

Orange Lake Stakeholder Engagement

Orange Lake is challenging to manage due to its wide shallow bottom contours, dramatically changing water levels due to a direct link to the Florida Aquifer, rich organic sediment, drifting islands of vegetation, human-induced changes to hydrology, and long history of recreational and financial importance to local communities. A large number of stakeholders (>150) have a wide range of interests in Orange Lake and its associated resources.

The conflicting needs of different user groups must be considered as possible future management actions are developed. The dynamic nature of Orange Lake habitats requires an adaptive approach to management. A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) is being facilitated and written by Normandeau Associates under contract from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The HMP development process is designed to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to provide input to the HMP, while ensuring that the HMP provides a clear, achievable roadmap for future management activities at Orange Lake.

Guiding Principles

Stakeholder engagement will be guided by these principles: honesty, fairness, transparency, and facilitator neutrality.

FWC and Normandeau are committed to engaging stakeholders in the HMP development process. This will be accomplished through stakeholder interviews and communications, public meetings, an online survey, a field trip, and a stakeholder comment resolution report as an appendix in the HMP.

Promise to Stakeholders

The Normandeau project team promises to provide opportunities for stakeholders to provide input into development of the FWC Orange Lake HMP. We promise to consider all stakeholder input and recommendations for lake management goals, objectives, and actions. We promise to address and balance, where feasible, the needs of all stakeholder groups and FWC habitat management guidelines for the lake.

FWC is committed to an HMP that consists of stakeholder supported management actions that are within FWC's jurisdiction.

Stakeholder Level of Participation

The Normandeau project team will be asking stakeholders to describe their thoughts and concerns about Orange Lake management. Stakeholder input will be used to inform the HMP. The team will work to get input from stakeholders that represent as many of the interests in Orange Lake as feasible.

Decision making on content of the HMP will ultimately be FWC's responsibility. The Normandeau project team will incorporate stakeholder input into several drafts of the plan. FWC will review, provide comment on, and approve each draft of the plan after considering 1) the feasibility of recommended actions, 2) FWC's ability to implement recommended actions, 3) whether recommended actions are within FWC jurisdiction, and 4) whether actions are consistent with the FWC Orange Lake Habitat Management Guidelines.