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# Lake Apopka

**A FACT SHEET**

**FOR**

**PUBLIC**

**MEETINGS**



Until the 1950's, Lake Apopka attracted national attention as a bass fishing lake. Now, Lake Apopka attracts state-wide attention as a prime example of cultural eutrophication. In less than a generation, the collective activities of man have changed the lake from a natural resource of economic and aesthetic value to a pollution problem of complex and expensive solutions.

This brochure is intended to serve as an informational aid for concerned citizens. Information compiled here has been drawn from technical reports, public meetings and historical records so that those with an interest in the restoration of Lake Apopka will better understand the complexity of such a project.

## DESCRIPTION:

- Florida's fourth largest lake.
- Average depth 6.5 feet.
- 31,000 surface acres of water, 51 square miles.
- Located 15 miles northwest of Orlando, straddling the border of Lake and Orange counties.
- Headwaters of the Oklawaha River, a tributary of the St. Johns River.
- Connected to Lakes Beauclair, Dora, Eustis and Griffin.

## PRESENT CONDITION:

- Extreme eutrophication.
- Perpetual algal blooms.
- Extreme turbidity.
- Most rooted vegetation gone.
- Rough fish dominant species.
- Extensive organic deposits on bottom, over 50 feet in some areas.
- Twenty-five percent of bottom has six feet or more of muck.

## MAJOR CAUSES FOR CONDITION:

- Sewage discharge from Winter Garden.
- Irrigation discharge from muck farms.
- Discharge from citrus processing operations.
- Decomposition of aquatic plants.
- Decomposition of aquatic animals.

## RESTORATION

### PUBLIC CONCERNS:

- Will there be degradation of downstream waters?
- Will there be damage to citrus groves?
- What amount of economic loss can commercial fishermen and fish camp operators expect?
- Will irrigation water be available?
- What loss of fish and wildlife is anticipated?
- Will water quality improve without restoration?
- How lasting will restoration be?
- Will a drawdown concentrate toxins or harmful bacteria in the remaining water and increase health dangers?

### TEMPORARY SIDE-EFFECTS:

- Nuisance algal blooms.
- Loss of some plant and animal life.
- Decline of water quality.
- Odor problems.
- Hardships for anglers and fish camp operators.

### BENEFITS:

- Reversal of lake's eutrophic condition.
- Reduction in algal blooms.
- Improvement in water quality.
- Improvement in shoreline and nearshore habitat.
- Re-establishment of game fish populations.
- Decrease in rough fish populations.
- Return of aesthetic and recreational resource.
- Economic gains for fish camp operators and surrounding communities.



## CHRONOLOGY:

- 1922-27: Discharge of sewage effluent from Winter Garden begins.
- 1924: Discharge of waste water from citrus operations begins.
- 1942: Discharge from muck farms begins.
- 1947: Hurricane destroys large amounts of bottom vegetation, September.  
First algal bloom reported, October.
- 1948: Discharge of waste water from citrus concentrate operations begins.  
Chemical control of water hyacinths begins.  
Apopka-Beauclair Canal opens.
- 1948-50: Rooted vegetation disappears.  
Frequent algal blooms appear.
- 1950-55: Recreational fishing peaks.
- 1952: Control structure in Apopka-Beauclair Canal stabilizes water level in lake.
- 1957: Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) samplings reveal a dominant rough fish population.
- 1957-59: GFC conducts shad poisonings, killing 20 million lbs. of rough fish.
- 1963: Natural fish kill results in death of 10-20 million lbs. of rough fish, 4.5 million lbs. game fish.
- 1970: GFC samplings reveal continued dominance of rough fish in species population.
- 1971: Department of Pollution Control experimental drawdown.
- 1976: Abatement of discharge from muck farms begins.
- 1977: Discharge from citrus concentrate operations ends.  
Construction of three-step sewage treatment plant by Winter Garden begins.

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