

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges

2024 Annual Meeting Notes

2/24/2024

Recorded by Pete Tirrell

Friends Annual Meeting Feb 24 2024

9:30 Sign in

Visitor sign in and option to join/renew Friends. Shop for merchandise peruse silent auction items.

10:00 Program begins

Scott Wright opened the meeting and introduced Ron Kamzelski, board member and candidate for board President 2025, explained the presidential trio. The trio: Denise Fieber current president 2024, Ginessaa Mahar past president 2023, and himself president-elect 2025. Slate of candidates for 2024:

Ron Kamzelski President-elect 2025

Peter Tirrell Secretary

Robin Gallup Board director, new

Chuck Adams Board director, new

Debbie Meeks Board director, new term

Boyd Kimball Board director, new term

Motion to approve slate by John Thalacker, seconded by Scott Wright, all in favor, slate approved.

Ron introduced other board members and those leaving board

Staying: John Thalacker, Linda Kimball, Scott Wright, Dan Kline, Bill Dummitt, Jeri Treat, Debbie Jordan

Leaving: Peg Hall, John McPherson, Paul Ramey, Barbara Woodmansee

Core volunteers and champions:

Peg Hall, Communications director

John McPherson, Vista champion

Barbara Woodmansee, pollinator champion

Jay Bushnell, advocacy champion

Russ Hall, science champion

2023 Initiatives and highlights

Vista (John M and Debbie M) grants to restore cooks house, replacement of windows
Jay Bushnell advocacy
New outreach trailer
Communications Peg Hall
Junior Rangers several ranger programs, due to success considering a Senior Ranger program
Trail maintenance led by John Thalacker
Pepper busters led by Scott Wright
Butterfly walks and Pollinator garden Barbara Woodmansee
Solstice and Seahorse Key events
Merchandise sales
Finances managed by Linda Kimball

Introduction of Andrew Gude, Refuge Manager

The refuges exist due to community support

Introduction of refuge staff:

Dan Frisk, Project Leader - North Florida Refuges
Daniel Barrand, forester Innovative forest restoration program utilizing mechanical, chemical, fire
Jason Coates, maintains roads and trails
George Pelt, heavy equipment operator
Johnny Mendoza, admin support
John Stark, assistant refuge manager

Full time volunteers, Rick and Robin volunteers in Levy county, Dusty and Kathy in Dixie county, Mike at Shell mound (will return to Shell mound when dock rebuilt)

Recognition of programs and initiatives

Brazilian pepper removal team the pepper busters
Pollinator surveys, Barbara Woodmansee worked with refuge staff to promote habitat restoration
Junior ranger program initiated by Carter Swarm and Debbie Meeks. 3 events, Dixie and Levy county students.
Outreach trailer
Friends website
Vista restoration, lot of work going on, next year a full time resident volunteer acting as caretaker

Brandon Imhoff, Unlimited State of Ability

Introduction to the value of universal access and specialized equipment. Equipment provides access and protects ecosystems. Simplicity of access helps ensure continued access, such as open areas of Vista.

Charming story of marriage proposal at River Trail at Lower Suwannee refuge.

Friends President Denise Feiber introduces author/journalist Cynthia Barnett

Cynthia Barnett Rain, A history for stormy times

Discussion of her book "*Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*"

Started with local connection by book about great great grandfather *50 years down the Suwannee River* by LL Barnett

Loves rain, fluviophile. Covered topics throughout history from misunderstandings about climate and weather and particularly rain. The more rain the more colorful the animals. Animals and humans adaptations for rain. Medieval Europe's "little ice age" weather blamed on witches. History of meteorology and suspicion of weather prediction. Hurricane Idalia sudden strengthening due to warming of the Gulf of Mexico. Droughts likely to be worse due to climate change.

12:00 Lunch

BBQ provided by Kenny McCain

1:00 After lunch activities

Nature walk with John and Donna Thalacker

Tour of Vista, main house is open

Demo of mobility equipment at Vista