

# A good scrubbing for Alligator Lake–

June 22, 2019



Kudos to FWC for not putting more poison in this lake. Everyone wins when we use mechanical harvesting for aquatic weeds instead of chemicals.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

---

# A good scrubbing for Alligator Lake

By NICK ANSCHULTZ

Special to the Reporter

Friday & Saturday, June 21 & 22, 2019

It's not a dig. That's what Robert Perry, owner of Perry Construction Co. of Micanopy, said of the aquatic plant harvest that began late last month at Alligator Lake. Patrick McCord is a biologist for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. He said tussocks – similar to floating islands of vegetation – are the main focus of the project.

Tussocks rise and fall with the water levels and can contain other types of aquatic plants within them. Alligator weed and cupscale grass are some of the other plants being removed from the lake, McCord said. In order to get control of the weeds, Perry's company is using two kinds of equipment. The first is a pair of excavators with lake buckets attached to the front. These buckets are made with holes so when it goes down to scoop up weeds, water has a place to escape, Perry said.

The second piece of machinery is an aquatic weed harvester.

Similar to an underwater weed eater, this mechanism has a conveyor on the front that can scoop up anything in its path. The main area being harvested is the north end of the lake behind the Florida Department of Transportation building.



An excavator on Thursday compresses weeds and muck collected from Alligator Lake. The weeds and muck were later loaded into a dump truck and removed.

So far, the project is half done with more than 2,500 yards hauled out of the area, Perry said. In total, 5,000 yards of material will be removed and taken for proper disposal. For this job, the muck and weeds being taken away is going on a piece of private property.

Whatever happens after that is up to the landowner, McCord said. Usually it is turned into a variety of agricultural resources. As of now, Perry said he and his team are fighting low water. The lake is down 2 to 3 feet because of minimal rain in the area.

The estimated completion date for the project is Wednesday. When it's all over, Alligator Lake will be an improved habitat for fisheries, McCord said. The removal of floating mats on the surface allows sunlight and oxygen back into the lake, creating a healthier environment for the whole ecosystem.



Photos by TONY BRITT/Lake City Reporter a worker operates an aquatic harvester to collect alligator weed, cupscale grass and more from the surface of alligator Lake on Thursday.