

Minutes
Board Meeting
Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
Thursday, June 18, 2015

Present:

Board Members: Greg Lang, Kit Lane, Peg Hall, Maria Sgambati, Bob McKinstry, John McPherson.

Refuge Staff: Andrew Gude, Larry Woodward.

1. Call to Order.
2. Introduction of Guests
3. Approval of Minutes: Motion by Peg Hall to adopt minutes of April 16, 2015, board meeting as presented. Second by Maria Sgambati. Passed.
4. Refuge update – Refuge Manager, Andrew Gude, and Deputy Manager Larry Woodward, presented the following update:
 - a. Hunt Permits: This was the first year for charging for hunting on the refuge. The permit is \$15, the permitting process will help get hunting data for the first time.
 - b. Seahorse Key: No news from toxicology tests, etc, regarding why the birds abandoned their nests. Several theories have been proposed: military disturbance, severe thunderstorm, etc. There has been successful re-nesting on Snake Key with good diversity and number of birds.
 - c. Positions: The Refuge will be able to re-fill George’s position, and Andrew is trying to upgrade Anthony’s position. The Refuge has a forestry intern and 4 YCCs for the summer
 - d. Dixie Mainline: Work is continuing on cutting trees growing up in the road, on which there have been a few complaints, but the trees have to be removed to allow for maintenance and safety.
 - e. Tram Line Trail: Work is continuing on the trail.
 - f. Big Bend Conservation Area: Now has life of its own, with the state working on the project for hydrologic restoration. Many different groups are working on it, with study being done by IFAS on value of springs, etc., to the local economy. There is likely to be pressure exerted by new agricultural uses.

- g. Panther Ridge: FWS bought the land south of Shell Mound Road; the state is going to buy land to the north (Caber Tract). There will remain an un-purchased parcel south of the Refuge.
5. Committee Reports:
- a. Treasurer's Report. No report due to Libby Cagle being on vacation. Current checking balance: \$28,000.
 - b. Communications. Peg Hall had nothing new to report.
 - c. Invasive Species. Roger McDaniels is on vacation and project is on hold for the summer.
 - d. Inventory. Carmelo provided a written inventory report (attached).
 - e. Membership. No report due to Marci Wilcox being on vacation.
6. Initiatives update: Brief updates /requested actions by Champions.
- a. iNaturalist: Training session was successful and there will be another training session in the Fall, with the possibility of it being followed up with a bio-blitz.
7. Old business / updates:
- a. Promotional video concept/budget: Greg Lang stated that there needs to be a conceptual budget and scope to be reported back to the Board. There was general agreement that the video should be relatively short. A possible concept: how the Refuge is central to the overall environmental health of the region.
 - b. Letter from Friends to refuge complex and regional management: Maria Sgambati reported that a letter will be written to David Viker, Chief of Refuges, Region 4, about the staffing situation. It was agreed that it should be sent to Representative Yoho and Senator Nelson. There was lengthy discussion about getting the word out on the importance of Refuge activities, e.g., Big Bend Conservation Area.
 - c. Vista boat assessment: Bob McKinstry reported that Linda Rowe Alexander said that the family would be thrilled to have houseboat restored. It is historically significant and would be an educational tool. Bob is going to contact Bruce Goss, who worked on it before, to do an assessment.
8. Other Business and Reminders:

- a. Retirement Party for Ranger Pam Darty, Thursday June 25 at 12 noon, FWC Marine Lab, Cedar Key. Please bring a dish or desert to share.
 - b. No August Friends meeting.
 - c. October meeting to be held in Dixie County.
 - d. Greg Lang reported that the Legislature had appropriated Amendment 1 funds in the amount of \$55,000,000 for land acquisition, \$47,000,000 for springs programs, with most or the remainder going towards running existing programs. There may be lawsuits by environmental groups, and the Friends group needs to keep in mind how the appropriations might benefit the Refuge.
9. With no more business to address, the meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.