



JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jackson County Advocacy and Action for Merritt's Mill Mitigation

Jackson County, FL – The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners remains steadfast in its commitment to preserving the natural beauty and ecological health of **Merritt's Mill Pond**. This treasured recreational and natural resource is currently facing challenges from the invasive hydrilla grass. Although Merritt's Mill Pond falls under State jurisdiction, the County has actively partnered with the State and tirelessly advocated for effective mitigation efforts.

Mitigation Efforts Overview

Since March 2022, the County has worked diligently alongside State partners to implement a multi-faceted approach to hydrilla control. Key actions have included:

- **Herbicide Treatments:** Non-toxic herbicides, including ProcellaCOR, Aquathol K, and Diquat, have been applied to manage the hydrilla without harming wildlife or humans.
- **Biological Controls:** Introduction of triploid grass carp, which feed on hydrilla, to help naturally control the plant's growth.
- **Mechanical Harvesting:** Contracting mechanical harvesting companies to remove hydrilla and other invasive plants, improving boat traffic and overall waterway health.
- **Research and Monitoring:** Collaborating with the University of Florida for dye studies and ongoing monitoring to determine the optimal herbicide application rates and ensure effective long-term management.

State Jurisdiction and Funding

Merritt's Mill Pond is a State-owned and regulated waterway, meaning the County relies heavily on State action and funding for mitigation efforts. Despite these limitations, the local government has been a vocal advocate for prioritizing the pond's health. The State has already spent over \$200,000 on mitigation efforts in 2024 alone, demonstrating a significant financial commitment to this cause.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, the County and State partners have planned several critical actions to continue addressing the hydrilla issue:

- **August 2024:** Additional applications of Aquathol K & Diquat and introduction of more grass carp to sustain control efforts.
- **September 2024:** Scheduled skimming operations using a cutter boat to manage floating vegetation and clear the waterway.

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Commitment to Community and Environment

Jackson County understands the importance of Merritt's Mill Pond to our residents and visitors. While direct regulatory control is outside the County's jurisdiction, we remain dedicated to advocating for and supporting State-led initiatives to restore and maintain the pond's ecological balance. Regular updates will be provided as new developments occur.

We appreciate the community's support and patience as we continue to work towards restoring Merritt's Mill Pond to its optimal ecological state.

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