

▶ A new board member asked:

What do we envision for the future of the Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges.

▶ Good question.





What Do We Do?

The mission of the Friends of the Refuges has always been clear:

- Support and advocate for the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges.
- Engage in activities that foster awareness and involvement in these vital areas.





Understand the Refuges Goals and Initiatives

The core of the Refuge's efforts centers on wildlife conservation and habitat preservation.

- Maintaining and enhancing wildlife populations in the Refuges.





▫ **Managing and protecting ecosystems against external threats like pollution and invasive species.**

▫ **Preserving critical habitats for migratory birds, fish, and other wildlife.**



Our Role

The Friends can complement Refuge efforts.

- Provide resources, whether in the form of funding, volunteer time, or expertise.
- Advocate on behalf of the Refuges to raise awareness, secure funding, and influence policy.





▫ Facilitate educational outreach to engage the public and local communities in conservation efforts.

However, it is important to recognize that we have limited resources—both financial and human. This means we must be strategic in how we support and advocate.



Strategic Alignment:

- Enhancing habitat restoration projects that align with the Refuge's needs: butterfly habitats, tree planting, trail maintenance, brush removal, debris cleanup, light infrastructure repairs.

- Supporting educational programs that engage local communities in wildlife conservation efforts: Jr and Sr Rangers, butterfly and wildlife walks, using the outreach trailer to attend community festivals or events and monthly news briefs.



- ▶ **▫ Addressing specific conservation challenges identified by the Refuges, such as invasive species management or migratory bird protection: Pepper Busters, bird counts, swallowtail kite project.**

- ▶ **By focusing on these targeted areas, we can ensure that our involvement is both meaningful and impactful.**



The Importance of Partnership

Our relationship with the Refuges must be one of partnership, built on mutual understanding and shared goals.

To be most effective:

- We need to be in close communication with the Refuge management to understand their priorities.





- We must be flexible and responsive to shifting needs and challenges that arise.
- We should always focus on long-term sustainability in every initiative we support.



The Road Ahead



- Building deeper relationships with the Refuge management and other key stakeholders.
- Focusing our efforts on initiatives that complement and support the Refuges' wildlife and habitat conservation goals.
- Leveraging our limited resources effectively, ensuring that every action we take has a meaningful impact.

By being intentional in our actions, we will not only support the Refuges but help them thrive for generations to come.



In Conclusion:

The future of the Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges should be about strategic partnership and focused support.

Let's work together to build a sustainable and impactful future.

Volunteers are always welcomed and needed to help on any of our initiatives.

Thank You





Andrew Gude
LCKNWR Manager