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Indian River Lagoon Observations

April 6, 2016: "You can observe a lot by just watching"

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April is my favorite month of the year. One of the reasons is that it is now spring, the time of year when nature starts a new cycle. In Florida that means we are nearing the end of our dry season. The days are growing longer, the temperature is warming. The days are usually quite nice, with lots of blue skies and sunshine. On land, new growth is obvious on our oak trees. In the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), this is the time when seagrasses, organisms that I spend a lot of time working with, are most productive.

I have never been one for "spring cleaning". But in my lab this year, we decided that it was time to spruce up our website, starting with the Indian River Lagoon Observatory (IRLO for short). IRLO is now in its fifth year. We have been quite busy ... in the field, in the lab, and on our computers ... developing a better way to conduct research and connect our scientific ambitions to better understand how the IRL works with the growing need to better manage this precious resource, critical to the life style we who live nearby all enjoy.

IRLO is an environmental observatory. Scientists use astronomical observatories to watch and to study the stars and planets. The goal of our observatory is to acquire and disseminate data and knowledge on the IRL critical to its ecological function and sustainable management. We have described our current research in the rest of our website (</hboi/irlo/index.php>). One thing we want to initiate this spring is a series of regular blogs: communications about our activities, experiences, and reflections about the IRL and our research on it – observations from our observatory, if you will.

We are launching this effort now after building a strong platform to make observations on and from the lagoon and because the need to share our thoughts is more pressing now than ever. Since 2016 began, in the northern IRL, there have been renewed outbreaks of algal blooms that first began in 2011; that these



Part of the IRLQ Team (left to right: Jon Richardson, Dave Bourdette, Ben Metzger, Dennis Hanisak) deploying new water quality instrumentation at a site in the SLE in July 2015. For more information, see IRLON. (Image credit: Brian Cousin)

blooms are occurring in the winter, rather than spring-summer as in the past is troubling, as it may suggest



Landsat 8 imagery during February 2016 reveals extensive bloom conditions in southern Mosquito Lagoon, Banana River Lagoon, and in Indian River Lagoon from Turnbull Creek. (Image credit: St. Johns River Water Management District)

that a phase shift in the system may be underway. Already there has been a massive fish kill in Brevard County. Meanwhile, to the south, Lake Okeechobee discharges similar to those that occurred in 2013 with devastating losses to seagrass beds, oyster reefs, and other resources in the St. Lucie Estuary (SLE) and nearby IRL have been underway for more than two months. Like the blooms to the north, these discharges are occurring much earlier in the year than usual due to the record “dry season” rainfalls in the Lake Okeechobee, SLE, and IRL watersheds.



Lake Okeechobee discharges into the St. Lucie Estuary (SLE) and nearby IRL have been underway for more than two months. Most of the discharges then flow out the St. Lucie Inlet and impact corals and other reef organisms in St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park. (Image: Screen grab from video produced by Voss lab, FAU Harbor Branch; the full video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FgBon2CAwM>) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FgBon2CAwM>)

We hope that our observations on these and other phenomena will be helpful to all who read them. Our research team is out on the lagoon multiple times each week. We are out there doing our work, but also have time to reflect on other things we see, too. As Yogi Berra, the legendary baseball player known for pithy and paradoxical quotes, said, "You can observe a lot by just watching". Don't quote me, but I am pretty sure Yogi said that during spring training!

We hope you find our observations interesting and helpful.

Observations Archive

- › April 6, 2016: You can observe a lot by just watching (/hboi/irlo/april06_2016.php)
- › April 27, 2016: Our Tenth IRLON Site (/hboi/irlo/april27_2016.php)
- › May 12, 2016: Barnacle Busting (/hboi/irlo/may12_2016.php)
- › May 26, 2016: Future of Water Quality Research in Florida Workshop (/hboi/irlo/may26_2016.php)
- › June 29, 2016: St. Lucie Estuary Algal Blooms (/hboi/irlo/june_29_2016.php)
- › July 08, 2016: Connecting Users to IRL Data (/hboi/irlo/july08_2016.php)
- › October 11, 2016: A Brush with Hurricane Matthew (/hboi/irlo/oct11_2016.php)
- › January 17, 2017: Martin County Youth Leadership Environmental Day (/hboi/irlo/jan17_2017.php)
- › March 3, 2017: St. Lucie Estuary – What A Difference A Year Makes! (/hboi/irlo/mar03_2017.php)
- › June 12, 2017: Here Comes the Rain – 2017's First Flush (/hboi/irlo/june12_2017.php)

› August 24, 2017: An Estuary at your Fingertips: Connecting the Community to Environmental Data (/hboi/irlo/aug24_2017.php)

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