

Friends of the Lower Suwanee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges

February 21, 2018 Monthly meeting

Members Present: Russ Hall, Sharon Tyson; John McPherson; Roger McDaniels ; Debbie Meeks; Peg Hall; John Thalacker; Libby Cagle; Jim Hoy; Dan Kline; Kit Lane; Bob Lewis; McKenzie ; Miriam Wiley; Debbie Jordan by phone

Guests: Flora Remy (sp?); Ashley Cook (both staffers for Senator Marco Rubio); Belinda Gates

Refuge Staff: Andrew Gude; Larry Woodward; Dan Frisk

Minutes of the previous meeting, agenda, and committee reports were approved.

Vista charette is Friday, Feb 23 at the Cedar Key Community Center. 83 West will provide lunches. There will be about 25 attendees and 3 members of the family present. Bob McKinstry will give a talk about the history of Vista.

Refuge Report: 43 miles of roads and trails were cleared. David Murphy, the full-time enforcement officer, is leaving for a position on the Olympic Peninsula. The staff hopes to be able to refill this position, since it leaves Larry as the only enforcement officer on the staff.

The staff is doing prescribed burns as much as possible before the season ends. There will be an emergency salvage timber sale in Dixie county with a local firm. No money exchange is involved- the firm will get some timber value and the refuge will get some burned trees which could harbor beetles removed. A hunt for disabled veterans drew 3 participants for a hog hunt. A Citizen Science program to survey oysters on reefs is under consideration. There is still considerable tension in the area over oyster harvesting- local oystermen are fighting oystermen from other areas who are coming here because Cedar Key is still open while their local areas are closed. UF has an \$8 million grant to restore oyster reefs in Suwanee Sound.

Two of Senator Rubio's staffers listened to a short recap of Friends' efforts to assist the refuge. They talked briefly about hurricane disaster relief available to the refuge and the US Supreme Court case of Florida vs Georgia over water usage from the Chattahoochee watershed.

Birds are carrying nesting material to Snake Key. The paperwork will probably not be in place for a closure this year. Many birds are hanging around Seahorse- we are hopeful nesting may resume there.

McKenzie reported that a Right Whale has been sighted in the Cedar Key area Monday and Tuesday of this week near Seahorse and Snake Keys.

Communications: The team is studying which brochures to reprint and in what numbers. The Nature Drive brochure has proven very popular and is running low.

The design of new panels for Shell Mound was discussed. Cost will be about \$5000, which will be funded outside Friends' budget.

Peg Hall noted that she is leaving the board and will not be producing the Newsbrief or updating the website and Facebook.

Roger gave a pepper busting report. Sharon mentioned that research is ongoing on a biological solution.

Mac Cox has done the required annual review of Friends' finances.

Annual Meeting: Kenny is providing food. Peg suggested, and the group agreed, to try renting tables and chairs at a cost of around \$500. There was a brief discussion about possibly holding the event in the pole shed where boats are stored. No firm decision was made. At the annual meeting, the Luna and Trees t-shirts will sell for \$15 (long sleeve for \$20). We will close out all the old t-shirt designs with the old logo for \$5, which is close to our cost. These shirts have already paid for themselves.

Submitted by William Dummitt