

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys NWR
May 20, 2020 Monthly Board Meeting Minutes
Prepared by: Debbie Meeks

Present: John McPherson

By phone: Matt Chatowsky, Ed DeHaan, Bill Dummitt, Denise Feiber, Peg Hall, Joe Hand, Debbie Jordan, Boyd Kimball, Linda Kimball, Dan Kline, Ginessa Mahar, Debbie Meeks, John Thalacker, Travis Thomas, Barbara Woodmansee

Guests: Jay Bushnell, Andrew Gude

10am- call to order

- 1- The agenda was adopted by consensus.
- 2- A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the February minutes.
- 3- The treasurer's report was reviewed and approved.
- 4- The annual meeting was discussed. The lack of portable toilets and unresponsiveness of the company were noted for next year. Minutes for the meeting need to be written and submitted, Peg and Debbie will do this.
- 5- Refuge report- Andrew Gude
 - a. Volunteers are gone for the year.
 - b. The Refuge had a huge increase in visitation, people seem to be adhering to social distancing.
 - c. Covid rules remain in place until the end of next week but the office will remain closed to visitors.
 - d. Andrew is applying for Covid grants.
 - e. George is improving the River Trail and Tram Ridge trails with lime rock.
 - f. A pole barn was built for the marine mammal stranding equipment. There is no coordinator for the program yet.
 - g. Sterling is coming back from the border.
 - h. There was vandalism on the Dixie side.
 - i. Andrew applied for permission to release a thrip that is an approved non-native biological control for Brazilian Peppers.
 - j. Barbara Woodmansee is surveying for 2 rare skippers and would appreciate help from a Friends member or two.
 - k. Joe Hand said Leslie Sturmer asked if the chemical used to control Brazilian Pepper in Cedar Key is a concern for the clam industry. Andrew will call her.
- 6- Project Reports and Discussions
 - a. Visitor Contact- Bill Dummitt reported that the program shut down in mid-March and will not start again until fall.
 - b. Interpretive media- Debbie Meeks reported she is not working on anything.
Membership- the member count is holding steady.
 - c. Online Communications-
 - i. Peg Hall reported that the News Brief is being opened much more than normal probably due to people staying home. The website is also getting increased visitation.
 - ii. Peg organized and hosted a new member orientation on Zoom that went well and was very helpful.
 - d. Inventory and Sales- Bill Dummitt reported no sales. He will replenish stock before the Seafood Festival.

- e. Kite Project- Debbie Jordan reported that a couple of new nests were found in the area Suwannee was captured and tagged. Suwannee appears to be aimlessly moving around the Refuge so Gina thinks he is not tending young. Ideas for fundraising for the kite research were discussed. Online t-shirt sales will be pursued by Denise Feiber and Debbie Jordan.
 - f. Pepper Busting- Ed Dehaan had nothing to report.
 - g. Trails-
 - i. John Thalacker said the River Trail will be wheelchair accessible after George finishes his work.
 - ii. Barbara Woodmansee suggested a new trail or improving the Tram Ridge trail with interpretive signage and discussion followed. Russ Hall, Peg Hall, and Debbie Meeks are interested in working with Barbara on this.
 - h. Advocacy-
 - i. Jay Bushnell received a letter from the National Refuge Assoc. about Vic's award.
 - ii. Jay will forward information about how the Friends can join the coalition that opposes M-CORES.
 - i. Vista-
 - i. John McPherson reported that the finished report from Bender & Associates is delayed due to the pandemic. He expects to get a complete report in June.
 - ii. A motion was made, seconded and approved to apply for an annual special category grant from the state for \$100,000 to stabilize prioritized structures. Friends will be required to match 25% or \$25,000 but most of it can be in volunteer hours or supplies, the minimum cash portion from Friends will be \$6,250. In order to submit the grant on time Friends will promise \$25,000 in cash, details can be worked out later.
- 7- Open Discussion- John McPherson stated that the call in meeting seemed to go well and everyone agreed to use the same format for next month's meeting.

Adjourned at 11:49am.