

**Friends of Refuges Board Meeting
Refuge Headquarters
November 7, 2011**

Board Members Present: Ron Black, Jay Bushnell, Ed DeHaan, Mark Gluckman, Peg Hall, Russ Hall, Bob Hudson, Richard Herman, John McPherson, John Thalacker, Marci Wilcox.

Also Present: Andrew Gude, Refuge Manager, Pam Darty, Refuge Ranger, Joan Stephens (Membership Chair), Donna Thalacker (Member of Nominating Committee), and Joyce DeHaan, Member.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at Refuge Headquarters.

Minutes of meeting of September 12, 2011 – It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the board of directors meeting of September 12, 2011. Motion carried.

Date of next board meeting – Following discussion, it was agreed that the next board meeting will be December 5 at 10:00 at Refuge Headquarters, and will be a planning meeting for 2012.

Remarks by Refuge Manager – Peg Hall introduced the new Refuge Manager, Andrew Gude. Andrew discussed his background and experience, his vision of efficiency and mission accomplishment for the Refuges, his management style and partnering opportunities with various agencies. He also reported that the new Deputy Refuge Manager will arrive December 5.

Nominating Committee Report – Peg Hall reported on behalf of the Nominating Committee, whose membership is Marci Wilcox, Donna Thalacker and Peg Hall. She reported that discussions are in process, and there is one opening for a new board member. Board needs were discussed. Peg asked board members to suggest names for potential board members to the Committee.

Budget Committee Report – Mark Gluckman reported on behalf of the Budget Committee, whose membership includes Peg Hall, Bob Hudson, Mark Gluckman and Jerry Salamon. He reviewed expense budget categories being prepared by the Committee, which include Building Public Support for the Refuges, Support for Refuge-Initiated Activities, Support of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Administration and Fund-Raising, and two new categories of Short-Term Special Needs Fund and Long-Term Reserve Fund. Mark asked board members to submit suggestions for projects, initiatives and events for 2012 for inclusion in the budget. The proposed budget will be submitted to the board for review and approval at the December 5 meeting. Discussion ensued whether the budget is a general guide for expenditures or a control document, with flexibility, that sets the expenditures for the organization for the year. This will be discussed at the December board meeting.

Financial Review Committee – Jay reported on behalf of the Financial Review Committee, whose membership includes Jay Bushnell, Peg Hall and John McPherson. He reviewed the Committee report previously provided to the board, which is made a part of these minutes. He reported that the Committee determined that appropriate financial controls and board policies are being followed.

Great Suwannee River Cleanup – Jay reported on preparations for the Cleanup on December 3. Point people for the Cleanup are Jay Bushnell (Fowlers Bluff), Jim Hess (Camp Azalea) and Richard Herman (Town of Suwannee). Various coordinating activities were discussed.

Membership – Peg reported that a member retention mailing needs to be distributed in December. Discussion ensued. It was agreed that Joan Stephens will handle the mailing. Sean

Dowie previously volunteered to assist with content. It was noted that the recommendations from the Nominating Committee need to be included per the Bylaws.

“Meet the Refuge Manager” events were discussed. Following discussion it was agreed to host these events in Cedar Key, Chiefland and Suwannee in January. All Friends group members will be invited and asked to bring non-member guests.

Events -

Jay reported that planning is in process for 2012 events and asked board members to submit suggestions. He reported that coordination with other agencies in Cedar Key that host events is in process.

The date of the Annual Membership Meeting was discussed. Andrew will check the Refuges schedule and get with Peg Hall.

The Interagency Luncheon was discussed, and will be held in late winter or early spring.

River Trail Enhancement –

John Thalacker proposed additional signage for newly identified plants and trees on the River Trail. Andrew stated the Refuge will provide sign posts. The Friends group will provide the signage.

John also discussed a proposed expansion project for the boardwalk that ultimately would extend from the parking area to the existing boardwalk. He noted that the current dirt trail has many cypress knees that impede wheelchair and other access. He proposed that the extension to the boardwalk be raised above the cypress knees, would include wider areas with benches, and would provide wheelchair access. It was noted that grant funds may be available. John will work with Refuge staff to develop the proposal, and will check into A.D.A. requirements.

Inventory Review Committee – Peg reviewed the state of current inventory of sale items. Following discussion, she appointed an Inventory Review Committee of Jay Bushnell (Chairman), Bob Hudson, John McPherson, Joan Stephens, John Thalacker and Marci Wilcox. The purpose of the Committee will be to review the current status of sale items, and make recommendations to the board for potential expansion and enhancement.

Friends Academy Report – Peg reported on her attendance at the Friends Academy, which was sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Wildlife Refuge System. She noted that a written report had been distributed to the board prior to the meeting. Peg reported it was an excellent conference and her attendance was at no cost to our Friends group. Several ideas coming from the conference were:

- Board Conflict of Interest Policy – John McPherson will prepare a proposed policy.
- Tracking of Volunteer Hours – Board members were asked to keep track of their hours volunteered on behalf of the Refuges for reporting to Refuge staff. Peg will distribute a form for that purpose.

During discussion, it was suggested that a meeting/local conference be held with all Friends groups in Florida.

Andrew discussed a Volunteer Agreement form that needs to be signed by all Refuge volunteers. Pam will distribute the form to the board for signature.

Cedar Key Seafood Festival – Russ Hall reported that the Refuge booth on Saturday of the Cedar Key Seafood Festival was successful. The booth was set up and staffed by Refuge staff and Friends Group volunteers. Much positive feedback about the Refuges was received,

twenty-four people signed up for the Friends group e-newsletter, and some Friends group tee-shirts were sold.

Shell Mound Welcome Committee – Ron Black reported on volunteer activities at Shell Mound. He reported that volunteers currently provide maintenance and cleaning involving thirty to forty hours per month among the five volunteers. He reported they receive a great deal of positive comments from visitors to Shell Mound. He stated a need for signage and a self-guided interpretive tour at Shell Mound, and signage for Dennis Creek. Ron will work with Refuge staff to develop a plan.

Old Business –

Pam Darty reported that she has spent \$191 of the \$200 provided by the Friends group for the children's project. She asked that she be permitted to spend the remainder on tablecloth cleaning, which was agreed to by the board.

Jay Bushnell reported that he is trying to resurrect the Florida Master Naturalist Program. There was interest from several board members.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

Following the meeting, Mark and Russ gave an update on the Paddling Guide project.

Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Key NWRs

Treasurer Report

October 31, 2011

	During October	Year to date
Cash Receipts		
Memberships		4,085.00
Donations		1,921.50
Sales		818.00
Total cash receipts		<u>6,824.50</u>
Cash Disbursements		
support for lower suwanne & cedar key nwr		
Postmaster & print shop		438.66
Food for annual meeting		426.96
Awards & honorariums		215.00
Festival fees		50.00
Projects-tree markers		135.76
Projects-butterfly garden		35.00
sub-total		<u>1,301.38</u>
support refuge-initiated activities		
Refuge summer program (advance)		200.00
Vista pictures		302.82
Equipment (tables, chairs, player)		707.57
sub-total		<u>1,210.39</u>
support for wildlife refuges across the US		
National Wildlife Refuge Association		<u>250.00</u>
administrative & fundraising support		
Florida Department of Revenue	0.46	134.13
Tick removal tools		100.13
sub-total	0.46	<u>234.26</u>
Total cash disbursements	<u>0.46</u>	<u>2,996.03</u>
Excess of receipts over disbursements	-0.46	3,828.47
Cash Balance beginning of period	<u>10,360.75</u>	<u>6,531.82</u>
Cash Balance 10/31/2011	<u>10,360.29</u>	<u>10,360.29</u>

Financial Review Committee Report
John McPherson, Jay Bushnell & Jerry Soloman

The Committee's task was to review the procedures used to account for the Friends finances. The internal control of finances are recorded as follows:

Monthly accounting of deposits and expenditures are balanced,

Jerry collects the mail, records the membership funds and then sends the memberships to Joan Stephens to add to membership list,

Bills are paid on a monthly basis as approved by the Board,

Quarterly sales tax are paid as follows:

Our sales of products includes sales tax so the actual sales tax must be subtracted from the total amount of sales,

Example, on \$10.00 dollars of sales divide by 1.07=\$9.35 x .07 sales tax=\$.65 (in years past we have actually been paying more than double taxes on our sales),

Donations are recorded as such,

An annual fee of \$61.25 is filed with the State,

A 990 IRS form is filed with the Federal Government

The question of the relationship of expenditures to the budget were discussed. It was the opinion that the budget was a guide and that adjustments would be made throughout the year as needed.

There was also discussion about maintain an inventory list which seemed to be adequate.

Submitted by Jay

Friends Academy 2011

Sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) with participation by the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA)

October 16-21

National Conservation Training Center

Ideas that Cling from the Academy

I will bring them to the Budget Committee for possible inclusion in the Board's December Planning Discussion

1. Who in our Friends group might want to lead identification and monitoring project? How could we facilitate it?
2. What projects are Friends members currently doing, or wanting to initiate, that might be candidates for the types of funding that are available?
3. Should we be recording volunteer hours in order to document one way the Friends supports the Refuge and its goals?
4. Could we be helpful with priority NWRS programs at the Refuge such as invasive plant control?
5. Might we want to consider hosting a regional Florida Friends groups meeting?

Surprises

1. The participating groups tended, like us, to have fewer than 200 members
2. The activities of each Friends group related closely to the life-stage of the board members
3. Friends groups not much larger than ours had Visitors Centers and Nature stores. I never did get my head around how they staffed and maintained them.
4. Many of the refuges are in almost equally remote, under-populated, and relatively poor regions. We seemed to be the norm, not the exception.
5. The lobbyists with NWRA love the competitiveness and game-playing. They are on top of facts and politics. They play aggressively and apparently successfully despite a small staff.

No Surprise

1. The National Wildlife Refuge staff members all came across as smart, focused, well-prepared professionals
2. They each seemed totally aware that their work is first and foremost to protect the natural resources assets of the nation and the taxpayers.

Electronic Communications Update for November 7, 2011 Board Meeting

Email Newsletter

Newsletter	Received by	% Opened (Industry Average = 21%)	# of Clicks
November 1	233	44%	8
October 12	230	44%	24
September 16	229	43%	25
August 25	230	43%	12
August 18	229	43%	26
July 29	229	44%	25
July 2 (Ibis)	229	50%	68
June 19	229	46%	37
June 6	229	43%	15
May 20	230	41%	32
May 6	232	41%	32
April 23	226	59%	34
April 5	172	48%	31
March 23	129	57%	19
March 15	118	50%	1
March 4	113	58%	28
February 20	111	55%	14
February 3	109	62%	

Facebook

Fans as of September 1= 108

Active monthly visitors in August = 40

Fans as of November 1 = 115

Active monthly visitors in October = 86

Website

New template

Pageviews in August = 1146

Pageviews in October = 1040