

ADOPTED

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

**July 26, 2013
9:17 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

The meeting began at 9:17 A.M. with Jono Miller presiding. This meeting was advertised in the Herald Tribune on Friday, July 12, 2013.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jono Miller - Sierra Club
Mary Jelks - Friends of Myakka
Suzanne Cooper – TBRPC/ABM
Tom Williams - FFS
Louis Kovach - Homeowner
Mike Chouinard - Homeowner
Belinda Perry - Sarasota County
Bill Byle - Charlotte County
Glenn Compton – Manasota-88

Melissa Dickens - SWFWMD
Greg Blanchard – Manatee Co.
Suzanne Lex - FDEO
Maran Hilgendorf - CHNEP
Jim Beever - SWFRPC
Becky Ayech - ECOSWF
Elizabeth Wong - City of N. P.
Allain Hale – ECOSWF

INTERESTED PARTIES

David Parks – I-75 PIO
Stephen Giguere - Myakka River State Park
Chris Becker – FPS
Chris Oliver – FPS
Judy Meents – FPS
Crystal Gorman – URS/I-75
Robert Garrigues – RS&H
Richard (Mose) Howard – Atkins/FDOT

Dee Allen - Mosaic
Alex Aycrigg – RS& H
Brett Bennett – RS&H
Peter Rogas – RS&H
Mary McMurray – FDEP/Char.Har.
James Fike – RS&H
Vinod Sancheti – Sarasota County,
Public Works

BUSINESS MEETING:

- **Call to Order, Roll Call and introductions were made. Chris Oliver introduced himself as the new Environmental Specialist II, Biologist for the Myakka W&S River Program.**
- **There were no public comments.**

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- **Vice-Chair Elections:** Jim Beever nominated himself, provided the meeting starts at 9:00 am instead of 8:45. Becky Ayech seconded the Motion. Nominations were closed. The Motion passed by acclamation.
- **Additions to the Agenda:** Elizabeth Wong, update City of North Port; Becky Ayech, sludge in Manatee County, also known as land applications of residuals and an update on the I-75 project.
- **Revision and Approval of the Meeting Minutes from February 1, 2013 Council Meeting.** Becky Ayech moved adoption of the Minutes. Belinda Perry seconded. The Minutes were adopted.

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

Richard (Mose) Howard – I-75 Update:

The project is about 8 ½ miles, from Sumter to River Road. There were some concerns and questions at the previous meeting in February which were forwarded to Mose who subsequently forwarded to DOT. They will formally respond to Jono who can then circulate within the Council.

They are finished with the design and will transition into the construction phase in November. Dave Parks will be the go-to for public information; the daily/weekly activities of construction. Crystal Gorman, CEI, represents the engineering side during construction; and Mose will still be involved.

Dave Parks, Public Information Officer, 407 Commercial Court, Suite C, Venice, FL 34292, 239.770.4935, DavidParks@ComViaCorporation.com. The telephone number rings directly to his cell phone.

Bill Byle – Charlotte County Update:

Bill stated that many baby boomers will retire to Charlotte County especially noting Cape Haze, Rotunda and Gulf Cove; thus more boaters in the Myakka River.

Coral Creek Restoration Project has discovered that old canals and mosquito control ditches may provide some habitat for juvenile fish species that were lost over the years by coastal development.

Belinda Perry – Sarasota County Update:

The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program acquired another ¼ acre lot on Warm Mineral Springs Priority Site. That brings the total to 3.5 acres along the creek that is under protection. That represents less than a ¼ of the lots they have identified for acquisition. The purpose of the acquisition is to protect a buffer along that creek due to its importance to Warm Mineral Springs flow way, but also as a manatee winter refuge.

Over the last year the County has reviewed 10 permit projects along the river; nine have been approved. They pertain to maintaining existing retaining walls or adding a new

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retaining wall. One permit application was denied for putting a pool fence and cage within 50 feet of the Myakka River zone. (A detailed report will accompany the minutes on the website.)

The Gulf Coast Conservation Foundation presented their conceptual land use plan for their property along the Myakka River that was approved by the County for a kayak landing and some upland recreational use.

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation:

(1) Snook Haven Extension – In July the County awarded a contract for bringing central water and sewer to the property extending down from Venice Avenue. Presently the site is on septic and well. It should be completed in December or January. Snook Haven will be closed during that time starting in September for about four weeks.

(2) Improvements to the Addition (former Decker Property): The County has had two public meetings regarding their conceptual plan. They are working with all the permitting agencies. One improvement is to move the existing dock to the addition and make it ADA accessible, remove some bulkheads and replace it with native shoreline. No application has been filed yet.

(3) Senator Bob Johnson's Landing: There were two public meetings in 2012. The County is doing pre-application meetings for that draft plan.

Questions and answers followed.

Steve Giguere – Myakka River State Park Update:

Early onset wet season shut down the Park's burn season; with management activity in nine zones and just over 3500 acres of prescribed burning this past fiscal year. The goal was around 8,000 acres.

The park treated many exotic plants in their past fiscal year. They achieved 64% of their goal by treating more than 460 acres of the roughly 717 acres infested with various exotic plants.

Two projects were funded by Suncoast Invasive Species Working group; cogon grass and lygodium treatments within the Deer Prairie Slough area of the park. Two additional similar projects have been funded for the near future.

There have been some articles in the newspaper promoting Deep Hole. Last January droves of people came out wanting to see Deep Hole. With a limit of 30 people a day people would line up an hour before the park opened. As it dries out again and Deep Hole is visible the park will have a different approach as to dealing out permits.

The park is still in transition for finding a new contractor for feral hogs. The contract for last year did not work out well. For the past year the park has been doing most of the

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removal in house which has totaled nearly 1300 hogs removed from the property. This is high due to the lack of a contractor for two years prior.

The park is also using a new trap system. They currently have a large corral style trap that is remotely activated. It is 30 feet with a 10-foot diameter drop-door. They are currently in the purchasing process of getting a remotely-tripped door that is connected to a wildlife camera that sends text messages to a phone so one can remotely drop the door. Using this new-style trap is better because it utilizes less staff time. It has been successful for other state parks.

Questions and answers followed.

Tom Williams – Myakka State Forest Update:

Tom presented a power point with accomplishments from the last fiscal year, July 2012 – June 2013.

- The Myakka State Forest had 26,537 visitors with 3,460 overnight permits.
- There were 12 acres burned by wildfire due to lightning. The projected goal for prescribed burns was nearly met with 1,427 acres burned.
- One mile of road was upgraded, and 10.5 miles were graded. Seven miles of the boundary were maintained against encroaching exotics and breaks in the fence.
- There were 5 various programs and tours in the forest. Also, three radio/TV articles occurred during this period
- The aviary contract is for ten sites with 50 hives on each site. All the bees are European honey bees.
- Seventy-six hogs were taken during the hunting season which begins in the last week of October.
- Out of 764 acres 201 were roller-chopped. Two OPS technicians worked to remove exotic vegetation for 9 months of the year including; 44 acres of Melaleuca, 32 acres of Brazilian pepper, 28 acres of Cogon grass and an acre of Torpedo grass.
- The Forest had several Eagle Scout projects. A troop out of Venice installed a self-guided tour on the Gordon Smith Memorial trail. Several shelters over picnic tables were built. Rest stations were put in at the North Loop Trail. The scouts are responsible for the planning, funding and completion.
- The Forest now offers group camping in an oak hammock.

Discussion occurred regarding why Myakka State Forest can allow hunting on their property but not state parks. State parks are considered single use and the state forest is multi-use. State parks have many more visitors/staff compared to the state forest. State parks receive their monies from recreation whereas the state forests make money on cutting timber. Statewide the state forests earn about 6 million dollars a year.

Greg Blanchard – Manatee County Update:

USF Center for Community Development has delivered an expansion of the Tampa Bay Program Wetland Mapping Project that extends over all of jurisdictional Manatee County

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including the entire Myakka River Watershed. A ½ acre mapping unit was used to interpret the 1950's aerial maps and the 2007 land use and land cover data from SWFWMD. The wetland classification and change analysis was to a fairly high degree. This data will have many other uses.

Since the last update Manatee County has been issued with a new phase 1 MS4 permit. With a new phase 1 permit the county is responsible for all TMDLs and water body impairments within the jurisdictional county. That was one of the reasons for their challenge to the permit filed with the State which was resolved approximately in January this year. The difficulty they have with these permits is their storm water management program is an urban program and the scope of the MS4 program does not extend to agricultural or natural areas, yet they still make the permittee responsible for water body impairments in those areas. The end result is that the county program is required to deal with the rural TMDLs. There will likely be more discussions on TMDLs at future meetings because there are potentially several waterbody impairments within the Myakka River Basin. The county is waiting on the EPA to resolve some issues with some older waterbody assessments.

Questions, comments and answers occurred.

Chris Becker – Myakka River Biologist Update:

Natalie Cole resigned to take a position with South Florida Water Management District. Chris Becker conducted the river inspection for June.

Chris described seeing what looked like little leaves on the top of the water. They were actually hogchokers at the surface trying to breathe. Water levels were fairly high and when he got to Deep Hole there were only 3 alligators. Just beyond Deep Hole where the river forms again was a fish kill. Most of the fish kill were tilapia. This would also explain why the hogchokers were at the water's surface. This was soon after flooding rains which normally corresponds with periods of low dissolved oxygen in the water.

There seemed to be much more cogon grass along the river, especially in shoreline areas with saw palmetto all the way to U.S. 41. There was less Brazilian pepper.

At the Rookery Island there were nesting wood storks, anhingas and great egrets. Here a storm blew up. The river inspection was not completed due to the storm.

Permitting: Currently under review is a scour counter-measure permit at the U.S. 41 Bridge on the Myakka River as well as the Salt Creek Bridge. FDOT plans to excavate near the bridge pilings and insert riprap next to them in the riverbed to reduce erosion. The project is currently being held up by US Fish & Wildlife Service because the Salt Creek Bridge over Warm Mineral Springs Creek where the manatees pass through. It is not desirable to have construction during the time the manatees are present.

A permit exemption was issued for a dock that had been re-built.

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One property owner who lives at Tarpon Point still opposes the slow speed zones and wanted the Council to know this.

Asian swamp eels were seen at the Lake Manatee Reservoir which may mean that they could be in the upper Myakka Watershed. This is another invasive exotic that is moving around the state. These eels started in the Tampa region but now are in both the Little Manatee River Watershed and Lake Manatee Watershed. They are hardy and individuals can change sex to meet reproductive needs.

Questions and answers followed.

Maran Hilgendorf – Charlotte Harbor NEP Update:

Maran invited the members to participate in some of the grants and events that are coming up. Two types of grants are offered: the Public Outreach Grant for up to \$5,000 has a deadline of September 4th. It is an easy process on their website. Anyone can apply. The work has to help implement the CHNEP plan to protect the natural environment of SW Florida as defined by their program.

The second type of grant is the micro-grant usually up to \$250. Apply at any time of the year. They are considered until all funds are allocated.

The CHNEP is now working on their 10th calendar. Maran wanted to thank all who have made submissions. Due to the abundance of online submission of images they have decided to cancel the online survey. At the next meeting the Citizens Advisory Committee will go through the hard task of narrowing down almost 600 images that were submitted down to less than 100. If anyone wants to join the task the meeting will take place August 7th at the Charlotte County Library in Englewood on 776.

The recent issue of Harbor Happenings, page 4, lists some of the events coming up: September 6th – a meeting for anyone interested in environmental education at Mote.

Maran has been using a service called Eventbrite, eventbrite.com, type in CHNEP, and all the events will pop up and you can register on-line.

September 20th is a new program for creating an informal advisory committee of high school students. They will have up to 100 students from throughout the seven counties join for a day at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

September 26th is the Conservation Lands Workshop, a free event at the Charlotte Harbor Event Conference Center in Punta Gorda. Dr. William Mitsch is the keynote speaker, an internationally known wetlands researcher. (Register through Eventbrite.)

CHNEP has taken the PowerPoint presentations and made them into PDF files which are posted on their website. Recently these include audio that follows with the PowerPoint. These are to be converted to a form of video and posted on YouTube.

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November 23rd is the 14th Annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival. Exhibitors are encouraged to participate and to help promote the event as long as they adhere to the subject of the natural environment of southwest Florida. Normally 3,000 people attend. It is free to both exhibitors and the public. All expenses have been paid by sponsors. Exhibitors are asked to donate items for an onsite raffle.

On December 10th and 11th NOAA Coastal Services Center will offer a Project Design and Evaluation course. This is a logic model course. Many granting agencies are now requiring applications to follow a logic model. There is a \$40.00 charge which includes lunch (if requested CHNEP may waive registration fee).

March 25th and 27th Charlotte Harbor Watershed Summit. People who are doing research are invited to present their latest findings. It will be held at the Charlotte Harbor Event Conference Center. The CHNEP is in the process of accepting abstracts for presentations and posters now. Let Maran know if you are interested in presenting and she will forward the email that gives you guidance.

The last couple times, presenters have been invited to write up their results in a paper that has been compiled into a special issue of the Florida Scientist. The CHNEP posts these papers in PDF format on their website.

For next year CHNEP is working on an interpretive guide training program offered through the National Association of Interpreters. Maran invited members to make suggestions or recommendations.

The Florida Native Plant Society, which the CHNEP sponsors, is having their annual conference at FGCU in Lee County May 15th – 18th.

Melissa Dickens – SWFWMD:

There are some updates to the hydrologic restoration in the Deer Prairie Creek Preserve property. SWFWMD has selected King Engineering to do the environmental assessments, design, and engineering work and this project will be moving forward in the near future.

The district is moving forward with the Myakka River Watershed modeling. The district is in the process of finalizing the main stem model for the Myakka River which is expected to be completed at the end of this year. Once this is completed the district will be able to use the model to explore conceptual alternatives to enhance the health of the river.

The district is also continuing work in Flatford Swamp. They are continuing with FARMS Projects and looking into pilot vegetative management projects including using the brown moth to combat lygodium. Discussions continue with Mosaic regarding possible alternatives for the excess water in Flatford Swamp.

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Permitting: The district recently issued the individual ERP permit for the I-75 widening from River Road to Sumter Road. The permit will enable DOT to widen from the existing 4-lanes to 8-lanes. The permit includes water quality treatment, peak discharge attenuation, 30 retention ponds and 8 wet detention ponds. There was some mitigation done through the Myakka Mitigation Bank.

Elizabeth Wong – North Port Update:

The City of North Port has begun construction on new water control structure to replace the existing deteriorated structure on the Myakkahatchee Creek, which runs into Myakka River. The structure acts as a dam to retain water for the City's water treatment plant and has gates that can be opened to reduce upstream flooding. The new structure will have additional gates and capability of remote, automated control of the gates. The project is jointly funded by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the City. Elizabeth asked if members could spread the word to the public to avoid fishing and kayaking in the construction zone, especially during the snook season in September.

The City is adding more portage across their water control structures so that the public can enjoy kayaking and canoeing in waterways. North Port also plans to update their kayak and canoe brochure to include these portages and the new kayak launch at Square Lake set for construction in December.

Development: The next phases of construction in the Island Walk development on U.S. 41 just west of River Road has begun. This development has extremely large interconnected stormwater ponds for treatment and attenuation. It connects to the Myakka River by a pipe under U.S. 41, then to a small tributary which flows down to the Myakka River. There are also future plans to restart construction in the Grand Paradiso development which is on the north side of U.S. 41 west of River Road.

Becky Ayech – Sludge in the Upper Myakka River:

Riding through the park one day recently Becky looked at the water and saw sludge. In the past, she has seen people come up intending to empty their trucks and they pull off on the side of the road next to the river. The truck is made to look like it is broken down and they run their discharge pipe underneath the truck into the river.

In Manatee County the Myakka River does not have set backs big enough to prevent land applications from domestic residuals (sludge). What can we do about that? We have no control over what happens to the Myakka River in Manatee County because it is not under our purview.

Jono stated that we have been getting correspondence stating that the sludge spreading has stopped permanently. Chris Becker stated they have removed facilities from the one permitted site.

Becky stated that the signs are still up for Class B sludge on the gates. (Class B is the least treated sludge and AA is the best treated sludge.)

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Greg Blanchard stated that spreading sludge is still “permissible” but the FDEP permit has been given up. There are currently no active land spreading permits in Manatee County. It does not look like there will be for the foreseeable future because economics of the business changed. Staff at Manatee County NRD has said they are exploring a change to their land spreading ordinance to prohibit land spreading of anything other than AA grade which is probably constitutional because it is compatible with the state’s allowance of AA grade for fertilizer.

PRESENTATIONS:

Peter Rogus – County Road 780 (Myakka Road) Bridge Replacement:

Peter gave a presentation on a bridge replacement project designed for Sarasota County. (PowerPoint presentation will accompany the Minutes on the website). The bridge is very old, built in 1954 or 1955. It is in very poor condition generally with a settlement problem and some structural stress.

The bridge replacement will include a two-lane roadway with some improvements. It will increase shoulders to 8 feet. It will have a sidewalk on the inside of the curve area and there is room for this to be expanded if it ever gets urbanized to allow for a sidewalk on the outside of the curve also.

Sarasota County explored three different alternatives to see what was best for the alignment and several other conditions including; maintenance of traffic, environmental concerns, and hydraulics.

(1) They looked at what was called a center alignment which is closing down the roadway and detour the traffic. This would impact wetlands outside of the right-of-way, which the County owns. Impact on the wetlands would increase expense and be an impact on an area that was not desirable.

(2) The other alternative was to take the roadway and shift to the inside of the curve. It works well for maintaining the traffic but there is a long wetland area that would be impacted. This was also not desirable.

(3) The option selected was to shift the bridge and will be built in phase construction. The new bridge will be directly adjacent to the old bridge. The new pilings will be off-phase for the existing ones so they can construct the new bridge without affecting the existing bridge. One of the things taken into account is the crutch bents, two different locations where the foundation has settled from an oversized load. They had planned to strengthen that. That was done in an emergency situation.

The length of the bridge is 329 feet, 4 inches from beginning to end. The original bridge was very similar in length. Close coordination with Sarasota County was required to ensure that the project was not only constructible but met their drainage criteria also This coordination included “pre and post” modeling to make sure the water flowing under the bridge now is the same as it will be after construction is complete.

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This is a very tight construction situation. The plan leaves the existing bridge in place. A portion of the new bridge is built right up against the right-of-way line. When that is done the traffic is put onto that. Then remainder if the existing bridge is knocked out.

The project will utilize pre-cast elements which speed up construction. Pieces will be brought to the construction site and put in place. More construction techniques were described.

Traffic counts were done. In the morning everyone is going to town; in the evening everyone is coming home. In between these two peaks there is a volume of time where the traffic will get restricted to one lane. All the latest in DOT standards will be used in maintenance of traffic.

Peter brought up some of the good comments at the public information meetings. He noted that coordination was required with a whole set of environmental permitting agencies.

Questions and answers followed. Jono voiced his concern regarding hyacinth backing up behind the bridge. He was invited to send a comment. Wildlife concerns were discussed.

Jim Beever deferred his presentation to the next meeting.

Becky Ayech made a Motion to send a letter to the Consultant in the County to ask if the prows can be placed on the upstream of the bridge pilings of proposed CR780 Myakka Road Bridge to keep water hyacinth from collecting on the pilings. Suzanne Cooper seconded the Motion. The Motion passed unanimously.

Becky Ayech made a second Motion that asked the Chair to send a letter to Manatee County Commission asking to have the Waste Water and Residual Land Spreading Ordinance #97-26 opened to amend the ordinance to only allow "AA" sludge to be land applied. Maran Hilgendorf seconded the Motion. Greg Blanchard abstained. The Motion passed.

Future Agenda Items:

- Status report on manatee use and mortality in the river from Wildlife Commission.
- If possible, to address at the same time have a presentation about manatee access to thermal water. Mary Duncan from FWC was recommended.
- Reschedule Sea level rise and the Myakka River – Jim Beever
- Sarasota County 2050 changes to their Comprehensive Plan when ready.

ADOPTED

Next Meeting Date:

This was not discussed.

Becky Ayech moved to adjourn. Suzanne Cooper seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

The meeting ended around 12:00 p.m.