

SAVE OUR LAKES



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DISTRICT APPROVES BLACK CREEK CONST. CONTRACT

On July 12, 2022, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Governing Board voted to approve the execution of a contract to construct the first phase of the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project. This includes a water pump station and intake structure between Penney Farms and Camp Blanding off State Road 16 in Clay County.

"The Black Creek project is a result of years of collaboration between the District, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, local governments, utilities, and other interested stakeholders like the Save Our Lakes Organization," said SJRWMD Executive Director Mike Register. While the primary goal of the project is to increase recharge to the Upper Floridan aquifer, it will also raise lake water levels and help Lakes Brooklyn and Geneva meet their SJRWMD adopted minimum water levels.



Lake Brooklyn, Google Earth, 1999. We fully expect that by 2026, the lake will be at (and will generally maintain) this new "normal high."

Water from Black Creek will be pumped through a 17-mile pipeline, eventually discharging into a passive treatment system that will remove color and minor nutrients. From there, the water will flow into Alligator Creek and ultimately Lake Brooklyn where recharge to the aquifer will occur through the lake bottom. While the amount of water pumped each day will vary, depending on the water level in Black Creek, the maximum amount of water diverted will not exceed 10 million gallons per day. To ensure the protection of natural resources within the creek, pumping will only occur when there is sufficient flow available in the creek.

"I am thrilled to see this project become a reality," said SJRWMD Board Chair and former Senator representing Clay County, Rob Bradley. "For those of us who grew up in Clay County, we've seen firsthand the drastic changes in our lake levels over the past few decades. This project will help us address that and more, all while protecting Florida's natural systems." Project funding is from legislative appropriations, utilities contributions and district funds. Construction completion is expected in 2024

This article is based on the July 14, 2022 issue of the SJRWMD "Water News" waternews@sjrwmd.com. To learn even more, visit www.sjrwmd.com/projects/#black-creek.

Next SOLO meeting: 7PM, SEPTEMBER 13 at the First Baptist Church. We'll have updates on the Black Creek Project and more! Look for meeting signs posted around Keystone

SAVE OUR LAKES ORGANIZATION, INC.

P.O. BOX 185, KEYSTONE HEIGHTS, FL 32656

EMAIL: save-our-lakes@comcast.net - **WEBPAGE:** www.saveourlakes.org

President: Vivian James — **Vice President:** Chandler Rozear — **Secretary/Treasurer:** Susan Welsh

Board Members: Webb Farber, Glenda Harper, Scott Slater, Dr. Pat Welsh

The Lake Recovery Journey

Here's some of the "How we got here" background from Vivian, Chandler, Webb and others.

By the late 1970s early 1980s, the decline of the lakes was clearly not part of what had long been thought to be a "7 Year Cycle". Lake Geneva resident, Rodney Bamford, armed with charts, graphs and photographs, campaigned far and wide for relief. The Lake Brooklyn Civic Association (LBCA) was formed in 1995 by Chester Moody and Philip & Judy Baumgardner with the recovery of their beloved lakes as its mission.

The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) was established in 1974. It adopted the original Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) for Lakes Brooklyn and Geneva in 1996. The MFL for Brooklyn was 99.9 ft NAVD88 (1988 North American Vertical Datum) and for Geneva, 97.4 ft NAVD88. (Note: Since it was set L. Geneva has never met that elevation .) The LBCA met with the SJRWMD numerous times to discuss the impacts of regional development on the Lakes. Though individual's understanding of the Lakes' hydrology varied, most in the LBCA agreed that the Lakes' low levels were at least partially due to something other than lack of rain.

Lakes Brooklyn and Geneva are a part of the Etonia Chain of Lakes with headwaters in Camp Blanding in a sand ridge area that began to be mined in 1949 for the minerals used to produce Titanium Dioxide. These lakes are connected by Alligator Creek. In the mid-1990s, LBCA worked to get Alligator Creek surveyed. These surveys showed significant elevation issues blocking or impeding flow in Alligator Creek. Permits were issued between 1994-97 allowing the clear out of the blockages in Alligator Creek and, coupled with El Nino rainfall in 1997, water began to flow and Lake Brooklyn even discharged water downstream filling Keystone Lake! This was great news for the community, but it didn't solve the real problem and the water level was down again in short order.

In the late 1990s-early 2000s, Tampa Hydro-Geologist, Peter Schreuder, was hired to study the area lakes' problems and present a plan for recovery. The Schreuder Report proposed six options, all aimed at improving the flow in Alligator Creek and suggesting a combination of three options for the best results. Two of the options were completed: (1) Opened up a portion of a berm located at the headwaters of Alligator Creek

inside Camp Blanding; and, (2) Installed a pipeline connecting the Southwest Quadrant Lake (a man-made lake in the mined area also located at the headwaters of Alligator Creek) to Blue Pond (the first and most northern lake in the Etonia Chain of Lakes). An additional study, required to continue with the third option, was never funded.

In 2000, the Lake Region Council Association (LRCA) (also known as the Lake Region Civic Association) was formed to also work on lake level issues. On April 21, 2009 the Lake Region Council Association changed its name to more accurately reflect its purpose and became the Save Our Lakes Organization, Inc. (SOLO). Vivian Katz became the President of SOLO in August 2009.

The Water Districts are required by the State to set MFL's for certain significant water bodies. These "Minimum Flows and Levels" are to be protective of the water body and ensure that it is "not harmed" by either lack of rain or pumping from the Aquifer. A breach of the MFL requires corrective action on the part of the District. In 2010 the District sought to reevaluate Geneva and Brooklyn's MFLs and, supported by its major consumptive use permit (CUP) holders, the Utilities, proposed dropping the lakes already unmet MFLs by an additional 15 ft. The proposed lowered MFLs were presented to the Governing Board for adoption. Board member Mariyam H. Ghyabi-White asked the presenter if the proposed MFLs had been shown to the people in Keystone Heights. The answer was, "No." Thus the long struggle to save our lakes began a more urgent and consequential phase. There were heroes along the way. SOLO board members, Dr. Pat Welsh, who didn't back down while calling for a transient 3-D Model to be used as per USGS requirements to model the lake region and Webb Farber, who has a sixth sense for detecting faulty math and scientific calculations. Vivian Katz-James was never afraid to "work the room," make a personal contact or a call to support the SOLO cause. Dr. Ann Shortelle, who, as District Executive Director, raised the professional stature of the District staff. She followed through with the science required to accurately determine appropriate MFLs and stood up to the utilities to bring them to the table to participate in a solution for the lakes. General Douglas Burnett, whose steady hand on the District Governing Board, first as a member and even more so as its Chairman, infused the Board with a "Pull the chocks and fly the

SJRWMD GOVERNING BOARD Mtg. 10:00 AM Tues.,08/09/2022 at the Palatka Office
VERIFY on website: www.sjrwmd.com/governingboard/ (Live Streaming is available)

mission” attitude. In October 2015, Keystone City Manager, Scott Kornegay, organized the Keystone Heights Water Summit which was attended by representatives from the water management districts, Federal, State and Local officials and representatives of several utilities. SOLO brought Peter Schreuder in to address the group and a wide range of ideas and concepts were discussed at length. One of the attendees was State Senator Rob Bradley of Clay County who caught a vision for what the lakes could be again and, working with his colleagues in the State Legislature, secured the funding that made the Black Creek Water Resource Project possible.

Through it all SOLO kept showing up at meetings, reviewing Draft MFLs for the lakes, carefully listening and then explaining the reasons for our concerns when what was proposed

did not protect the lakes as it should. At long last an MFL document that was protective of the lakes was agreed upon and accepted by the Governing Board. The lakes were legally declared to be “in recovery” which then required the District to move forward with actions leading to the restoration of the lakes and ultimately, the recharge of the Floridan Aquifer.

With Rob Bradley, first as a member of the Governing Board, then its Vice-Chairman and now it’s Chairman, the Governing Board now is moving forward with the intention of protecting Florida’s water future. With Mike Register as the new Executive Director, the District Staff has been reenergized. Their priority is the Black Creek Water Resource Project and soon water will again be filling our lakes and flowing into the Floridan Aquifer. **Our thanks to all who’ve worked so hard!**



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Correction!

1 Acre-foot of water equals 325,828 gallons **NOT** 360,000 gallons as was erroneously stated in the July 2022 Newsletter. Thanks and a tip of the hat to Mike Bell, P.E.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION and RENEWAL FORM

Cut, copy or send the whole page!

(Please Check) **RENEWAL** **NEW MEMBER**

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SEND MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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PLEASE SEND THIS FORM ALONG WITH YOUR ANNUAL DUES CHECK FOR \$25.00 PAYABLE TO:

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SOLO WEBSITE www.saveourlakes.org

You can get information as well as communicate with us through our website: www.saveourlakes.org or our email: save-our-lakes@comcast.net. Our newsletter comes out once a month by email and US Mail (usually the first week of the month). **Please feel free to check us out!**

Save Our Lakes Organization, Inc.
P.O. Box 185
Keystone Heights, FL 32656



Logo by: *Graham E. Kestner*

Next meeting: 7PM, SEPT 13 at the First Baptist Church. We'll have updates on the Black Creek Project and more! Look for meeting signs posted around Keystone Heights. Get your Shots & Boosters!

NEWSLETTER PRINTING BY FABCO-AIR. THANK YOU, FABCO-AIR!

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Lake Geneva 7/11/22: 91.61 FT
(Down 0.10 FT from 6/13/22)

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