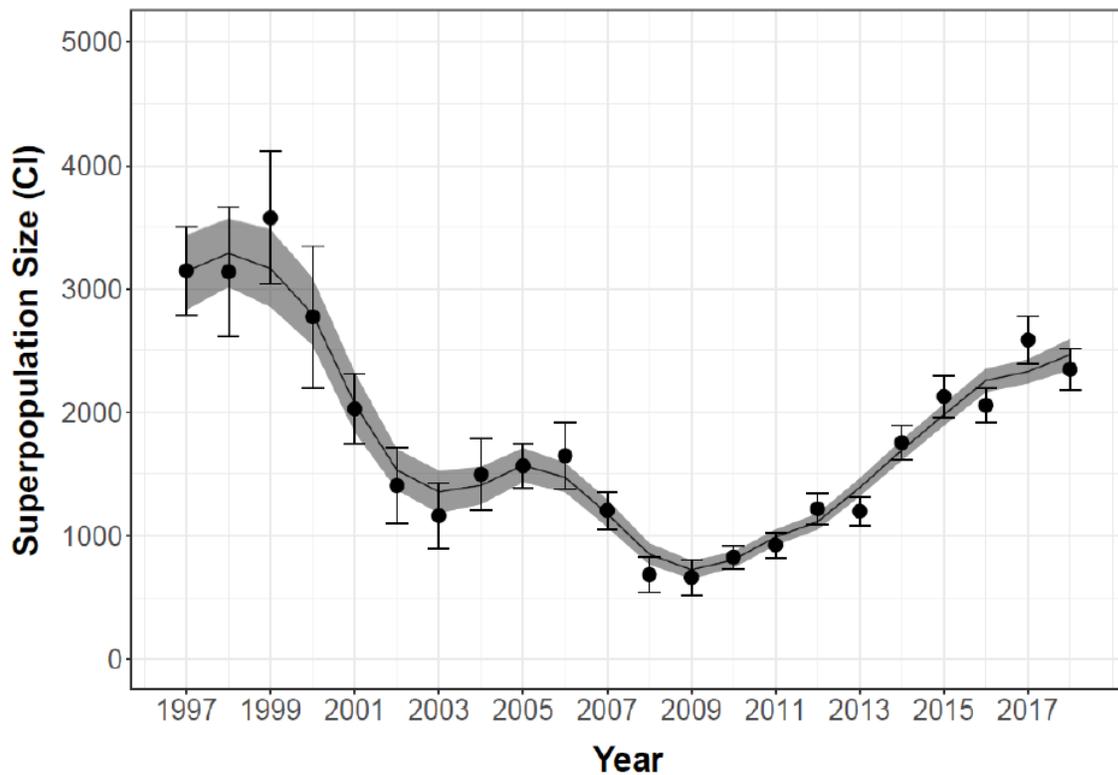


KCOL Habitat Management Plan Meeting – Public Comment Session

Q: Homeowner Lake Kissimmee - FAPMS FWC/University of Florida FWC has sprayed the ducks off the lake; studies about diquat & exotic snails is bologna, believes FWC is taking income from FAPMS. What happened to grassy island? No pig trail, why haven't you opened it up, where is the Kissimmee grass? UF paper says the snails are eating it. I did my own study. No wading birds, no frogs, fish with tumors, birds being sprayed, believes snail kite population will go down 50%.

Response: Here is the most recent population estimate as of 2018 (courtesy of the University of Florida). The statewide Snail Kite population estimate has been increasing since 2009. During UF most recent survey, they counted twice as many kites on Lake Kissimmee than any other waterbody in the state. They also counted more kites on Lake Kissimmee than they counted in the Everglades, Okeechobee and St. John's River areas combined.



Additionally, UF study on Grassy Island and exotic snails is attached. These research findings can be summed up as follows:

1. Loss of Paspalidium on the KCOL has been blamed on a variety of causes but several stakeholders believe that the decline is due primarily, or in whole, to the FWC invasive plant management program.
2. Researchers at UF conducted 2 years of field and lab experiments and their results do not support theories that decline of this species is due to repeated herbicide applications, disease, or muck buildup.

3. Populations of Island Apple Snails (IAS) vary from lake to lake and healthy Paspalidium was consistently observed in lakes with low IAS populations.
4. Lab research indicates that IAS are voracious eaters and prefer new, green Paspalidium growth. UF researchers believe that IAS are eating the perennial regrowth from existing Paspalidium rootstocks which would normally replace the brown shoots and leaves every spring.

Q: Water level USGS studies show that drawdowns may affect sink holes. Could there be some link between the recent sinkhole and the East Lake drawdown?

Response: No, the sink hole near the police station was caused by a burst pipe.

Q: Kissimmee Valley Audubon Society: Are there any bird counts before and after spraying, A: (Tyler) We monitor snail kites, WMD does some monitoring in the Kissimmee restoration area. Q: Is there a biologist we can speak with?

Response: FWC will have an avian biologist included in the management plan process and we will follow-up & see what monitoring efforts are occurring. Avian monitoring that is currently taking place within the KCOL includes:

Snail Kites – Tyler Beck, FWC Tyler.Beck@MyFWC.com

Sandhill Cranes – Tim Dellinger, FWC Tim.Dellinger@MyFWC.com

Wading Birds at the Kissimmee River Restoration Area – Michael Cheek, SFWMD mcheek@sfwmd.gov

Q: We support Management Plans; WMAs all have management plans. Q: Have you looked at their process? Previous KCOL Long term management plan applies to current efforts, that plan was peer reviewed. Paul suggests that FWC gets their plans peer reviewed.

Response: FWC has coordinated internally with planning staff. Suggestion for a peer reviewed plans was noted.

Q: Appreciate the timing of the meeting to accommodate stakeholders, hope the management plan process puts lake health first. Osceola Co. has management plans from 2015. Echoes Dr. Gray with peer review of management plans. Hurricanes and nutrients and everything in the watershed (homeowners/developments) impacts these lakes and we should have a plan that informs residents of their responsibilities moving forward.

Q: Invasive plants (submersed aquatic plants) are choking out the lakes, we want to navigate these lakes and you can't, it's choked out now and we need to keep it at bay, there are too many weeds on these lakes.

Q: What do you see for the future of hydrology?

Response: That authority rests with other agencies. On head water lakes, raising high pool to 54ft, adding more flexibility throughout the year, low pool will not be driven down, flood control drives the management schedule. The northern chain will not change. 1.5ft higher on lower chain, allowing greater fluctuations. Include light compensation points from hydrilla data.

Q: Will other agencies be included in this process? They have their own benchmarks. Are their parameters?

Response: For this planning effort FWC will focus on management activities that are under our jurisdictional capability. We will include other agencies in the management plan process.

Q: Are we looking at nutrient loads.

Response: DEP is the agency charged with monitoring nutrient loads.

Q: Florida Institute of Technology Indian River Lagoon/water quality research-Please consider working with them.

Q: Why is Grassy Island gone, why aren't there any ducks?

Response: There could be a few different reasons for the lack of ducks. Hydrilla has redistributed ducks throughout the state, as it is ring-necked duck's preferred habitat. The small amount on Lake Kissimmee is not a big attractor for ducks, and they will quickly be pressured of these small areas. Birds need large areas where they can find refuge and rest from anglers and hunters. Since hydrilla attracts both of those user groups, it is likely that any ducks using that smaller area were quickly run off due to repeated disturbance. Lastly, hydrilla has been expanding further north throughout the United States, where milder winters do not force ducks to migrate as far south.

Response: Cited UF study concerning Grassy Island.

Q Why are there tumors on the fish?

Response: It is not uncommon to find a small amount of fish with red sore disease or lesions. FWC is currently investigating the increased reports of abnormalities. Through our long-term monitoring program, we are documenting abnormalities and cooperating with our fish health lab to determine causes.

Q: What are you looking for in the fish monitoring? Will it tell us what causes fish tumors? Is this a knee jerk reaction? Things have changed because of population from growth.

Response: FWC is looking for trends in the rate of abnormalities and coordinating with our fish health lab to determine causes.