

The Istokpoga Newswire

Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.



Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program

How Will This Program Help Lake Istokpoga?

By Bert Galloway, President

Most of the time we think of Lake Istokpoga as our own little paradise, but in the big scheme of things Lake Istokpoga is just the beginning of one of the world's most magnificent ecosystems the Florida Everglades. Keeping this in mind let me give you a little history of the Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP), on how it came about and how it affects us here on Lake Istokpoga.

Passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist, the Landmark NEEPP promotes a comprehensive interconnected watershed approach to protecting Lake Okeechobee and its estuaries. By expanding the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act (LOPA), the Florida Legislature recognized the importance and connectivity of the entire ecosystem from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the Lake Istokpoga watershed south to Florida Bay.

The NEEPP includes short-term measures for implementation during the first three years of the plan and longer term measures that will be put into operation post 2010. The plan represents the best blueprint for achieving water quality standards while better managing

lake levels in the entire Okeechobee watershed.

Components of the multi-phase plan include

- a. Implementing agriculture management practices on more than 1.7 million acres of farmland
- b. Adopting new regulations that reduce the impacts of development on the water quality and flow.
- c. Building treatment wetlands to clean water flowing into the lakes.
- d. Using other innovative green nutrient control technologies to reduce phosphorus loads from the watershed.
- e. Create between 9000,000 and 1.3 million acre-feet of water storage north of Lake Okeechobee through a combination of above ground reservoirs, underground storage and alternative water storages projects on public and private lands.

What you have just read gives you an overview of the NEEPP on the entire Okeechobee watershed which Lake Istokpoga is part of. As follows are some of the projects that are proposed to specifically help Lake Istokpoga.

Avon Park Air Force Range. Approximately 10,000 acre feet of storm water runoff will be retained on a 3,600 acre site at this location. This project also includes restoration of an existing levee and replacement selected water control

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Special points of interest:

FOI Meeting on November 13. See page 3 and 4 for more information

structures in Arbuckle Marsh. Storm water runoff to Arbuckle Creek and Lake Istokpoga will be reduced by this project.

Rafter T Ranch. This project, located in the Lake Istokpoga watershed, will provide 2,000 acre feet of water storage and phosphorus treatment.

Lykes Brothers, Inc. This project, located in the Lake Istokpoga Sub-watershed, will provide 5,000 acre feet of regional water storage. Some water quality improvements are expected from retaining water on this site.

Brighton Reservoir. This facility will provide storage capacity of up to 1,300 acre feet and reduce TP loads by approximately 1.5 mt/yr. (metric ton/year) It will consist of a 500 acre reservoir to be located on the Brighton Seminole reservation. This project will take some of the water demand off of Lake Istokpoga.

Buck Island Ranch. This ranch, located in the Istokpoga Sub-watershed will provide approximately 1,000 acre feet of on site water storage and treatment of phosphorus. It will also take some of the water storage demand off of Lake Istokpoga.

Some of these projects are already underway, such as the replacement of the levee on the Arbuckle Creek Marsh. The one thing to keep in mind about all the restoration work that is either underway or proposed is it will take time and also funding. The problems that we are encountering here on Lake Istokpoga and elsewhere in the Florida Everglades Ecosystem did not happen overnight and it will take time and a lot of effort by us all to preserve this amazing

ecosystem that we call home. For more information about the NEEPP please attend our membership meeting on November 13, 2008 at 7:00 PM. We will have representatives from the different agencies who will answer your questions.

Source for technical aspects of this article were from the SFWMD website at www.sfwmd.gov

What's Happening on Istokpoga At This Time?

We have had a good amount of rain this summer and fall that seems to have broken the dry spell that we were in. Also tropical Storm Fay gave us a nice downpour that helped to bring the lake back to a normal winter pool of 39.5 ft so as we get ready to start the winter season water levels are looking good but the hydrilla is another story. Following are some short updates on things that your board of directors is working on and other projects that are being preformed by some of the state and local agencies. Also we will try to give you some insight into events that have happened in the last few months. If you have any questions about or ideas for this column please Email them to friends@istokpoga.org we can us your input.

A: Hydrilla Spraying on Istokpoga

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Aquatic and Invasive Plants group had a contractor on the lake in October to map out the locations of the hydrilla on the lake (look for this map on our web site Istokpoga.com). At the end of November or the beginning of December they will have a private contractor on the lake treating about 2000 acres of hydrilla by helicopter. They are going to target the hydrilla on the north end of the lake first because it is there stated goal to try and keep the hydrilla confined to the south end of the lake. Also the Highlands County spay unit will be cutting some navigational trails in the

hydrilla when it is needed and they will also respond to problems of canals blocked with hydrilla (863-402-6812).

B: Arbuckle Creek monitoring of water quality

This is an ongoing project by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to assess the water quality of the Arbuckle Creek watershed. SFWMD is trying to track down the areas in the watershed that contribute the most phosphorus loading of Arbuckle Creek and subsequently Lake Istokpoga. SFWMD has not released any new data on this project. We are still looking to SFWMD for more data on this project. Any news that we receive on this project we will pass on to you.

C: Hydrilla Resistance to Herbicides.

Fluridone also known as Sonar that has been very effective in controlling Hydrilla on Lake Istokpoga can no longer be used. For now and in the foreseeable future the state (DEP) will control the Hydrilla with Aquathol K. There is hope that in the future that the DEP will have some new herbicides to do a whole lake treatment with. At present there are five herbicides that are in some stage of testing and one could be the answer to our Hydrilla problem. In the interim let us hope that the DEP is able to keep the Hydrilla under control in the south end of the lake. Dr Bill Haller from the University of Florida will speak at our next general membership meeting on November the 13, 2008 at the Lorida Community center at 7:00 PM. Come out and hear one of the worlds foremost experts on Aquatic and Invasive Plants management.

D: Canal Maintenance & Dredging

This \$800,000 project headed up by Clell Ford, Highlands County Lakes Manager, should be going to bid in December. The initial part of this project will be the 17 canals that the

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has already permitted. We were hoping to see this project start before the end of the year, but it is our understanding that it will be January or February before it gets started in earnest. To get more information on this project please attend our November 13, 2008 membership meeting at the Lorida community center at 7:00 PM. at which Clell Ford will have a question and answer session, or see our last newsletter which had a full article about this project.

E: Spring Lake Pumping Problem

The pumps are now working on a normal schedule and all parties involved in this project are pleased with the outcome. In the future we should not see any flooding in Spring Lake or harmful water being pumped into Lake Istokpoga.

F: S-68 Modification Project US Army Corps of Engineers.

This project is well under way and on schedule. The contractor has completed the concrete pour for the new gate just to the east of the existing gates on county road 621. The contractor is now digging a new diversion canal to supply water for this gate. Look for the contractor to start work soon on replacing the temporary road with a new road over the new gate. This project is being done to better handle discharges of water from Istokpoga. Look for this project to be completed by the first of the year.

G: Istokpoga Canal Project US Army Corps of Engineers

Following is the scope of work for this project. There are three main features to this project. The one that is most important to Lake Istokpoga is the building of a new control structure (S-67) and demolition of the old one (G-85).

This control structure is about a ½ mile east of county road 621. It is old and it is leaking badly. Another part of this project will build a new park with bathrooms, picnic area, 2 boat ramps and one airboat ramp at the Istokpoga Canal and US. 98. Also the Istokpoga canal will be dredged from U.S. 98 to the Kissimmee River for easy access into the river. This project is a little behind scheduled and should be completed in early April 2009.

H: Pond Apple Tree Enhancement.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Along with the SFWMD have planted 800 Pond apple trees on the west side of Big Island. Historically there has always been a stand of these trees, in this area of Big Island but in recent years for one reason or another trees has been depleted. The Pond Apple also known as the Alligator-apple is native to

Don't miss the Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association Fall Meeting.

Our Speakers will be Dr. Bill Haller, UF Expert on Hydrilla, and Clell Ford, Highlands County Lakes Manager who will update us on the Canal Project.

South Florida and is common in the Everglades. It provides a good habitat for birds and other wild life. Its fruit is also a good food source for the wildlife. It is hoped that this new area of Pond Apple will be used as a bird rookery. This project is completed and the FWC will be monitoring it to see if more of these projects will help the lake in the future.

I: Arbuckle Creek Marsh

There is a project underway to restore the earthen levee for the Arbuckle Creek Marsh. This is a saw grass marsh that is located next to Arbuckle Creek on the Avon Park Bombing Range. It is important to

Lake Istokpoga because it acts as a water storage area and filter for Arbuckle Creek thus helping to keep some of the phosphorous and nutrients from entering the lake Istokpoga. For your information, it is estimated that about 80% of the phosphorous and nutrients that enter Lake Istokpoga come from Arbuckle Creek. This project is funded by SFWMD and is being managed by Clell Ford' Highland County Lakes Manager. This project will go to bid in November and look for work to begin the first of the year.

Friends of Istokpoga 2008 Fall Meeting

The Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. will hold its 2008 fall general membership meeting at the Lorida Community Center on Thursday, November 13, at 7:00 PM.

This meeting will have two speakers who will provide valuable information about the lake and answer some of the questions and concerns that you might have about Lake Istokpoga.

Our first speaker for the evening will be Dr. Bill Haller from the University of Florida. He will be giving a presentation on the hydrilla in Lake Istokpoga. Dr. Haller is a world expert on hydrilla and other invasive plants and is someone you don't want to miss because he can really convey to you the problems and potential solutions of hydrilla in very down to earth terms.

Our second Speaker will be Highlands County Lakes Manager, Clell Ford, who will bring us up to date on the canal dredging project. He will also be answering any questions that you have in regard to this project.

There will be refreshments served beginning at 6:45 PM. There will also be a membership table where you can pay your 2009 dues. Please come out and bring your friends, neighbors and others who are interested in our beautiful Lake. This will be a very informative evening with these two dynamic speakers.

Alligators

By Virginia Greene, Secretary FOI

The alligator is listed by the State of Florida as a "Species of Special Concern". Alligators are found in all 67 counties of the state. They are found in practically all fresh and brackish bodies of water and occasionally in salt water. Alligators inhabit the area from southeast Oklahoma and east Texas on the western side of their range, to North Carolina and Florida east.

Florida is believed to be home to more than one million alligators, based on estimated 6.7 million acres of suitable habitat.

With tremendous human population growth, people seeking waterfront homes, more alligator-human interaction can occur. From year 1948-2007 there have been documented 463 alligator bites on humans. Of those 307 which were unprovoked. Unprovoked bites are defined as bites on human beings by wild alligators, which were not provoked by handling or intentional harassment. Provoked bites, 156, are defined as incidents where people were bitten by wild or captive alligators, while being handled, moved or intentionally harassed. Twenty two deaths have occurred.

In 2007, FWC received more than 13,000 nuisance alligator complaints. Nuisance alligator trappers were issued 11,000 permits and tags, removing more than 10,000 alligators. An alligator is deemed nuisance when

at least 4 ft. in length and pose a threat to people, their pets or property. The Nuisance hotline number is 1-866-392-4286.

In 2007 22,508 alligators were harvested in Florida. This included statewide harvest (5965), private lands (6194), and nuisance (10,349). Lake Istokpoga yielded 116. The average length of these alligators was 7'8", with the largest being 13 ft. The data from the 2008 harvest will not be available until late Dec. The statewide harvest runs through the end of October. There were 82 permits issued, 2 alligators per permit.

In 2007, the St.-John's River (Lake Hell n Blazes, Lake Poinsett, Puzzle Lake) yielded 993 alligators. Lake Okeechobee yielded 896, during the Statewide Harvest.

Mr. Steve Stiegler and Harry Dutton, FWC biologists greatly assisted in gathering the data for this article.

Meet Lisa Kreiger

Lisa Kreiger is a Senior Project/Water Resources Manager at the South Florida Water Management District's Okeechobee Service Center. Although Lisa is not a stranger to Lake Istokpoga issues, she will be participating to a greater extent in the coming months as she is taking over the District's representation on the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee and sub-committees.

Some of the projects Lisa has been involved with during her 11 year tenure with the District

include construction of the Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough storm water treatment areas, muck removal projects on Lake Okeechobee, water storage and restoration evaluation of Lake Hicpochee, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the

Northern Everglades Plan.

Before joining the South Florida Water Management District, Lisa worked for Florida Power & Light in Land Management in Cooling Pond Operations. She has earned an Associate of Science degree in Marine Technology from the Florida Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business & Management from Nova Southeastern University.

Membership Renewal time

Now is the time to join the Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.! If you join anytime for the rest of 2008, you will also get all of 2009. This is a gain of two months on your 1 year membership.

There are two easy ways to join.

1. You can mail in the application on page 5 of this newsletter
2. Or, you can come to our meeting on November 13th and save the expense of a stamp.

Either way, we hope you will consider joining us in our efforts to keep our beautiful lake as natural and beautiful as it is today, and to improve the overall condition and health of the lake.

For those of you that are already members, we hope you will take this opportunity to renew your

membership. Please remember that in addition to supporting our efforts to protect our lake you will also receive all our newsletters and gain access to the members only section of our association website.

Lisa Kreiger, SFWMD is our new Representative to the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee. Welcome Lisa!

Mail completed Application to address at bottom of form with your membership fee or bring it to our meeting.
Remember that numbers count, so please consider all members of your household when joining.

Membership Application Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.

Annual membership fee \$7.00 per person
Annual Family Membership fee \$12.00 per family*
Annual Associate membership fee \$25.00

Annual dues are valid Jan. 1 to Dec. 31

*Family Membership is for a couple and their children under 18 years old living at home

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Circle Correct Answer: Yes/No I am willing to work on a committee below?

Committees: Finance, Legislative, Newsletter, Membership, Publicity, Weed Control (Circle one)

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Additionally, I would like to donate \$10 ___ \$15 ___ \$25 ___ Other _____ *

**All Donations are tax deductible*

Make Checks Payable to: **Friends of Istokpoga**

Mail to: P.O. Box 205, Lorida, FL 33857

For additional information call: 863-219-0082 - Voice Mail

Or email us at: friends@istokpoga.org

Please visit our web site: www.istokpoga.org

**Friends of Istokpoga Lake
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