

MEETING SUMMARY
Environmental Advisory Committee
Southwest Florida Water Management District
October 8, 2019

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District convened for a regular meeting at 10:30 a.m., October 8, 2019 at the Tampa Service Office, 7601 US Highway 301 North, Tampa, Florida 33637.

Committee Members Present

Ed Sherwood, Tampa Bay Estuary Program
Paul Crowell, Keystone Civic Association
Dwayne Carlton, Ocala/Marion County, Chamber & Economic Partnership
Mark Alderson, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

Governing Board Member Present

Roger Germann

Staff Members Present

Caroline Browning, Facilitator
Michael Molligan
Chris Anastasiou
Lei Yang
Gabe Herrick
Ron Basso
Granville Kinsman
Randy Smith

Recording Secretary

Kelly Page

A list of others present who signed the attendance roster is filed in the permanent records of the District. Approved summaries from previous meetings can be found on the District's website at WaterMatters.org.

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

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Mr. Mark Alderson called the meeting to order, welcomed members, staff, and interested persons and asked for member introductions. Mr. Roger Germann introduced himself to the committee.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None

3. Approval of the July 9, 2019 Meeting Summary

The committee unanimously approved the July 9, 2019 meeting minutes.

4. Public Comments

There were no public comments presented.

5. Freshwater Algae: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Dr. Chris Anastasiou, lead water quality scientist, provided a presentation on the various types of algae, their importance to aquatic ecosystems, and issues related to freshwater harmful algal blooms. Dr. Anastasiou discussed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) harmful algal bloom program (HAB) and how FDEP works with the Water Management Districts, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and local governments in sampling, surveillance, and response to harmful algal blooms. Dr. Anastasiou also discussed the ways members of the public can report harmful algal blooms, and the online resources where the public can go to find more information on HAB's.

Mark Alderson asked if the District is on the Governor's Task Force. Dr. Anastasiou replied the task force is made up of select members of the academic community but he does attend the task force

meetings via the webcast. Jennette Seachrist confirmed the District is not on the Governor's Task Force.

Mr. Sherwood asked for Dr. Anastasiou's opinion regarding management of freshwater nuisance/exotic submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). Dr. Anastasiou explained vegetation management has improved greatly over the last 40 years. He also added while FDEP is doing research on nutrient sources, the Water Management District could be a good resource in implementing projects based on the academic research. Dr. Anastasiou expressed the importance of understanding not only where nutrients are coming from but also what happens to those nutrients once they enter the receiving waters. He stressed it is important to understand nutrient pathways and how harmful algal blooms respond to nutrient inputs.

Mr. Ed Sherwood made a motion to recommend the District's Governing Board provide full support for the Governor's Blue-Green Algae Task Force recommendations on implementing the research and regulatory reform topics identified in the consensus document. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. Lake Hancock/Upper Peace River Reservation

Dr. Lei Yang, chief professional engineer, provided a presentation on the Lake Hancock reservation proposal, which will exempt water from consumptive use. She explained this proposal will improve the Upper Peace River Minimum Flows status and will have no adverse impact on the adopted Lake Hancock's minimum lake levels, the adopted MFLs for the Middle and Lower Peace River, Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (PRMRWSA)'s water withdrawals, and flows to the Charlotte Harbor.

Mr. Dwayne Carlton asked whether the raise in water level at the P-11 structure will affect the wetlands or the water quality released into Saddle Creek. Mr. Randy Smith joined Dr. Yang and explained both projects (P-11 structure and wetlands) were constructed in conjunction with one another. Raising the lake levels stores additional water, the stored water is then routed through the wetlands to improve water quality conditions downstream.

Mr. Carlton asked whether there are any major municipal or other interests using water out of Lake Hancock. Mr. Smith explained there are no water supply withdrawals from Lake Hancock; The significant legal user is the PRMRWSA which withdraws from the bottom.

Mr. Mark Alderson asked whether water improved at Lake Hancock and Mr. Smith explained Lake Hancock is one of the poorest water quality lakes in Florida and raising the water level one and a half feet did improve nitrogen and chlorophyll levels, however, concentrations are still elevated which is why the wetland treatment is still needed. The wetland is still in the establishment phase and updates will be provided to the Governing Board.

Mr. Crowell asked whether reducing periods of high flow into the freshwater estuary is healthier as opposed to fluctuations. Mr. Smith explained these projects are intended to protect the Upper Peace River and the estuarine systems as well.

Mr. Ed Sherwood asked if there were any future climate considerations and Mr. Smith suggested a follow-up hydrologic presentation, if desired. Members asked for hydrologic updates. Dr. Yang suggested committee members could sign up for status updates on the river systems, Mr. Smith said he would provide links to hydrologic data.

7. Chassahowitzka and Homosassa Minimum Flows Reevaluation

Dr. Gabe Herrick, lead environmental scientist, and Ron Basso, chief hydrogeologist, provided a brief summary on MFLs and the monitoring and evaluating process. Dr. Herrick explained the MFLs

recommendation for withdrawal impacts be limited to an eight percent reduction at the Chassahowitzka and a five percent reduction at Homosassa. No recovery or additional prevention strategies are needed at this time.

Mr. Basso explained the MFLs for these two river systems remain above the MFL due to the geology and the relatively low rate of groundwater extraction from the two spring sheds. Also, these springs have some of the highest recharge rates per year.

Mr. Alderson asked whether any of these water bodies are impaired. Dr. Herrick explained there are different water body identifications within these systems, however, the MFL is not required to remediate the impairment and is a separate issue from MFL.

Mr. Crowell asked whether global warming and rising sea levels will cause sea water encroachment with the District's reduction in flow. Dr. Herrick explained staff look at sea level rise to project reevaluation but current MFL is based on current data.

Mr. Alderson asked whether reclaimed water in these systems is advanced wastewater treatment (AWT) or secondary and suggested AWT would be beneficial in recharge. Mr. Smith explained there is a focus in this region on AWT.

Mr. Carlton asked what eight percent on the Chassahowitzka equates to on the Rainbow River and staff explained the Chassahowitzka is tidal throughout so they cannot compare. Mr. Carlton asked whether the eight percent has a negative effect on the river and Dr. Herrick replied in the negative.

8. Migration to the Environmental Data Portal

Mr. Granville Kinsman, Hydrologic Data manager, provided a brief overview of the migration of the District's database as well as new way of accessing the data. The current corporate database known as Water Management Information System (WMIS) is transitioning to the Environmental Data Portal (EDP). Improvements from the current software include a map interface, viewing tabular data simultaneously with a graph, data will be updated in near real-time, it will support downloading data in various data formats, data scripts can be used to pull data into models without going through the interface, etc. Additional information, updates, and training will be available.

Mr. Granville explained hydrologic updates are available monthly and links will be provided to the committee.

Members asked if the other water management districts are looking to mirror this district's data software. Mr. Granville explained there are two water managements districts currently using Hydstra, one of the management software pieces we migrated from, and they are closely monitoring our migration to our new software products.

9. Governing Board Liaison Comments

None

10. Open Discussion and Development of agenda topics for the Environmental Advisory Committee meeting in the District's Tampa Office on January 14, 2020 at 10:00am.

Members requested access to current and past presentation files.

11. Announcements and Other Business

None.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.