

Upper Ocklawaha Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP)

Annual Meeting Notes

June 21, 2023, via GoToWebinar

9:30 am – 11:33 am

Attendees

Richmond Abellera, DEP	Trevor Knight, Marion County
Chas Antinone Jr, Citizen	Kevin Koehler, CFX
Suzanne Archer, SJRWMD	Joy Kokjohn, SJRWMD
Erica Atkinson, Apopka	Heather Lindell, Orange County
Lisa Bally, RES	Jason Maron, Apopka
Michael Barr, DEP	Erich Marzolf, SJRWMD
Evelyn Becerra, DEP	Lori McCloud, SJRWMD
Connie Becker, DEP	Matt McKinney, Duke Energy
Tonya Bennett, DEP	Susan McNamee, Hydro International
Julie Bortles, Orange County	Jennifer Mitchell, SJRWMD
Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting	Jessica Mostyn, DEP
Lauren Campbell, DEP	Daryl Myers, Hanson Professional Services
Jennifer Cappelletti, FDOT	Edward Northey, FDOT
Cathie Catasus, Lake County	Kevin O'Donnell, DEP
Susan Davis, SJRWMD	Michael Olka, Lake County
Jian Di, SJRWMD	Joshua Papacek, SJRWMD
Dean Dobberfuhl, SJRWMD	Amanda Peck, DEP
Sheryl Ervin, Infiltrator Water	Nicolas Pisarello, ATM
Yesenia Escribano, FDACS	Kellie Ralston, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust
Jessica Fetgatter, DEP	Raulie Raulerson, FDACS
David Frady, DEP	Rhonda Roff, Citizen
Melissa Fuller, Eustis	Fred Schneider, Lake County
Jim Gross, Florida Defenders	Jodi Slater, SJRWMD
Samuel Hankinson, DEP	Lucy Sonnenberg, JU
Janet Hearn, ATM	David Taylor, DEP
Cori Hermle, FDACS	Jennifer Thera, FDACS
Moir Homann, DEP	Unknown, Florida Channel
Mitchell Katz, Orange County	Christine Vrabic, Marion County
Chandler Keenan, DEP	Curt Williams, Florida Farm Bureau
Tracy Kelley, Wildwood	Jessica Wineberg, Orange County

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUMMARY

Upper Ocklawaha BMAP Updates—Jessica Fetgatter

Q: What is the status of establishing a free-flowing Ocklawaha River by implementing the partial restoration alternative?

A: Lauren Campbell noted that permission to remove the Rodman Dam would need to be permitted and coordinated by folks outside of our division (DEAR). Currently, no decision has been made to allow its removal, but those decisions are not up to DEAR. A citizen's group led by Casey Fitzgerald is currently pursuing that effort and they have been meeting with decision-makers in a renewed effort to get the Rodman Dam removed.

Q: Is nitrogen monitored or calculated?

A: Jessica Fetgatter responded that for estimates of project reductions, some projects are monitored, and the data are used to estimate the reductions. For most projects, the nitrogen reductions are estimated based on studies on best management practice efficiencies. Lauren added that nitrogen is currently being sampled at sites throughout the BMAP. You can pull water quality data, such as nitrogen, from the Watershed Information Network (WIN) database. You can also find information on stations being sampled in this basin in the story maps.

Q: When will local Florida Department of Health offices implement the new onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (OSTDS) requirements under House Bill 1379? What about OSTDS repair permits?

A: David Frady responded that the law becomes effective on July 1, 2023. DEP is working on the changes to implement that law, starting on July 1. For most of the BMAPs, the changes affects the requirements for new OSTDS. For the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) area, which is outside this BMAP area, there are some additional requirements regarding existing OSTDS. Outstanding Florida Springs (OFS) BMAP areas also have additional requirements.

St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Update—Jian Di

Q: How do we control atmospheric deposition of phosphorus?

A: Jian Di answered that is a good question, now that atmospheric loading is a bigger part of the loading after the other restoration efforts. We need to think about approaches because the atmospheric sources are uncontrollable from a water program standpoint.

Q: How do you explain the constant total phosphorus and increased chlorophyll-a concentrations during drought years?

A: Jian Di responded during drought years, there is a concentration effect. The phosphorus levels are constant and sometimes the levels are increased. This is a reflection of the condition that the lake is total phosphorus (TP)-limited for algal production. So, the TP levels stay the same because the excess available TP is assimilated by the algae and is represented in the chlorophyll-a concentrations. There are some variations in the relationships between TP and chlorophyll-a.

Q: Can we cut off the Apopka-Beauclair Canal, or run it through a treatment (wetland or other)?

A: Jian Di confirmed that we have the Lake County Water Authority's Nutrient Reduction Facility (NuRF) does just that—captures water from Lake Apopka in the Apopka-Beauclair Canal, removes phosphorus offline, and then returns the treated water back to the canal. If we can increase the capacity, we can treat more water there. There are volume limitations for the treatment, but it does reduce loading before it reaches Lake Beauclair.

Q: FYI-Orange County-Environmental Protection Division (EPD) completed a hydrologic/nutrient study for Lake Carlton in 2018 and found that 13% of the total phosphorus load in Lake Carlton comes from internal recycling (55 pounds per year [lbs/yr]). Dredging is cost-prohibitive on this 300-acre lake. The use of buffered alum on this state submerged lands (SSL) lake is prohibited by the state. Any suggestions as to how Orange County should address the total phosphorus load from internal recycling on Lake Carlton? Follow up comment Mitchell Katz: The 2018 Orange County report on Lake Carlton here:

<https://orange.wateratlas.usf.edu/waterbodies/lakes/7840/>. Scroll to the bottom of the page and under "Water Quality Links" is a download link for the *Lake Carlton Hydrologic/Nutrient Loading Study*.

A: Jian Di responded that internal loading could be decreased by more aquatic vegetation and shoreline planting. Activities that reduce sediment resuspension in the lake should be helpful. Shad (fish) harvesting could be an option that the St. Johns River Water Management District has used in other lakes for removing nutrients and reducing sediment resuspension, but Jian was unclear if shad play a big role within Lake Carlton, in particular. Jian was interested in reviewing the Orange County report on Lake Carlton.

Q: Why are agricultural stormwater sources listed separately for Lake Griffin (Emeralda Marsh) but not for other lakes? It seems that agricultural sources are considered "stormwater runoff" for all the other lakes. Follow up question: I would like to request the separated agricultural versus stormwater quality results from Mr. Di.

A: Jian Di explained that in the past, we have reported the estimated loads with more detailed categories that included natural runoff, urban runoff, and agricultural runoff. This year, we simplified the groups and consolidated the stormwater loads into one group. However, the SJRWMD has information on agricultural runoff separated from urban and natural stormwater runoff that I can share.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Update—Cori Hermle/DEP Agriculture Enforcement Update—David Frady

Q: If vegetation has such a great assimilative capacity, why not allow more vegetation to grow--even hydrilla--and perform *mechanical* removal rather than spraying vegetation?

A: Cori Hermle noted that the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) tries to encourage native aquatic vegetation in the lakes. Hydrilla is not a native species and is aggressive in taking over habitat from native species.

Q: Do the FDACS' best management practices (BMP) guidelines include any fertilization setbacks from waterbodies? Or setbacks from rim ditches connecting to waterbodies? Rim ditches are ditches on the edge of a field that drain the field, so it doesn't flood.

A: Cori Hermle answered that FDACS does review the property and locate waterbodies when the property is enrolled. There is a minimum buffer in which they are not allowed to fertilize. They also recommend vegetated buffers to abate any runoff from the field. For cow/calf operations, they have cost share funding available for exclusion fencing around wetlands and waterbodies to prevent the stirring up of muck and to prevent the cattle defecating in the water. For rim ditches, the same rules apply to rim ditches as other waterbodies, and they have exclusion zones. You cannot fertilize right next to a ditch because when there is a rain event, that gets flushed out. There is a buffer distance and a recommended vegetated buffer. All the FDACS BMP manuals are available on the FDACS website; at the back of the manual are details on buffer zones and exclusion zones.

Q: If this governor is so committed to water quality, and saying we have budget surplus, why is he and/or Senator Simpson allowing such staff shortages at FDACS?

A: Cori Hermle responded that is a higher-level political question than one for FDACS staff. Everyone is welcome to reach out and connect to their local legislative delegation. The legislative delegation meetings happen in the fall prior to the legislative session and that is an opportunity to go and ask about staff funding for FDACS or the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Q: I have heard from agricultural operators, and I know from our own cow/calf operation, that the University of Florida-Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF-IFAS) fertilizer rate recommendations are not protective of soil or water quality. What can we do?

A: Cori Hermle responded that the original UF-IFAS fertilizer recommendations were to provide an optimal crop without wasting money on fertilizer. Those IFAS recommendations were co-opted into regulations. IFAS is doing research and reviewing their fertilizer recommendations. Some of their research is older, and farming practices have new technologies and have responded to new market conditions. FDACS is helping to fund some of the IFAS fertilizer research; research, however, does take time. In the meantime, FDACS has a cost share program to assist producers with fertilizer techniques that are more efficient. For example, if they were using a broadcast spreader the grower can cost share a narrow bander that only applies fertilizer to the plant. In the last few years since Covid and then the war in Ukraine, fertilizer costs have exploded. Some fertilizer costs have doubled or tripled, so producers have incentive to use more efficient fertilizer practices.

Q: Does the FDACS manual on imperiled species include manatees?

A: Cori Hermle answered that she does not believe manatees are included. The most common species that are active in agricultural operations, such as sandhill cranes and gopher tortoises, are addressed. There are incidental takes allowed after precautions are taken to avoid harm. The

imperiled species manual was developed in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Funding Opportunities—Michael Barr

Comment: Michael Barr noted that for all new federal funding (e.g., the State Revolving Fund and Section 319 Grants), there are federal *Build America*, *Buy America* requirements to follow.

Adjournment

The meeting ended at 11:33 am.