

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge
January 18, 2022 Board Meeting

Members Present:

President Peg Hall, Debbie Jordan, Boyd Kimball, Linda Kimball, Debbie Meeks, Dan Kline, Jay Bushnell, John Thalacker, Ginessa Mahar, Denise Feiber, Ed DeHaan, Barbara Woodmansee, Bill Dummitt, Joe Hand, Paul Ramey

Representing the Refuge: Refuge Manager Andrew Gude, Deputy Manager John Stark

Treasurer's report- Linda reported that there was \$3796 in checking. The organization had a net profit (revenue after expenses) of 4087.15 last year, vs. a net loss of about \$600 in 2019. The complete report is available in Dropbox. The location of the cash box is presently unknown, last used at the Seafood Festival in the fall. It may have had \$50-60 in it.

New Deputy Refuge Manager John Stark was introduced to the group.

Refuge Report- Andrew Gude

Wounded Warrior hunt is underway in Dixie county.

USDA is interested in doing hog trapping on the refuge.

Event for Vic Doig and Ron Black is this coming Friday night the 21st.

Trail assessment is underway this week.

George and Jason continue road work.

Work on low water crossings behind the gates is still underway.

FWS archeology, realty, and facilities experts will be visiting the Vista site soon.

Effect of airboats use is still being studied. The Center for Biological Adversity brought up this issue.

They frequently undertake legal action against FWS. Airboat use on the land portions of the refuge is not allowed, but illegal crossing of marshes is common. Some airboat noise is caused by the prop and can't be mitigated by mufflers. Mufflers do provide a benefit and are required by state law, though this is not always enforced.

Fishbone Creek was the subject of negative comments on the Friends website, mainly because a canopied road was widened and many trees removed. The trees are still piled near the road. Andrew explained that widening the road was necessary because a large aluminum deck had to be brought in. It was not widened to allow access by large boats. The launch will be limited to paddle craft and outboards under 20 horsepower. Encroachment from trees on the roadways is a common issue on the refuge roads and tree removal is sometimes necessary. There is a difficult line between aesthetic issues and attempting to meet federal standards with the roadways. Several members commented that they hoped removal of the slash piles could occur soon. Andrew will check to see what can be done within budget. It is possible to contract out cleanup work but crews are hard to get. Buying appropriate equipment to do it with refuge personnel would have to benefit the entire complex, not just LS. Andrew responded to the original complaint by email but did not get a reply. Peg also responded on behalf of Friends and did not get a reply.

Budget

There is a budget carryover of \$3675, which was approved at the December meeting. Faye Sanders is increasing her monthly fee from \$50 to \$75. Members agreed it was a steep increase but no one was interested in trying to avoid using professional accounting services. A motion to accept the budget was seconded and passed by voice vote.

The nominating committee presented the slate of officers:

President- Debbie Meeks
President-elect- Ginessa Mahar
Immediate Past President- Peg Hall

Directors to be elected to a 2-year term:

John McPherson
Denise Feiber
Boyd Kimball
Travis Thomas
Barbara Woodmansee

Matt Chatowski is leaving the board and will not be replaced immediately. He will still be active in Friends. The slate of officers and board members was accepted by voice vote.

There was a discussion of how to publish a butterfly guide to the refuge. Preliminary work has been done by Barbara Woodmansee. Chiefland Print Shop can print for a reasonable price. A committee of Barbara Woodmansee, Boyd Kimball, Debbie Meeks, Peg Hall, and Joe Hand was formed to work out the details.

The next item on the agenda was Annual Meeting, but before discussion was underway Zoom went out and the meeting was temporarily ended. A smaller group met a few hours later to continue. Before that meeting, Andrew informed the group that current federal guidelines wouldn't permit an in-person gathering of more than 50 people at the refuge.

The board meeting continued at 3:00 on zoom. Board members present were Peg, Debbie M, John M, John T, Ed, Dan, Denise, Joe, Linda, and Boyd.

The primary topic was the timing of the Annual Meeting. No one wanted to consider another zoom annual meeting.

The consensus was to push the date until we could meet at the Refuge. Although the Cedar Key City Park and Community Center are available on Feb 26, the issues of parking and other logistics, as well as the desire to have Friends back on the Refuge inclined us to wait out the closure of federal facilities. Avoiding Arts Center's and Friends of Library's events in March and April, April 2 will be considered as a date for the postponed Annual Meeting. John will check with Kenny about catering and Barbara and Peg will check with Mark Minno about the presentation.

All other Annual Meeting related topics are on hold.

Planning and execution of the butterfly guidebook will continue, still with a goal of having it ready by the elusive annual meeting.

Plans for this Friday's Reception in conjunction with Vic and Ron's retirement party were discussed. John, Ed, Denise, and Peg will volunteer to help with set up on Friday afternoon.

Debbie J asked Debbie M to report for her that Gina and the kite researchers have not heard from Suwannee the kite. They think he is still alive, but that his tracker probably has finally died out.

That led to a discussion of the store and inventory and an interest in a strategy discussion about the store.

The News Brief has had more than 550 opens and the most popular items were about Vic's retirement, about the new staff, and about the Annual Meeting. Many people left comments on the website that they plan to come to Annual Meeting . . .or did before it was postponed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.