

Martin County Projects Update



Rivers Coalition Meeting

March 30, 2016 at 6 p.m., City of Stuart Commission Chambers

(Update provided by Deborah Drum, Manager, Ecosystem Restoration & Management Division)

LAKE OKEECHOBEE DISCHARGES OF 2016

- As of midnight last night, Lake Okeechobee was at 15.06 feet. The real time readings this afternoon had it at 15.16 feet, so the recent rainfall has already affected the Lake level by an increase of .10 foot
- The County continues to monitor the discharges and remains in constant communication with the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District on operations to move as much water as possible south, and to communicate the environmental conditions of the St. Lucie to be taken into consideration as they make operational decisions. To that end, if anyone in the community has observations of fish kills, lesioned fish, or other notable environmental conditions, please contact Martin County so that we may notify and coordinate with the appropriate state and federal agencies.
- Martin and St. Lucie counties are in discussion to investigate the potential for an economic study to determine the financial impact of Lake Okeechobee discharges on tourism businesses in our communities. Under consideration is using the "Lost Summer of 2013," and potentially the 1998 El Niño event as baselines, and compare impact information from 2016.

PROJECTS

- Martin County completed the Manatee Pocket SW Prong Baffle Box project in February 2016. The baffle box was installed on 45th Street just south of Cove Road and it treats an approximately 200 acre upstream watershed that extends to the Publix's shopping center on the corner of US 1 and Cove Rd. The project will assist the County in meeting their TMDL / BMAP requirements by removing annually an estimated 209 lbs of TN and 38 lbs of TP. Total cost of the project was \$232,500.
- The MC Golf Course Water Quality Project consisted of installing three weirs on existing pipes, the repair of a fourth weir and the excavation / de-silting of 1800 feet of an outfall ditch. The project was completed in March 2016 at a cost of \$138,000. The project takes advantage of water quality benefits within the existing lakes on the golf course and will also assist the County in meeting their TMDL / BMAP requirements by providing in excess of 100 ac-ft of water quality treatment, and reduce annually TN and TP by an estimated 548 lbs and 205 lbs, respectively.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

STATE

The 2016 legislative session achieved many of the County's goals. The session saw a significant increase in funding for Everglades restoration, funding for critical water projects in Martin County and the passage of Legacy Florida that sets up a continued funding source for Everglades construction. The legislature also responded to concerns on other policy initiatives that would have otherwise had negative implications for the County's land management and environmental restoration efforts. We continue to advocate for needed land for storage, and Martin County was among the first to pass a resolution supporting \$300 million in funding for Florida Forever. Martin County supports a multitude of solutions vital to improve our waterways. We thank every member of the Martin County legislative Delegation for their tremendous support throughout the session.

APPROPRIATIONS

- \$60 million for the C-44 Reservoir (a significant increase over the last 3 years).
- Funding for the Caulkins Water Farm (approximately \$7 million) which will hold approximately 30 billion gallons of water.
- Additional funding for water quality projects north of Lake O. from the \$56 + million allocated to the Northern Everglades.
- \$700,000 to complete the All American Ditch Stormwater Quality Retrofit which will create a stormwater treatment area in one of the most polluted tributaries of the St. Lucie Estuary.
- Operations and maintenance funding for hybrid wetland/chemical treatment systems including those at Bessey Creek and Danforth Creek .
- DEP funding for the Indian River Lagoon Council and National Estuary Program, chaired by Martin County Commissioner Ed Fielding.
- **Martin County is directly and indirectly the largest recipient of environmental funding in the State.**

SB 1168 – “LEGACY FLORIDA”

- This bill creates a recurring funding source for Everglades restoration (approximately \$200 million or 25% of Land Acquisition Trust Fund for 20 years). It was the final bill to pass through the Senate on the final evening of the session. The bill also includes language that gives preference to those projects that reduce harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee. This bill now awaits the Governor’s signature.

HB 1075/SB 1290

- We were successful in pushing an amendment that deemphasized surplus of conservation land if a local managing entity doesn’t meet established goals.
- We were also successful in retaining the language in the definition of Water Resource Development Project that prohibits the use of these funds for “the construction treatment, transmission and distribution facilities”. This change would have been a significant policy shift in how the state allocates limited Amendment 1 monies.

HB 851/SB 658

- We coordinated with environmental groups working against this bill on septage. The bill was withdrawn.

FEDERAL

- Martin County continues to communicate and coordinate with the Martin County federal legislative delegation on our priorities for Everglades restoration progress.
- Martin County continues to work for maximum funding at the federal level for the C-44 component for IRLS. The C-44 will give relief from the massive St. Lucie Basin discharges that help to cripple the estuary. **In President Obama’s proposed budget, nearly 80 percent of the entire Everglades funding commitment of \$75 million is dedicated to the C-44 project (\$59 million).** The contract for the C-44 reservoir is the second largest awarded contract in Corps history.
- Martin County also supports the renovation of the Herbert Hoover Dike because it is essential to protect lives and property.
- Martin County continues to work to lead efforts throughout the region in improving the health of our waterways through organizations such as the County Coalition and Indian River Lagoon Council. When NEP was most recently reauthorized, it included language put forth by Congressman Murphy and Congressman Posey to prioritize funding for greatest-needs estuary systems such as the Indian River Lagoon, which we supported.
- Martin County is among the few local entities that have stepped in to financially assist a CERP project. So far some \$75 million has been raised by the citizens of Martin County to assist in purchasing land for IRLS, including the land being used for the C-44 component of the IRLS project.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

- Martin County adopted a resolution asking the Governor to declare an emergency on February 9, which included a request that the legislature to use Amendment One funds for design of a 507,000 acre-foot storage reservoir south of the Lake.
- On February 11, 2016, Governor Rick Scott requested that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers take immediate action to relieve flooding of the Everglades Water Conservation Areas and the releases of water from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.
- On February 26, 2016, Governor Rick Scott signed Executive Order 16-59, which declares a state of emergency in Lee, Martin and St. Lucie counties.
- On March 17, 2016, Governor Rick Scott activated Florida's Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program for more than 100 businesses affected by the federal government's water releases from Lake Okeechobee. Earlier this month, Governor Scott directed the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to activate a business emergency operations center to survey businesses damaged by the water releases in Lee, Martin and St. Lucie counties. After receiving survey results, DEO has opened the application period for loans to eligible small businesses from March 16 to April 30, 2016. A workshop for affected businesses was held earlier today.
- The South Florida Water Management District took the following actions:
 - 2.7 billion gallons of water moved into the A-1 Flow Equalization Basin from Lake Okeechobee. To reduce harm to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Lake Okeechobee releases, the District began emergency operations in early March to send lake water directly into this new reservoir.
 - Water managers began emergency operations on February 15, 2016, to move water from wetlands in Miami-Dade and Broward counties to Everglades National Park. The record rainfall left water levels too high for Everglades wildlife in WCA-3.
 - By raising the L-29 canal level, the South Florida Water Management District has been able to move approximately 31.5 billion gallons of clean water into the northern portions of Everglades National Park, as of midnight on March 27, 2016.