

**Minutes
Board Meeting
Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
Thursday, May 21, 2015**

Present:

Board Members: Greg Lang, Bob Hudson, Libby Cagle, Roger McDaniels, Bob McKinstry, Debbie Meeks, Kit Lane.

Refuge Staff: Pam Darty.

Guests: Jay Bushnell.

1. The meeting was convened at 10:05 a.m. by Greg Lang, President.
2. Greg Lang congratulated Roger McDaniels for being recognized as the Volunteer of the Year by the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges.
3. Approval of Minutes. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the Friends board meeting of April 16, 2015. Motion carried.
4. Financial Report. Libby Cagle, Treasurer, reviewed the financial reports through April 2015 (attached). She reported that financial activity was minimal this time of year. She also reported that she will be traveling over the next several months, and will leave blank checks with Maria Sgambati in the event a check needs to be written. Maria will also have a key to the Friends post office box in Cedar Key. The budget category of the Friends donation to the Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory in support of the summer camp, as approved in the last board meeting, was discussed. Following discussion, it was agreed to place the donation under the budget category of Education.
5. Vista Property. The status of the boathouse on the Vista property was discussed. It was reported that the boat builders group associated with the Arts Center in Cedar Key had reviewed the boat house and concluded that it would be very expensive to restore it to original condition. Jay Bushnell and Bob McKinstry reported that they know the last builder who worked on the boat house, Bruce Goss. Following discussion, it was agreed that they will ask Mr. Goss to give his opinion on the feasibility of restoring or replicating it.

6. Membership. Marci Wilcox reported by email that the Friends has 271 members currently.

7. Refuge Update. Pam Darty reported:
 - The biggest event of the season is the lack of nesting birds of all species in the rookery at Seahorse Key this year. Pam reported that the birds had nested, laid their eggs, and then abandoned the nests. Many have relocated to Snake Key and are re-nesting there. Pam and Maria discussed what is being done to try and determine the cause. Maria reported that 50-60 years ago the rookery was located at Snake Key and the birds then moved to Seahorse Key. They reported that several bird and rat carcasses have been sent to the University of Florida for necropsy, but to date nothing has been found that would have caused the move.
 - Pam reported that YCC work begins in June
 - She reported that the Nature Coast Middle School had a field trip to Seahorse Key. She indicated that the Refuge had no system to reimburse the school for gasoline expenses, and requested that the Friends donate \$127 to the school to reimburse them for gasoline. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to approve donating \$127 to the Nature Coast Middle School for gasoline expenses for the field trip. Motion carried.
 - Pam reported that after she retires, there will only be five individuals working at the Refuge. Jay stated that is about one third of the staffing that existed in the past. Extensive discussion ensued. Bob Hudson reported that he had talked with Larry Woodward regarding the board's interest in helping with volunteers where feasible. He reported that Larry is talking with his staff about this possibility and will get back with him. Following extensive discussion about the lack of staffing at the Refuge, it was agreed that Maria and Jay will draft a letter from the Friends board to the National and Regional offices of the Fish and Wildlife Service expressing the board's very serious concerns about the need for appropriate staffing for our refuges, and the board's perception that the regional re-organization of the refuges is not working in our refuge's best interests. Maria and Jay will distribute the draft letter for action at the Friends board June 2015 meeting.

8. Promotional Video. The possibility of the Friends of the Refuges promotional video was discussed. Greg asked the Communications Committee to discuss the possibility, and make recommendations including general budget guidelines to the board.

9. Salt Creek Trail. Debbie Meeks reported that she has received permission from the Refuge to cut a new hiking trail on the Dixie County side to Salt Creek.
10. iNaturalist. Greg discussed the iNaturalist app training. The board members who participated in the training gave positive reviews of the app. It was reported that 23 people participated in the training.
11. Ibis. Scheduling of the Ibis was discussed. Jay Bushnell reported that in the past it was published quarterly but for some reason was changed to three times per year. And, in the past it was used to notify membership of the annual meeting. Greg stated he will ask the Communications Committee to address the Ibis schedule.
12. Tram Trail. The new Tram Trail was discussed. Pam indicated that signage will be installed when the Refuge is ready to announce the new trail to the public.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.