

**APPROVED
MEETING SUMMARY**

**Environmental Advisory Committee
Southwest Florida Water Management District
June 6, 2011**

The Environmental Advisory Committee of the Southwest Florida Water Management District convened for a regular meeting at 1:40 p.m., June 6, 2011, at Polk's Nature Discovery Center, 4399 Winter Lake Road, Lakeland, FL 33803.

Committee Members Present

Dwayne Carlton, Chair, Ocala/Marion County COC
Mark Alderson, Vice Chair, Sarasota Bay NEP
Lisa Beever, Charlotte Harbor NEP
Julie Byrne, Sarasota Audubon Society
Eileen Hart, Keystone Civic Association
Dave Kandz, St. Petersburg Audubon Society
Sam Stone, Charlotte County COC
Bob Upcavage, Suncoast Native Plant Society

Committee Members Absent

Mitch Almon, Florida Trail Assoc. Suncoast
Mike Burton, Manatee Chamber of Commerce
Holly Greening, Tampa Bay Estuary Program
Alan Grubman, Save the Homosassa River Alliance
Carl Keeler, Izaak Walton League
Greg Nowaski, Control Growth Now, Inc.
Betsy Roberts, Env. Confederation of SW FL
Sharon Terrill-Elfers, Sierra Club Tampa Bay
Dana West, Greater Sarasota COC

Staff Members Present

Lou Kavouras, Facilitator
Veronica Crow
Lizanne Garcia
Will Miller
Lois Sorensen

Governing Board Member

None

Recording Secretary

Teri Hudson

Approved summaries from previous meetings can be found on the District's Web site at (www.WaterMatters.org).

The numbers preceding the items below correspond to the order of presentation.

1. Host Introduction

Jeff Spence, Polk County Parks & Natural Resources Director, welcomed members and guests to the facility giving a brief introduction of the property. He stated this facility is a joint project between Polk County, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the Polk County School Board. There are classrooms staffed by two full-time teachers offering seventh graders in the County an opportunity to explore the facility. The property is very diverse offering a look at various wildlife species via many hiking trails, bird watching, and picnicking. This property is located on Lake Hancock. A Six-hundred plus acre wetland was restored by SWFWMD staff. More information about the property can be found on the County's and SWFWMD's websites. Interest from members and the audience included questions regarding commercial fishing activities on Lake Hancock; future plans to connect the trails; concern regarding the trail around Lake Hancock specifically reconnecting the wetlands to the lake and the safety of hikers.

2. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Dwayne Carlton called the meeting to order. He welcomed members, staff, and interested persons and asked for member introductions.

3. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

Lou Kavouras, Deputy Executive Director, stated there were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

4. Approval of the March 7, 2011 Meeting Summary

It was moved and seconded to unanimously approve the meeting summary as presented.

5. Hydrologic Conditions and Water Shortage Plan Update

Lois Sorensen, Demand Management Program Manager, discussed the 12-month rainfall data stating that the District as a whole is on the lower end of the normal range of what the 12-month rainfall should be which is a deficit of about six inches. There is a slight surplus when looking at the 24-month rainfall data. Surface water in the northern part of the District is in the normal range of fluctuation. Groundwater is down but still in the normal range of fluctuation, but below where we were this same time last year. In the southern part of the District, river flow is still in the normal range of fluctuation but in the short-term we are below normal. The major public supplier in this area still has plenty of water in storage. Groundwater in the southern part of the District is in the normal range of fluctuation dropping a little bit. The rainfall forecast calls for an equal chance of above, normal, or below normal rainfall. Part of the summer looks like it could be above normal. The Governing Board decided not to change the current Phase I restrictions, but staff is closely monitoring resource and supply conditions and will report back to the Board every month to reassess their decision. The Water Shortage Plan Rule 40D-21 became part of the Governor's rule review and 38 amendments are in the spirit of Executive Order 11-01. As a result of changes in legislation, the Statement of Estimated Regulatory Costs (SERC) that was already prepared for this rulemaking needs to be updated. The District's Economics staff is in the process of making changes and staff will be analyzing this new cost data and the different perspective this rule must take. Estimated full implementation of this rule is July 2012.

6. EPA's Numeric Nutrient Criteria Update

Veronica Crow, Environmental Manager, updated committee members on recent activities related to EPA's Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC). Ms. Crow provided a review of the rule, the impacts of this rule on the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), specifics regarding site specific considerations, and the legal challenges of the rule. Ms. Crow stated FDEP submitted a petition to EPA on April 22, 2011 requesting withdrawal of their 2009 determination that NNC is required, requested that EPA repeal their promulgated NNC and halt its nutrient rulemaking for Florida estuaries and South Florida canals, and requested a response within 30 days with no requirement to do so. The petition was in response to a March 18, 2011 memo from the EPA Office of Water detailing eight elements EPA believes is needed for effective State programs to manage nutrients. The petition documents how FDEP met eight elements acknowledging that Florida has nutrient impairment, but DEP is addressing. Things to keep in mind are before the lawsuits occurred, EPA stated it would be pushing for NNC nationwide, FDEP agreed to establish NNC sometime in 2011, and it is likely NNC will be in Florida even though planning, construction, financing and implementation will take a long time.

7. District Activities in the Charlotte Harbor Watershed including Lake Hancock Outfall Treatment System

Lizane Garcia, Senior Environmental Scientist, stated the first Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan for Charlotte Harbor was developed in 1993 and updated in 2000. The focus of this Plan has been to implement projects that restore degraded habitats and reduce pollution entering threatened waterbodies. Currently SWIM has 13 ongoing or completed habitat restoration projects in this watershed that will restore over 1,300 acres. Two examples of habitat restoration projects in the Charlotte Harbor watershed are the Coral Creek and Alligator Creek projects. Once completed, these projects will restore approximately 1,400 acres of coastal uplands and wetlands. Although not a SWIM project, the Upper Peace River Initiative is important to protecting the health of Charlotte Harbor and its watershed and includes several projects including Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification Project and Lake Hancock Outfall Treatment Project. Ms. Garcia stated the goal of the Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification Project is to raise the water level to 100 feet to store water during the wet season and slowly release it during the dry season to help achieve the minimum flow. Construction bids were received on June 2, 2011 with construction anticipated to begin in the fall and be completed in December 2012. Ms. Garcia discussed the project goals, cost benefits, and design considerations of the Lake Hancock Outfall Treatment Project. The Lake Hancock Outfall Treatment System is a 1,000 acre constructed treatment wetland designed to remove 27% of the nitrogen discharging from Lake Hancock. Construction is scheduled to be completed in 2013 for a total cost of approximately \$28 million. Ms. Garcia responded and followed up on the following questions and concerns from committee members: will groundwater recharge be increased as a result of the Outfall Treatment project or the Lake Level Modification Project? If so, by how much?; how often will the vegetation have to be harvested to maintain an emergent wetland?; has the District considered the use of the harvested material as a biofuel?; how much of the upper Peace River flow will go through the wetland?; and what is the aeration device for discharge? Is it mechanical, gravity, etc?

8. Overview of Land Management Program including Hunting on District Lands

Will Miller, Land Use & Protection Manager, stated the purpose of creating the District's Land Resources Stakeholders Group was to increase public comment on District land use issues. One of the issues raised from the group was the evaluation of additional hunting opportunities on District lands. The evaluation objectives are to identify lands that may provide public hunting opportunities that currently do not and reevaluate current hunting opportunities. The properties were prioritized based on ownership/management and include: Chassahowitzka, Cypress Creek, Halpata Tasthanaki, Weekiwachee, Lower Hillsborough, Lake Panasoffkee, Green Swamp East and West. Mr. Miller discussed the evaluation criteria the FWC and District land managers will use to conduct evaluations of each property. Initial recommendations will be brought to the Stakeholder's group on July 29, 2011, with final recommendations going to the Governing Board in the fall. Mr. Miller stated there will be an opportunity for public input before the recommendations are brought before the Governing Board. Concern raised from committee members included the additional impacts on the lands and preserving the species that some of these groups represented on the committee are trying to save. Mr. Miller reiterated the District will balance the preservation of the lands with recreational use and will not allow the destruction of our lands.

9. Development of Agenda Topics for the September 12, 2011 Meeting

- Septic Tanks (how the regulation and maintenance is effecting water resources)
- Water Management District Budget and implications of recent legislation
- Institutional/staff/operational changes
- Update on Alafia River & Tampa Bypass Canal Reclassification

10. Announcements and Other Business

Lou Kavouras briefly discussed the following with committee members: Basin Board merger; budget; election of officers; Executive Director, Dave Moore's resignation and the appointment of Judy Whitehead as their new Governing Board liaison.

11. Adjournment

There being no further discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.