

Myakka River Management Coordinating Council
SWFWMD Sarasota Service Office
6750 Fruitville Road
Sarasota, FL 34240
December 7, 2018
9:30 A. M. – 12:30 P.M.

MINUTES

The meeting began at 9:30 A. M. with Jono Miller presiding. This meeting was advertised in the Herald Tribune on Friday, November 23, 2018.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jono Miller – Sierra Club	Howard Berna - SCNR
Allain Hale – ECOSWF	Juliette Jones-Friends of WMS
Dennis Ragosta-SWFWMD	Bob Clark – VAAS
David Jayroe – City of North Port	Rebecca Armstrong – FDEP/FPS
Barbara Hines-Manasota 88	Corky Pezzati-SCLWV
John Meyer- TBRPC	Paul Thomas-FWC
Chuck Johnston – O Bar O Ranch	Marlene Guffey-Homeowner
Mike Chouinard-Homeowner	Lou Kovach-Homeowner
Bill Byle-Charlotte County	Vivianne Cross-FDOT
Harold Joslin-Friends of Myakka	Wade Matthews - SAS

INTERESTED PARTIES

Chris Oliver – FDEP/FPS	Nadine Hallenbeck – FDEP/FPS
Chris Becker – FDEP/FPS	Lauren Peters-FDOT
Sara Lewis- public	Tyler Maldonado-FDEP/FPS
Joan San Lwin- public	Hugh Haulik-GCH Sierra Club
Cathy Lewis- Miakka Community Club	Victor Dobrin - public
Mike Sosadeeter-Sarasota County	Justin Saarinen-Sarasota County
Andrew Polaszeh-FWC/Law Enforcement	Michael Sowinski-FWC/IPMS
Wayne Douchkoff- public	Stephen Giguere – FDEP/FPS

- **Call to Order and Roll Call was made.**
- Jono introduced the newest member of the Council, Chuck Johnston . Chris Oliver introduced potential new members and each one gave a brief overview of their organization.
Public Comments: Ms. Lewis, a homeowner on Myakka Road, showed some photographs and voiced her displeasure with the high concrete barrier associated with the replacement bridge at C.R.780. In the past, there was a view of the river on either side. With the new bridge, the view on one side is completely blocked off. Instead of the county using an aluminum railing on the top of the wall, they just added more concrete to the top instead.

- **Approval of the Meeting Minutes from July 27, 2018 Council Meeting.**
Bob Clark moved adoption of the Minutes. Lou Kovach seconded. The Minutes were adopted.

NEW BUSINESS:

Updates:

Howard Berna-Sarasota County:

The marrying of the Unified Development Code (UDC), land development regulations and zoning code requirements was passed on November 27th by the Board of County Commissioners. There were no changes to the standards of the Myakka River Protection. They did remove the Myakka River Standards Relief Review Committee but there will still be a variance process that goes to the Board of County Commissioners if a proposal is made that does not meet the current standards for protecting the Myakka River.

Regarding the new bridge over the Myakka River, Howard indicated that public safety and/or engineering issues may have been the reason for the changes to the design. He suggested if concerns remain that the Council could next approach the Board of County Commissioners.

Discussion continued.

Bill Byle-Charlotte County

The most productive area in Charlotte Harbor is near the mouth of the Myakka River up beyond the bridge in Englewood. This is an important spot because certain fish learn how to breath the brackish water in this area before heading back out. As sea level rises and there is more diversion of water to the Myakka River, this area, known as the Center of Abundance, will move up the river.

David Jayroe-City of North Port:

This past October, the city commission passed a fertilizer resolution encouraging the non-use of all fertilizer. In February 2019, they will be holding a workshop to also consider changing the fertilizer ordinance. The city met with a consultant to revise the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC). There will be many opportunities for public input. The 2nd quarterly meeting of the Canal Watch Group was held. There is a new Environmental Advisory Board that meets monthly. They have discussed and passed on comments to the commission concerns regarding things like nutrient pollution.

Juliette brought up the plans for development of the Warm Mineral Springs and the associated public meetings.

Paul Thomas-FWC

Nothing new to report.

Mike Chouinard mentioned that he saw two salt water crocodiles in the river above U.S. 41.

Crocodile sightings were briefly discussed.

Bob Clark asked about the progress with improving law enforcement on the river, noting that it was big topic at the last meeting.

Discussion continued.

Dennis Ragosta-WMD

Dennis had to leave early but gave Chris Oliver an update to read on his behalf which included an update on test well at the Flatford Swamp. The WMD is drilling monitoring wells for injecting water deep underground. They are expecting to completed drilling, in early 2019.

Allain Hale-ECOSWF

Nothing new to report.

Rebecca Armstrong-Myakka River State Park (MRSP)

MRSP has been working on treating cogon grass and climbing fern. Two contracted projects have been completed. The first burn of the season is Saturday December 8th, weather permitting. Treatment of paragrass at Big Flats Marsh continues. FWC's AHRE is funding aerial treatment that will take place in the spring.

FWC recently conducted an assessment of priority fresh water resources throughout the state. Rivers, streams, lakes, non-forested and forested wetlands were all evaluated. The Myakka River ranked high and so did the park. They will be meeting in a few weeks to discuss possible future projects that incorporate habitat improvement and hydrology.

Discussion on vegetation management and herbicide usage continued. Some members requested more information regarding products in use.

Jono brought up a couple of MRSP items. First, was a photo of a survey witness tree just past the canopy walkway on the right side. He is hoping to determine if it was done in the CCC period or before that in the 1800s. Also, there has been an interesting spike mid-morning in the water levels (as per the online gage near S.R.72) recently. Lastly, he took the new concession pontoon tour on the Upper Lake. He noted that while the tour was good overall, the boat did run aground once and flushed several alligators when it approached the bank.

Chris Oliver-Myakka Wild & Scenic River (MWSR):

In October 2017, an application was submitted to request funding through the SWFWMD Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) to conduct modeling to identify the best solution for the restoration of the Upper Myakka Lake (UML) Bypass/Weir Area. An agreement with the WMD and a contract with a contractor for the study are both in the final stages of review. In October 2018, a similar CFI proposal was submitted to study the Down's Dam area for restoration. District IV commented on the permit application for the roof structure addition to a formally permitted structure recommending against approval.

Installation of the buffer signage at the Myakka CWA/Rookery occurred in February 2018. (The

closure period of January 1st to August 31st.) Chris noted FWC law enforcement patrolled five or six times after the signage was posted. He has also received letters, phone calls and photos of various violations on the river.

In accordance with the motions made at the July 2018 meeting, Jono wrote a letter and it was sent to county land managers and law enforcement agencies. Captain Carpenter from FWC is supposed to come out on the river with Chris sometime in 2019.

There have been some joint efforts to reduce climbing fern/lygodium along the river with Robert Pasquali from Sarasota County. Recently, 15 or so small areas of lygodium were treated/removed between Snook Haven Park and Laurel Road.

There were nearly 30 confirmed manatee sightings in the Upper MWSR and MRSP areas. This makes it the 7th consecutive year of observation in the park. Between staff and volunteers, it was determined that manatees were present in the Myakka above MRSP South boundary for 148 days or 40.5% of 2018.

Motions:

Allain Hale motioned that the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council recommends Sarasota County modify the bridge wall to follow its original proposed design, including the railing on both sides, for visibility of the river. Bob Clark seconded.

Discussion ensued.

Howard Berna, Juliette Jones, David Jayroe, Rebecca Armstrong & Bill Byle abstained. Motion passed.

Allain Hale motioned that the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council directs Becky Aych to prepare documents to support the first motion. Bob Clark seconded. Howard Berna abstained. Motion passed.

Break 11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Jono reconvened the meeting. He brought up the current project at Snook Haven Park (SHP) and noted the prior discussions about the new ramp and increased motor boat use in the area.

Mike Sosadeeter-Sarasota County update on SHP

Mike projected some design slides and photos. He noted that parks staff have been working on increasing compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) the SHP Addition/Phase II. There will be ADA parking and better ADA access to Snook Haven restaurant. A sidewalk and ramp that goes to an ADA floating kayak launch. There is a 50-foot set back from the river which will be planted with native plants. There will be shelters with grills and a wash down station for kayaks.

Jono brought up that ramps can increase run off into the river from parking lots increasing possible pollution.

Mike replied that they have drains to direct the runoff into a swale instead of the river.

Bob asked what kind of signage there will be in this area to let people know how to behave on the river. And, are we using the “wild and scenic” verbiage.

Mike responded that there will be interpretative signage.

Chris noted that the regulatory signage, speed signage, does include “wild and scenic” verbiage. And, there have been discussion with Mike and Shawn Yeager about new educational signage for SHP and SBJL that will include more elements on the MWSR.

Discussion continued.

Chris complimented Mike and other staff involved for considering the river viewshed impacts and their work to avoid impacts during the planning process.

Tyler Maldonado-FPS/Office of Park Planning

The current management plan for MRSP was approved in 2004. The plan is supposed to be updated every 10 years. They started the process in 2014 by reviewing the plan. In 2015-2016, a new UMP was drafted. In March 2017, a public meeting and advisory group meeting were held. The public meeting brought many negative comments from the public, especially regarding the consumptive use language. Tyler confirmed that language has been taken out. They are currently working on inconsistencies with issues that had already been addressed.

They are planning a public meeting at the end of January 2019 to give the public another chance to voice their opinions on the plan. ARC has to approve the plan before it can be made the management plan for the next 10 years. With the public meeting being in January, the earliest ARC meeting that the UMP could be added to the agenda is in June. The Division of State Lands, another part of DEP that governs management plans, has 10 days to review the plan and the ARC members get 90 days. After the public meeting in January, the plan needs to be submitted by March to get on the June agenda. In early January, a draft plan will be released to public meaning members will be able to look it over as well. There is a two-week comment period after the public meeting ends to make additional comments so members don't even have to attend the meeting. The plan then gets submitted to ARC and, because it will still be a public document, the public can see any changes that were made after the public meeting.

Jono recommended that the Council hold its next meeting after the draft was released to the public so a presentation could be made and the Council would have a chance to review as a group prior to the public meeting.

Tyler spoke to the four items of concern that the Council discussed at the July meeting.

The first concern was including governing language of the act, management plan, and rule. The plan does contain detailed information on what the act did, what the rule does and what the management plan has said and how it effects the way the property is managed and the different proposals that can be put forth.

The second suggestion was to include an analysis of the visual impacts of recreational river use, minimize new impacts and approaches to remove or ameliorate some existing visual intrusions. Tyler clarified that the recreation and infrastructure section is meant to say what the park and the district want and need. It does not necessarily say where things will be located or what they will look like. They will be doing a master plan for the use areas in the park which will be more specific.

The third suggestion was regarding mapping inaccuracies. Tyler has updated all the maps and will be sitting down with other staff to review these items.

The fourth suggestion was to conduct a recreational carrying capacity study. There is an objective in the MRSP UMP stating that they will support any effort that the MRMCC makes towards such a study. This is an unfunded need and there is no money budgeted for this. There have been a few studies done on other rivers, Rainbow and Itchetchee, and they came back inconclusive. Weeki Wachee River is in the progress of a recreational carrying capacity study and they would like to wait to see what the results are of that study before going forward with one on the Myakka.

Jono reminded the Council that the studies done for the other rivers cited are not the same as the Myakka. The other rivers are springs, whereas the Myakka is not. People using the springs want a different experience than people on the Myakka and there is a different environmental impact on the springs than on the Myakka. Jono expanded on this reminding everyone that the Myakka River is unique so any carrying capacity study that is done needs to be tailored to the unique resources and usages of the river. People are hoping to see alligators which need to come out and sun themselves. People coming by too close or too often can impact them. We need to understand this resource. Any study should focus on what visitor want to see and how to minimize the impacts to wildlife.

Bob asked what it means when a carrying capacity study comes back inconclusive.

Jono explained that the people doing the study only come back with the facts ascertained from the study, they do not make any recommendations on usage. They leave that up to the organization requesting the study.

Jono also pointed out that the springs usually have a consistent water flow whereas the Myakka can vary greatly depending on the time of year. At low water, wildlife tends to concentrate and at high water, many species get spread out.

Marlene asked how would we enforce any of this?

Jono responded that the number of people entering the river is increasing with new points to access, citing the new access at the C.R.780. So, we are going have to deal with the issues like this. But, areas like the Wilderness Preserve are better regulated, to 30 people per day, and we need to consider ways to do this. We will need more law enforcement in some areas.

Discussion continued.

Future Agenda Items:

More members are still needed for the Recreational Carrying Capacity subcommittee. The subcommittee will likely meet after the next Council meeting.

The first meeting the Council holds in 2019 will be the business meeting. Typically, at this meeting, organizations are nominated to join the MRMCC and the election of officers is held.

Presentation on MRSP UMP.

Presentation on sea level rise from Jim Beaver.

Continue reviewing the management plan for MWSR.

Jono encouraged everyone to go out on the tour boat on the Upper Myakka Lake and take note of how the tour is run. There is a new concessionaire and they want to add another boat. It would be helpful to know how it is working out so far.

Lou Kovach motioned to adjourn the meeting. Juliette Jones seconded.

The Meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.