

Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council

June 29, 2009 Meeting Minutes

I Call to Order

Chairwoman Sarah Heard called the meeting to order at the Jupiter Community Center at approximately 2:00.

II Roll Call: Council Members present: Vince Arena, Albrey Arrington, Bruce Dawson, Gale English, Sarah Heard, Tom Howard, Lynn Kelley (alt for Ann Broadwell), Chad Kennedy, David Levy, Peter Merritt, Dave Nickerson (alt for Pat Magrogan), Jim Ostrander, Sam Payson and Sean' Sculley.

New members Bruce Dawson (Bureau of Land Management, Dept. of Interior) and Sean' Sculley (SFWMD) were welcomed to the Council.

III Approval of Minutes from March 30, 2009

Minutes unanimously approved without change.

IV. Agenda Changes – Item 4B deferred to the next mtg; Update on G-160 Operation added as Item 4F

IV.A Update on Current Water Level

Sean' Sculley (SFWMD Deputy Director of Watershed Management and Mgr of Coastal Watershed Projects) described graphic portrayals of flow rates (Lainhart Dam) and salinity (River Mile 9.1). Both showed present values meeting MFL criteria but reflected the lack of water necessary to meet MFL criteria during the peak of the dry season (i.e., < 35 cfs flow for 26 consecutive days and salinity exceeding 2.0 ppt).

III.C Loxahatchee River Science Plan Update

Miao-Li Chang (SFWMD Division Director, Coastal Ecosystems) gave a PowerPoint presentation describing the work of the inter-agency science team. The team is using the Decision-making Framework and is analyzing data from various research and monitoring projects (e.g., hydrology, groundwater, flow/stage, flora and fauna studies including investigations of oysters, seagrasses, fishes..) to help guide restoration of the Northwest Fork. Financial constraints may prevent some desirable studies from being continued in FY 2009-2010.

III.D Ocean-to-Lake Greenway Trail Event

Susan Kennedy (State Greenways & Trails Committee and Co-chair of the NE Everglades Trail Association) reminded the Council of the history of the Ocean-to-Lake Greenway, including its designation by the State of Florida in 2004 and then described the February 2009 Ocean-to-Lake Greenway festival. The 3-day event included over 60 horseback riders, bicyclists and hikers who participated in all or portions of the excursion. Small gaps in the pathway still exist (e.g., Gulfstream Citrus Rd and Hobe Grove Ditch), but overall, there is great support by the managers of the public lands through which the trail leads, including WMD(Dupuis), FWC (Corbett Wildlife Mgmt Area) ERM (Riverbend Park) and the Fl Park Service (J Dickinson State Park). The group has begun planning for the 2010 festival, which will hopefully be expanded to also include canoeists and kayakers.

IV.E Wild and Scenic River Management Plan Status

Dianne Hughes (FDEP) fielded comments on the recently-released update of the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. Considerable discussion ensued regarding needing to include an appropriate level of detail regarding various tangential issues (e.g., CERP).

Ultimately, a C. Kennedy Motion was seconded and approved by a majority to allow Dianne Hughes discretionary authority to replace lengthy detailed descriptions with abbreviated summaries and web-site hyperlinks, provided standard bibliographic references are also included. Dianne requested that Council Members with specific wording changes provide them to her electronically in Excel spreadsheet format by July 15th, after which subsequent chapters will be released for review and comment.

IV.F Operation of G-160 and C-18

C. Kennedy updated the Council regarding FDEP's consideration of a WMD request to discontinue certain monitoring requirements related to operation of these water management features. WMD is actively involved in negotiations with SIRWCD and neighbors, and is innovatively trying to minimize exceedances of permit conditions. DEP has requested that WMD move forward with establishment of a water reservation for the Loxahatchee.

D. Levy noted that the City of Palm Beach Gardens has expressed their concerns about needing to ensure that residents' properties are not flooded.

V. Updates from Member Agency/Organization Activities

A. Arrington noted that the River Center in Burt Reynolds Park will be celebrating it's first birthday in August and he thanked the project partners for their support in the Center. Monthly visitation is consistently exceeding targets and appears to be appealing to visitors of all ages. A donation of \$125,000 was recently received.

B. Dawson advised the Council that during July and August, the Bureau of Land Management will be holding several public meetings to solicit input on the recently-released draft management plan for the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area.

Discussion ensued regard the potential advantage of the Council re-affirming to the WMD Governing Board the value of continued monitoring and possibly recommending cost-saving strategies. A Motion was offered, but after further discussion, died for lack of a second.

VI. Public Comments

Paul Millar (Martin County) commented on S. Sculley's MFL hydrograph and reminded the Council that the terms of the MFL rule require that immediate corrective actions are to be taken if the MFL criteria are not met for 20 consecutive days (in spring 2009, these criteria were not met for 26 consecutive days). He suggested that the District consider directing excess Lake Okeechobee water (that would otherwise be discharged to tide) into the Rock Pits to help address elevated chloride levels, and asked that the 90 cfs restoration target for flow over the Lainhart Dam be added to the MFL hydrograph to help the Council in the future gauge progress toward restoration.

Public Comments, Cont'd

Susan Kennedy: 1) Expressed her concurrence that restoration levels be shown on the MFL tracking hydrographs, and 2) recommended that adequate detail be maintained in the Wild & Scenic Mgmt Plan updates because documents formerly referred to may no longer be available.

Dick Roberts (Fl Park Service - retired) urged authors of the Wild & Scenic River Mgmt Plan update to investigate Wild & Scenic Mgmt Plans for other federally designated waterways – documents that were not in existence when the initial and/or former versions of the Loxahatchee plan were developed.

VII. Council Comments

J. Ostrander indicated that his attempts to meet with the WMD Office of Counsel to obtain clarification of various administrative/procedural issues have been unsuccessful and he asked that the Council officially request that such a meeting take place. Discussion ensued both on the procedural questions themselves and the reasonableness of a request that the WMD Office of Counsel meet with any individual Council member. A suggestion was made that Mr. Ostrander bring to a future Council meeting the specific questions for which he seeks clarification. The Council can then determine if it wishes to seek clarification on the issues and the best process for getting responses from WMD.

VIII. Announcements

None

IX. Adjournment

With no further action items, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Braun, Secretary