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**Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission**
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Public meeting to provide updates on Kissimmee Chain invasive plant management

Invasive plant management on the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes will be the focus of a public meeting in Kissimmee on Tuesday, Feb. 22 from 6 to 8 p.m. The meeting will be held on the fourth floor of the Osceola County Commission Chambers in the Administrative Building at 1 Courthouse Square.

This is a dual-purpose meeting. It will provide updates on recent invasive plant control on lakes in the Kissimmee Chain by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the South Florida Water Management District. It is also a follow-up to a Dec. 12 public meeting where the FWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave an update and answered questions on the hydrilla treatment program implemented last November.

The FWC, the South Florida Water Management District, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the University of Florida will present information on hydrilla management activities, herbicide monitoring reports and herbicide registration, and an update on snail kite nesting activity.

These agencies implemented an adaptive approach to hydrilla treatment to help protect the endangered Everglade snail kite by increasing the bird's access to its food source, namely apple snails. The kite has lost most of its historic nesting and feeding habitat in South Florida because of drought and floods, and, in the

past few years, many have moved north to Lake Tohopekaliga – Toho, for short.

In October, at the first meeting held by the FWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the new treatment plans, biologists detailed how hydrilla provides a food source and a structure on which apple snails climb to the surface of the water, where the Everglade snail kite can eat them. Abundant hydrilla and apple snails make Lake Toho one of the best areas in the state for snail kites to find plenty of food and to nest.

As a result, the FWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are taking extra precautions when controlling hydrilla in Lake Toho this winter and spring, to help the dwindling population of snail kites. These agencies are working to balance the needs of this endangered species with the needs of the people and businesses that use the lake or depend on it for their income.

For more information on the meeting, please contact Ed Harris at 407-858-6170.

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