

Merritt Island Hunt Impoundment Conditions

November 1, 2016

The summer of 2016 was hot and dry, but the rains eventually came and the impoundments filled with fresh water. As of November 1st, most of the impoundments are still in the early stages of submerged aquatic vegetation growth. However, water level and salinity conditions are favorable for production of a good crop of duck food this winter.

The big story this season was Hurricane Matthew. Fortunately the storm stayed off the coast and spared us from what could have been catastrophic damage. The impoundments on south end of the Mosquito Lagoon (Area 2) took a hard hit as a surge of water over washed the levees and stripped away the base of Biolab Road. The Beach Impoundments (Area 3) all survived but high water and wave action further eroded the levees where boats cross into the impoundments. The impoundments in Hunt Areas 1 and 4 have some damage from erosion to the levees but the seasonal waterfowl hunter access points will be open. Check the Merritt Island NWR website for updates on road closures and access restrictions.

The following is a brief summary of habitat conditions within individual impoundments opened to waterfowl hunting. Water levels and salinity for November 2015 are included for comparison.

- Biolab (T-27A) - Current water level = 2.1, salinity 14 ppt (1.6, 18ppt 11/2015). Biolab was dry for much of the summer but now has plenty water and should produce good submerged aquatic vegetation. Biolab Road is currently closed due to storm damage. Check the Merritt Island NWR website for guidance on access and updates on road closures.
- Max Hoeck Creek (T-27B) - Current water level = 2.0, salinity 10 ppt (1.7, 25 ppt 11/2015). Max Hoeck Creek was dry for much of the summer but now has plenty water and should produce good submerged aquatic vegetation. Access may be limited due to storm damage. Check the Merritt Island NWR website for guidance on access and updates on road closures.

- Eddy Creek Impoundment (T-38) - Current water level = 2.3, salinity 25 ppt. This impoundment was managed as open last year after a water control structure failed. The structure has recently been replaced and the impoundment is currently holding plenty of water. Salinity is above the target level, but not too high to grow some widgeon grass before the ducks get here. As of November 1st, Eddy Creek Boat Ramp is closed due to storm damage. Check the Merritt Island NWR website for guidance on access and updates on road closures.
- East Gator Creek (T-24B) - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 10 ppt (1.7, 20 ppt 11/2015). Current water level and salinity favor the growth of widgeon grass but as of November 1st the impoundment has not topped out.
- Catfish Creek (T-24C) - Current water level = 1.9, salinity 6 ppt (1.7, 0 ppt 23/2015). Conditions have remained good all year and there is plenty of submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Peacock's Pocket (T-24D) - Current water level = 2.0, salinity 0 ppt (1.8, 21 ppt 11/2015). Conditions have remained good all year and there is plenty of submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Gator Creek - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 1 ppt (1.7, 20 ppt 10/2015). Current habitat conditions are good and there is plenty submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Shiloh 5 - Current water level = 2.1, salinity 5 ppt (2.1, 1 ppt 11/2015). Target salinities and water levels were reached late but current conditions favor good production of submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Shiloh 3 - Current water level = 1.9, salinity 8 ppt (2.0, 3 ppt 11/2015). Target salinities and water levels were reached late but current conditions favor good production of submerged aquatic vegetation.

- Shiloh 2 - Current water level = 1.9, salinity 8 ppt (2.0, 6 ppt 11/2015). Current habitat conditions are good and there is plenty submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Shiloh 1 - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 20 ppt (1.8, 10 ppt, 11/2015). Current salinity is above target level but habitat conditions are fair.
- M Pond - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 10 ppt (1.8, 6 ppt 11/2015). Target salinities and water levels were reached late but current conditions favor good production of submerged aquatic vegetation.
- L Pond - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 8 ppt (1.7, 11 ppt 11/2015). Target salinities and water levels were reached late but current conditions favor good production of submerged aquatic vegetation.