

Staff Directory

Keith Andreu, Aquatic Technician
William Colon, Aquatic Technician
Jason Cull, Operations Manager
Jeremy Ford, Aquatic Technician
Dr. David Hoel, Executive Director
Dr. Ernesto Lasso de la Vega, Water Quality Laboratory Manager
Justin Lamb, Aquatic Biologist
Colin Lewis, Aquatic Biologist II
Aaron Lloyd, Assistant Director
Kevin Watts, Deputy Director

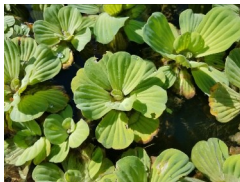


Top Ten Plant Species Treated
In 2024
(acres treated)

- | | |
|--------------------|-----|
| 1. Spatterdock | 785 |
| 2. Water Lettuce | 52 |
| 3. Water Hyacinth | 29 |
| 4. Cattails | 22 |
| 5. Muskgrass | 19 |
| 6. Torpedograss | 14 |
| 7. Water Pennywort | 12 |
| 8. Tapegrass | 8 |
| 9. Spike Rush | 6 |
| 10. Alligatorweed | 3 |



Spatterdock



Water Lettuce



Cattails



Muskgrass

Public Outreach

The Pond Watch Program has continued giving support to residents of Lee County who have storm water ponds. The total number of sites has increased to 130, which represents more than 150 monthly samples analyzed by the Water Quality Laboratory. The information collected by the district is presented to volunteers at the annual Pond Watch Workshop (second Monday in March). Annual reports provide evidence and recommendations for best management practices to minimize adverse conditions in their ponds.

Pond Watch was invited to organize a Citizen Science Workshop at the Florida Lake Management Society Annual Symposium in Bonita Springs, Florida in August. The event invited citizens from neighboring counties who manage storm water ponds. The district was able to organize presentations from experts on the topics ranging from exotic animals to beneficial littoral plants.

The Water Quality Laboratory has continued sampling the Caloosahatchee River from the Franklin Lock to the Moore Haven Lock as part of the monitoring of nutrients and harmful algae blooms, in addition to sources of pollution to the river. FGCU student and LCHCD intern, Caroline Hoel, used the data collected as part of a GIS assignment for class, creating a document showing the phosphorus point source at Pollywog Creek in Hendry County. This work will be presented at the Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership Technical Advisory Committee and can be found at:

[Nutrient & Chlorophyll Concentration: Caloosahatchee River](#)

The district provides support to university (FGCU and FSW) students on their professional development with our internship program. Students work in the laboratory conducting water quality analysis of samples in addition to collecting samples from the river and local water bodies. Many students have applied for jobs referencing this part of their education as practical experience rendering better possibilities for employment with private companies and seeking government careers.



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Lee County Hyacinth Control District

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Executive Director
Dr. David Hoel

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Lee County Hyacinth Control District
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Lehigh Acres, FL 33971

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The gavel has changed hands and the new President of the Florida Aquatic Plant Management Society (FAPMS) is Jason Cull. In just eight short years, Jason has exemplified the standard of hard work, dedication and the astute professionalism recognized from his esteemed colleagues.



Keith Andreu was honored again by the South Florida Plant Management Society Board of Directors and was selected President. This is Keith's second consecutive term professionally representing aquatic plant managers in our region.



William Colon was nominated and selected for the prestigious award of "Plant Manager of the Year" at the 2024 Florida Plant Management Society Annual Conference.



The Florida Lake Management Society recognized Ernesto for his exceptional 33 years of service with this organization and created "The Ernesto Lasso de la Vega" Award. This award is given to professionals who have worked to restore, protect and advance our understanding of Florida's aquatic resources.

The Lee County Hyacinth Control District was formed by an act of the Florida Legislature on June 12, 1961.



Operations

Aquatic vegetation is managed by the application of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - approved herbicides, mechanical harvesting and the use of triploid grass carp. 2024 summaries are as follows:

Chemical Control

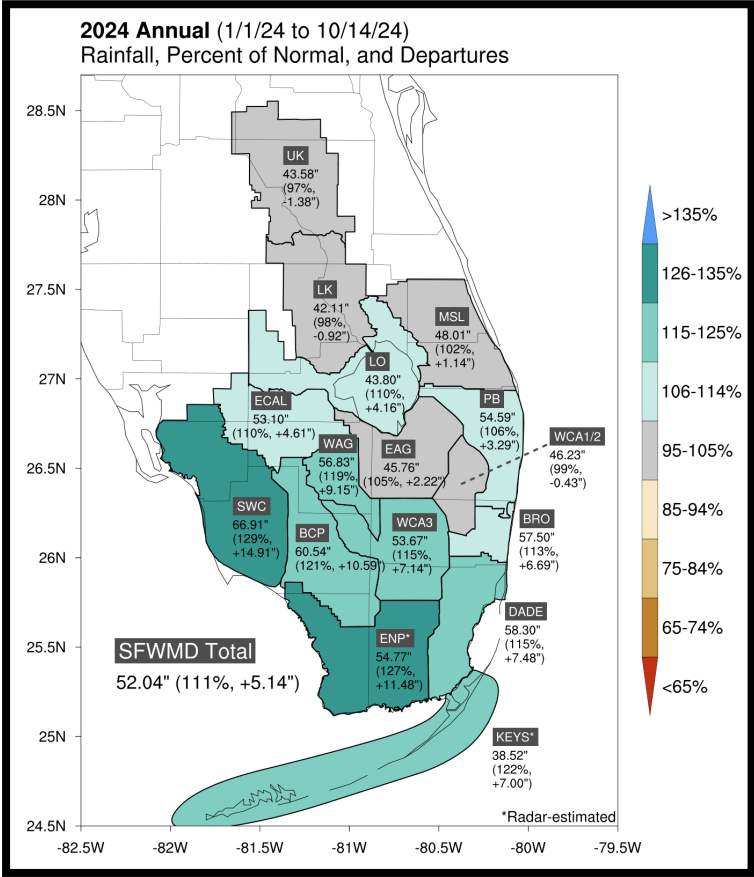
Service Requests - 734
Acres Treated - 962

The geographical jurisdiction of LCHCD includes all of Lee County, the Caloosahatchee River and its tributaries up to the border of Lake Okeechobee in Glades County (28,423 acres managed). The District defines public waters as any waterbody accessible by the general public, or owned as a public resource. Uses of the water may include, but are not limited to, navigation, recreation, fishing, flood control and water supply.

Florida once again was in the crosshairs of an active hurricane season and above normal rainfall. This all attributed to making our jobs a bit more difficult contending with high winds, inclement weather and overly abundant water levels. Never discouraged, our staff continued to battle the elements with a steadfast approach emphasizing our proven integrated aquatic plant management (IAPM) strategy. When things get tough we continue to find a way to get our tasks completed.

The steady influx of heavy summer rains and regional sheet flow impacted aquatic herbicide treatments in large freshwater basins. Fortunately, windows

of opportunity presented themselves whereby our staff adjusted to these conditions with positive results. Coordination with municipalities to reduce water movement aided our efforts to have longer herbicide treatment contact time on targeted aquatic plants which rendered an optimal outcome. Sometimes, integrated plant management plans need to be adjusted midseason to achieve maximum efficacy and long-term control. Understanding the ability to make these changes has given us the confidence to be flexible with our treatment plans without sacrificing our desired (IAPM) goals.



William Colon, Keith Andreu, Jason Cull, Justin Lamb

In May of this year LCHCD staff attended and presented at the Aquatic Weed Control Short Course in Orlando, receiving lots of positive feedback. Florida Aquatic Plant Management Society president-elect Jason Cull gave an excellent presentation on “Using Drones to Evaluate Treatments.” This information provided insight on how we effectively implement aquatic weed treatment results with drones. Also, South Florida Aquatic Plant Management Society president Keith Andreu delivered an in-depth presentation on the ins and outs of “Invert Spray Systems: What’s Old is New.” Invert technology has been around for over 50 years and is still utilized on the forefront for aquatic plant control applications. The nuances associated with operating these spray systems was very well covered by Keith.

The St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement District organized their first aquatic invasive plant management workshop in Slidell, Louisiana. This meeting was comprised of local representatives focused on jurisdictions and mandates to control aquatic invasive plants. LCHCD was asked to be the keynote presenter for this collaborative and educational aquatic plant management workshop. Kevin Watts provided a history and overview of LCHCD’s integrated management program focusing on the best methods of control and effective operational equipment. This was the first step for the St. Tammany folks to coordinate with their constituents and implement an aquatic vegetation plan to issues associated with overlapping jurisdictional areas. LCHCD was privileged to showcase our program and provide other professionals with a different management perspective on aquatic plant control.



Last year, LCHCD hosted a couple of on-site “field trips” of our facility with the aquatic weed managers of Pasco County and St. John’s River Water Management District (SJRWMD). We took these groups into the field and performed chemical applications showcasing our spray drone and invert truck. This year those same folks were able to reciprocate these field trips, but on their home turf.

SJRWMD gave us an eye-opening experience by showing us the vast lakes, river and wetlands they manage via airboats and helicopter. While different in size of their jurisdiction and responsibilities, we were alike in managing public waterways for recreational activities and invasive plant control. Pasco County on the other hand, focused on private waterways and targeted only aquatic weeds that harbored mosquitoes.

These “field trips” offer collaboration efforts on what works well for us and for them. We felt this was a great advantage for both programs to highlight and share professional development techniques and gain hands-on experience from one another.



Biological Control

TGC stocked - 526
Acres stocked with TGC - 1,051



LCHCD manages the use of triploid grass carp (TGC) (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) for the purpose of maintaining optimal levels of submergent vegetation in conjunction with our integrated aquatic plant management program. Field data is collected, analyzed and processed to determine the assessment of stocking rates. Results from stocking triploid grass carp are depicted accordingly in the graph below.

