

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges December
20, 2017

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Board Members – Russ Hall, John McPherson, Jim Hoy, Da Kline, Peg Hall, Roger
McDaniels, Libby Cagle, John Thalacker, Kit Lane, Mackenzie Russell, Bill Dummit,
Debbie Meeks

Refuge staff members -- Andrew Gude, Larry Woodward

Other Members and Guests – Susan Nugent (Founding Member), Charlie, Carolyn,
Belinda Nettles

Russ called the meeting to order and introductions, 10 AM

The agenda, minutes of the November meeting, and Financial Report were reviewed
and approved with no changes.

Annual Meeting Discussion

Russ reported that the Nature Coast Biological Station has scheduled a major fund-
raising event for the date of our Annual Meeting. In April 2017 we set our Annual
Meeting for the last Saturday in February every year so as to avoid conflicts with
community organization events and to enable the Refuge staff to make plans well in
advance. Nevertheless, to accommodate our NCBS colleagues, the Board agreed to
change our Annual Meeting to March 10, depending on the availability of our keynote
speaker Dr. Ken Sassaman. Russ will follow up. The afternoon program will be a “soft
opening” of the new Shell Mound interpretive trail.

Vista Charrette Discussion

John reported that our charrette is proposed for February 23 at the Cedar Key
Community Center. Vista family members, Refuge staff members, and Friends Board
members will be the attendees. The date is being held by the family members and
Refuge staff. He also reviewed the background, decisions, and consensus
determinations leading to this charrette being scheduled.

Belinda reviewed an outline of the day’s activities, starting with the goal of determining
how to implement the decision to use the property for Refuge Visitor interaction. Her
outline is attached.

Board members commented that it will be important to have a reasonable balance in the
numbers of participants from each of the three constituent groups, or to find another
way to assure that the larger number of Board participants does not skew the results of
the discussions. We asked that Belinda dedicate some time early in the day for the
family to describe their intent in making the gift of the land.

In response to a Board member query, John provided a summary of the history of the use of site. When the company that owned the site was closed in the 1960s, the property was purchased by the family and the heirs have now passed ownership to the Refuge, keeping a life tenancy.

The Board consensus was that all Board members will be invited to participate but not expected to be there if it was a serious inconvenience. John or Belinda will rent the Community Center and order food for Friends.

Friends Visitor Contact Program

Bill reported that Visitor Contact Pilot Program has successfully recruited Friends members to work at the front desk at headquarters every day except one that the Refuge is open from Thanksgiving through December. Volunteers have reported no problem and seem to be enjoying the time spent at the Refuge. Scheduling is now underway for the month of January. Peg has set up an electronic chat room for the volunteers. It will be open soon.

Refuge Report

- Larry thanked Friends for co-sponsoring the annual Collaborators Lunch on December 1. About 100 colleagues attended.
- Long Cabbage Reef is being restored and Refuge took oyster specialists and Water Management District specialists to visit the work.
- Natural Resource Damage Group from Fairhope AL and other collaborators recently toured the site of planned hydrology restoration on the Lower Suwannee Refuge
- Jeff Gleason, an FWS Migratory Bird expert, is now stationed at headquarters
- Vic recently gave a talk about the Black Bear project to an audience in Crystal River
- Andrew gave a presentation at the Cedar Key Audubon meeting about the closings at Snake Key and Seahorse Key related to bird rookery activity. Other public meetings will be held for input. Seahorse Key will be temporarily open more than in the past.
- The December Seahorse Key Open House had about 70 attendees, as is usual for cool and windy season. The next Open House is Feb 17. The Light Station tower is not fully available for touring because of safety concerns.
- There has been vandalism on some Refuge boat ramps
- There are community concerns again about open access at the Lukens Tract where recently a group of about a dozen visitors were concerned because of gunshots fired while they were on a nature walk. The group reported their concerns to both the Refuge and the Water Management District
- An aerial burn last the summer caused mortality to some trees on the Dixie County side of the river. The Refuge plans to manage the area as a meadow to encourage herbaceous flowers in the area.

- Roger was presented with an America the Beautiful pass in recognition of all his volunteer hours

Communications Committee Report

Peg and Debbie reported on progress with the Shell Mound guidebook, the annual report, and Barnett Creek hiking trail brochure.

Membership Report

Debbie reported that all current and recently lapsed members receive an end-of-year letter from Russ encouraging renewals and gifts.

Invasive Plant Control

Roger reported the team has been eradicating Brazilian peppers on the Refuge, in Cedar Key, and nearby. The next work day will be January 9.

Inventory Report

Debbie reported on progress toward ordering a new performance t-shirt in time for the Annual Meeting. The design will use the winning photo from last year's Annual Meeting photo contest.

Artist in Residence

Bill reported that the Arts Center seeks Friends participation. This year's program will not include residency at Seahorse Key, but will provide residency in town with travel to the Refuges. Kit expressed preliminary interest in representing Friends on the project, contingent on more specifics.

Nominating Committee

Russ and Bill reported that the process is underway and they are considering opening the nominations to all members through a letter asking for expressions of interest in serving. There was some concern expressed that interest might be expressed by members who did not have the priority skills the Board identified as necessary. The consensus was that the Board should be more deliberate in specifying the needed skills and then inviting expressions of interest.

Next Board Meeting

January 17, Refuge Headquarters, 10 am to noon

The Board adjourned at 11:50 am

Submitted by Peg Hall