

Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan

Technical Meeting Summary

Wednesday, July 1, 2015

9:00 AM – 10:53 AM

Williamson Conference and Education Center
2229 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34972

Attendees

Nagel Altrui, City of Kissimmee	Andrew James, SWET
Beth Alvi, FDEP	Kerry Kates, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
Rick Baird, Osceola County	Mitch Katz, Orange County
Missie Barletto, Aim Engineering and Surveying	Greg Kennedy, FDEP
Sarah Beedle, City of Kissimmee	William C. Kennedy, FDEP
Lesley Bertolotti, SFWMD	Kimberly Lawrence, Osceola County
Vanessa Bessey, FDACS	Jesse Markle, SFWMD
Del Bottcher, SWET	Libby Maxwell, Florida Legislature
Patricia Burke, SFWMD	Linda McCarthy, Lykes Brothers Inc.
Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting	Sherry McCorkle, Congressman Tom Rooney
Marisa Carrozzo, Conservancy of Southwest Florida (by telephone)	Christopher Morris, Deseret Cattle & Citrus
Audra Corson, OSWCD	Melodie Naja, Everglades Foundation (by telephone)
Sara Davis, FDEP	Julie Neurohr, FDEP
Kenneth Dodge, Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A.	Steffany Olson, SFWMD
Rachel Espinosa, E-Sciences (by telephone)	Kelly O’Nan, Hendry County
Clell Ford, Highlands County	Michelle Piccolo, FDEP
Tony Federico, Federico, Lamb & Associates (by telephone)	Irene Quincey, Pavese Law Firm
Stanley Ganthier, FDEP	Kenneth Rau, Higgins Engineering
David Glassner, FDEP	Jack Richie, Highlands Co. Lakes Association
Paul Gray, Audubon Society	H.M. Ridgely, Evans Properties
Wayne Groves, City of Kissimmee	Gary Ritter, SFWMD – Okeechobee Office
Katie Hallas, FDACS	Jeff Sumner, SFWMD
Noah Handley, Lykes Brothers Inc.	Ramon Torres, FGCU
John Hayford, Okeechobee Utility Authority	Paul Whalen, TAC Environmental
Janet Hearn, ATM	Bonnie Wolff Pelaez, FDACS
Jeff Holland, RCID	Scott Wuitschick, AMEC Foster Wheeler
Diane Hughes, Martin County	

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Tiffany Busby welcomed everyone to the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) meeting, and thanked the state college for the use of their meeting facilities. Everyone introduced themselves and who they represented. Tiffany stated that there were several action items from the last meeting on November 18th and these agenda items are following up on those. Tiffany noted that Del Bottcher would provide an update on the water quality modeling efforts; Katie Hallas would present some information on the status of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) best management practice (BMP) enrollment, Implementation Assurance program, and new BMP manual development; and Sara Davis, the basin coordinator for this BMAP, would provide some

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information about the BMAP monitoring network and the Florida storage and retrieval (STORET) database and provide some selected project updates.

Status of Watershed Assessment Model (WAM) Updates

Del Bottcher provided a PowerPoint presentation to accompany his remarks. Del noted that he is being assisted in these modeling efforts by his colleague Andrew James as well as by Xueqing Gao at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for assistance on the load estimation tool (LET). Del provided an outline of his remarks and stated that the current updates underway for WAM are due for completion in July 2015 and new WAM activities are scheduled to begin in July 2015.

Del reviewed the history of WAM development and stated that its origin was a geographic information system (GIS)-based model started in 1984. The model was first in an ArcView format and was later moved to the ArcMap format. In 2009, a rigorous peer review of the model was coordinated by the University of Florida (UF). The two main recommendations from this peer review were the following: First, to develop a more robust documentation of the model; and second, to perform a sensitivity analysis of the results for the Lake Okeechobee model. Del noted that revised documentation has been completed and the recommended sensitivity analysis is currently underway.

Del informed everyone that the WAM was developed specifically for Florida conditions. The model simulates surface and ground water flow, total suspended solids (TSS), and nutrient loads. It can also model dissolved oxygen (DO) and chlorophyll-a when combined with the water quality analysis simulation program (WASP) model. The model is GIS-based which allows for the use of spatial data. It simulates field scale land sources and handles complex flow networks. It also has a relatively user-friendly interface.

Del showed a map of Florida that highlighted the watersheds simulated by the WAM. Del added that the model has been mostly used by the water management districts, especially the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

Del reviewed a conceptual model of WAM and the various processes handled in the model. It is a grid-based system that uses a detailed source cell model. The cells are routed through a stream network system. The model handles ground water and allows ground water flows to move in different directions than the surface water flows. The model works in areas with both urban and agricultural land uses. Del added that the beauty of a GIS-based model is that it can make good use of spatial data such as septic tank locations and utility infrastructure.

Del reviewed the background of modeling activities in the Lake Okeechobee watershed. Originally, the 2004 through 2006 land use was used along with rainfall from the 1998 through 2007 period. The rainfall period was later extended from 1975 to 2010. They also added the Fisheating Creek area to the model for the purpose of hotspot identification. This information was used to plan regional treatment projects and the most cost-effective locations for BMPs. They also used the model to simulate pre-development conditions for the Fisheating Creek basin. In 2014, DEP used the WAM model results in the BMAP. In 2015, Del is updating the data for the Okeechobee basins through 2013.

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Del noted that the primary focus of the modeling has been phosphorus loads but WAM also models nitrogen. Nitrogen was always included in the model but was never calibrated. With the new updates to WAM, nitrogen will now be calibrated.

Next, Del reviewed the simulated watersheds in the 2008 and 2012 update. The WAM includes 14 model domains. He also showed basin maps of the rainfall stations and the stream and topography spatial datasets that were used in the WAM. Del added that the stream network included a portion of the Caloosahatchee River and a portion of the St. Lucie River. Del also showed graphics of the soils data and the ground water flow data. Del stated that some ground water actually flows out of the basin, so there could be some ground water losses, depending on where you are in the basin.

Graphs were shown of the modeled and actual total phosphorus (TP) concentrations and flows at station S65A located below Lake Kissimmee as well as at station S65E located just before the Kissimmee River enters Lake Okeechobee. Del noted that in 2012 there was some construction occurring that may have affected the data. He commented that close to the lake, the model does a good job at capturing the flows and has reasonable accuracy at predicting TP loads during the 1997 through the 2009 time period.

Del explained how legacy phosphorus was handled in WAM through the use of land use definition files that contain an initial soil phosphorus content parameter; this parameter represents the accumulative past inputs of phosphorus to the soils.

The 2012 updates of WAM were described. The simulation period was extended from the original time period of 1999 through 2007 to 1975 through 2010. No other changes were made and the results showed some phosphorus build up from 1975 through 1998, but otherwise very similar results.

Del described the development of the DEP Lake Okeechobee BMAP LET. DEP developed attenuation factors from source cells to the watershed outlet based on the WAM estimates. The WAM unit loads and attenuation factors were then applied to the updated 2009 land uses. They also used a fraction of the outlet loads that were attributed to specific land uses. The tool is capable of being used for future load allocations by watershed and land use. It has also been used to test the impact of existing projects; and to determine the cost effectiveness of abatement technologies by land use. Del added that the attenuation was based on the 2004 and 2006 land use data but that 2009 land use data are now available. Therefore, the plan is to adjust the load estimated based on the more recent land use information.

The current WAM activities were reviewed next. The completion date for these current activities is July 2015. Under these current efforts the WAM simulation period has been further expanded to a 35-year period from 1978 through 2013 (with an additional three years of spin up time prior to 1978). Updated hydrography, land use, basin boundaries and major restoration projects have been added to the model platform. Additional calibration will be needed due to the many changes to the model. They have developed a plan of work for the uncertainty and sensitivity analyses. They have also developed the plan of work for expanding the WAM to include the three southern Okeechobee Sub-watersheds.

Del then showed side-by-side maps of the basin boundaries and the topography of the Lake Okeechobee Basin. Then he displayed side-by-side maps of the hydrography and land uses in the basin. These were major items that were updated during the current WAM activities. Del added that additional calibration

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will be needed because of the magnitude of the WAM changes. The calibration will be performed in the upcoming year, and therefore the current loading results are preliminary.

Del showed a table of the land use types in the six northern sub-watersheds and the percent differences between the 2004 and 2009 data. He added that there have been some re-definitions of land uses, so the modelers are working out how to include those changes in the model.

Next, Del showed side-by-side maps of the soils and the rain stations. Del stated that the soils information is from the current SSURGO dataset, which is the soil survey geographic database developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Additionally, the current work on WAM included adding some major projects that were online during the simulation period. Additional projects may be added as they come online. The model can be used to examine existing conditions and for scenario testing.

The uncertainty and sensitivity analysis work plan was reviewed. The goal of this effort is to quantify the overall uncertainty in the WAM. The uncertainty is based on the accuracy of the data used in the model plus the accuracy of the model itself. The sensitivity analysis tests the affects that individual parameters have on model outputs. This can be complex, since you change one parameter, it often affects the other parameters too. Del outlined the workplan related to the uncertainty and sensitivity analyses. He stated that he will select a subset of the sub-watersheds and perform the analyses on the subset; the analyses will not be run on all six sub-watersheds. Based on the results of the uncertainty and sensitivity analyses, the model will be recalibrated and the results utilized.

In the next slide, Del reviewed the new activities that are scheduled to begin in July 2015. They plan to work with the FDACS on updating the land use data for the northern sub-watersheds. They will look at some of the BMPs on improved pastures. The original estimate of the number of cattle per acre was too high and now they will make those more accurate. They will perform a complete recalibration and provide goodness-of-fit analyses on the calibrated basins. They will also setup and run the model for the three southern sub-watersheds. The workplan also includes an update to the DEP LET to include all nine sub-watersheds, as well as additional spatial resolution within the sub-watersheds. Del noted that the current BMAP did not fully address the three southern sub-watersheds. In some parts of the area south of the lake, there is not a definite hydrologic boundary and how water flows is dependent on water management measures. Del showed a map of the three southern sub-watersheds.

Del added that they will update the DEP LET including expanding it to the entire BMAP area including the three southern sub-watersheds. They will update the source cell unit loads to include the spatial influences of soils, rain, irrigation sources and wastewater treatment areas. They also plan to update the cell attenuation factors. They will go to a cell-level basis so the attenuation will be more spatially robust.

Mitch Katz asked to see the graphic that shows the phosphorus concentrations upstream near Lake Kissimmee and those near Lake Okeechobee and that the scales for the graphs are important. Del responded that there is more phosphorus coming out than is going in. Linda McCarthy asked how the average runoff was estimated and whether the details on the specific stormwater systems in place were included in the estimates. Del replied that the model doesn't include a lot of specific spatial data on

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what treatment facilities are on the ground. The model uses average retention values to estimate runoff. WAM is set up so that an actual spatial coverage of treatment systems could be applied, but the data layers are not currently available. Del added that they ran into this issue in the early runs doing the sensitivity analysis. Right now, to the best of his knowledge that dataset is not being developed. Linda followed up by asking if some treated areas may still show up as hot spots and Del responded that they could.

Kimberly Lawrence asked whether GIS datasets of BMPs available from some counties could be used in the model. Del responded that if the data were provided, they could redefine that. In the model, they don't input BMPs directly but they could use that information to update the land use information in the model.

Gary Ritter asked if the WAM has the ability to identify the best, most cost-effective project locations. Del responded that it does have that ability. The best example of that is how the WAM was used in the Fisheating Creek basin to help place projects and BMPs. The model was used to simulate what the benefits would be from various projects. The results showed that you get a bigger bang for your buck when you treat stream reaches with high concentrations.

Paul Gray said that he was curious about the difference between the legacy loads versus new sources coming into the basin. Paul asked if the WAM can differentiate what loads are new and what is already there in the lake. Del answered that the WAM is able to do that. Once the phosphorus is there, the model doesn't treat it differently because of the source. The model looks at the total loads but the model can show where the loads were generated. Del added that legacy phosphorus has a long-term impact because of the interaction between water, soils and the phosphorus. The model keeps track of the legacy phosphorus but it doesn't output that information as a number.

Paul asked when the land is fertilized, is that more mobile than the legacy phosphorus. Del replied that when fertilizer is applied to the land surface, we can see water quality spikes from fertilizer loads. The legacy sources tend to be more constant. Del added that phosphorus in general is not very mobile and in soils it tends to get tied up. Usually, only about one one-thousandth of the phosphorus in soils is expected to move out of the soil and into water.

Mitch asked if the model can be predictive such as to test the benefits of a sanitary sewer system. Del responded that it can be used that way.

Melodie Naja asked if the hot spot locations may change with the model changes. Del responded that, yes, some areas will change. Melodie asked how the hot spots are ground-truthed. Del replied that they look at the water quality data for that area. They may also have to go out to verify the hot spots with monitoring, but the first place is to look at the water quality data and see if they support the hot spot identification.

FDACS Updates

Katie Hallas used a PowerPoint presentation to support her remarks. Katie provided a presentation overview and explained that she would cover topics such as BMP enrollment, Implementation

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Assurance, and BMP manual development. She added that FDACS' work on agricultural land use updates have focused on the Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough (TC/NS) area.

Katie showed a map of the enrollment in the Lake Okeechobee watershed as of March 31, 2015. Katie added that FDACS updates their BMP enrollment every quarter, so a new enrollment map will be available very soon. Katie added that there were significant amounts of enrollment increases in the recent quarter that ended June 30, 2015. Katie stated that about 57% of the enrollment as of March 2015 is in cow/calf operations; about 27% are enrolled in row crop BMPs; and 11% are enrolled in citrus operations. Katie noted that FDACS' digital recordkeeping started in 2002, so some of their enrollment occurred before the files were electronically recorded.

Katie stated that the BMAP included some enrollment numbers through September 2014 and since then, over 15,000 additional acres have been enrolled. A lot of those areas represent re-enrollments of citrus under the revised manual. Since September 30, 2014, 141 notices of intent (NOIs) have been completed in a variety of commodities.

Katie commented that Bill Bartnick with FDACS has been working on BMP manual updates including the 2015 Vegetable and Agronomic Crop BMP Manual. The dairy manual is expected to be adopted by the end of 2015. Katie explained that the dairy manual applies to those facilities that are not large enough to be under the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) permit program. Katie stated that the final draft of the Dairy BMP Manual is available and the process is awaiting the BMP effectiveness verification letter. There is a Steering Committee that is working on a flowchart that describes how to achieve a nutrient balance.

Next, Katie reviewed the current FDACS Implementation Assurance Program. This program is designed to follow-up with growers after BMP enrollment. Katie noted that FDACS began the IA Program in 2005 in the Suwannee River Basin. The IA Program has two components: site visits and surveys. In 2007, Katie reported that the IA Program expanded to the Lake Okeechobee Basin, especially supporting implementation of the Citrus Manual. Since then, FDACS has supported a statewide IA Program.

Katie outlined the site visits that have been conducted which include 1,251 visits during the years 2007 through 2014. Katie added that these are quite a few site visits given that there are around 8,600 NOIs in place right now. During the IA process, the FDACS staff review the items listed on the NOI and find out what BMPs are working and what parts of the manual may need revision. This is an important part of the process to provide feedback to the BMP development team lead by Bill Bartnick.

The key areas that have been noted for improvement at the farm level are recordkeeping; mobile irrigation laboratory usage; and soil and plant tissue testing. Katie noted that recently the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) changed their phosphorus test and not all producers are aware of that.

Katie showed a pie chart that listed the site visits conducted by commodity. Katie noted that some sites may have been visited more than once. The majority of the site visits were for poultry operations as the program started in the Suwannee Basin where poultry operations are common.

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Then Katie reviewed the surveys that have been conducted each year since 2009. Each year a different manual is surveyed. This year, the Specialty Fruit & Nut Manual is undergoing the survey process. Katie noted that the Citrus Manual is scheduled for the survey in 2016 and the Equine Manual is scheduled for 2018. However, these surveys are on hold while the whole program is being evaluated.

Katie stated that FDACS uses the survey to refine the BMP manual. For the Specialty Fruit & Nut Survey, FDACS reached out to 2,780 NOI holders. So far, the response rates have varied among surveys.

Katie briefly provided an overview of the Specialty Fruit & Nut Survey. The results indicate that five practices are implemented at a rate of 80 percent or higher while 11 practices are implemented at a rate of 40 percent or less. Katie added that just because a practice is not implemented does not mean a grower is out of compliance. Sometimes, a BMP is not applicable to them and it may be appropriate for FDACS to consider revisions or alternate methods.

Katie listed that the main areas of improvement being noted as a result of the Specialty Fruit & Nut Survey are the following: recordkeeping; education on irrigation management tools; and the applicability of rain shutoff devices on irrigation systems. This last item has a less than one percent implementation rate.

Katie stated that the future of the IA Program is being reviewed. Revisions to the IA Program began in late 2014 and a preliminary draft plan was developed in May 2015. Katie noted that FDACS is moving forward with rule-making and there is already an internal work group in place. It is possible that an external work group will also be formed.

Katie then reviewed the agricultural land use update being performed by FDACS. Katie explained that FDACS began ground truthing efforts for the six northern sub-watersheds. The TC/NS area is complete and the Indian Prairie Sub-watershed is in progress. The Fisheating Creek basin should be complete in late 2015. Lake Istokpoga, Upper Kissimmee, and Lower Kissimmee are scheduled to be complete in 2016. Katie noted that agricultural land uses change frequently.

Katie reviewed a map of the original land uses in the TC/NS Sub-watershed. The map shows the 2008-2009 land uses that were used for the LET in the BMAP. Katie noted the land use changes that have been observed since that time include changes in improved pasture acreages, the addition of inactive dairies, a decrease in unimproved pasture, a decrease in urban acres, and a small decrease in upland forest.

Next, Katie reviewed the TC/NS compliance assistance program. A pilot project was done in the Lower St. Johns River basin and this process is similar to the one used there. In the TC/NS sub-watershed, Audra and Bonnie with FDACS prepared a list of unenrolled producers in the sub-watershed using data from the property appraisers' offices. Excluded from the list were parcels less than 50 acres (except nurseries) and non-commercial agricultural parcels. FDACS sent letters to 118 producers the week of May 11th and the response deadline was June 20, 2015. The non-responders information will be provided to DEP in a second letter. So far, 20 additional producers and 10,600 acres have been enrolled through this process.

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Katie then reviewed the dairy cost-share projects. FDACS is working with eight dairies in the Lake Okeechobee watershed to implement cost-share BMPs. These include stormwater collection ponds and barn improvements to move cows off the pasture. The estimated reduction from these efforts is 1.94 metric tons per year of TP at a cost of about \$2.363 million; this has been a good investment.

Rick Baird asked if there was a map of BMP enrollment available, so counties could tell who is enrolled and what BMPs they are signed up for. Katie responded that they don't have a good checklist map. The growers determine what BMPs they enroll for. Gary Ritter stated that it was a good presentation and asked if FDACS has been working with farmers on BMPs since the 1980s if that information can be provided to Del and put into the WAM to help with the estimates on nutrient reductions. Katie responded that the nutrient reductions are based on what are called "the Bottcher numbers" and the BMPs for the various commodities. Katie added that Del also uses FDACS' BMP information.

Mitch responded that if the counties had a list of non-enrolled growers, they could look for hot spots and support solutions and BMP implementation. Katie replied that if anyone knows of operations that are not enrolled or want to be enrolled to contact either Bonnie Wolff Pelaez or Vanessa Bessey with FDACS. Their role is to reach out to the growers in more areas and to enroll them.

Gary added that the same thing can be done for urban BMPs and see where reductions are needed from urban land uses as well.

Kimberly asked if the model will be available for public use. Del replied that the model will be available but there may be some training involved to use it. Also, there could be training workshops provided for those that may be interested. Katie added that FDACS will ensure that the model is available.

Results of Monitoring Network STORET Comparison

Sara Davis also used a PowerPoint along with her oral presentation. First, Sara reviewed the monitoring network listed in the Lake Okeechobee BMAP. She noted that DEP wants to provide good water quality analyses in the future, so they have been reviewing what data are being uploaded to Florida STORET. Sara showed a list of the entities that have monitoring stations included in the BMAP as well as a map of their locations. Sara noted that all data associated with the BMAP network should be uploaded to the Florida STORET database.

Sara displayed some pie charts that show how many stations are managed by each entity and whether any phosphorus data are available in the STORET database since BMAP adoption. Most stations that are managed by cities or counties have not uploaded phosphorus data into STORET in 2015.

Sara added that she wanted to check to see if everyone is set up to upload their data and to provide time to catch up and do this before the data are needed for the annual report. She added that lags to the uploading process are a concern. She also suggested that when you upload data, to let your STORET coordinator know that you have done so. There is a holding area for data that are uploaded and the STORET coordinators will move the data into STORET more quickly if they know there are data in the holding area and that they need to process it.

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Kimberly asked how often the SFWMD uploads their data because at Osceola County, they only upload once per year to make sure their data is ready to be uploaded. Kimberly also asked how many times per year is acceptable. Sara answered that it depends on the entity and the monitoring frequency. For the BMAP, DEP requests that the data uploads correspond with the annual report needs so that the water quality data are available for an annual analysis. Beth added that DEP doesn't want to cause an undue burden for anyone but they do want to use the data for the annual report.

Rick asked if once per year is adequate to upload data. Beth responded that DEP will work closely with the county to see what is important. Leslie added that from a SFWMD standpoint, they have many stations and a 16 county area they monitor, so they upload on a limited basis. Clell Ford stated that the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is not listed as a monitoring entity and they should be so that their stations in Polk and Highlands Counties are included. Sara requested that everyone let her know if there are other entities missing from the list. Trish Burke added that the SFWMD data are available in the District's DB Hydro database, which is fairly easy to use; the data are posted in DB Hydro within 30 days of collection.

Project Status Updates

Sara provided a quick update on some projects in the Lake Okeechobee Basin. She provided a list of projects under development with coordinating agencies including the Lake Istokpoga project. Sara stated they are working on the design and engineering from Phase I. Highlands County (Clell Ford) is in negotiations for getting the construction done. The construction is expected to be complete in late 2016, but is funding dependent.

Buck Island Ranch and Rafter T Ranch are currently in contract negotiations. Sara added that Buck Island Ranch is in the design/permitting phase and the Rafter T Ranch is in the operations and maintenance phase.

The PL-566 funded project known as the Fisheating Creek Structure is in the planning phase. Both FDACS and the NRCS are working on this project. The plan is expected to be complete by the end of the year.

Sara reviewed the State Road (SR) 710 Regional Project. The feasibility study was completed in October 2014. FDOT is working on identifying partners and the schedule is not yet determined.

Melodie asked if there is an update on the Lakeside Ranch Phase 2 project. Sara responded that she did not have updates for all the projects right now but there would be a full update when the annual report is completed.

Sara reviewed the next steps including continuing work on the WAM revisions; continuing work with FDACS on compliance assistance; for everyone to ensure their data is uploaded into STORET; and to analyze the water quality data for the annual report, early next year.

Paul asked when the annual report would be ready. Sara replied that the reporting period will end December 31, 2015, so the report will be prepared in early 2016 followed by a meeting in spring 2016. Kimberly asked what the process is to prepare the annual report. Sara stated that DEP will send out information asking for updates on projects and ask that the update be sent back about one month later.

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Tiffany added that DEP tries to make it as easy as possible to update your project status. She added that meeting the response deadline is important as the report is based on the local information provided. The report is really your report and photos of your projects are welcome. Tiffany added that Sara may contact some of the entities that have completed projects in the past year and ask them to provide a short presentation about their project at the annual meeting.

Questions, Comments, and Discussion

There were no other questions or comments.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 AM.

Action Items

- Monitoring Entities-Work on uploading your monitoring data into Florida STORET prior to the annual report progress next spring.
- Sara-Find out whether SWFWMD can be added to the list of monitoring entities.
- Del/FDACS/DEP—Continue work on the WAM revisions.
- DEP-Continue working with FDACS on compliance assistance.
- Sara-Analyze the water quality data for the annual report, early next year.