

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Kipp Frohlich, Director, Habitat and Species Conservation
Date: February 21, 2019
Subject: Staff Update - Aquatic Plant Management

Purpose:

Provide an update on recent developments in the aquatic plant management program, including efforts to engage stakeholders and the public.

Summary:

Invasive plants degrade and diminish Florida's waterways by displacing native plant communities. Some invasive aquatic plants pose a significant threat to human welfare and cause economic problems by impeding flood control and affecting recreational use of waterways. FWC is charged with managing invasive aquatic plants to prevent negative impacts to native plant communities, fish and wildlife habitat and navigation.

In recent months, citizens and stakeholders have expressed concern about the FWC aquatic invasive plant management operations in peninsular Florida. Much of the concern has centered on the perception that the use of herbicides is excessive, diminishes water quality and that the nutrients from treated and decaying plants fuel algal blooms. In late January, FWC paused use of aquatic herbicides to allow staff to host a series of public meetings to better understand stakeholder concerns. The meetings included facilitated listening sessions, information exchange and details on resource management operations.

Staff will present information on aquatic plant management operations and provide an update on the stakeholder engagement. The presentation will include information on Legislative appropriations to the FWC to treat aquatic plants, and how FWC establishes priorities for the allocation of those funds following rule 68F-54.005, F.A.C. Chemical, mechanical and biological controls will be discussed and compared in terms of effectiveness, potential environmental risk, and cost. The importance of comprehensive resource management plans, such as the one developed for Orange Lake with extensive stakeholder participation, will be highlighted. Finally, we will provide initial results and potential actions developed from the recent engagement events.

Staff Recommendation:

This is an informational presentation, Commission guidance welcomed.

Staff Contact: Matt Phillips, Leader, Invasive Plant Management Section

Presenter: Kipp Frohlich