

Board Meeting Minutes
Friends of the Lower Suwanee and Cedar Keys Wildlife Refuges
11/17/2016
Submitted by William Dummitt

Members present: Libby Cagle, Peg Hall, Russ Hall, Maria Sgambati, Roger McDaniels, Jay Bushnell, John Thalacker, William Dummitt, Ed DeHaan, Debbie Meeks, Kit Lane, Greg Lang, John McPherson

Refuge Staff: Andrew Gude, Larry Woodard

The meeting was called to order at 9:55 AM on 11/17/2016 by President Maria Sgambati.

Bill Dummitt moved to accept the agenda, second by John Thalacker, motion passed by acclamation.

Peg Hall moved to accept the minutes of the previous meeting, second by Russ Hall, motion passed by acclamation.

The meeting opened with a refuge update by Andrew Gude.

The refuge will probably want to stage boats at Vista, maintenance of the dock will be important.

Several members of the leadership of refuges in the Big Bend area made an overflight of the region from the mouth of the Withlacoochie north to St. Marks. The purpose was to get an overview of the area to facilitate protection of the area with the Big Bend Conservation Area initiative. The Big Bend is one of five priority planning areas in the refuge system. Goals include preservation of working lands, protection from overdevelopment and intensive agriculture. Major purchases of new lands is not a part of the initiative as much as working with private landowners and other parties to meet the goals. It is unlikely that the refuge will get much more land to manage directly.

The refuge is presently short on staff- 2 staff members have new babies, 2 more on fire duty, and Dan Barrand is working with St. Marks on fire management.

The annual cooperators luncheon is Dec. 2 11am-2pm with lunch at 12pm.

Andrew reported that refuge management will meet with Water District management on Atsena Otie. 80% grants are available with a 20% cash or in-kind services match to improve access to federal lands.

The refuge is partnering with the Shorebird Alliance to provide a Least Tern nesting platform on the old Atsena Otie dock.

Jay Bushnell asked about reaction to the acquittal of the Oregon refuge occupation participants. Andrew felt the prosecutor dropped the ball. No cease and desist order was delivered to the occupiers, even though the FBI was in constant contact with the occupiers.

Regarding the Lukens tract, Andrew noted that any users must get a permit from the Water Management district. Any harassment while accessing the site should be documented. The Refuge's position is that the disputes involving the tract should be settled by the Water Management District

which owns the property. The refuge is involved with managing the property but not doing law enforcement on the tract.

John Thalacker asked about how to deal with cypress knees on the River Trail. Andrew replied that they can be removed as part of normal trail maintenance.

There was a short discussion of butterfly garden maintenance.

Peg Hall reviewed the communications report. The full report is attached. 500 people got the News Brief and 200 opened it. Most popular was the story about New Zealand entomologists who visited the site to study no-see-ums. There were 1600 website views with 8000 pages read.

John McPherson provided a treasurer's report (attached).

It was noted that there was space available at the Shell Mound kiosk for some of the brochures available from Friends. John Thalacker agreed to clean and update the Cedar Key kiosk.

Roger McDaniels showed brochures for the Tram Ridge and River trails. He also passed around a writeup on the Dennis Creek trail that has never been converted to a brochure. There was a short discussion over whether it was proper to use the FWS logo on our brochures. Such use is under the radar and will be continued unless we are instructed to do otherwise.

Inventory: We should order Blue Goose passports now while a low price is available. Peg Hall suggested getting coloring books for sale at the booths.

Pepper Busting will resume with a training session at the refuge on December 13, and the first day of work on December 16. This year the focus will be on the islands. The pepper busting effort does not require money from Friends but does need publicity.

Membership: Margy VanLandingham resigned from the membership committee. It was noted that we currently have 201 members. Kit Lane may be willing to replace Margy on the membership committee.

Advocacy: Jay Bushnell noted that Friends once sponsored a recognition luncheon for refuge staff but no longer does so.

Jay is on the Florida Wildlife Association board. He passed around the Audubon Conservation Action Agenda for 2017. It appears that the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge may lose its lease. The question was raised whether Friends could do anything. Maria will look into whether we should write something with the Board's signature.

Jay passed around the book *The Forgotten Coast*. He noted that there are 79,000 people in the 4-county Big Bend region, which is 0.5% of Florida's population.

The question was raised whether Friends should take a position on the Sable pipeline. Peg noted that we had no guidance from NWRA. No action was taken.

Russ noted that we should participate in the next Seahorse Key open house and stress that the island is part of the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, not UF.

A nominating committee has been formed.

Doug Maple has been identified as a new board member.

It appears that the idea of having Friends staff the front desk at the refuge, brought up by Andrew at the previous meeting, has been taken off the table. There was a short discussion of other ways Friends could help with the problem of no one being available to greet Refuge visitors, perhaps by meeting visitors at the Educational Building.

Russ Hall is leading a biological survey of the area around the Tram Ridge Trail on Friday, November 18th from 1-4 pm. The Environmental Education building is available. The goal is to repeat the process in the future to see how the area may be changing with regard to biological diversity.

John McPherson reported that Peggy Carr at UF, who showed initial enthusiasm about helping manage the transition of the Vista property, has not responded lately to calls or emails. There was a discussion of hiring a professional to help manage the transition. Greg Lang suggested contacting NWRA for guidance in Adaptive Reuse of Exceptional Properties.

Maria noted that Friends groups were invited to send 1-2 representatives to a Florida Friends gathering at Pelican Island NWR (the first National Wildlife Refuge) on December 11-12.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.

Communications Team Report November 2016

News Brief

- **October News Brief**
 - Sent on the 24th to 494 email addresses. 40% (194 addresses) **opened it 389 times**. Many of our email addresses are shared by a household. When both household members open it, we have more readers than the number of “opens” indicates.
 - This is the first time we used a new format. Each story has a photo and very short introductory text. The title and photo are linked to a longer story on our website or elsewhere. We are trying this to give the News Brief a new look and try to keep it appealing and useful to readers.
 - Stories- Boat trip to the Board Meeting, Suwannee Cleanup, Noseeum visitors, Dan Frisk is here, Refuge update, Seafood Festival Booth
 - Readers clicked through to the story on the website **113 times**, rather than just reading the short introductory narrative. **Most popular Noseeums, Boat ride, Suwannee Cleanup.**
- **November News Brief**
 - Sent on the 14th to 492 email addresses. So far, 37% (179) **opened it 329 times**.
 - Stories – Board Mtg/Vista Walk, Seahorse Key Open House, Malheur NWR, Salt Creek Overlook Cleanup, Membership database update, Blue Goose Passport books, Mussel listed as endangered, Pepper Busting, Nominations for Board, State preserving lands map, advocacy links to Sabal Trail pipeline and awards competition.
 - Readers clicked through to the stories on the website **81 times** so far. **Most popular – Membership list, map of preserved land, Malheur, mussels**

Facebook Page

- 5 New fans. Total now is 442.
- 10 Posts and 10 Shares, by Maria and Peg
- 2956 Number of people to whom our posts were “served” by Facebook in the last 28 days. The number was 1,997 last month.

Friends Website

- 9 posts in the past month
- About 1,588 visitors in the past month
- About 8,275 pageviews in the past month

Friends of Refuges Balance Sheet

As of November 15, 2016

	Nov 15, 16
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Petty Cash	110.00
Regular Checking	20,382.62
Savings	10,002.96
Total Checking/Savings	<u>30,495.58</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>30,495.58</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u><u>30,495.58</u></u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
Sales Tax Payable	31.66
Total Other Current Liabilit...	<u>31.66</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>31.66</u>
Total Liabilities	31.66
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	28,042.94
Net Income	2,420.98
Total Equity	<u>30,463.92</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u><u>30,495.58</u></u>