

MINUTES
Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys NWR
Annual Meeting
March 24, 2012

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges met at the Refuge Headquarters on March 24, 2012. The meeting was called to order by Peg Hall, President, at 10:45 a.m.

After welcoming everyone to the meeting, Peg Hall introduced Andrew Gude, Refuge Manager. Andrew welcomed the group to the Annual Meeting and thanked everyone for their participation and support of the Refuges. He recognized each member of the Refuge staff, and thanked the Friends group for its support. Andrew provided an update on the Refuge, including successful habitat improvement through controlled burning, planting of longleaf pine seedlings and wire grass habitat, forestry program and timber sales, and other important projects. He introduced Mark Musaus from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region office, who thanked attendees for their service to the Refuges.

Peg Hall provided an overview of the mission, activities and volunteer opportunities of the Friends of the Wildlife Refuges. She reported on the Great Suwannee River Cleanup project of which the Friends of the Refuges was a sponsor, bird and nature walks the 1st Monday of each month, the Tree Identification Project along the Riverwalk, electronic communications and internet activities and several other Friends projects. She also encouraged participation in the silent auction and the afternoon activities. Following her overview, Peg called the business meeting to order.

Report of Nominating Committee

Peg Hall, reporting on behalf of the Nominating Committee presented a proposed slate of officers and directors that included the following:

- New board members - Kirby Alexander and Carmelo Echevarria
- Reappointment of board members - Russ Hall, Bob Hudson, John Thalacker, Mark Gluckman, and Sean Dowie
- Secretary – John McPherson

Peg asked if there were nominations from the floor. Hearing none, it was moved and seconded to approve the slate of officers and directors as proposed by the Nominating Committee. Motion carried.

Donna Bushnell conducted an installation ceremony for the officers and directors, and led the Friends members in a pledge of their support.

Financial Report

Peg Hall provided a financial report to the members, reporting that total revenues of the Friends was \$7,000 in 2011, and that expenditures were \$4,000. She provided an overview of the major categories of expenditures, and discussed the purposes of the Long Term Reserve Fund. She also reported the number of active members at 166, before the Annual Meeting and life members at forty-two so far for 2012.

Peg asked for suggestions from members for summer activities of the Friends group. Following discussions, the business meeting was adjourned.

Paddling Project Update

Mark Gluckman and Russ Hall provided an update to the Friends group Paddling Project that was presented at last year's Annual Meeting. They noted that paddling guides have been printed and distributed example copies of the guides. They also noted that a separate website has been established for the Paddling Guide, which is www.paddlelsckrefuges.org. The website will be interactive where members are asked to post comments and photos.

Keynote Presentation

Peg Hall introduced Jay Bushnell, Past President. Jay introduced Nick Whitney, Ph.D., who gave an excellent presentation titled Motion in the Ocean: The Secret Lives of Marine Animals. Dr. Whitney gave an overview of his research on sharks in the Dry Tortugas and Hawaii, as well as some of the research on sturgeon in the Suwannee River. He also discussed the exotic snake infestation in the Florida Everglades.

Lunch and Activities

Following the discussions, attendees were invited to participate in a "pot luck" lunch.

Afternoon activities included:

- Power boat rides on the Suwannee River, leaving from Treasure Camp in Fowlers Bluff, captained by Vic Doig and Jay Bushnell
- a Group Paddling trip on Sandfly Creek, led by Mark Gluckman
- Plant Identification Walk on the River Trail, led by Donna Thalacker and Jean Holbrook
- Hayrides, led by Larry Woodward
- Visits to the Special Operations Response Team trailer and the new refuge classroom
- Fire Equipment and Marsh Master Rides, led by the refuge fire crew
- Mini Workshops
 - Vole Research led by Rod Hunt
 - Biting Friends on the Refuge, led by Dan Kline
 - The Naturalist Project, led by Russ Hall
 - Shell Mound research and interpretative volunteering, led by Tiffany Black