

**Minutes**  
**Board Meeting**  
**Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges**  
**Friday, August 23, 2013**

**Board Members Present:** Jay Bushnell, Carmelo Echeveria, Bob Hudson, Peg Hall, Russ Hall, Roger McDaniels

**Attending by phone:** Jane Connors

**Guests:** Maria Sgambati, M.D., Joyce Tarnow

**Staff:** Andrew Gude, Vic Doig

- Meeting called to order by Jay Bushnell at 10:00 a.m.
- Introduction: Jay asked each participant to discuss a positive experience from this summer. Discussion ensued.
- Minutes from board meeting of July 26. Moved, seconded and approved, with the following modifications:
  - 8.b. delete the word “not.” The Friends group has participated in the past.
  - 3.d. should read “Jay said he will check with Jerry about this.”
- Treasurer’s Report: The board reviewed and discussed the Treasurer’s Report. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to accept the Treasurer’s report. Motion carried.
- Investing long term funds: Investing of Friends group funds in a long term account was discussed. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to invest \$10,000 of Friends group funds in a two-year CD with Drummond Bank. Motion carried. Jay Bushnell and the Treasurer will work with Drummond Bank regarding the most appropriate names to be put on the CD, and whether they could be Friends group titles rather than individuals.
- Audio System: Bob Hudson stated he has exchanged emails with Jim Wilcox, and will follow up with Jim.
- Inventory:
  - Carmelo gave a report on sales of Friends group items at events, which have declined substantially. Carmelo noted that it appears that most individuals who are buying shirts are Friends group members. Carmelo recommended reducing prices in accordance with the attached pricing schedule as a means of selling the inventory. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to approve the inventory re-pricing schedule as recommended. Motion carried. (Note: I’ll ask Carmelo to email you the re-pricing schedule for attachment to the minutes.

- Development of new inventory items for sale at events was discussed. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to authorize the Inventory Committee to proceed with development and purchase of new items at a cost not to exceed \$1,200. Motion carried. It was noted that the Inventory Committee includes Peg Hall, Carmelo Echevarria, Roger McDaniels and Jay Bushnell.
- Donation to Friends of the Library: It was noted that a \$100 donation has been made to the Cedar Key Friends of the Library. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to donate \$100 to the Suwannee Tech Center, to be used for Refuge related programs and activities; and, to ask Jane Connors to inform the board of the use of the funds. Motion carried.
- National Friends Association: Jay reported that he had received a thank you letter from the National Friends Association for our donation.
- Refuge Update: Andrew provided the following update on the Refuge:
  - Budget- the 2014 budget for operational funds is down 20% from the 2009 budget. The year 2009 was the last year that a Federal budget was developed. Operational funds represent 20% of the Refuges total funding, and is the portion of the budget that Refuge staff can use for projects, support and improvement of the Refuges and its services. Fixed funds, representing salaries and benefits, etc., represent 80% of the Refuges budget and are fully funded. Andrew expressed optimism that our Refuges will still be able to deliver current offerings with the reduced operational funds.
  - Refuge Web Page- Andrew reported that Pam Darty is updating the Refuge web site, as well as assisting other Refuges in this task. She will also manage the updated web site. The goal is to develop a web site that offers “one stop shopping” with all Refuge related events, notices, etc. The site will be linked to the Friends web sites. There was discussion about the opportunity to make the Friends and Refuges web sites even more coordinated.
  - Four Youth Conservation Corps students worked at the Refuge this summer. They planted 13,000 Longleaf Pine seedlings and wiregrass.
  - Road paving – Following some misunderstandings and last minute negotiations, the entrance road to the River Trail and Refuge Headquarters is scheduled to be paved, hopefully this fall.
  - Atsena Otie Dock – the old hurricane-damaged dock is being taken down and shortened. A boardwalk from the beach to the trail will be built, as well as an observation platform using a portion of the old dock.
  - Restore Act (BP funding) – Andrew is involved in this long term funding process.
  - Big Bend Conservation Area – Andrew reported on a very large and long term initiative that would link conservation lands, both public and private, throughout the

Big Bend area. He is working with Federal Agencies and large universities, i.e., IFAS at the University of Florida. The foundation of the initiative will be to support economic sustainability, including aquaculture, with a background of conservation. Ultimately, at the proper time, the initiative will need to be explained and promoted with elected officials and the public. He has asked for \$1 million grant for planning work.

- The Refuge system is being reorganized to create “Refuge Complexes” which will result in the consolidation of staff and headquarters within the Refuge system. An organizational chart has not been published yet.
- Volunteer Definition- subsequent to the confusion about the definition of a “volunteer” that occurred during last year’s volunteer appreciation luncheon, Andrew and his staff developed the following definition that will be used in the future: “A volunteer is someone who invests twelve hours or more in Refuge initiated and/or supported activities during a fiscal year.” There was discussion about examples of volunteer hours that would be counted, and the need for documentation. By example, work by a volunteer on the River Trail, planting pine seedlings, removal of invasive species, etc., would be tracked and considered as volunteer hours. Even though it may be initiated by the Friends group, those are examples of activities that are supported by the Refuge. But, attendance at a Friend’s Group board meeting is an example of an activity not counted as volunteer hours.
- Cooperators luncheon – The Refuge is holding the annual Cooperators luncheon on December 5, 2013. It was noted that the Friends group is funding the luncheon and it is in the budget.
- Initiatives Reports:
  - Education Initiative – The education event at the Seahorse Key Light Station was discussed. It was noted that there will be an overnight group and a day group, each consisting of ten individuals. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to approve the following principles for selection of participants in the event:
    - The organizers of the event will participate, namely Jennifer Seavey and Donna Bushnell
    - The president of the Friends group, or his designee, will participate
    - The remaining slots will be offered to all members of the Friends group, and each applicant shall have an equal chance to participate. The Education Committee is authorized to determine the methodology for selecting participants if there are more applicants than slots, so long as every member has an equal chance of being selected to participate.

- Paddling Panels (Report is attached) – Peg and Russ discussed the current state and use of the paddling panels. They reported that the original plan where panels would be loaned to paddlers for a small deposit has not worked very well, for a variety of reasons. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Paddling Committee will prepare and distribute books of “tear off” sheets and a copy of the plasticized sheets of the paddling trails to various interested agencies, such as paddling clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc. The Committee is authorized to determine which agencies to distribute to.
- Invasive Species Report- Roger reported that a grant for \$9,850 has been received. Vic reported that \$9,250 has been spent on equipment and supplies to date. Volunteer training will take place in November, Spraying will begin thereafter, at the Lukens Tract, which is believed to be a source for infestation in Cedar Key.
- Behind the Gates – Jay reported he has escorted five individuals to various points of interest in the Refuge.
- Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee will meet on Sunday, August 25, consisting of Peg Hall, Jay Bushnell and Bob Hudson. It was subsequently noted that a non-board member of the Friends group needs to be added to the Committee.
  - Jay Bushnell will be Past President, Bob Hudson will be President
  - Board members whose terms are up for renewal include Peg Hall, Russ Hall, Carmelo Echevarria, Richard Herman, John McPherson, Jerry Salamon and John Thalacker.
  - The Committee asked board members for suggestions for new board members.
- Communications:
  - Peg provided an excellent and in-depth Communications Report, which is attached. (John, you should have received this by email) She also reported she is developing an updated paddling website.
  - Ibis – Jay reported he will publish and Ibis in October
- Old Business:
  - Town of Suwannee Kiosk – Jane reported that a site has been identified. The State has indicated they will maintain the area around the kiosk. The Suwannee Chamber of Commerce will pay for the materials. Jane stated that a source of kiosks has been located that could substantially reduce the overall cost of it.
  - Suwannee River Clean Up – Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to sponsor a Suwannee River Clean Up on December 7, 2013. Motion carried.
  - Butterfly Garden – Maintenance of the Butterfly Garden at Refuge HQ was discussed. Jay is asking the Cedar Key Garden Club to assume maintenance of it.

- New Business:
  - It was noted that the Seafood Festival is October 19 and 20. The Friends group will have a booth and will need volunteers.
  - Old Friends group tents- It was noted that the old Friends Group tents are broken and in a state of disrepair. They are no longer used since we have the new tent. Jay Bushnell offered to personally purchase the tents. Following discussion, it was moved and seconded to sell the old, broken, Friends group tents to Jay Bushnell for \$20 total. Motion carried.
- Next board meeting: It was agreed that the next board meeting will be on Wednesday, September 25, at 10:00 a.m. at Refuge headquarters.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

## Communications Report August 2013 by Peg Hall

### News Brief

I have sent 4 News Briefs since the last Board meeting, on June 29.

**June 30 -- *The Ibis*.** We had already mailed the *Ibis* to those who prefer a print copy or who request both print and electronic versions.

- This News Brief went to 405 people (only 153 of whom are current members)
- 47% opened the email (including 101 of the current members)
- 17% opened *The Ibis* link (including 44 of the 101 current members)

**July 17 -- Bad Plants, Good Plants, Education, Trails, Inventory, Advocacy, Upcoming**

- This News Brief went to 403 people (153 current members)
- 43% opened the email (94 current members)
- 8% clicked a link---30 people went to the trail guide link, 1 to the link about the water and land legacy campaign, 2 to the FWS link about commenting on hunting and fishing regulations, 1 to our Friends website
- 5 readers sent comments about the rose mallow photo

**July 27 -- Advocacy Alert, Plant Clarification**

- This News Brief went to 406 people (153 current members)
- 38% opened the email (including 80 of the current members)
- 5% clicked a link---14 people went to the NWRA link about refuge funding and 10 to the rose mallow links.

**August 19 -- Media Splash, Kiosk at Shell Mound, Board Meeting Friday, Upcoming Events, Advocacy Links**

- This News Brief went to 406 people (still 153 current members)
- 31% had opened the email by the following day (including 61 of the current members)
- 6% clicked a link---11 people went to the Hidden Coast Paddling Festival link, 10 to the story with Bob's picture and the scallops, 1 to the link about refuge funding, 3 to the duck stamp link, 1 to the link about the Indian River Estuary, and 2 to our Friends website.

### **Facebook**

- **8 new fans since last report = 170**
- **4 new posts since the last report**

### **Friends Website**

- **Pageviews in July = 1,384 (falling...need to add content to attract readers)**
- **Pageviews in May = 1,532 (Apparently, it helps to post new content regularly.)**
- **Pageviews in April = 2,818**

### **Paddling Website**

**I have begun work on a new website. The paddling panels will be available in higher resolution and therefore the website will have much greater utility.**

- **Pageviews in July = 209**
- **Pageviews in May = 347**
- **Pageviews in April = 396**

**Paddling Project**  
**What To Do With All the Panels in the Shed?**

**Goals of the Paddling Project**

1. Position the refuges as a premier paddling destination
2. Position paddling as the refuges signature/marquee attraction
3. Maximize paddlers' experience of the refuges as a wildlife-first environment
4. Build appreciation and support for the refuges' mission

**What We Did**

1. Research and ground-truth multiple paddle trails
2. Develop navigational and biological information
3. Produce high quality trail guides useful to paddlers

**How We Tried to Distribute Them**

1. To individual paddlers for temporary use
2. Via venues convenient for paddler

**Results to Date:** Full success up to the point of distribution

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**Rethinking Distribution**

1. Could it meet our goals to distribute them to **individuals**? Who? Why?
  - a) Friends Members
  - b) Guides
2. Could it meet our goals to distribute them to **organizations and agencies**? Which? Why?
  - a) Key USFWS offices, including communication offices
  - b) Paddling clubs and organizations in Florida and the southeast
  - c) Recreational journalism offices, including electronic journalism
  - d) Offices of Economic and Visitor Development in Florida and the southeast
  - e) Florida Trail Associations
  - f) NWRA office

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**Potential Action Items**

1. Set priorities among potential recipients
2. Develop mailing lists
3. Prepare transmittal letters
4. Prepare packages for mailing
5. Allocate funds for packaging the sets of panels, buying mailers, postage



Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWRs  
Treasurer's Report  
For the Period January 1 thru August 19, 2013

	<b>Year to date</b>
<b>Cash Receipts</b>	
Memberships	3667.86
Donations	2,725.00
Sales (includes \$75 in paddling panels )	<u>473.00</u>
<b>Total cash receipts</b>	<u><u>6,865.86</u></u>
 <b>Cash Disbursements</b>	
<b>support lower suwannee &amp; cedar key nwrs</b>	
Annual meeting	677.98
Communications	581.18
Butterfly garden plants	32.00
Festival fees	25.00
River walk signs	<u>51.73</u>
sub-total	<u><u>1,367.89</u></u>
<b>support refuge-initiated activities</b>	
Barnett Trail Guides	18.00
Luncheon for volunteers	141.88
Interagency Cooperators Meeting	<u>263.84</u>
sub-total	<u>423.72</u>
<b>support National Wildlife Refuge System</b>	
NWR Association Membership	<u>150.00</u>
sub-total	<u><u>150.00</u></u>
<b>administrative &amp; fundraising support</b>	
Purchase inventory	142.66
Florida Department of Revenue	71.83
Florida Department of State	<u>61.25</u>
sub-total	<u><u>275.74</u></u>
<b>Total cash disbursements</b>	<u><u>2,217.35</u></u>
 Excess of receipts over disbursements	 4,648.51
Cash Balance 12/31/2012	<u>14,731.09</u>
Cash Balance 8/19/2013	<u><u>19,379.60</u></u>
 The cash balance consists of two components	
Operating fund	8,645.31
Long term reserve	<u>10,734.29</u>
Total	<u><u>19,379.60</u></u>
Note: Long term reserve at 12/31/2012	8,734.29

Budget committee recommended transfer	<u>2,000.00</u>
Long term reserve at 8/19/2013	<u><u>10,734.29</u></u>

Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Key NWRs  
Actual Versus Budget  
Through August 19, 2013

	<b>actual thru 8/19</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>
<b>Cash Receipts</b>		
Memberships	3,667.86	2,500.00
Donations	2,725.00	2,500.00
Sales	473.00	1,000.00
Total cash receipts	<u>6,865.86</u>	<u>6,000.00</u>

	<b>Actual thru 8/19</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>
<b>Cash Disbursements</b>		
<b>support lower suwannee &amp; cedar key nwrs</b>		
Annual meeting (food, supplies, honorarium)	677.98	500.00
Communications	581.18	800.00
Great Suwannee River Cleanup		150.00
Butterfly garden	32.00	50.00
Festival fees	25.00	100.00
Other (River Walk Signs)	51.73	300.00
<b>2013 Initiatives</b>		
Art		250.00
Dixie County Friends		250.00
Education		100.00
Paddling Project		1,500.00
FL Big Bend Science Symposium		500.00
Sub-total	<u>1,367.89</u>	<u>4,500.00</u>

<b>support refuge-initiated activities</b>		
Interagency Cooperators Meeting	263.84	500.00
Refuge summer program (2013)		250.00
Luncheon for volunteers	141.88	
<b>2013 Initiatives</b>		
Dixie County Refuge expansion		50.00
Nature Coast Conservancy		250.00
Inventories/survey Refuge Biodata		50.00
Shell Mound Enhancements		750.00
River Trail Accesibility		100.00
Refuge Restoration Projects		
Refuge Trail Guides (Barnett guides)	18.00	200.00

Vista Property Conservation Planning		1,000.00
sub-total	<u>423.72</u>	<u>3,150.00</u>
<b>support national wildlife system</b>		
NWR Association Membership	150.00	150.00
sub-total	<u>150.00</u>	<u>150.00</u>
<b>administrative &amp; fundraising support</b>		
Purchase of inventory	142.66	
Florida Department of Revenue	71.83	100.00
Florida Department of State	61.25	100.00
sub-total	<u>275.74</u>	<u>200.00</u>
Total cash disbursements	<u>2,217.35</u>	<u>8,000.00</u>