



Southwest Florida Environmental News for July 2021

Clarity

Welcome to the July issue of Green Flash!

This month, we take a closer look at proposals to manage the future water flow from Lake Okeechobee, known as the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual. How the water is managed impacts ecosystems, water salinity, and even algal blooms and red tide, across south Florida.

The issue is quite complex and rather muddled for Floridians and newcomers alike.

The issue of Lake Okeechobee water management is one of humans attempting to manage nature. We try to deliver some of the best work on the subject, and hope it inspires readers to do some of their own exploration on the subject.



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Army Corps' Lake O plans

leave questions



AMERICAN LOTUS ON LAKE OKEECHOBEE PHOTO COURTESY FWC

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has proposed six new management plans for Lake Okeechobee to go into effect once the nearly \$2 billion restoration of the aging Herbert Hoover Dike is complete. All of the proposed plans have the lake rising 1.5 feet more than it is currently kept, to over 17 feet. This has some **conservationists** as well as the **Lee County Board of County Commissioners** and **several Florida Congressmen** concerned, seeking more discussion, changes to the proposals, or more time to review the **proposed plans**.

The USACE is hoping to approve by August 4 a **new plan**, which will determine when and how much water is discharged from Lake Okeechobee, and where that water will go.

The volume of the eventual proposal's discharges, especially when it comes to estuary ecosystems, is an underlying concern. The ecosystems are in danger of becoming too brackish if they don't receive enough fresh water, and too filled with nutrient runoff that feeds toxic blue-green algae and red tide algal blooms if they receive too much.

WGCU-FM's show Gulf Coast Life took a **deeper look** at the impact of nutrient runoff from Lake O.

The Florida Department of Health in Lee County continues to urge people and their pets to stay out of the Caloosahatchee River near the Franklin Lock and Dam in Alva due to the continued presence of harmful blue-green algae, despite the repeated application of a product labeled as a pesticide known as Lake Guard Oxy. The product was promoted earlier this month by Governor Ron DeSantis. The News-Press **reports** water quality advocates note that in addition to harming birds and beneficial insects, the product does not address

the root cause of the blooms: nutrients in the water. What's more, long-term exposure to blue-green algae may be **linked to neurodegenerative disorders**.

To learn more about blue-green algae, Captains for Clean Water has a short **educational video**.

There are also several books and articles available on the issue of Lake O. **This piece** from Craig Pittman is an excellent, quick-read primer, and **"The Swamp,"** by Michael Grunwald, is also a very good place to start.

More WGCU Environmental Coverage of Note



BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

PHOTO COURTESY FWC

- We have regular updates on **red tide** and **blue-green algae**.
- A **dog in Palm Beach County** was recently killed by blue-green algae.
- **Manatees are experiencing a mass die-off** in part due to nutrient run-off.



A VIEW OF THE UF/IFAS INDUSTRIAL HEMP PILOT PROJECT

PHOTO COURTESY IFAS

- **Conservationists are gathering signatures** for five rights of nature amendments.
- The **governor has signed a bill** capping impact fees, which conservationists worry will put taxpayers on the hook for developers' infrastructure expenses.
- Is Florida ready for **industrial hemp**?

Read more environmental reporting

Featured Florida Wildlife

Argentine tegu

Meet the Argentine tegu, the pet turned invasive, prohibited species. Here's what to do if you have them in your home as a pet



or in your yard as an unwelcome guest. [LEARN MORE.](#)

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE JOHNSON

Consumer Alert & Solution

Sunscreen is often toxic



SUNSET ON SANIBEL PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS

Bloomberg reports benzene, an industrial solvent and a chemical known to increase the risk of leukemia, has been found in some sunscreens and after-sun skin care products. Johnson & Johnson's Neutrogena line of sun products as well as CVS's after-sun spray were found to contain benzene.

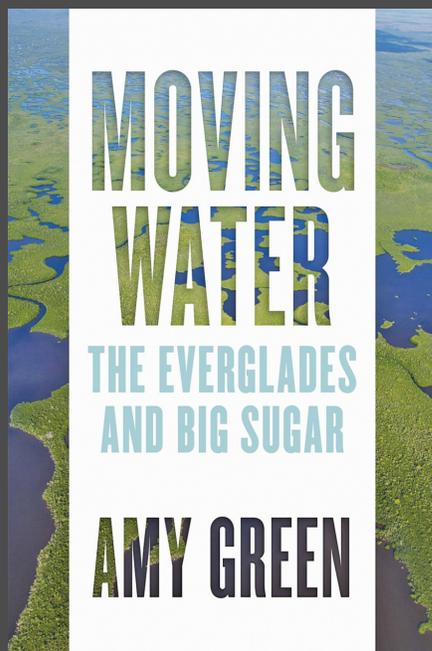
There is no safe level of benzene exposure, according to Philip Landrigan, director of the Global Public Health Program and Global Pollution Observatory at Boston College. **The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has an array of actions to take** if you've been exposed to benzene, including washing the skin thoroughly and detailed steps to take to dispose of your

clothing.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not have clear standards for benzene in sunscreens or hand sanitizers, and FDA spokesperson Jeremy Kahn tells Bloomberg News, “The FDA urges manufacturers to test their ingredients to ensure they meet specifications and are free from harmful contamination.”

Another issue with sunscreen is oxybenzone and octinoxate, which are two ingredients that are supposed to protect the skin, but are devastating to coral.

To protect your skin and the environment, wear clothing and hats, stay in the shade, and go outside early or later in the day. If you must use sunscreen, look for a product containing zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Many of the sunscreens you’ll find at local health food stores will have skin care options that have zinc and not oxybenzone and octinoxate, and hopefully, they’ll be free from benzene too. You can learn more about sunscreens at the Environmental Working Group’s [website](#).



Author Interview

Moving Water: The Everglades and Big Sugar
By Amy Green

WGPU's Gulf Coast Life Book Club host Cary Barbor chats with Amy Green about her new book, *Moving Water*, covering the Everglades, toxic algae, Big Sugar -- and of course, Lake O. Fast forward to about 15:30 to hear the chat.

LISTEN NOW.

Calendar of Events



PHOTO COURTESY DCEFF

WATCH: Environmental shorts for free online at the **Environmental Film Festival** in the Nation's



PHOTO COURTESY AIB

VISIT: Artists in Bloom, a collaborative community art exhibition at **Naples Botanical Garden**,



PHOTO CREATIVE COMMONS

DO: Take your pup to **Dog Beach** in Bonita Springs -- one of

Capital.

through Sept. 6.

Florida's best dog beaches. Be careful not to let your dog drink the water.
14436 Bonita Beach Causeway, Bonita Springs.



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Almost extinct orchid found growing on London office's rooftop

WION Web Team

London, United Kingdom • Published: Jun 15, 2021, 09:07 PM(IST)



SCREEN CAPTURE OF WIONNEWS.COM

Ending on a good note

A thought-to-be-extinct orchid has been found growing on the 11th floor rooftop garden of an office building in London. No one is sure how it got there, but dust from the Sahara, traveling on the wind, might be the reason. [READ MORE](#)

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