



JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE ON MERRITT'S MILL POND GRASS MITIGATION

JACKSON COUNTY, FL - July 17, 2023 - Following an assessment meeting on July 10th, the Jackson County staff in collaboration with FWC IPM (Invasive Plant Management) Biologists have provided updates on the Mill Pond Grass Mitigation Project. This meeting was held to visually survey the Mill Pond and evaluate the early results of the Aquathol K treatment administered on June 14th and 15th.

Since the treatment application, the FWC has undertaken both aerial and sonar surveys to ascertain the pre-treatment surface area, as well as the submerged biomass. These comprehensive evaluations were initiated at Jackson Blue Springs, where the treatment was applied, with observations showing significant progress in the elimination of aquatic plants, notably hydrilla, eel grass, and coontail.

The areas previously dominated by hydrilla have shown visible signs of mitigation, with much of the vegetation either dead or dying. In some areas, detached hydrilla has started floating and drifting, a normal occurrence indicating the successful impact of the treatment. This phenomenon is expected to continue as the residual hydrilla dies and detaches downstream.

Moreover, the treatment has resulted in a visibly wider boat path, with much of the pond floor being discernible for a significant length of the channel. This update highlights the positive steps towards the restoration of the pond's natural ecological balance.

This information will be relayed to the research team spearheading the project. Further updates regarding the treatment's success, as well as any potential supplementary treatments, will be duly communicated to the public.

The team has taken note of public suggestions of a small drawdown to "flush" the floating vegetation and aid its flow through the dam. However, such an action could inadvertently expose more submerged vegetation like eel grass, and potentially trap the floating vegetation instead of freeing it. This might cause an opposite effect to what is intended.

For a successful drawdown experiment, it would necessitate a prolonged period of several weeks or a couple of months, to allow the existing grass to lie below the surface, before the pond could be refilled to its full capacity. It's important to note that the team is currently maintaining the water level by holding back as much water as possible, hence raising it above existing vegetation is unfeasible.

Jackson County continues to appreciate public support and patience as the mitigation efforts continue. The primary objective remains to restore the Mill Pond to its optimal ecological balance, while prioritizing environmental safety and long-term sustainability

For more information regarding the Merritt's Mill Pond Grass Mitigation Project and a history of our process to this date, you can visit our website's "Public Notices" page to find past press releases about the issue. <https://jacksoncountyfl.gov/announcements/>

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About Jackson County, FL Board of County Commissioners:

The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners is the governing body of Jackson County, Florida consisting of 5 elected officials representing the County's 5 Districts. It is committed to serving the community through effective governance, economic development, public safety, and environmental sustainability.

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