



## Lake Okeechobee Releases SLR/IRL 2013

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch photographer/Ed Lippisch pilot



Since the 1920s, Lake Okeechobee has been attached to the St Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon through C-44. A tipping point was reached this year; change must come.



## Dark Waters

Sewall's' Point and Sailfish Point near the St Lucie Inlet show releases from canals & Lake Okeechobee. Lake releases began on 5-8-13 and ended on 10-21-13. It was the "Lost Summer." The releases brought 136 billions gallons of non SLR basin, polluted, water into the estuary; 72 tons of phosphorus; 687 tons of nitrogen; and 15 million pounds of suspended sediment. (FOS, Mark Perry) The release water coming into the SLR moved as far north in the IRL as the Ft Pierce Inlet.





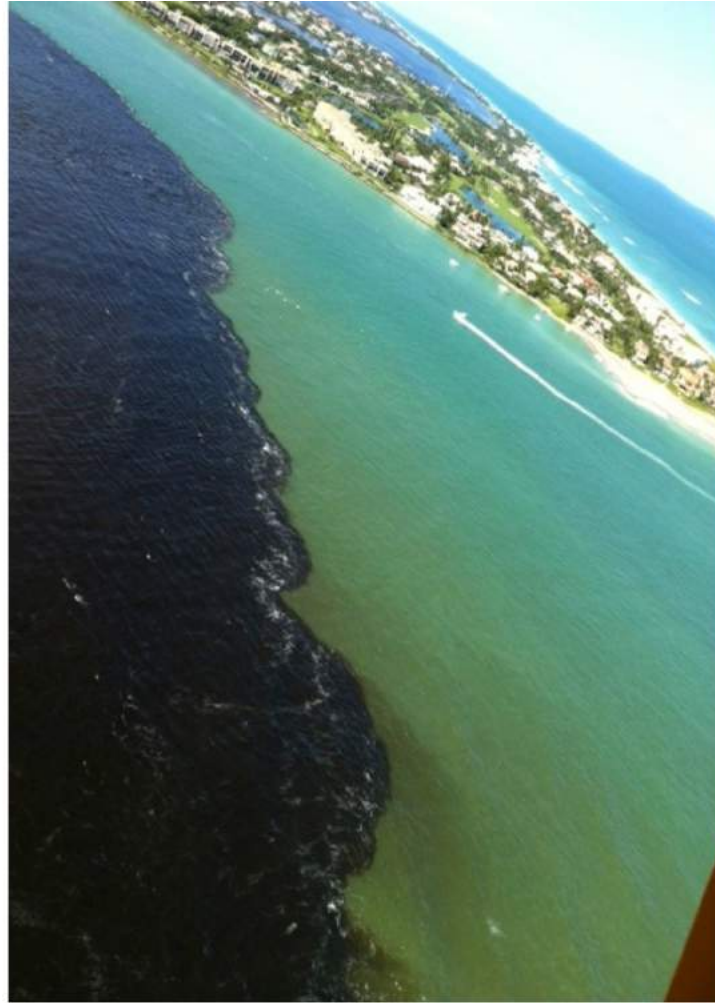
L-R Crossroads; Jupiter Island, plume over protected reefs; St Lucie Inlet, far, and close up.



Plume along Jupiter Island 20 miles south. Next page: Sewall's Point and Sailfish Point's 700 acres of seagrasses completely covered by dark, silty water; beach protest; IRL/Nettles Island in St Lucie County; St Lucie Inlet in Martin County.



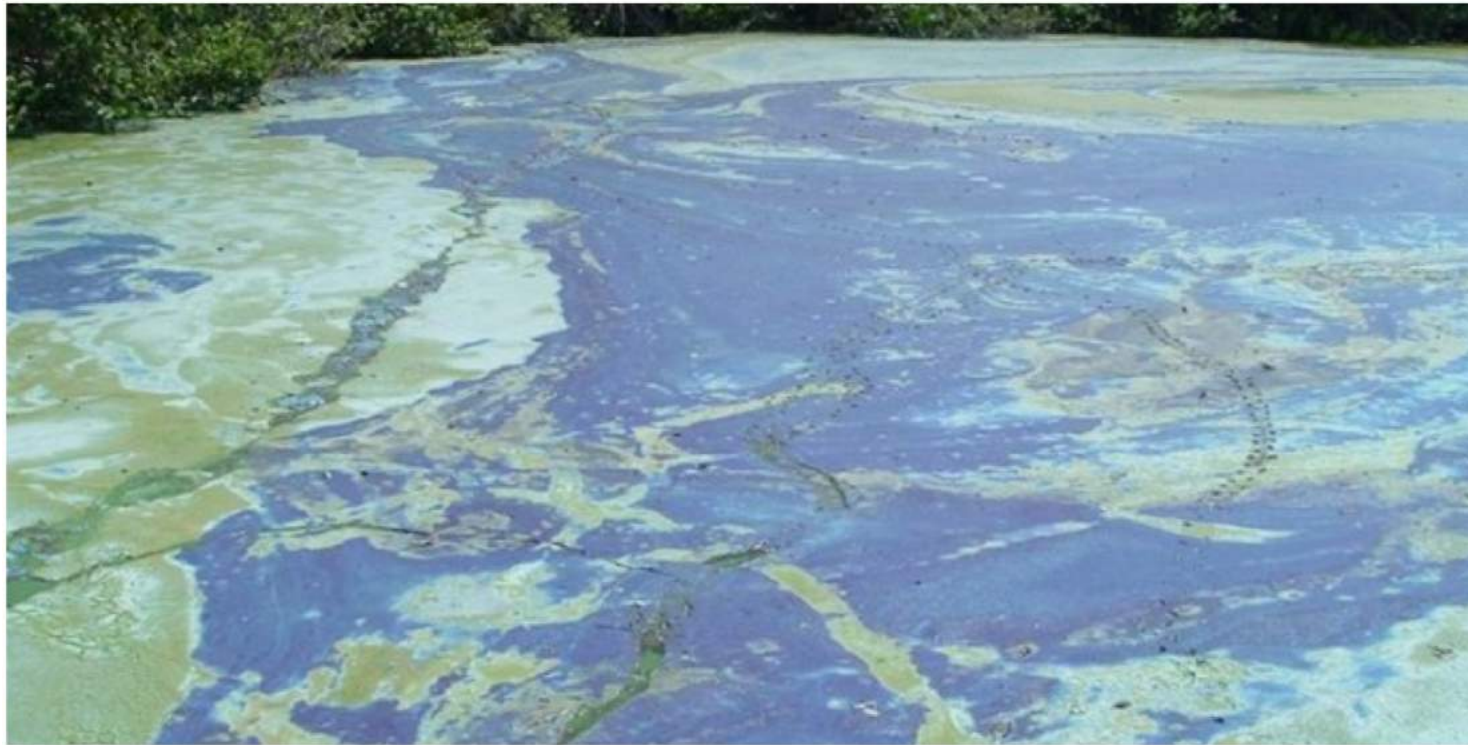




St Lucie Inlet and Sailfish Point, plume mostly from Lake Okeechobee. Next page: Toxic algae; protest signs form the public's 5000 people event at St Lucie Locks and Dam.







Toxic algae came and went throughout the hot summer months. Contact with the water was forbidden by the health department. Blue-green algae had been documented in Lake Okeechobee when releases began (FOS). (Photo Mary Radabaugh/St Lucie Marina)



100% of oysters were lost due to low salinity; up to 85% of seagrass was lost; wildlife left or died; children could not swim; camps were cancelled; tourism and local businesses suffered.



Dark plume slugs through the St Lucie Inlet and around Jupiter Narrows; Indian River Drive/ IRL in St Lucie County.





## Sewall's Point

Sewall's Point is surrounded by the St Lucie River on the west side and the Indian River Lagoon on the east; its real estate is considered some of the most desirable in the county. From May-October 2013, these usually beautiful waters were dark as coffee and full of suspended sediment and often toxic algae.

Selling waterfront real estate in such an environment is impossible.

For families living along the river and visiting friends, fishing was discouraged not only because brackish water fish had left the area, and the water was rancid, but because breathing around the water could cause respiratory problems; who would want to breathe or eat fish around these waters? Would you?



The people protested by the thousands with local politicians by their side...

## St Lucie County

St Lucie County's Taylor Creek area is not connected to Lake Okeechobee but also experienced terrible runoff releases from C-25. Also canals C-23 and C-24 added to the destruction of the river in both Martin and St Lucie Counties. Approx. 40% of the fresh water coming into the SLR/IRL came from Lake O and 60% came from the local canals & runoff. We have enough problems with out releases from Lake Okeechobee.







The plume from Lake Okeechobee went all the way south to Jupiter Island as well as over the protected near shore reefs along the coast. (Photo Scott Kuhns)

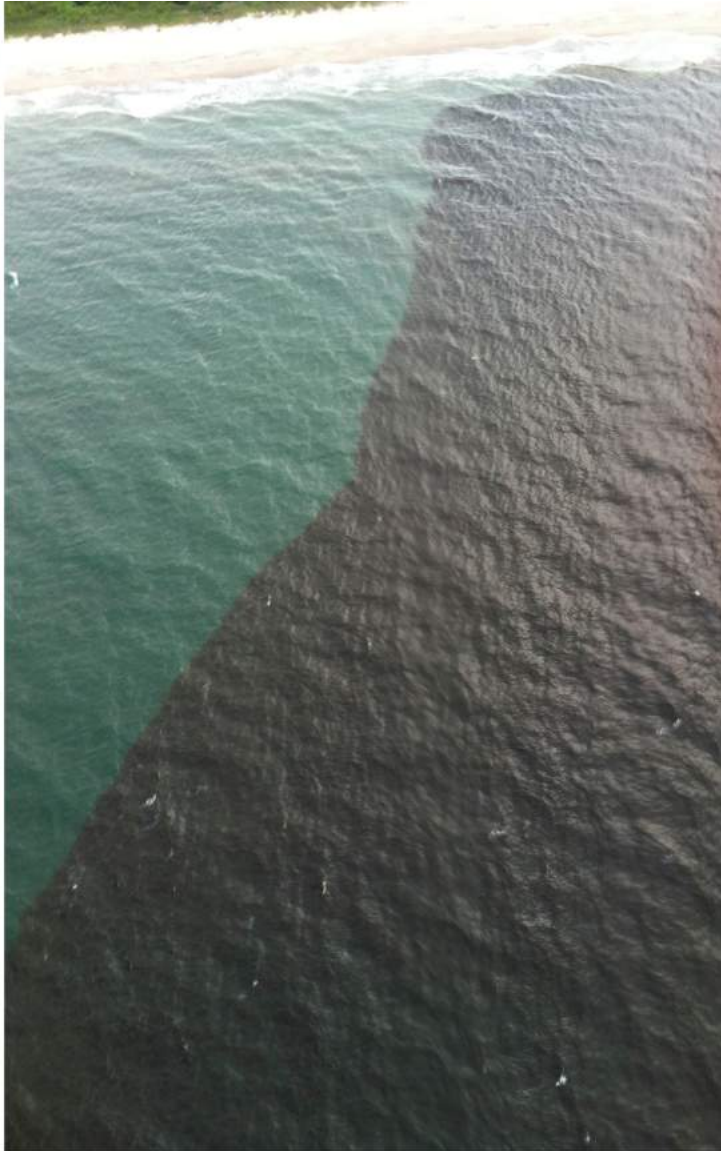


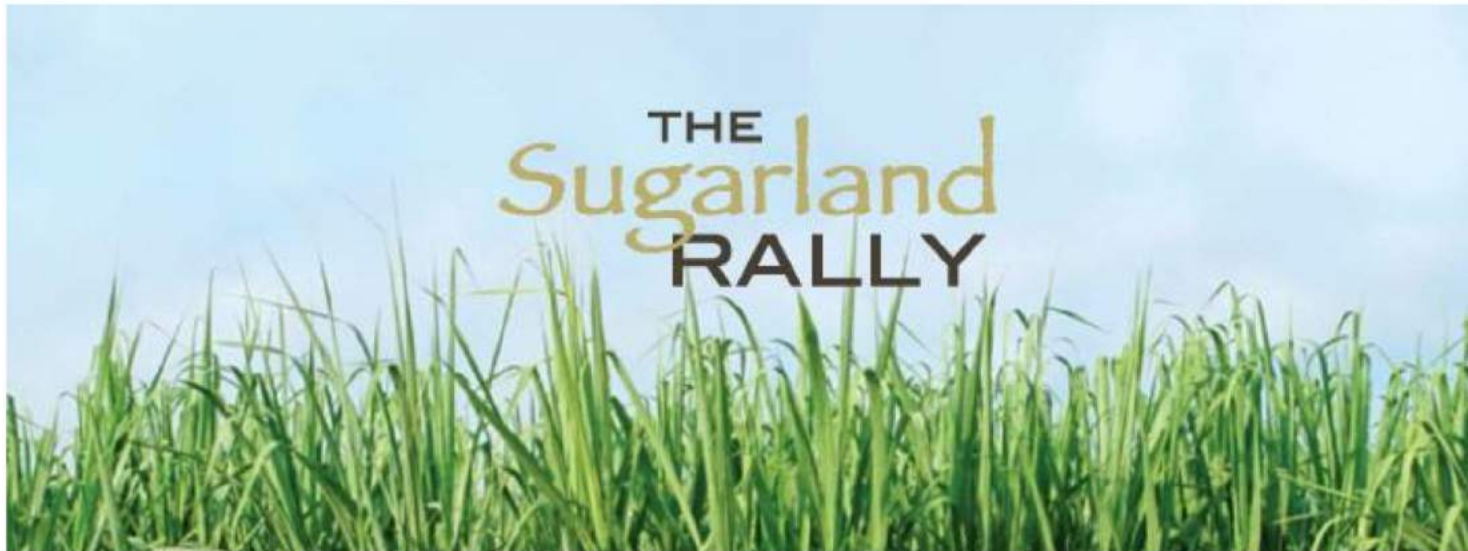
The Sandbar, a popular weekend gathering area for boaters, became off limits due to high bacteria levels from an overabundance of fresh water. Septic tanks and runoff add to this.



Million dollar real estate surrounded by algae blooms is not good for sales. (Photos by Gary Hendry and David Stone). Next page: Roosevelt area, and close up of plume in ocean.







The Sugarland Rally was held in Clewiston to unify east and west and to bring those who live south of the lake into the conversation. The Caloosahatchee River is also devastated by the releases from Lake Okeechobee and those south of the lake live in fear of breaching.

## River Kidz speak out too

Young Celia Traylor went to Washington DC with her family on behalf of the river... She and others like her are depending on our legislative delegation and state and national politicians to work harder on issues of river health. Celia and one day her children, and their grand children will look back. We want them to be proud. Progress was made this year but so much more is needed. Lake Okeechobee is 730 square miles. So much water must be stored north and flow south of the lake if we are to save the Indian River Lagoon.







River Kidz went to Washington DC to support legislation for the SLR/IRL



## Politicians For the Future

Veronica Dalton, River Kidz member, speaks before 5000 people at the River Protest, St Lucie Locks and Dam, 2013.



Made on a Mac