

**Minutes
Board Meeting
Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
Thursday, October 15, 2015**

Present:

Board Members: Libby Cagle, Roger McDaniels, Debbie Meeks, John McPherson, Bob Hudson, Maria Sgambati, Carmelo Echevarria, Bob McKinstry, Jaime Jarrels, Peg Hall, Sherry Beauchamp.

Refuge Staff. Larry Woodward.

Guests: Jay Bushnell, Amy Gernhardt, Anne Lindgren.

1. The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Maria Sgambati, Vice President, and guests were introduced.
2. Approval of Minutes: **Motion** by Bob Hudson to approved the minutes of the Board Meeting of September 17, 2015, as submitted, with correction of Carmelo Echevarria's and Allan Pither's name. **Second** by Jaime Jarrels. Passed by a unanimous vote.
3. Refuge update. Deputy Manager Larry Woodward provided the following update:
 - a. Burning: Working with Cedar Key Scrub on burning, and also on land management issues.
 - b. Lukens Tract: Chris Topping bought portion in the middle with the SRWMD parcels on either side, and Topping is likely to purchase rest of public area, including kayak launch area. In any event, it is difficult to manage and allow public access with private property in the middle.
 - c. Healthy Gulf–Healthy Cedar Key: The Refuge taking part in this effort.
 - d. Staffing: Pam Darty's position still exists but no authorization to hire as of yet.
 - e. Mainline Road: Still working on roadway issues including stump grinding and resurfacing of sections damaged by flooding.
4. Committee Reports:
 - a. Treasurer's Report. Libby Cagle submitted a report and stated that there were not many transactions over the summer. An income of \$7,000 was budgeted for this

year, and with only 3 months left in the fiscal year, there have been very low budgeted expenditures.

- b. Communications. Peg Hall submitted a written report which is attached. She reported that Debbie Meeks has initiated 4 new interpretive panels which will come back to the Board for review. There has been no new work on the video, but the Committee will be continuing to work on the PowerPoint which can be used for community presentations. The Newsbrief went out for September, and Peg went over what were the most popular articles. She reported that Facebook is slow with few new friends. The website has been updated, and she needs bios of board members for the website.
- c. Invasive Species. Roger McDaniels reported that pepper busting will resume later in October, and that he is working with Vic Doig on a plan. The busting events will normally be on Tuesday mornings at 9 a.m. There was discussion about cogon grass in the Refuge and how farmers have been dealing with it. It was suggested that we take our successful pepperbusting program to show others. The possibility of providing free lunch in order to encourage additional volunteers was also discussed and there was consensus to use Friends funds for such lunches.
- d. Inventory. Carmelo Echevarria reported that the earrings have not arrived yet. He reported that he checked on hats with the company in Gainesville but found the hats there to be too expensive. It was suggested that we go back to the Print Shop in Chiefland for hats. Libby Cagle suggested key chain with compass and thermometer as a sales item. Bob Hudson suggested putting an animal on the new hats. It was also noted that we need hats for women that are not so guy-looking. Carmelo said he is looking for a new banner, and it was suggested that he try the Print Shop for that as well. There was discussion about Seafood Festival logistics.

5. Initiatives Update:

- a. Seahorse Key Artist in Residency program . Maria Sgambati, Anne Lindgren, and Amy Gernhardt discussed the future of this program. Marine Lab, Friends, and the Arts Center all work on the program at this time. They got a good response to the call for artists, and Carol Swayze from Englewood was chosen for this year. It was suggested that the program be expanded to include the Lower Suwannee Refuge, and that a separate committee be created to move it forward. Peg Hall suggested that the Friends art initiative be associated with the national Artist in Residency program. **Motion** by Peg Hall that Friends partner with Seahorse Key Artist in Residency program. **Second** by Bob Hudson. Passed by unanimous vote.

- b. Proposed Seahorse Key native plant garden. Maria Sgambati said that groups have asked her about planting a native plant garden on Seahorse Key. There was general agreement that a native plant garden is not appropriate on a wild island already covered with native plants. There are also water supply issues. It was suggested that an alternative would be to label the existing native plants with signs, or provide printed materials for visitors.
 - c. Tram Trail Panels. Pam Darty sketched out ideas which Debbie Meeks and Peg Hall have worked on and will bring back to the Board for review. Debbie did another panel for the Suwannee side with information about what the Refuge had done for the land and providing education about vandalism. Directional signs are being created by Refuge staff.
 - d. Promotional video. It was reported that Bill Dummitt is anxious to work on this.
 - e. Paddling Project. Peg and Russ Hall met with Mark Gluckman about paddling trails in Cedar Key. Peg and Russ will be championing this.
 - f. Visitor Center: Roger McDaniels and Libby Cagle reported that they saw many nice visitor centers during their travels. Jay Bushnell reported that he also saw nice visitor centers on his summer travels. There was agreement that Friends needs to pursue the idea of using Vista as a visitor center, including pursuing federal money.
 - g. FNCC/Refuge: John McPherson reported that Florida's Nature Coast Conservancy has signed the MOU for managing the Section 29 aquatic lands and has delivered the agreement to Refuge staff.
6. Business items/updates:
- a. Nominating Committee: It was proposed that the nominating committee for this year be comprised of Debbie Meeks and Roger McDaniels, and Alison Nelson as the non-Board member. **Motion** and **Second** to approve nominating committee as set forth above, subject to acceptance by Alison. Passed by unanimous vote. Jay Bushnell said that he would do an Ibis in December which will include the slate of officers.
 - b. Priorities Planning Committee. President Greg Lang proposed that in lieu of a Budget Committee there be a Priorities Planning Committee to take a broader look at the Friends budget and priorities for the coming year. He envisions this committee addressing the upcoming fiscal year first from a priorities and planning perspective, initially ignoring the fiscal impact of those priorities. After the priorities are agreed upon, a proposed funding amount would be proposed. Finally, the priorities and proposed funding would come together in a working

document that will be a combination of priorities and working budget that will be recommended to the Board. The committee should present its work to the Board prior to the end of the fiscal year and with enough time for the Board to take action. Greg suggested the following members for the Committee: Peg Hall, Chairperson; Maria Sgambati, Member; and Bill Dummitt, Member; and suggested that any Board or general member offer suggestions to the individual committee members. **Motion** by Bob Hudson to create the Committed with the members as listed above. **Second** by John McPherson. Passed by unanimous vote.

7. Events:

- a. National Wildlife Refuge Week-October 13-19: The President strongly suggests that each one of us have some fun and do something *WILD!* in celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week.
- b. November Friends Board meeting & River & Creeks Cleanup to be held in Dixie County- November 19: Debbie Meeks, champion of these events was thanked for her hard work on this. It was confirmed that Friends would split the cost of lunch. Debbie will also be organizing a Suwannee River cleanup at Fowlers Bluff on December 5.
- c. The Board was reminded that Sea Horse Key Marine Lab will be open to visitors on October 17th.
- d. Big Bend Science Symposium update. Maria Sgambati reported that the date has been moved to January and that she will bring additional information to future meetings.
- e. Libby Cagle suggested that consideration be given to a trash to art project, and a Friends-sponsored trip to Okefenokee.

8. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Communications Team Report October 2015

Publications

Work continues on wording and graphics for 4 new interpretive panels that Debbie has initiated

- 3 for the new Tram Trail
- 1 for the Dixie side, "Restoring Your Refuge, Restoring Your Heritage"

Video, about Friends and the Refuges

No new activity

Power Point, about Friends and the Refuges

A few changes to the preliminary outline. Intended use will be for volunteers (initially board members) to give presentations to hospitality industry members and vendors, service organizations, church groups, others. **See attachment.**

September 30 News Brief

Received by 487, opened by 199 which is 41% (same as last month). The industry standard for nonprofit newsletters is 22%.

Topics were – Invitation to the Board Meeting, Save the Date for Suwannee River Cleanup and the board meeting in Town of Suwannee in November, Call for Volunteers for Seafood Festival, Announcement of Shired Island Cleanup by Current Problems, Announcement of 2016 Artist-in-Residence selection, Alaska Maritime NWR description, Advocacy and information links

The links opened were

1. Artist-in-Residence (13)
2. Alaska Maritime NWR (9)
3. Shired Island cleanup (2)
4. Advocacy and Information links (4))

Facebook Page

- 1 Number of new fans this month. Total now is 370.
- 3 Number of posts this month. Maria and Peg posted.
- 314 Number of people to whom our posts were "served" by Facebook this month, compared to 1275 last month.

Friends Website

- 1 Post by Peg using Bob's photos
- 3 Updates
 - July Board Meeting minutes
 - Champions list on Who We/The Board are page
 - Initiated a page with photos and short bios of board members and champions. Will discuss at the board meeting. **See attachment**
- 2107 Pageviews in the past month, according to Weebly