

# **Environmental Report May 2025**

## **Lake Okeechobee Water Level, 19 May 2025: 11.14ft.**

Barring a Lake Okeechobee level rise above 17 feet from extreme rain events, the Army Corps (ACOE) does not anticipate needing to discharge lake water to the east during the next five years. This presents us with the unprecedented opportunity to implement the next critical phase of Indian River Lagoon South components: muck removal from the Saint Lucie Estuary and Indian River lagoon. True environmental restoration of our estuaries will necessitate muck removal from 100 years of lake discharges and large scale seagrass planting. Scientists along the entire 156 mile Indian River lagoon are actively engaged in seagrass restoration experimentation. The ACOE will be involved in understanding the “hazmatic” quality of the muck.

## **Study: Parasite scarcity in Indian River Lagoon animals is a bad sign**

Fewer parasites in fish and crustaceans means the lagoon is more fragile and less biodiverse than before.

## **Treasure Coast Drought**

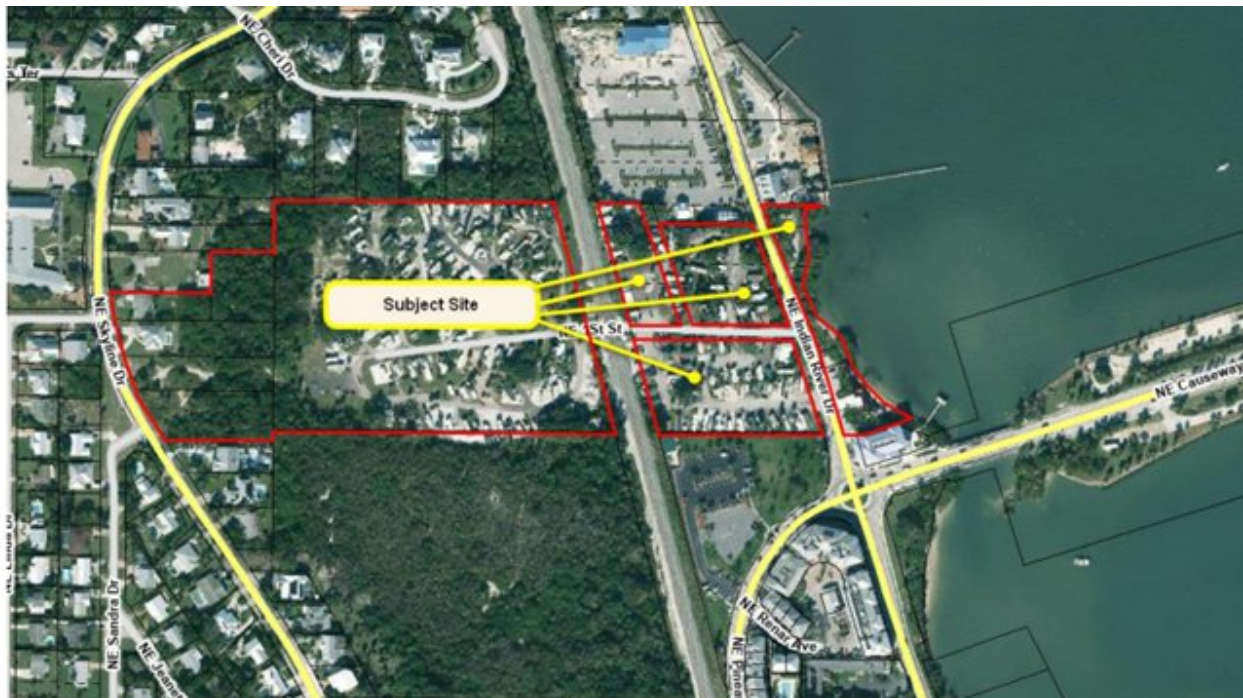
The drought experienced by our area appears to have diminished due to recent rains. The possibility of “wildfires” has lessened.

## **Martin County Rural Lifestyle Policy**

The former Board majority approved the creation of the Rural Lifestyle future land use. Its allowances and conditions for approval were rapidly expanded from its first approval in September 2022. Currently, there are 6613 acres designated Rural Lifestyle in Western Martin County.

The current Board of Commissioners proposed eliminating these provisions allowing the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation adjacent to any free standing urban services district and within 6000 feet of any primary urban services district.

# Pitchford Landing Proposal



Ginny Sherlock reports that Jensen Beach residents fought the proposed Pitchford's Landing development for many years. And while the developer-friendly Martin County Commission ultimately approved the project and the PUD zoning agreement, the developer ran out of steam (money) and the project never moved forward.

A new request allowing for assisted living facilities, motels and some other types of semi-commercial uses, with a density of 5 units per acre, 50% minimum open space and 30-foot maximum building height. The re-zoning application appears on the May 20 draft agenda for the Board of County Commissioners.

## New FDOT Contact:

We have been advised of a new FDOT contact for upcoming A1A project. Ross Shillingsford, [rshillingsford@gm2inc.com](mailto:rshillingsford@gm2inc.com).

## Review of State Legislative Session:

### Friends of the Everglades 2025 Legislative Priorities

1. Rescue the River of Grass
2. Protect wetlands
3. Protect Florida's state parks
4. Take bold steps to improve water quality
5. Don't ban fertilizer bans
6. Smarter, controlled development
7. Stop sugarcane burning



### Florida budget: House, Senate miles (& billions) apart

#### Senate proposal:

\$117.36 billion, including  
\$750 million for  
Everglades restoration

#### House proposal:

\$112.95 billion, including  
\$357 million for  
Everglades restoration

**Governor's budget:** \$115.6 billion, including \$805 million for Everglades restoration





## Update on State Park: HB209

### Safeguarding Florida's state parks



Sen. Gayle Harrell



Rep. John Snyder

#### SB 80/HB 209: Nearing the **finish line**?

- HB 209 passed the House, SB 80 headed to Senate floor; HB 209 amended to incorporate better protections against inappropriate development in our parks.



UPDATE: The State Park Preservation Act was unanimously passed by both chambers of the Legislature and awaits the signature of Gov. DeSantis. There is some concern as to the support from Gov. DeSantis. This bill will prohibit additions of pickleball courts, hotels and golf courses.

## SB200

The Department of Environmental Protection to create a comprehensive waste reduction and recycling plan for our state by a deadline. This important request to control waste including Fertilizer being manufactured via Human Waste!!

NOTE: Could not find if this bill got through approval process.

### Good bills that went nowhere

**SB 1646/HB 1575** - Water Quality Improvements: Requires state agencies to create plans to prevent and mitigate harmful algal blooms and take action to ensure nitrogen levels continue to drop in Lake Okeechobee. Neither bill has had a hearing.



## SB 7002: Impact on Everglades restoration?

Styled as a 'good government' bill, measure would impose new budgetary requirements on water management districts; also authorizes SFWMD to pursue "LOCAR" reservoir project north of Lake Okeechobee



## 'Mitigating' harm to wetlands?

SB 492/HB 1175: Mitigation Banking

**OPPOSE**

Allows applicants to use mitigation bank credits from outside the area when local credits aren't available; also would allow mitigation credits to be issued and sold before wetlands restoration takes place.



Sen. Stan McClain



Rep. Wyman Duggan

