



Corps of Engineers

Special points of interest:

- Life Jacket Loaner Program a success
- Four public meeting scheduled in August to discuss Lake O regulation schedule
- Ortona Lock reopened
- 2,700 trees planted along Lake
- Jeremy Crossland receives national honors

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BigWater News

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August 1, 2007

Water Safety at W.P. Franklin Recreation Area

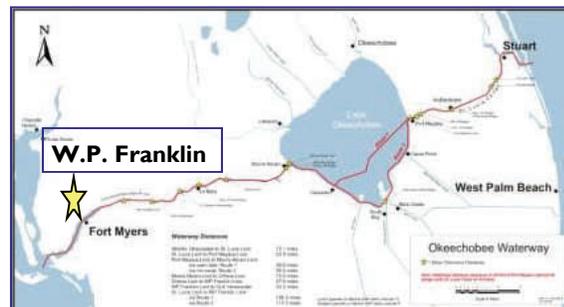
Water safety is an ongoing concern at the W.P. Franklin swim beach. Park Rangers and lock staff work as a team in monitoring the visiting public and take the opportunity to remind youths and adults on water safety. Park Rangers and lock staff distribute important water safety messages through coloring books and Lee County sponsored flotation commendations that give free ice cream to children wearing PFDs (i.e., Personal Flotation Devices).



The new “Life Jacket Loaner Program” is getting good use at the beach and boat ramp. Park Rangers are working with the boating public by conducting safe boating checks and passing out literature on federal and state laws. In the future, water safety billboards will be installed at strategic locations at W.P. Franklin, Moore Haven and St. Lucie and Ortona. An example of one of the water safety billboards that will be installed at W.P. Franklin is shown to the right.



Many swimmers are making good use of the Life Jacket Loaner Program.



New Comment Period Opens on Revised Draft Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, has revised its draft Environmental Impact Statement that supports the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule. A 45-day public review and comment periods begins July 6 and ends Aug. 20.

The environmental impact statement for the water control plan outlines in detail the proposed actions, other actions considered and probable environmental affects of all alternatives studied.

Implementation of the new regulation schedule is anticipated to begin November 2007.

Further information on the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule and Environmental Impact Statement may be found at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/> Click on Hot Topics at the top of the page and then on Revised LORSS Draft EIS. For general questions, please contact the Corporate Communication Office at (904) 232-2236.

Public Meeting Dates and Locations:

Tuesday, August 7. Indian River Community College (Wolf High Tech Center). Stuart, FL.

Wednesday, August 8. Lee County Commission Chambers. Fort Myers, FL.

Monday, August 13. University of Florida—Everglades Research & Education Center. Belle Glade, FL.

Tuesday, August 14. Okeechobee Civic Center. Okeechobee, FL.

All meetings begin at 7: 00 p.m.

Around The Lake Updates

- ◆ Ortona Lock re-watering was completed on schedule and re-opened for navigation on July 20, 2007.
- ◆ Repairs to the Ortona guide wall also were completed on July 20, 2007.
- ◆ HHD Toe Ditch Project is ongoing in Focus Area 5.
- ◆ After nearly four months of drought keeping invasive plant growth in check, herbicide treatments have resumed on the west side of the Lake in Fisheating Creek.
- ◆ Volunteers are needed to help out at St. Lucie Lock Recreation Area for National Public Lands Day. The event will take place Saturday, September 22 from 8:00 a.m. until ? Volunteers will help build a 5K trail and help maintain an existing nature trail. For more details contact Adam Tarplee at 863-227-3609.

Fill 'er Up!



2,700 trees planted to restore native habitats in Lake O

Recently, South Florida Water Management District oversaw the planting of 2,700 native trees on the rim canal and spoil islands near Clewiston, and at areas near Moore Haven.

Trees plantings ranged in height from 4-8 feet tall, and represented a mix of pond cypress, bald cypress, red maple, swamp bay and Dahoon holly.

Low water levels in the lake have provided ideal conditions to re-establish these trees in their former haunts. Many of Lake Okeechobee's trees were cleared over 100 years ago to create cropland.

By adding native trees where they once grew in abundance, will restore critical habitat to the lake when water levels return to normal.



Plantings at the junction of Route 1 and Route 2

Information was paraphrased from *WaterWorld*, <http://pennwell/printthis.clickability.com/>

Ranger Bailey Participates in Labelle Summer Camp

In the month of June, Park Ranger Richard Bailey completed two interpretative programs for Labelle Summer Camp involving 149 youths ranging in age from 5 to 12 years old. The programs took place at W.P. Franklin Visitor Center and Lock & Dam. Park Ranger Bailey presented information about native and exotic wildlife and fish found in the area of Franklin Lock. Water safety techniques were also discussed and give-away packets were distributed to camp participants. Videos were also presented that addressed lock operations and provided background about the Okeechobee Waterway and history of the Corps of Engineers.



Unwelcomed Gators



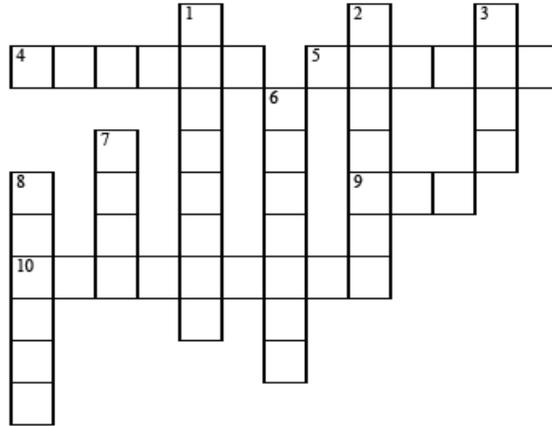
Occasionally, alligators are seen near W.P. Franklin's swim beach and subsequently are removed to protect the public. The alligator shown to the right was found in the driveway of a park host campsite. The 7'4" alligator was dispatched back to the east side of the dam by Park Ranger and Lock staff. Lately, there have been six alligators of



various sizes removed by trappers hired by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Generally, nuisance alligators are removed once they lose fear of people.

Alligators undoubtedly have an intimidating appearance but most are quite wary of people.

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 4 Hardest substance in the body
- 5 FL state cap.
- 9 Herb's embankment
- 10 Sweet grass

DOWN

- 1 Essayons
- 2 An excavating machine
- 3 Young male turkey
- 6 Hotdog plant
- 7 Stout-bodied leaper
- 8 Water holder

* Answers on back page, left column

Nature Shots



Blending of Sky & Water



Gator Climbs into Tilapia Bed

Old Buildings Demolished



After standing for more than 50 years, two government built homes located on the south side of the main office have been leveled. The structures were originally built to house government employees, but in recent years served as an exercise room and provided space for extra storage. Both building sustained significant damage from Hurricane Wilma in 2005, which sealed their recent fate.

W.P. Franklin Projects...



Re-decking of boat-in campsites required removing old boards that succumbed to weathering.



RV parking sites in the North Campground recently have been upgraded from 35 feet to 45 feet to hold longer RV's.



Wooden borders around gravel pads have been replaced with concrete borders to eliminate high maintenance costs of replacing rotten timbers. These borders should also reduce tripping hazards associated with uneven timber placements.



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Clewiston, FL 33440

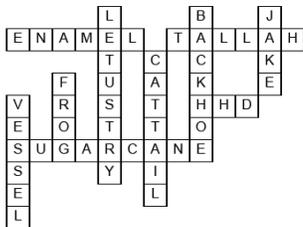
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Help Wanted:

If you would like to contribute ideas, information or photographs to the BigWater News email or phone Michael Boles – newsletter editor:

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Crossword Puzzle



Thank you to the following staff members for their contributions to this month's newsletter:

- Phil Hart
- Art Ruebenson
- Russ Burkett
- Steve Sullivan
- Jim Hammond
- Steve Schneider
- Adam Tarplee
- Tyson Zobrist



Corps of Engineers

Congratulations Congratulations



Mark Abshire recently received a promotion and will officially transfer to the Nashville District on August 4th, though his last day here at SFOO came on July 20. Mark has worked at SFOO for the past eight years. His new duty location is in western Kentucky.

Park Ranger Paula Bratschi has transferred to St. Lucie to be closer to family. She is already being missed as part of the team at the W.P. Franklin Visitor Center.

King of the Castle



Earlier this year, biologist Jeremy Crossland received honors as the SAD NRM Stewardship Employee of the Year.

Just recently, Jeremy has gained even wider recognition for his stellar work ethic by being named the National NRM Stewardship Employee of the Year!

On behalf of the SFOO staff, we would like to thank Jeremy for all of his efforts which make our day-to-day activities so much easier.