

## Martin County Projects Update



### Rivers Coalition Meeting

**May 26, 2016 at 11 a.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 14.38 feet. The real time readings this morning had it at 14.44 feet. Last week, heavy rainfall increased the Lake level by .7 feet in one week. Inflows from the Kissimmee Basin have been over 10,000 cfs in the past couple days, and outflows from the Lake have been under 2000 cfs, so it is anticipated that the Lake will continue to rise under these conditions.
- Higher temperatures in the estuary, lower salinities, and higher nutrients associated with basin runoff, Lake releases, and muck sediments create an environment that is conducive to blue-green algae blooms. Since there have already been observations of blue-green algae in the Lake and estuary, this is an issue of paramount concern. Any observations of blue-green algae bloom should be reported to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection at 772-467-5572.
- 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.
- The wet season begins on June 1st, however, as this past "dry" season demonstrated, we never really know what kind of rainfall we will be facing. There are indications of a La Niña system developing, which could result in more active tropical system development. All of these conditions are shaping up to be a very challenging water management scenario which could look a lot like the summer of 2013.
- Martin County staff will continue to coordinate on a frequent basis with the ACOE on operational decision making, and provide input to their process to help protect the St. Lucie River and Estuary, and the Indian River Lagoon.

#### PROJECTS

- All American Ditch Water Quality Improvement Project
  - Bid opening held on Wednesday, May 18, 2016 with two bidders. We have an apparent Low Bidder and we are currently reviewing the bids and will issue a Notice of Award within two weeks if bid is found acceptable.
  - County is working with FDEP to get all grant contracts in place for the project.
  - Construction is anticipated to start in July 2016 and continue for 15 months.
- Martin County's Ecosystem Division is working on new storm drain labels that have an English and Spanish translation of Dump No Waste/Drains to River. These will be installed at storm drains throughout the County.
- Martin County's Fertilizer Ordinance summer-time ban on application of fertilizer is in effect from June 1-September 30. The ordinance applies to anyone---personal or professional---landscaping in unincorporated Martin County. The fertilizer ordinance includes exemptions for agriculture, golf courses, athletic fields, and for lawns that soil tests have indicated a need for phosphorus. The ordinance also prohibits vegetative material, including grass clippings, from being washed, swept, or blown into stormwater drains.
- The Martin County Tourism Development Council has approved an allocation of funds to be used on the economic impact of the freshwater discharges. It is our hope that a deep analysis will give us a better measurement of the discharges. Tourism and the environment are interconnected here in Martin County. These figures will be incorporated into the Tourism Development Council's legislative priorities documents moving forward. It is our hope that the more we can measure and track the potential economic impact, the better we can help our stakeholders and legislators understand the widespread effects. The study will benchmark the potential loss of market share due to the environmental issues.

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

- The Martin County Board of County Commissioners embarked on an advocacy trip to Washington DC from May 17-19.
- Commissioner Heard met with staff from Representative Curt Clawson's office to thank him for his recognition and advocacy for acquiring additional storage around Lake Okeechobee, and accelerating the renovation of the Herbert Hoover Dike.
- Martin County Commissioners met with Secretary Jo Ellen Darcy's office (Army Civil Works) to thank the Army Corps of Engineers and Ms. Darcy for the significant progress made and continued funding on the Indian River Lagoon-South Project, specifically the C-44 component.
- The President's Council on Environmental Quality staffers thanked Martin County for our advocacy of Everglades restoration and our unified voice as members of the 16 County Coalition to prioritize our projects, which has helped us maintain support for the IRL-S project.
- Martin County Commissioners also met with our delegation (Representative Murphy, Senator Nelson, and Senator Rubio) to advocate for continued funding and the completion of the IRL-S project.
- Last week the U.S. Senate approved funding for more than \$100 million for Everglades restoration along with additional recovery money for the IRL (90-8 vote), which includes \$75 million for CERP, \$59.5 million for IRL (\$53.3 million towards the C-44).

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- The County Coalition will hold their quarterly meeting on June 3 at 10 am in Okeechobee in the Judge William L. Hendry Courtroom at 304 NW 2nd Street. Topics include updates from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District on wet season readiness and project updates. Martin County participates in this coalition of 9 counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee.
- The next Water Ambassadors Program is scheduled for June 9, 2016 at UF IFAS Extension Office. Call 772-288-5654 to register.