ADOPTED

Myakka River Management Coordinating Council
Lemon Bay Park
570 Bay Park Blvd.
Englewood, Florida 34223

November 8, 2013
9:05 A.M. – 12:20 P.M.

MINUTES

The meeting began at 9:05 A.M. with Jono Miller presiding. This meeting was advertised in the Herald Tribune on Friday, October 25, 2013.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jono Miller - Sierra Club
Mary Jelks - Friends of Myakka
Maran Hilgendorf - CHNEP
Louis Kovach - Homeowner
Mike Chouinard - Homeowner
Elizabeth Wong - City of N. P.
Bill Byle - Charlotte County
Betsy Roberts – Manasota-88
Melissa Dickens - SWFWMD
Greg Blanchard – Manatee Co.
Paul Thomas - FFWCC
Jim Beever - SWFRPC
Becky Ayech - ECOSWF
Ed Flowers - DOF
Robert Bendus – Historical Resource
Corky Pezzati – SCLWV

INTERESTED PARTIES

Jon Robinson – Myakka River State Park
Hugh Dinkler –ESA
Chris Oliver – FPS
Judy Meents – FPS
Ashley Ellis – Sarasota County
Diana Donaghy – Myakka River S.P.
Denise Boyd - FWC
Dee Allen - Mosaic
Jennifer Manis - FPS

BUSINESS MEETING:

- **Call to Order, Roll Call and introductions were made.**
- **There were no public comments.**
- **Additions to the Agenda: NONE**
- **Revision and Approval of the Meeting Minutes from July 26, 2013 Council Meeting was postponed till a quorum was reached.**

NEW BUSINESS:

PRESENTATION:
Denise Boyd, FWC, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), Marine Mammal Program (MMP) - Manatee Use and Mortality in the Myakka River.
(A copy of this presentation will be placed on the MRMCC website)

The MMP is divided into regions with the Charlotte Harbor Field Lab located in Port Charlotte operating in ten counties in southwest Florida. It is also called Southwest Field Lab (SWFL). The primary duties of the SWFL is to coordinate manatee rescue and recover any manatee carcasses for transport to the Marine Mammal Pathobiology Laboratory (MMPL) located on the campus of Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida

A necropsy overseen by veterinarian staff is performed. Animals not in great condition will have a necropsy performed in the field, where they are left to decompose naturally in the environment. The remains are consumed as food by other animals.

The SWFL conducts photo identification of manatees in Salt Creek, a warm-water site right off the Myakka River; education and outreach; participates in research captures; tagging and tracking; and aerial population surveys.

A Manatee Mortality chart for the Myakka River from 2000 to the present was presented. (See slides 8-9 in the presentation online.) There were 50 mortalities on the Myakka River from 2000 to present, averaging 1-6 mortalities per year, with a range in causes of death. Based on the Manatee Mortality chart from 2000 to the present; 6% of manatees were unrecovered, 8% died due to cold stress, 12% from natural causes, 20% from impacts from watercraft, 22% from perinatal causes; and the remaining 32% has undetermined causes of death. The data does not show any trend or geographic relationship related to manatee deaths in the river. No mortalities above I-75 in the Myakka River have been observed to date. This year there was a significant red tide mortality event in SW Florida with over 270 manatee deaths.

Salt Creek is warmed by the waters from Warm Mineral Spring and is an area where manatees aggregate in the winter to stay warm. Monitoring has occurred at this site since the early 1990's. It is the only natural, warm-water source for manatees in SW Florida. Staff use photographs for identification purposes and have identified 50 to 70 manatees that use the site year after year showing these manatees have strong site fidelity. The photo ID monitoring project uses a unique pattern of scars and cuts in the tail (tail mutilations) that have occurred over time. The photographs go into a Mark and Capture Model.

Probes are deployed to monitor temperatures throughout the region including Salt Creek and the Myakka River. The probes log water temperature and salinity every 30 minutes. They are put out in early November and picked up in April. They also monitor manatee presence in the area.

Accessibility into Salt Creek by manatee is tidally influenced, and tagged manatees have been monitored to watch their movement patterns with manatees waiting for high tides to move through the shallow constricted segments.

SWFL rescues manatees that get stranded in low tide. Some manatees have been fitted with a telemetry tag and belt. They are attached with a soft rubber around the peduncle (just ahead of the tail). It floats up behind the manatee and transmits satellite and GPS coordinates as the animal moves. Manatees concentrate their activity around the Big Slough (Myakkahatchee Creek), Myakka River and the Salt Creek areas.

SWFL had assumed they had a good idea of manatee use of the Myakka River. Historically, it was thought that Down's dam would block manatee access up further into the river system. Over the past two summers, SWFL started getting calls from Myakka River State Park biologists and concerned citizens with sightings of manatees up in Myakka River State Park, including the Upper Lake and Weir. These manatees appear to use these areas and leave before the water levels drop too low. It is possible that area above the dam is a good for calving with plenty of vegetation and fresh water.

They have a 24-hour hotline through law-enforcement dispatch: 888-404-3922 (cell phone *FWC or #FWC).

Questions and answers followed.

Approval of the July 26, 2013 Minutes: Becky Ayech moved. Paul Thomas seconded. The Minutes were adopted.

OLD BUSINESS: Becky Ayech followed up on the letters that were sent last time. The letter to Manatee County regarding residual land spreading (ordinance #97-26) was not sent. It will be sent today. Becky asked if there was any feedback regarding the I-75 Bridge. (A FDOT response will be posted on the website.)

NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED:
UPDATES:

Greg Blanchard – Manatee County Update:
The Manatee County Natural Resources Department (MCNR) has been combined with the Parks Department. This step was taken primarily to save money. This will also allow cross promotion between athletic parks and natural preserves, and hopefully assist in generating youth volunteers to help out in Manatee County Parks and Natural Preserves projects. The County has a very good volunteer program.

The Council will continue to be informed regarding natural resources issues as the County continues these departmental changes.

MCNR has applied for a scientific permit to do water sampling in Beker State Park. They plan on using this site for Stream Condition Index (SCI) training for county staff. Beker

(Wingate Creek) State Park is an ideal site for this purpose. It is located in the Upper Myakka Watershed.

MCNR met with Chris Becker at the park for a tour with Park Manager Manny Perez and the water level was still pretty high. Now is the beginning of the period with lower water levels, where a second site visit should occur to finalize their study site locations.

Questions and answers followed.

Elizabeth Wong, Stormwater Manager – North Port Update:
As discussed at the last meeting, North Port is replacing their Water Control Structure (WCS) #101 which separates the Myakkahatchee Creek from the tidal portions of the Myakka River. The structure is just north of U.S. 41. It is very old, deteriorated and corroded. The replacement project is roughly 60-70% done. The contractor has completed the new structure downstream of the old structure, put in sheet pilings and instead of four gates they will have six gates. It has been a very challenging project due to the heaviest rainy season in many years. The project is expected to finish in early 2014. It is half funded by SWFWMD.

North Port has selected a consultant for a new kayak/canoe trail: Kimley-Horn. They will create portages around WCS #101 structure. These portages will allow kayakers and canoeists to go around the structures into the Myakka River. The Blue Ridge and Coco Plum (canals?) by Dallas White Park will also have portages too.

Chris Oliver – Myakka Wild and Scenic River Biologist Update:
A concerned citizen (who could not attend) called and wanted to let the Council know that he thinks the south of U.S. 41 manatee speed zones should be removed in that area. It was noted that the Council does not make that determination.

Four inspections of the Myakka River have been done since the last meeting from Myakka River State Park down to the county line. During the first inspection in July Chris came across a field necropsy of a manatee that was killed by a boat strike. This was the 323rd manatee to die in SW Florida this year.

In all of the trips many tarpon were observed including near the Pavilion area, above S.R. 72 in the Lower Lake area, above the dam. Dave Blewett's research on snook abundance was discussed. Stomach content analysis shows that the fish seem to be eating a lot of exotic fishes. In 2012 the brown haplo was being eaten. Blue tilapia and Walking catfish were in some of the samples. Also notable in one sampling event this year they counted 176 snook in the lower section which was a record for the area. It was suggested that the more flow there is the more snook we will have.

Casings from the invasive Island Apple snail were found in the marsh upstream of the entry to the Lower Lake.

The wading bird rookery south of U.S. 41 looked pretty good with regards to the number of birds, especially Great egrets which increased in numbers until September when they maxed out at about 120, which included chicks.

In early October, there were some serious aquatic vegetation blockages (water hyacinth) which required portages during the inspection. SWFWMD has gone through there now and made it passable.

One metal-post campsite grill was installed on the sandbar directly across from the Venetian subdivision overlook. A Cabbage palm may have been taken out, too.

Permitting: Approval was issued in August of the placement of riffraff on the pilings of U.S. 41 to prevent erosion and preserve the structure. A pier was approved across from 780 Imperial Drive in the Harbor Cove community, where an existing structure had been for a long time. It was approved for rebuild. Neither project has started yet.

Snook Haven will probably be replacing existing dock at the cottage just to the northwest of the restaurant. It has a deck that goes to the lip of the river but not over it. No plans have been seen yet.

Questions and answers followed.

Bill Byle – Charlotte County Update:
Charlotte County expressed their concerns about the State surplusing conservation lands in the County that in some cases took years to acquire. There were a dozen or so sites identified in Charlotte County, many of which the County tried to acquire in an attempt to increase the buffers around the aquatic preserves, wetlands, rivers or restore floways. The state has a website where you can check a map of all the surplus lands being considered, and which have been removed from the list.

Over the summer, when things normally slow down, the County averaged 30 new building permits per week in Cape Haze and Rotunda which are connected to the Myakka River by miles of canals. Charlotte County will be contributing to an increase in boat traffic on the Myakka River.

Jono mentioned Punta Gorda had an approach to addressing sea level rise and questioned if the developments in the Cape Haze peninsula were at risk if there is significant increase in sea level. He inquired if Charlotte County was working on a strategy, regulations or approach to dealing with the most vulnerable areas in the county?

Bill responded that the developers of South Gulf Cove and Rotunda had the same ‘foresight’ as the developers of Cape Coral. They made sure the land was high enough by the creation of hundreds of miles of canals and using the spoil to bring the land up. Bill believes they would be good for a couple of hundred years, whereas, the city of Punta Gorda, Ft. Myers, downtown Sarasota and downtown Bradenton may get water on their Main Streets with existing super high tides and west winds.

Ed Flowers – Florida Forest Service Update:

Tom Williams has retired and it was noted that the process of trying to fill that position has begun.

The Service has just finished a chopping project on Winchester. Pine trees will be planted toward the end of December or January. A cogon grass spraying contract will get started next week on the Jennings side of the forest. The first prescribed burn occurred yesterday; it had been too wet to burn prior.

There are delays in the construction of the new canoe/kayak launch because the land is partially owned by SWFWMD and they cannot process the permit as a stakeholder. The Service is working with the DEP on the permit instead. Currently the Service is in the process of finding an engineer to fill out the forms that will let them move forward. The goal is to open the canoe launch around the first of the year.

Questions and answers followed.

Melissa Dickens – SWFWMD:
The District has finalized the main stem model for the Myakka River. Right now staff is using it to analyze some conceptual alternatives to improve the health of the river. Some examples of these conceptual alternatives include using the model to show what would happen if some excess water in Flatford Swamp were removed, or closing off Blackburn Canal and seeing how that affects the flooding downstream. They are still in the analysis process and should have some results by the early part of next year. Some preliminary findings may be available to share at the Council's next meeting.

The Flatford Swamp Pilot Vegetative Management Project continues. The District has initially found that the brown lygodium moth has been successful in combating Lygodium, so the District is exploring the possibility of releasing additional moths to help with that effort.

Permitting: The City of North Port has a permit in-house for the Myakkahatchee Creek Greenway Nature Trail that was received by the District September 30th and is currently under review.

Melissa collected questions from the Council to research and address in future presentations to the Council. Questions and potential topics included:

- A brief overview on how Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) are determined; how significant harm is established (is it a political or biological statement?)
- Was the designation of the Myakka River within Sarasota County as a Wild & Scenic River used as part of the determination for establishing the MFL?
- A USGS document established the Myakka River as a zero flow river. Was that conclusion based on things that may have altered the flow or does this reflect

prior natural conditions? If it is true that it was normal and natural for the river to stop flowing during drought periods how does that intersect with the concept of a minimum flow?

- What is the district doing in Flatford Swamp to reduce the amount of water that's going into the swamp?
- What is the status on MFLs on Myakkahatchee Creek?
- Is the surficial aquifer system looked at in establishing MFLs on stream water bodies?
- Is SWFWMD going to adopt the recent Impaired Waters Memo that's being required throughout the state?

Additional questions and answers followed.

Paul Thomas – FWC Update:
Paul thanked Chris Oliver for the lead-in on Dave Blewett's project. Dave is one of FWC's biologists and has been working on fish community in the river. Paul would like to bring him to one of the next meetings to present some data.

FWC staff started seeing non-native apple snails in Polk County and Hillsborough County right after the hurricanes in 2004. Limpkins, Snail kites, Red-shouldered hawks, hogs, raccoons, otters, alligators and other animals love to eat these snails.

One interesting item about the snail is when it gets into conditions it doesn't care for, like high flow; it can suck air into its shell, close up and float. That is how they are being dispersed. These snails can really move everywhere when there is a storm event with moving water.

Discussion continued on this subject.

Maran Hilgendorf – CHNEP Update:
The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) is a partnership that works to protect ecosystems within seven counties in southwest Florida. Committees meet four times a year. Last year the CHNEP created a forum to meet on an as-needed basis to discuss specific issues. In December they will have a meeting to talk about the best vegetation to plant on artificial waterways that will improve water quality.

The CHNEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will have an agriculture tour in January that the Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association is coordinating. It is a bus tour. They will invite people from the Management Conference and then it may be opened up to others. An email will be sent out if there is space.

The CHNEP strives to build up the capabilities of others since it is a partnership program. There are two different types of events; the Environmental Education Meetings and Conservations Lands Workshops. Presentations from these two, day-long events are now on YouTube under the channel named "CHNEP1995". The Conservation Lands

Workshop featured about 10 different presentations. The keynote speaker was Bill Mitsch from FGCU, an internationally recognized wetlands expert.

The 14th Annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival will be November 23 at the Charlotte County Sports Park from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Exhibitors are quickly filling up. It is paid for by sponsors and proceeds from a raffle. About sixty exhibitors and 3,000 people usually attend. They provide a free tote bag.

Every three years the CHNEP hosts the Watershed Summit; the next one will be March 25 through 27. There will be sessions on fish, oysters, water quality, water flow, etc. They are seeking sponsors for this event. The goal is to make it available for free. It will be at the Event Center in Charlotte County.

In December there is a two day training called Project Design and Evaluation Training taught by NOAA Coastal Services Center.

The CHNEP started a 'Citizens Academy'. It is a free e-learning website. The structure will be self-paced interspersed with games, quizzes and videos. The website currently has 15 short videos, less than 3 minutes each, featuring local people explaining issues that are difficult to understand or inspire people to continue learning. Any input on the site will be appreciated. The Academy will develop through an informal advisory committee. Anyone interested should email Maran.

The CHNEP has hosted workshops with law enforcement about once every two or three years. This year's workshop is planned to be more interactive. Not only law enforcement will learn about the issues of concern to environmentalists, but environmentalists will learn from law enforcement. No dates are set yet, but the current plan is to have one in Sarasota County or Manatee County, as well as one in Charlotte County, and Lee County.

The Water Atlas has lots of great data available. The idea of making the Biologists data available was discussed.

PRESENTATIONS:
Jim Beever – Sea Level Rise (SLR) and the Myakka River:
(The SLR Presentation will be posted on the website)

The current rate of SLR being measured in the Myakka River area is 8 to 9 inches every 100 years. At that rate in about the year 3324 Florida will reach the level where we will have the 'Inland Sea' with 'Bay Okeechobee'. According to the International Panel of Climate Change the worst case scenario if people don't make any environmental changes is that we will get there about the year 2153.

We are in climate change; we are in sea level rise (SLR). The question is not whether we will be affected by SLR; but when, how much, what ways, and how rapidly will change occur. The Earth has been basically warming up since the last ice-age. This pattern of

getting colder, going into ice-ages and getting warmer after ice-ages has happened about four times on this planet since the period of the Ages of the Great Mammals. It is something that has been happening without any human intervention.

The Earth has been warming up even before civilization started. Once civilization got started humans started manipulating the landscape in different ways. Humans have been able locally to affect climate with doing things like irrigation, changing river courses, deforestation and building cities which create heat islands. We affect our local climate often to what we consider our benefit. Independent of greenhouse gases and other factors, cities are generally hotter places having a heat island affect. Since the Industrial Revolution we have become really effective at putting heat into the environment in return for the work we wanted done.

What does this mean for the Myakka River and our region? A tide chart from the longest, continuous measures of sea-level in the United States is Key West. It starts in the 1880's with some ups and downs which relates to things that happened in Key West like hurricanes and storm surges. Sometimes a hurricane goes away from places and pulls the tide levels down for a period. In general the trend is upward.

Specific to our region we have seen the average air temperature go up about a degree in southwest Florida since 1900. The number of days per year over 90°F has gone from 77 to 90 days in that period. North Atlantic water temperature has gone up about a degree as well. Global carbon dioxide levels have increased about 100 parts per million. Ocean pH has gone down about a tenth. Increased carbon dioxide in the ocean makes waters more acidic. That interferes with mollusks, oysters, and crustaceans making their shells.

Total rainfall has stayed the same but the rain comes at different times so we get wetter wet seasons and dryer dry seasons. More of the rain is being delivered in the rainy season, 6% more over this time period. There will be more flooding and more droughts.

Thirteen studies on climate change have been done in our region by the CHNEP/SWFRPC such as the Regional Vulnerability Assessment. The Punta Gorda Adaptation Plan was the first adaptation plan adopted and implemented in the state of Florida by a city. It was done with the citizens and the citizens planned their adaptation to climate change themselves.

Sea-level records from the Paleocene show that Florida in particular has been under the water mostly. During recent Ice Ages Florida got to poke its head above water. Geologically speaking Florida will soon be covered by water again.

At the highest stage when all of the glaciers had been melted, Florida was an archipelago. At the lowest stage the edge of the Florida coastline moves outward. Even now we find human habitation from the 10,000 year period when people had camps hunting mammoths out on that deep edge. So the coast expands and contracts. Just a little SLR is all it takes for a substantial amount of ground to be lost as the peninsula is flooded.

The rates of SLR today vary in different parts of the country. What is important in SLR is not just how much the water is coming up, but whether the land is sinking at the same time. Louisiana and parts of Texas have significant subsidence of the land in part because they have denied sediments to flow down to the areas they naturally did.

Even in our small region one can see places where whether a river is dammed or not determines whether a particular estuary has been keeping pace with SLR or is getting more flooded. Dammed rivers like the Hillsborough River and the Manatee River are not going to be able to keep pace in their estuaries as well as the Peace River which gets freer flow and sediment delivery.

Slides were presented showing different rates of SLR in Florida and the Gulf Coast. The Gulf Coast rate is about mid-range. We are experiencing about 3 mm/year (about the thickness of a Kraft cheese single) of sea-level going up. The fastest rising is in southeast Florida and the Keys.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers predicts surface SLR for Florida to be between 0.5 to 1.5 meters by 2100. The Southwest Florida Climate Compact says 3 - 7 inches by 2030 and 9 - 24 inches by 2060. In our area the ranges are projected to be 5 - 16 inches by 2050; maybe 21 inches by 2100 if the glaciers keep melting at the current rate.

Questions arise: 'What are humans going to do,' 'What is the climate going to do' and 'What are the buffering effects'? Scientists are finding that sometimes the oceans give you a little bit of buffering. But, there can be really negative affects which accelerates the heating. For example, sub-seas volcanism could make SLR faster. Many factors come into play, but ultimately, depending on the rates we will eventually get to each of these stages, but the time frame will be divergent.

In our region the greatest effects occur in Collier, Lee, and Charlotte counties. Finger canals invite SLR to come far inland relative to areas without finger canals.

Habitats will change too. Habitats in preserves around Charlotte Harbor and up along Myakka River including the park will change. Judy Ott of the CHNEP has shown sea grasses have moved. In some places it looks like mangroves are holding fast but in other places they have clearly moved.

The Charlotte portion of the Myakka River will see the strongest effects of SLR. The more incised the river becomes the greater the amount of SLR you need vertically in order to make any horizontal effect upon the landscape. This changes the shape of the funnel for the river. Areas which are shallows today will become deeper portions of the river and storm surge will be more effective moving up the river during tropical storm events.

Relatively substantial investment made already on the coast will be affected. No one will build giant dikes with huge pumps like the Netherlands. It would not be possible around our type of coast. The archeology below us is not sufficiently non-permeable for the SLR

not to come up through the soil behind any barrier built. Some levels of shoreline armoring are being looked at in the short-term, but ultimately adaptation and managed relocation is the thought process to respond to SLR in our region.

What will happen with the coastal systems? Expect to see increased vulnerability to flooding and storm surge, habitat damage and destruction during those storms, increased shoreline erosion, loss of habitations due to blocks to migration, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources. The Myakka River will get saltier and the isohalines will move up the Myakka River as this occurs. We will see changes in the tides and tidal regimes of plant and animal communities. Even the interior will have increased inundation; more future seasons when Myakka River State Park will be a system for canoeing due to the wetter wet seasons for longer time periods.

Expect to see the sea grasses migrate where they can but expect a general overall decline in sea grass extents. Oysters may keep pace similar to the sea grasses if opportunities are provided for them. Oysters will be moving with the isohalines. Due to the change in the shape of the funnel there will probably be less total oyster bars into the future.

The mangroves, salt marsh and brackish marsh in some cases are not going to be able to keep pace. On Pine Island Sound the top of the pneumatophores of the interior black mangroves of small islands have been flooded and the forest is dying. Sediment surface elevations can't keep pace with SLR if the rate gets fast enough. At the same time in the areas where there are no seawalls they expect mangroves to move inland. The sea-level activity on mangroves is expected to increase the total extent of mangroves around Charlotte Harbor by 75%. We should expect to see mangrove communities moving up the Myakka River from the current location today.

For salt marsh there is a real potential loss where humans have interfered (roads, barriers, etc.). Ten different actions have been identified that can be taken to keep migration corridors open for salt marshes. The Myakka River and the Myakka River State Park are a great opportunity for salt marshes to continue. (Refer to presentation online to see extents of salt marsh inundations.)

Brackish marsh will get rarer and rarer because again if you move up the funnel there will be less geographic area for brackish marsh to occur. It will still persist but there won't be as much space for it.

Uplands will begin to shift into wetland habitats. They will have to shift further inland as well. Expect xeric to become mesic to a certain extent and in some cases some habitats like tropical hardwood hammock and coastal scrub may disappear within our region. These communities are already relatively rare in the landscape. Many of these are distributed right up against the coast.

How much land use would be affected by 3 meters of SLR? About 45,000 acres of single family, 22,000 acres of preserves, 4,000 acres multifamily, 300 acres of industrial estates and so forth. This is assuming we still have 2050 zoning in place.

Much depends upon the environment that we live in. As we see the structure built for tourism on the coast damaged we will have to rebuild it to keep pace with it.

How will we respond? Will we armor, accommodate or relocate? Punta Gorda has already addressed this in their comprehensive plan. They are planning on managed relocation to a large extent. They have 246 options for adaptations that they have looked at. They selected the top ones to implement first. As they implement and complete they will go on to their next adaptation.

We have an opportunity utilizing our network of conservation lands of which Myakka River State Park is a key to maintain habitats here as SLR occurs. Myakka River is a vital corridor that needs to be maintained and not choked off by development moving into existing flood plain if we want to keep the range of habitats we have and support the tourism and fishing industry.

Habitat improvements with restoration can bring back habitats that will be more resilient. Living shoreline designs can be done that will help assuming that the rate continues at 8-9 inches. If seawalls are already existent staged, sloped GeoWeb can be put in.

Using culverts along roads so that they do not become barriers to migration of habitats may allow sufficient space for the habitat to move to the other side of the road as we see SLR. Filling in the mosquito ditches can slow the rate at which SLR moves inland.

Sediment slurry additions can be used in places where the sediment no longer comes down the rivers naturally. Just a little sand, a fraction of an inch, let the vegetation build itself up. It is being tried on the east coast and seems to be working very well in some of their mosquito control impoundments.

This presentation is on the web page for the Regional Planning Council. Some of the studies are also on the National Estuary Program web pages as well.

Becky Ayech made a Motion to contact FDOT regarding the issues the Myakka River Coordinating Council raised during the presentation by FDOT on the widening of Highway I-75. Corky Pezzati seconded the Motion.

Discussion: One item of concern was creating permanent water bodies in the median of the interstate attracting wildlife: four-legged and flying.

Elizabeth Wong abstained from the Motion. The Motion passed.

PRESENTATIONS CONTINUED:
Paul Thomas, FWC – Alligator Harvesting in the Myakka River.
(A copy of this presentation will be placed on the MRMCC website)

Paul noted he was a fisheries biologist and that he received information from his colleagues that study alligators in order to give this overview of alligator harvesting in the river.

In Florida, historically, hunting and poaching decimated populations of American alligators and they were put on the Endangered Species List in 1973.

In 1988 it was decided that Florida had enough alligators to support an alligator hunt. Since that time we now have a nationally recognized public hunt for alligators used as a management tool for populations and as a funding source for alligator and habitat management. It is one of the state's most popular limited-entry hunts. There are about 10,000 applicants every year. People pay their fee but they are not guaranteed a hunt. If they get a permit it allows the permittee to harvest two alligators. Residents pay $272 and non-residents about $1,000 to see if they can get a permit. The minimum size alligator one can take is six feet.

There are two types of permits: AMU-Alligator Management Unit- good for major water bodies, Okeechobee and parts of the Everglades, etc. FWC Staff does some pretty extensive population surveys of how many alligators there are. Depending on the area and the total population FWC will allow a harvest rate of anywhere from 0 to about 15%. Not every hunter is successful so the upper number is never fully met.

The other type of permit issued is called a County-wide Permit. These are available for almost every county, but there are a very limited number of county permits. County permits allow you to go to public access areas. Hunts are not allowed within the confines of a city.

Charlotte County gets 31 permits. That means there is a potential for 62 alligators to be taken out of Charlotte County; Manatee County – 62 permits; 124 alligators; Sarasota County – 4 permits; 8 alligators. There are not many public areas in Sarasota County.

Myakka River State Park alligator numbers are not going down but they are not going up either. The park's population of alligators is dominated by large, older individual alligators. It is like an inverted pyramid. There are not as many intermediate or small sizes. Large bull alligators like to prey on juvenile alligators. Big older females are more dominant than smaller more prolific breeding females; therefore the smaller get pushed out of the good breeding sites. As soon as the older females' eggs hatch out they get eaten by the bull alligators; "Self-regulating."

The County-wide permitting started in 2003. In 2003 hunters harvested two alligators out of the Myakka River; in 2004 they harvested five; in 2005 four were harvested. The total number of alligators removed from the Myakka River during a public hunt over 10 years is 32 in three counties. Law enforcement does the best they can on illegal hunts. It is typically about 7% of whatever the legal harvest is.

Nuisance alligators removed from the Myakka River area since 2005 was 29. If it is a nuisance alligator over 4 feet that is exhibiting nuisance behavior it must be shot. An under 4-foot alligator will be relocated.

Discussion about hunting within the Wild & Scenic portions of the river related to the County-wide permit distance restrictions to the high waterline, emergent vegetation, and 'preserves' occurred. It was stated that it was the hunter's responsibility to determine if he/she was within these parameters otherwise it would be illegal. Then the issue becomes one of enforcement.

See the FWC Alligator Management website for more detail. Questions and answers followed.

Bill Byle suggested a Motion that MRMCC send a letter to SWFWMD recommending/requesting that the SWFWMD adopt the "Impaired Waters Memo" as part of the SWFWMD Rule.

Note: The 'Memo' prohibits any new discharges to 'Impaired Waters' that would increase the level of impairment or to an OFW that would exceed existing state standards.

Becky Ayech made the Motion; Mary Jelks seconded it. Discussion followed. It was noted that hearings are being held on this subject. Each water management district around the state is considering this. There is supposed to be a statewide standardization on how it is all going to be adopted. The Motion passed; Melissa Dickens and Jim Beever abstained.

Future Agenda Items:

- Status update on the Management Plan

Next Meeting Date:
A poll will be sent out regarding the next meeting date.

Becky Ayech moved to adjourn. Greg Blanchard seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

The meeting ended at 12:20 p.m.