



LAKE WORTH LAGOON INITIATIVE (LWLI) HABITAT WORKING GROUP
Meeting Minutes – July 10, 2009

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 AM by Mr. Daniel Bates, Environmental Director, Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM).

I. Attendance and Introductions

Daniel Bates - ERM; Julie Bishop - ERM; Paul Davis - ERM; Eric Anderson – ERM; Alyssa Dodd – ERM; Ginny Powell – ERM; Rod Braun – SFWMD; Detong Sun – SFWMD; Bud Howard – Loxahatchee River District; Lindsay Nester – FWC; Tom Reinert – FWC; Jodie Gless – FPL; Eric Reusch – USACOE; Debbie Devore – USFWS; Erin McDevitt – FWC; Tom Twyford – WPB Fishing Club; Ernest Cowan – FDEP/FPS; Miao-Li Chang – SWMD; Don Bergeron – FDEP/FPS; Drew Martin – Sierra Club

II. New Business

Public/Private Partnership Sub-Group (Mangrove/Oyster Habitat) – Julie Bishop/PBC

- The Group has met two times and was well attended with good participation. Representation included NOAA, FWC, WPB Fishing Club, DEP and ACOE. Work includes NOAA collecting site feasibility criteria.
- As the public/private partnership moves forward (working in back yards of homeowners as well as municipalities), the Group will be looking at the best areas to target. Lake Worth Lagoon is 20 miles long with a variety of habitat. If it is not suitable for oysters because of salinity (SFWMD will assist in this regard), then mangrove habitat will be considered. We plan to try and gather enough properties to work on a large scale.
- Staff is working with DEP and ACOE to streamline permitting once the areas are selected. There are 10 areas with major projects that are in the Management Plan with approximately 20,000 linear feet of shoreline being targeted. Packages will be prepared for targeted municipalities' review of possible mangrove planters and oyster habitat. This is anticipated to happen fairly soon. An example is Currie Park located in West Palm Beach which has approximately 2,000-3,000 feet of shoreline. A package will be prepared with designs and ideas to be sent to the City of West Palm Beach for their review/approval of this project.
- The League of Cities will assist in getting the municipalities involved in this regard.
- Mr. Bates will be working to obtain a liability waiver for interested homeowners. Ms. McDevitt and Mr. Twyford are working on the backyard mangrove planter project.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Ms. DeVore discussed USFWS workshops to introduce Living Shorelines. Audience interaction is encouraged as much as possible. Participants include regulatory agencies, consultants, engineers, contractors and landowners. Positive feedback has been received in moving forward in this regard.
- Further discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Ms. Bishop suggested the coordination of a workshop in Palm Beach County. Ms. DeVore stated that a possible timeframe would be in the Fall of this year.
- Further discussion/questions and answers occurred.

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- Two more sub-group meetings planned this year. The next meeting will be in August or September.
- Hydrodynamic Salinity (EFDC) Model – Deton Sun/SFWMD - Mr. Bates stated that one of the biggest issues is salinity levels within the Lagoon.
- Mr. Sun gave a visual presentation of the model as below-referenced.
- Data includes monitoring conditions and calibration.
- Confirming and setting the benchmark is the priority. Small adjustments can make a huge difference for salinity distribution.
- Summary:
 - Model calibration appears good.
 - Accuracy could be improved.
 - Surveying the benchmark is a priority.
 - Present situation will resolve.
 - Measure total flow rate.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Mr. Davis reviewed the presentation. The model is useful, though it could be improved with additional elevation and salinity data. He asked if it is too obsolete to invest additional time in getting the elevations right and gathering additional salinity data. Ms. Chang answered that it would be good to have the data which would provide for a very useful model in the future. It is a good investment to update the salinity/flow data.
- Further discussion/questions and answers occurred.

Fisheries Monitoring Sub-Group Update – Paul Davis/PBC

- Initial objectives:
 - Establish a baseline of fish populations in the Lagoon.
 - Evaluate the success of the habitat restoration projects.
 - Evaluate potential changes in water management practices.
 - Demonstrate the importance of fish to the community in terms of economics and recreation.
 - Ensure the study complements other ongoing fishery research projects in nearby systems.
- After meeting and discussing the above-referenced objectives, it was determined that the objectives would not be feasible.
- Early on in the process, one of the directions was to contract with FWRI to do a fishery monitoring study of the Lake Worth Lagoon. FWRI believes it can do the work and is willing to move forward.
- Intent is to do something cost effective and that would not require a long-term funding source. Funding is available in the amount of \$70,000 for the next 1/-1/2 years, after which time there is no guarantee of funds.
- Prefer to do monitoring that would have some bearing on work being done in the Lagoon.
- An issue which arose recently is dredge hole filling. There is a dredge hole north of Forest Hill Boulevard that is currently being filled using spoil from the Palm Harbor Marina project in West Palm Beach. It is believed by some that the hole may have habitat value, though not enough studies were done to prior to the permitting of that hole.
- ERM had done, through FWRI, a preliminary study of 10 holes throughout the Lagoon. Those holes are ranked in terms of potential habitat value. It was determined that three holes had some potential for filling; the remainder had habitat value and should not be filled or additional studies should be done.
- Permitting agencies used the preliminary data to determine the holes should be filled.

- More data is needed and any additional holes should be evaluated for habitat value. There are probably at least another 10 more holes. These holes need to be looked at as opportunity to enhance the Lagoon.
- This is the direction in which the Group plans to proceed.
- This work is contingent upon the whether there are available funds in the budget.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred regarding possible ways to perform fishing surveys of the Lagoon. The information needs to be valuable in terms of being helpful and useful in moving forward (are there other ways to obtain the information more efficiently and effectively). There is definitely a positive public outreach component in this regard.
- Water quality sampling devices were also briefly discussed.

Status of SFWMD Projects in LWL Watershed – Rod Braun/SFWMD

- A contractor is working on the stormwater analysis project which is ongoing. Work includes summarizing water quality in the watershed basin.
- Work was done in the past but was not assimilated. Looking at existing information and also water quality basins in the watershed. Will summarize by basin and put together a storm event monitoring plan, which will be a three-year plan to identify hot spots in the watershed and the best location for storm event monitoring. The project should be completed by the end of September.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred about whether the work will be included in next year's budget.

Status of Habitat Restoration Projects in LWL – Dan Bates/PBC

- Project fact sheets were distributed regarding the below-referenced projects. Detailed information is available on the website at www.LWLI.org.
 - Boynton Beach/Ocean Ridge Mangrove Riprap – area is adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway with approximately 80 feet of mangrove habitat. The area has had erosion problems over the years. The shoreline was stabilized with riprap.
 - Ibis Isles – building a perimeter road around the outside of the project area to contain the muck from the C-51 that is sometimes 7 feet thick.
 - Snook Island Natural Area Public Use Facilities - next step is to put in public use facilities and remove the derelict bridge for use as an artificial reef. Funding is in place and plans are being finalized. The facilities will provide for public access and, therefore, promote public awareness of a very successful restoration project
 - John's Island Oyster Reef Project - work will be done in phases as funding becomes available. The areas where the rock will be placed are very shallow. The first phase includes placement of 7,500 tons of rock within a five-acre area which already has oysters. Work should begin in the next week and will take place over the next six months.
 - The County budget, coupled with the State's restrictions on funding, means there will be no new funding for these types of projects this year. We will not necessarily see a decrease in work this year or part of next year, but because the grants are followed by a couple of years before the work can actually be done, we will be tapering off on some of the habitat projects starting next year. Unless the County and the budget recover, it will be much more difficult to continue on the path we have been working.
 - Discussion/questions and answers occurred.

Stimulus Package and Budget Update – Daniel Bates/PBC – Mr. Bates advised that less stimulus funding was available for projects than was originally anticipated. The committee was asked to advise staff of any grant opportunities that may become available.

Member Issues – All

- Work on Munyon Island boat dock is moving forward.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Additional issues were discussed prior to adjournment (refer to item V).

III. Old Business

Decision Analysis Framework – Miao-Li Chang/SFWMD

- An overview was provided of the SFWMD's decision analysis framework and project information template which was distributed. For details, refer to the distribution.
- The Group's focus is to protect and enhance the LWL ecosystem. Water quality will be included as part of the Group, which makes it more evident as to the Group's objective and focus.
- The framework has been used for several different plans.
- The Group is following in the footsteps of the Loxahatchee River Management Plan and using the plan as a guideline. The ecological component appears to be more the objective of the Habitat Working Group. The Group will work on this and coordinate with the Habitat Group in this regard.
- An inventory will be conducted and then prioritized.
- A five-year plan will be put together.
- Funding issues are critical regarding the direction in which to proceed and work to continue.
- There is much data and the next step would be to analyze and use the data.
- The meeting minutes and related information are on the LWLI website, including a project information template for projects related to the Water Group's management objectives.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred about possible methods to provide feedback/information received regarding the related to the Water Group's objectives (create a subgroup, gather information, etc.). General consensus was to gather information in lieu of creating a subgroup. An update will be given at the next meeting.
- For details of the Group's management goal and objectives, refer to distribution.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Mr. Bates suggested sending an e-mail to the LWLI Working Groups to ask for their comments and input. He also requested an update on the feedback at the next meeting.

Monitoring Studies Update – Discussion - All

- Mr. Davis discussed annual transect seagrass monitoring which has been finished. Preliminary results indicate that grasses were growing a bit deeper at lower densities.
- Mr. Anderson stated that some of the shallower sites did not have as much grass as previously studies.
- Mr. Davis stated there are 14 sites being monitored by FWC within Palm Beach County, with 9 sites located within the Lagoon. The new information will be used next year and any necessary adjustments will be made.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Mr. Davis discussed oyster monitoring. Monitoring by Harbor Branch will be provided in an annual report in the near future. FWRI CERP monitoring is continuing.

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- Turtle monitoring is funded through the end of this year and will total 4-1/4 years of data. The goal is to gather data for five years, though there may not be funds to complete the last 3/4 year. Approximately \$30,000 is needed to finish the monitoring.
- Manatee monitoring continues with bi-weekly aerial surveys. Anyone interested in receiving the manatee report (sent by e-mail) should advise Mr. Davis. In the wintertime, there were approximately 400 manatees in the vicinity of the FPL plant. The number has dropped to 20-30 since March. They spread to hot spots throughout the County (JDMSF, Boynton Inlet, Loxahatchee River, etc.).
- Further discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- A bird survey was conducted in the spring and the results were disappointing. The next survey is planned for the fall of this year.
- Further discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Blue Heron Bridge area is a very popular dive spot. Many divers come into the County from other states and Canada just to dive in that location. A group associated with the Jacksonville Shell Club is collecting information on invertebrates in the area. A presentation on **Sea Slugs and Sea Shells in the Lake Worth Lagoon** will be given by Anne DuPont on August 19 at 2:00 PM at the Vista Center.
- Continued discussion/questions and answers occurred.
- Mr. Bates stated there is concern about restoration of the Blue Heron Bridge and possible major impacts.
- The C-51 basin is being looked at to locate the source of sediment in the Lagoon. Sampling has been completed and the final report is expected within a few months.
- The County is part of a group mandated by DEP to do NPDES water quality sampling. DEP is now looking at all the results. One of the things that may be considered is the sediment sourcing study and either expanding it within the C-51 basin (based on the study results) or taking the same idea and doing it in the C-16/C-17 to identify the sediment source in those basins.
- A project is underway to evaluate substrate characterizations, bathymetry and sediment sampling in the central of the Lagoon. The work is fairly complete with the exception of the vibracore sampling. The next phase would be to identify dredge holes and evaluate the sediment in those areas.

Oyster Outreach Site Selection/Permitting – Alyssa Dodd/ERM

- A site was identified at Anchorage Park in North Palm Beach. North Palm Beach wanted a smaller project and site would be larger than suggested by the Town Manager. Some concerns were also raised about neighbors who would view the oyster reef in this particular area.
- This information was reported back to staff to determine if the site should be pursued as the first project, or reassess and go to another site.
- Discussion/questions and answers occurred regarding possible sites.
- Mr. Bates stated that both Lantana and MacArthur State Park will be looked into as possible sites.
- Further discussion/questions and answers occurred.

Bird Island Trust Project – Rob Patten/BIT

- Ms. Bishop stated that an update will be provided at the next meeting.
- Mr. Bates stated that the project is under contract.

IV. Next Meeting

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- Update on August 6, 2009 LWLI Executive Committee Meeting – Dan Bates
- Update on August/September-Sub-Group Meetings (Public/Private Partnerships & Fisheries)
- Public Outreach Public Working Group Update – Alyssa Dodd
- Status of Habitat Restoration Projects in LWL – Dan Bates
- Update on Water Group Priorities – Miao-Li Chang
- Lake Worth Lagoon Bird Count Update - National Audubon Society
- Bird Island Trust Update – Rob Patten
- **October 16, 2009 – Next LWLI Habitat Working Group** (November 16, 2009 LWLI Executive Committee Meeting)
- Action Items

V. Additional Member Issues

- Mega-Yacht - Mr. Dan Bates has been following up and trying to obtain more information. There is much concern about the regional application. Mr. Bates explained that the proposed channel dredging involves deepening and widening of the Intracoastal Waterway between Peanut Island and Blue Heron Bridge.
- Exotic Green Mussels - Mr. Davis sent out information.
- South Cove Hearing - Mr. Bates stated confidence that the outcome will go in the County's direction. The Judge will try and make a point to put his findings out in time for staff to get permitting in place before FIND application funding deadlines. Timing will be very close. Mr. Anderson stated that court reporting is hoped to be expedited; information was received this week. Attorneys are required to submit their written judgments by August 10, after which the Judge has 30 days to respond. Mr. Anderson is reviewing the design plans and specifications in preparation to go forward on the project.
- Discussion/questions and answers followed.

The next LWLI Habitat Working Group meeting will be held on October 16, 2009 unless otherwise advised.

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:15 AM by Mr. Bates.