

Minutes
Board Meeting
Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
Thursday, November 19, 2015

Present:

Board Members: Greg Lang, Debbie Meeks, John McPherson, Bob Hudson, Maria Sgambati, Bob McKinstry, Kit Lane, Richard Herman, Bill Dummitt.

Refuge Staff. Larry Woodward.

1. The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Greg Lang, President, and guests were introduced. Debbie Meeks was thanked for organizing the meeting and cleanup in the Town of Suwannee. It was also noted that the lunch was delicious and appreciation expressed.
2. Approval of Minutes: **Motion** made and **Seconded** to approved the minutes of the Board Meeting of October 15, 2015, as submitted. Passed by a unanimous vote.
3. Refuge update: Deputy Manager Larry Woodward reported as follows:
 - a. Cleanup: Everyone, especially Debbie Meeks, was thanked for the Suwannee cleanup efforts.
 - b. Cooperators' Lunch: The Refuge invites various partners, private and government, to a lunch, which will be held this year on December 4 at Refuge Headquarters. All on Friends Board are invited.
 - c. Salt Creek Trail: Debbie Meeks has done a great job with the trail, signs, kiosk, and Larry expressed his appreciation for everything she has done.
 - d. Complex: Had a conference call but did not learn much other than there will be a 7% to 8% budget cut for the coming year for total operational and personnel budget. These cuts have been taking place since 2010 and so are cumulative in their impact. It is up to local managers to determine where to make cuts. Will have to wait on the decision to keep the complex together or break it apart.
 - e. Mainline Road: The Refuge has added a lot of limerock to mitigate erosion problems, and the tree trimming will continue.
 - f. Hunting: Seems to be down this year; 630 permits were issued.

- g. FWC Field Office: Working on MOU, so FWC has not moved into an office at the Refuge headquarters.
 - h. Fire: Prepping for fire, including putting in fire breaks between Refuge and private property, is underway with hopes of having a busy burning season this year.
 - i. Lukens: Larry provided an update and John McPherson summarized what happened at the SRWMD meetings. Larry confirmed that the MOU for Refuge management of the Lukens property is still in place and John requested that the Refuge not make any changes at this time.
 - j. Seahorse Open House: Next scheduled for December 19.
4. Committee Reports:
- a. Most committees did not report due to committee leaders being absent.
 - b. Nominating Committee: This committee (Roger McDaniels, Chair; Debbie Meeks; Allison Nelson) met and will come back with slate at December meeting.
 - c. Priorities Planning: This committee (Peg Hall, Chair; Maria Sgambati; Bill Dummitt) met once and issued a report which is attached. Greg Lang asked the Board to take a look at the report and provide feedback by email or at the next meeting. The report will then be finalized as part of the budget report.
5. Initiatives updates:
- a. Advocacy- Greg Lang bring back to the December meeting a strategy for improving our advocacy to support Refuge mission, especially given budget and staff cuts, and reorganization issues. Greg reported on his communications with David Viker who is dealing with his own budget cuts on the regional level. Mr. Viker offered to help with Friends advocacy strategy. Refuge staff cannot lobby, so that is something the Friends should do.
 - b. Cycling Panels. Debbie Meeks passed out the finished brochures. There was discussion about where the brochures should be distributed.
 - c. Seafood Festival: Greg Lang provided the following unofficial numbers: Sales: \$530.41; Donations: \$71.43.

6. Business items / updates:

Discussion of possible Fowlers Bluff cleanup on Dec. 5th. Larry Woodward said that he has been in touch with Fritzi and she wants to go ahead with it, but that he and Debbie Meeks think it should be skipped this year since we just had a cleanup in Suwannee.

Motion by Bob Hudson to skip this year. **Second** by Richard Hermann. Passed by unanimous vote.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Priority Planning Committee Report

Committee Members: Bill Dummitt, Peg Hall, Maria Sgambati

Meeting: Monday, November 2, 2015

Recommended Priorities for 2016, for Board Discussion

Outreach and Advocacy

- Develop the capacity for Friends members to do outreach/education in the community. We envision the completion of the presentation materials begun by the Communication Team. We suggest that the target audiences would include service organizations and vendors, other civic organizations, schools, federal, state, local representatives.
- Develop a plan to do this outreach!
 - Develop a Visitor Center Plan for Vista Property, even if the transfer is still 5-10 years away.
- Monitor developments with the Friends Policy Document
- Communications – Maintain or Develop:
 - Website
 - Ibis
 - Trail Guides
 - Brochures
 - Cedar Key Kiosk – improving information; keeping information current
 - Promotional Video
- Develop an Educational Support Program
 - High School Scholarship program and/or High School Internship program
 - Teacher Engagement / School Engagement to use Lower Suwannee Refuge as Outdoor Classroom
 - Develop another Science Camp for Adults, or other science-based adult program
- Expand the Art-and-the-Refuge Program
 - Support Seahorse Key Artist-in-Residence
 - Possibly in the future expand to Lower Suwannee?
- Expand our Science Programs
 - iNaturalist Biodiversity Inventory project
- Develop a program to better understand refuge users, who they are and what they do? This could be helpful with planning.

Physical Support/Infrastructure Projects

- Enhance the Invasive Plant Control – Pepper Busting Program by:
 - Finding more consistent help for Roger Mc.
 - Possibly developing a partnership with 4H/ FFA in relevant counties to help with projects or with local Master Gardeners
- Continue and Enhance Dixie County projects
- Continue and enhance Trails
 - River Trail Enhancement
 - Accessibility for River Trail
 - Shell Mound Enhancement
 - Other trails
- Develop Gateway Signage