

Minutes
Board Meeting
Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
Thursday, April 21, 2016

Present:

Board Members: Greg Lang, Carmelo Echevarria, John McPherson, Ed Dehaan, Libby Cagle, Maria Sgambati, Kit Lane, Russ Hall, Peg Hall, Roger McDaniels, Margy VanLandingham, Debbie Meeks, Jennifer Kolinek.

Guests: Jay Bushnell, Bob McKinstry

Refuge Staff. Andrew Gude, Larry Woodward.

1. The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Maria Sgambati, President.
2. Minutes: **Motion** by Kit Lane to adopt the minutes of the March 17, 2016, Board meeting as submitted. **Second** by Carmelo Echevarria. Passed by a unanimous vote.
3. Annual Meeting Review: The comments and ideas presented were as follows:
 - Need to start planning earlier, i.e., October.
 - Photo contest went well, but should have kept better track of photo submitters and to work on the awards ceremony. Possibly add a youth category.
 - The food was good as always, it was the right amount, and it was good to have vegetarian beans.
 - Don't need to have registration open during the business meeting and talk--re-open afterwards for any late-comers.
 - Don't need hand stamps--just use name tags.
 - Clarification of Treasurer position: To be taken by John McPherson.
 - Total sales: \$471.
 - Attendance: 130-140
 - Maria expressed gratitude to all who worked to organize and having it all set up on time.
4. Check Signing: **Motion** by Ed DeHaan to have each of the following authorized to sign checks: Maria Sgambati, President; Russ Hall, President Elect; Bill Dummitt, Secretary; John McPherson, Treasurer. **Second** by Greg Lang. Passed by a unanimous vote.
5. Arts Festival Review: The comments and ideas presented were as follows:
 - Maria thanked Margy VanLandingham for doing the organizational work and making sure it all went well.
 - Volunteers will be lined up earlier next year.

- Need to express to festival organizers that the music was often too loud to allow for conversation with people at the booth. Perhaps request to be placed further away next year. Maria will talk to Eileen ? with the Lions Club about the music. Suggestion that there be a maximum db for the music.
 - Revenue: Sales: \$661; Donations: \$51.
 - Inventory: 35 items (hats, t-shirts, etc.) were sold.
 - Suggestion that Friends consider asking to be placed near City Hall as had been down in past years.
 - Suggestion that should have a counter to keep track of how many people come by for information. The Board agreed that this is a good idea and that counters should be purchased.
6. Treasurer's Report. Libby Cagle provided a written report, attached. Libby was thanked for her excellent service as treasurer. The new treasurer was asked to bring a recommendation to the next meeting about having and using a debit card tied to Paypal.
7. Refuge update: Andrew Gude and Larry Woodward, reported:
- a. Refuge Manager: Andrew reported that questions about his job location have been settled and he will be full time at the Lower Suwannee/Cedar Keys.
 - b. Big Bend Conservation Project: Andrew reported that he has been working with Lauren Day of the Conservation Fund about properties in the Big Bend area that need to be conserved.
 - c. Bird Tagging: Larry described the new first-in-Florida antenna that has been installed to pick up pings from tagged birds flying by. The goal is to have a “fence” of towers across Florida to pick up migrating birds. The wifi that Friends provided is being used for this project. Information may soon be available online. It was suggested that this would be a good thing for Friends to promote, e.g., with links on website.
 - d. Burning: Over 4,000 acres have been burned so far this year, and the Refuge is in a good position for summer burning.
 - e. Dixie County: Sanders Creek bridge had bad erosion problem that is being addressed. Ducks Unlimited will be doing the contract work during which time the Mainline Road will need to be closed. It was agreed that Friends should publish the closing on website, etc.
 - f. Seahorse/Snake Keys Nesting: No birds have returned to Seahorse, but many are nesting on Snake Key, include Roseate Spoonbills, Ibis, Reddish Egrets. Vic Doig is doing surveys on Snake Key, but as of yet no authorization from the state to limit access to surrounding waters.

- g. Staffing: The fire intern, Sam, will be here for the year, and funding for this position will be available next year. Will also be getting a forestry intern, and Nature Coast Biological Station is helping with the costs of an intern. Still need to fill Park Ranger position which is back on list to be funded. Many elementary schools are looking for programs so this position is badly needed.
8. Tram Ridge Trail Panels: Debbie Meeks showed the new panels that are on an aluminum board and weatherproof. The cost was \$80 per panel and Larry Woodward will be working on the frames for installation. The Board agreed that they looked great.
9. Communications. Peg Hall presented a written report, attached, and reported the following highlights:
- The Communications Committee met and worked on several website issues.
 - The bicycling brochures have been used up and need to be re-ordered. The Dixie County TDC will help with the cost.
 - GPS information has been added to the website.
 - A News Brief bug has been fixed so that it presents properly on smartphones.
 - Kit Lane will be working on the listing of members on the website.
 - The Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce would like a brochure based on the Atsena Otie paddling panel. The Communications Committee is working on this.
 - Steve Cournoyer has offered to work with Friends on creating Refuge-centric paddle maps and guides.
 - Larry Woodward suggested that there needs to be publicity on the fact that a closed gate is meant only to keep vehicles out, not pedestrians.
 - It was reported that \$1,100 of the \$1,800 budgeted for communications has been spent. The Committee needs to purchase Adobe Creative Cloud and may need additional funds later in the year.
10. Inventory: Carmelo Echevarria reported:
- Don't have enough paddling panels left to make complete sets, so will start selling individually.
 - No inventory purchases are needed at this time.
 - Greg Lang present a set of donated Bruce Colin photos and asked the Board what should be done with them. The Board requested that Carmelo work with next year's annual meeting committee to determine what to do.
11. Membership: No report due to the absence of Marci Wilcox. Maria Sgambati reported that she will be researching membership software for nonprofits.
12. Advocacy:
- a. Big Bend Project: Russ Hall reported on the meeting with Lauren Day of the Conservation Fund regarding the Big Bend project. Russ went over a map of the project and emphasized that it is the longest undeveloped stretch of coastline in

the U.S. Maria Sgambati spoke about the biological importance of the area. Jay Bushnell asked for a decision on whether the Friends group should participate in the project or not. Greg Lang stated that he thought Friends should participate within our scope of interests. **Motion** by Peg Hall that the Friends participate in one or more of three possible ways: Financial up to \$500; in kind services; and/or letter of endorsement; with the manner of participation to be decided by president's committee and advocacy chair. **Second** by Greg Land. Passed by a unanimous vote.

- b. Lukens Tract: The draft letter to the Suwannee River Water Management District was reviewed and there was no objection to it being sent as is and signed by Maria. Larry Woodward stated that the Refuge was taking a hands-off approach until the SRWMD and the private owners worked things out as to the owners' behavior on the site. Margy VanLandingham stated that she has been following the situation and that it is still a mess, with the SRWMD trying to move ahead with new signs and kiosks but without cooperation by the landowner. There have also been conflicts between public users of the property and the private owners. Peg Hall and Maria Sgambati stated that Friends should help and stay engaged. Roger McDaniels reported that the final pepper busting for the season took place on the Lukens Tract, and he thanked all the volunteers for there work. Pepper busting will resume in the Fall.
- c. Vieques, Puerto Rico: Friends to be added to letter in support of preservation.
- d. Big Bend Refuges: Efforts are underway to increase communication and cooperation among the Big Bend refuges. A conference among the Friends group presidents will take place on April 26 at 3 p.m. There is the possibility of a road trip to be planned to St. Vincent and St. Marks refuges.
- e. Science Initiative: Horseshoe Crab tagging project has gone very well with about 400 crabs tagged. It has been determined that the Cull Property, owned by Florida's Nature Coast Conservancy, has very important beaches for the crabs. It has been learned that individual crabs spawn at different beaches.

13. Business Items:

- a. The Hidden Coast Paddling Festival has requested a contribution in support of the upcoming festival. After discussion, the Board agreed that this was not within the Friends mission, but that the treasurer should check on what contributions had been made in the past, if any.
- b. Conflict of Interest Form: Board members were requested to sign.
- c. Friends Calendar: Now on the website.

- d. Ibis: Jay Bushnell will do an April issue. It was suggested that Paul Ramey may be interested in working on the Ibis.

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Communications Team Report April 2016

Team Meeting was held April 21

Achievements during the past month –

- The Tram Loop Trail informational panels are finished and in-hand
- Most buttons on our website can now be read on mobile devices. Some are still white-on-white. We're working on it.
- Refuge Cycling brochure is in press. Partnering with Dixie Tourism Development Committee, we ordered 5,000 for the cost of 1,000 on our own. We keep copyright. We included both logos.
- We are adding GPX files to trail guide and maps on the website
- Implementation of a new template to make the News Brief more readable on mobile devices
- Addition of all Life and 2016 members to the website membership page
- Email "welcome" notes to all members who joined above the basic level

In the works –

- Plans for installation of the Tram Loop Trail informational panels
- Distribution of the Cycling brochures on the Dixie County side
- Plans for a trial Atsena Otie Paddling Brochure modeled on our Atsena Otie paddling guide
- Plans for upgrading the Cedar Key Kiosk Friends panels before the Seafood Festival
- Final draft of the River and Tram Loop Trails Guide

Under consideration –

- Clean up of the mailing list for News Brief to delete subscribers who have never opened it
- Brochures of all 12 paddling panels

April News Brief

Sent April 3. Received by 501 (up from 486). As of April 19, opened by 163 (33%)

Topics – Call for Volunteers, Annual Meeting, announcements re: pepper busting, Sulak talk, nature walk, manatee downlisting, board meeting, our reaching out to Friends of other refuges, iNaturalist, Horseshoe Crabs, conservation easement near the refuge, litter pickup by volunteers, rookery, Advocacy and Information links. The Annual Meeting Report link was by far the most often opened (about 50%). All the rest were opened by about the same number of people (10% or so)

- Annual Meeting report
- Conservation easement story
- Reaching out to other Refuge Friends in our Complex
- Rookery abandonment talk
- Science Initiatives
- Manatees
- Advocacy and Info

Facebook Page

8 New fans. Total now is 410.

12 Posts since the last report. Peg, Maria, Russ, Libby, Roger, and Bob posted.

1760 Number of people to whom our posts were "served" by Facebook in since the last report.

Most viewed posts

- Conservation easement
- Annual Meeting, by Peg
- Benches on Tram Trail
- Science initiatives
- Nature Walks

Friends Website

- About 2300 visitors in the past month compared to about 2000 each of the previous 3 months
- About 11,000 pageviews in the past month (compared to 9800, 9000, and 9400 the previous 3 months)
- Updates to the Membership pages (and the MailChimp database for News Brief) by Kit

Budget Implementation

- Request Special allocation to cover the cost of Adobe Creative Cloud annual fee.
- \$1,800 Assigned budget
- \$ 820++ Spent or committed to date
 - \$190 Cycling Brochures
 - \$???
 - \$20 Domain renewal for website
 - \$180 Display holders
 - \$130 Ibis printing and postage
 - \$300 Adobe Creative Cloud