

## **Myakka River Management Coordinating Council Meeting, April 24, 2009**

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### **Biologist's Report**

#### **River Inspection Highlights**

**January 29, 30-** USGS Park gage read 1.5 feet.

- Water levels lower than previous month and portaging was required in many locations including Deep Hole, Downs' Dam, the rapids, and around the "island" about halfway between Down's Dam and Border Rd.
- A total of 104 vultures and 52 Wood Storks were seen near the pavilion at Myakka River State Park eating tilapia and vermiculated sailfin catfish that were dead on the banks due to the cold weather.
- Many shore birds were observed in the Lower Lake due to the low water. A total of 206 Dowitchers, 24 Yellowlegs, 50 Sandpipers, and 43 Stilts were seen on this portion of the river.
- A total of 98 Great Egrets and 127 Wood Storks were observed at the rookery.
- Dead vermiculated sailfin catfish were seen along the banks near Venice Campground.

**February 25, 26** - USGS Park gage read 1.8 feet.

- A total of five white-tailed deer were sighted, four were seen near Lower Lake, and one was seen north of Border Road after Downs' Dam.
- Two dead gators were observed. One was about 5ft and was seen at Lower Lake. The other carcass was mostly decomposed in the water before Downs' Dam and was estimated to be 5-6 ft. Cause of death could not be determined.
- Florida bellflower (*Companulla floridana*) was observed blooming. This species has not been recorded on the river previously.
- A few areas before Downs' Dam where pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*) has formed mats across the river. We were able to paddle over them.
- Due to the low water, several tires were observed near the red house north of Border Road. We were able to remove 3 of them.
- A total of 108 Great Egrets and 143 Wood Storks were observed at the rookery.
- Fifty-one crab traps were counted on this trip which was a great increase from the 20 observed on the lower river last month.

**March 26, 27, and 30** - USGS Park gage read 1.3 feet

- Although the water was lower, portaging was not required around the island due to a high tide and southwest winds
- Two white-tailed deer were sighted at Deep Hole.
- Six hogs were sighted north of Rocky Ford.
- One Swallow-tailed kite was observed south of Downs' Dam.
- Turbid water was observed from Border Rd. Bridge to I-75 Bridge. Water was discharging from the old dolomite mine and 26 dead fish were observed.
- A total of 67 Great Egrets and 170 Wood Storks were observed at the rookery. Both Great Egret and Wood Stork babies were observed.
- There were 4 new blockages north of Downs' Dam where pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*) and maidencane (*Panicum hemitomon*) has formed mats across the river. We were able to paddle over them with difficulty.

**Permit Program (62D-15, F.A.C.)**

- 1 boat dock issued
- 1 rock revetment renovation issued

**Incidents (62D-15, F.A.C.)**

There was a substantial fish kill that occurred just south of Border Road Bridge during the week of 3/30/09. Water was discharging into the river from the shallow ditch that is connected to the overflow pit on the old dolomite mine property. Sarasota County, DEP Watershed Management, and FWC have been performing ongoing investigations. Sarasota County took readings throughout the week. The pH was very low at the beginning of the discharge, and DO was low in the area throughout the week. FWC concluded that the fish kill was not due to harmful algae blooms. Bruce Maloney from Sarasota County was able to speak to the property owner who was onsite removing Brazilian pepper. The landowner stated that if the discharge is causing harm to the river he would be willing to fill in or block the ditch leading to the river.

**Future Projects**

- Exotic Plant Removal Days Venice Campground

**Other Activities**

- Venice Comprehensive Plan amendment
- Mailing sent to homeowners on the river south of US 41 regarding mangrove trimming
- Public Involvement-
  - Myakka River Clean Up – Sat. Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>
    - 75 aluminum cans, 48 plastic bottles, 73 glass bottles, 250' fishing line removed from river
  - Ramblers Rest Brazilian Pepper Removal Day
  - Editing Myakka Wild and Scenic River Brochure which will inform the public about the Wild and Scenic River program, activities, and points of interest on the river.