

**Minutes  
Board Meeting  
Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges  
Thursday, March 19, 2015**

**Present:**

**Board Members:** Greg Lang, Kit Lane, Carmelo Echevarria, John Thalacker, Bill Dummitt, Ed DeHaan, Sherry Beauchamp, Bob McKinstry, John McPherson, Peg Hall, Richard Herman, Debbie Meeks, Maria Sgambati, Bill Kilborn.

**Refuge Staff:** Larry Woodward, Pam Darty.

**Guests:** Jay Bushnell.

1. The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Greg Lang, President.
2. Approval of Minutes. **Motion** by John Thalacker to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on February 19, 2015, and the Annual Meeting on February 28, 2015, as submitted. **Second** by Peg Hall. Passed by unanimous vote.
3. Annual Meeting. Greg said he thought it went very well with a good turnout. Possibility of having a second big tent. Possibility of having less items at the silent auction. Greg reviewed the attendance and monetary intake.
4. Refuge update. Larry Woodward reported as follows:
  - a. The state closed on the strip of land that runs along the south side of Shell Mound Road. FWS is looking at another small 8-acre parcel to be added to the Refuge, and it appears as though the State is continuing to work on the rest of the Caber Tract, possibly to be managed by the Refuge. This could be very beneficial to the scrub jay population.
  - b. The Board was reminded that Pam Darty was retiring soon and it remains unclear whether this position will be filled right away. Jacklyn with the fire crew is also leaving and Larry hopes that position can be filled.
  - c. The Refuge budget for this year will be very tight with virtually no working money. There is, however, money in the budget for equipment and a new backhoe will be purchased.
  - d. The fire crew is now at such a small size that complex burns are not now possible without outside help. Anthony is doing a great job. A recent burn in Dixie County created some unexpected smoke problems in places as far away as

Gainesville, and CR 349 had to be closed for 3 hours. But it was otherwise a successful burn of 12,000 acres.

- e. The tree planting program continues with about 20,000 trees planted, mostly in Dixie County.
- f. The Refuge volunteers, Charlie and Carolyn, have left for Maine after doing an excellent job for the Refuge. New volunteers will be working over the summer.
- g. The youth turkey hunt was successful with a 12-year-old girl harvesting a turkey.
- h. Thee Refuge is working on revising the applicable hunting regulations with the possibility of reducing the number of hunting days to reduce the stress on wildlife, and as a result of reduced staff. Larry mentioned the need to educate hunters on the conservation purposes of the Refuge, and Larry was asked to think about ways in which Friends could help with this.
- i. Funding has been obtained to replace the boardwalk on Dennis Creek: \$15,000, and the Refuge continues to work on the tram trail.

## 5. Committee Reports

- a. Treasurer's Report. Due to the absence of Libby Cagle, no report provided.
- b. Communications. Peg Hall discussed her written report which is attached.
- c. Invasive Species. Ed DeHaan reported that more volunteers are needed for the Tuesday and Thursday work days.
- d. Inventory. Carmelo Echevarria reported that the objective for the Cedar Key Art Festival is to sell new T Shirts at the regular price.
- e. Membership. Peg Hall reported on behalf of Marci Wilcox that 26 new members signed up at the annual meeting.

## 6. Initiatives update.

- a. Greg Lang reported on some format changes to the initiatives table.
- b. River Trail: John Thalacker reported that the River Trail had been rocked and asked that the Board consider spending \$2,500 on a historical display/kiosk about the logging industry. The Board agreed with the concept and asked John to continue working on this.

7. Cedar Key Arts Festival. Friends booth to be set up March 27, with the booth open on March 28 and 29. Various Board member volunteered to man the booth during the festival, with Greg Lang and Bob Hudson being the point persons.
8. Other business.
  - a. Maria Sgambati reported that the science initiative is continuing, with training on iNaturalist set for April 25, 2015, at the Marine Lab building in Cedar Key. This will be open to anyone. She also reported that Tiffany Black is working on a citizen science project involving horseshoe crab surveys.
  - b. Jay Bushnell reported on the need to provide testimony to Congress on Refuge issues and the Board agreed that Jay should draft a letter to Congress addressing the following issues:
    1. Funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
    2. Funding for Refuges.
    3. Support for reimbursing local areas for lost tax base to conservation land purchases.

Greg Lang agreed to forward the letter to the Board after it was send.

Jay also reported that he had talked to Desire Graves about the FWS/Friends agreement and that FWS is continuing to work on the issues raised by Friends groups. Greg Lang will put the agreement with comments in Dropbox.

- c. Debbie Meeks reported on progress with the Dixie County trails. A biking brochure is being worked on and work is being done on potential trails at Salt Creek. Richard Herman offered to help.
- d. Jay Bushnell offered to prepare an Ibis for April, and suggested that we continue to publish a printed version since 45 households still want to receive it in this form. Jay asked for updated contact information for the Board and Champions.
- e. Jay Bushnell reported that Daniel with the Refuge had asked whether Friends would be interested in helping defray the costs of tree planting. The Board asked for more information from Daniel, with the consensus being that this probably not a good role for the Friends since tree planting is part of Refuge operations.
- f. Jay Bushnell reported that he wanted to correct the McCormick Creek sign to add Barnett Creek. The Board agreed that this change should be made.

- g. Maria Sgambati mentioned the science camp and the need for scholarships. She is working with Levy, Gilchrist and Dixie counties on this.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

## Communications Report March 2015

### News Brief

March 11 (494 sent, 205 opened, 76 clicked)		February 14 (477 sent, 201 opened, 71 clicked)	
1. Annual Meeting article and photos	54	1. Annual Meeting	34
2. Ancient Fishing Techniques article	17	2. Library Series	14
3. Native Plant Show announcement	14	3. Slate of Officers	12
4. Refuge Association Awards link	7	4. Pepper Busters	11
5. FWS Newsletter link	6	5. Wildlife Corridor Expedition	9
6. Refuge Association Update link	4	6. Butterfly Garden	8
7. Refuge Association Legislative Priorities link	3	7. River Trail Work Day	8
		8. Nature Walk	6
		9. Science Team	5

### Facebook Page

0 new fans = 253

Posts since February 19	Reach	Clicks/Likes	Posted by
Refuge is magical	11	3	Bob
Teacher's photo of egret at Seahorse Key	92	19	Maria
Fishing in backwaters	49	26	Bob
New science initiative	18	2	Bob
Save the date: iNaturalist training	60	21	Bob
Ancient Fishing Talk	33	1	Maria
CK kiosk moved	241	24	Bob
No doubt	39	7	Bob
USA Today "best refuge" contest	45	5	Peg
Annual Meeting photos	23	1	Peg
USA Today "best refuge" contest	21	3	Maria
Cover photo update	67	5	Peg
Profile Photo update	71	4	Peg
Annual Meeting reminder	112	15	Peg

### Website

Pageviews in the last month = 3800, by 519 unique visitors

Pageviews in the previous month = 3650

6 posts since last board meeting by Peg and Donna T