

**Minutes**  
**Board Meeting**  
**Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges**  
**Thursday, October 16, 2014**

**Present:**

**Board Members:** Bill Kilborn, John McPherson, Greg Lang, Allan Pither, Jay Bushnell, Debbie Meeks, Carmelo Escheveria, Bob McKinstry, Libby Cagle, Roger McDaniels, Maria Sgambati, Jaime Jarrels.

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

1. The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Greg Lang, Vice President.
2. Approval of Minutes. **Motion** by Jay Bushnell to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2014, board meeting as submitted. **Second** by Carmelo Escheveria. Passed by unanimous vote.
3. Refuge Update. Larry Woodward provided the following update:
  - a. The Shired Island renovation has been completed.
  - b. Various forestry projects are under way, including thinning, tree planting, and fall burning.
  - c. The new law enforcement officer will be starting in November.
  - d. Pam Darty and Larry Woodward have been working with 4H in Levy County on marine science and STEM projects as part of the Refuge's efforts to reach out to kids. Maria Sgambati's efforts on Seahorse will tie in with this and Larry hopes that the Friends group will further embrace this effort. Pam has been working with Nature Coast Middle School on similar efforts. Larry hopes the Refuge and Friends can help with fuel, buses, etc.
  - e. All going well with the Complex, with James Burnett as the Complex Manager.
  - f. The Refuge continues to be affected by the sequester, with everything frozen at 2010 levels and budgets declining. It looks like no positions will be lost at the Refuge, but they had to really fight for the law enforcement position. There might be a problem in the future with refilling vacant positions. Salaries are essentially flat.

4. Review & Discussion of 2014 Initiatives. The written handout is attached, with the following reports given orally:
  - a. Dixie Enhancement: The Refuge continues to work on maintaining the Dixie Mainline. The trees were not taken out as was originally planned. The problem of signs being stolen continues to be a problem.
  - b. Education: Maria Sgambati stated that there is a real need to plan for Pam Darty's transition, and there may be a need for more money in that budget line.
  - c. Paddling: John McPherson reported that he will be calling Millie Chapell about doing some of the Cedar Key paddling trails as panels.
  - d. Exotics: Roger McDaniel reported that he has received the new equipment and trailer purchased with this year's grant money. This year's Brazilian pepper removal training session will be at 9 a.m. on November 4. The group will be reviewing the treated areas for needed work, and moving into new areas.
  - e. River Trail Enhancements: The Refuge will use the new skid steer to redo the trail bed when the equipment arrives.
  - f. Science Inventory: Refuge staff are working with other groups on possibly creating a Critical Wildlife Area in the Big Bend Area. This is a state designation which allows, for example, the closure of areas for nesting. A possible area needing this designation is Snake Key where birds have started to nest. The name of the group is the Big Bend Conservation Area Partnership. The group is planning a meeting in April 2015, and there remains the desire to do a Big Bend Science Symposium for all the groups to share research.
  - g. Trail Guides: Bill Kilborn reported that the Turkey Foot trail guide is almost done, and work on the Butterfly Guide has begun.
  - h. Butterfly Garden: Refuge staff reported that the butterfly garden is very popular with visitors and is attracting a lot of butterflies and pollinators. In general, the Refuge has changed mowing schedules to promote wildflowers along roadways.
  - i. Advocacy and Networking: Jay Bushnell reported that he wants to continue the effort to reach out to other Friends groups for interaction. Refuge staff and Board members all agreed that this is a good idea and that Jay should come back with a proposal. Jay said he will come up with a proposal that involves having other groups coming and staying overnight to learn about the Refuge.

5. New Business:

Date and Location of 2015 Annual Meeting. The Bylaws state that the Annual Membership meeting will be held in the first quarter of the year, and membership will be notified at least 30 days in advance. The possible dates identified for the annual meeting are February 28 and March 14.

6. Old Business:

- a. Nominating Committee Update - Roger McDaniels reported that the committee met, and so far: Jaime Jarrels will continue on as a Board Member; Kit Lane has agreed to be on the Board; and Jay Bushnell will retire from the Board. The Nominating Committee consists of Roger McDaniels, Greg Lang and Katherine Dunlap (non-board member). The proposed slate is due to the Board by the November meeting, and must be presented to the membership by January.
- b. 2015 Budget Committee Update. There was discussion about the role of the budget committee, and it was agreed that the committee could propose new projects as part of the budget process, but that the committee would not be expected to do a full planning effort for next year. There was discussion about the possibility of changing the fiscal year so that each newly created board could plan and budget after coming into office. The Budget Committee consists of Peg Hall, John McPherson, Maria Sgambati, Debbie Meeks, and Libby Cagle.
- c. Cedar Key Seafood Festival Planning. Allan Pither stated that volunteers are needed for the Friends booth.
- d. Cedar Key Kiosk Future Location. There was a general discussion about the location and content of the kiosk.
- e. Update on New U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Policy on Friends Organizations, and Agreement Template. Andrew Gude reported that he is researching the questions raised by the Friends group, and that other Friends groups have concerns too. The Florida Friends group is meeting on May 16-17, 2015, in Crystal River.
- f. Hidden Coast Paddling Festival Friends Booth Update. Bill Kilborn reported that the festival was very successful, but that it was a mistake in having the registration at the Steinhatchee Community Center when most people were gathering in Jena. As a result, not many people saw the Friends booth and none of the waterproof maps were sold. The festival next year will be in Yankeetown.

- g. Suwannee River Clean Up. The Refuge will provide two boats, with other boats being provided by volunteers. The cleanup will take place on December 6.
- h. 2014 Friends Science Camp on Seahorse Key. Donna Bushnell, via Jay, reported that so far there are 11 signed up for overnight, and 2 signed up for day only. There is some uncertainty about how to handle the scholarships offered by Friends, with the Board agreeing that the committee could work this out.
- i. Sturgeon Conference. Jay Bushnell reported on the conference schedule and activities.

7. Reports.

- a. Treasurer's Report. Libby provided written reports, attached. She now has the budgeted Vista money shown separately and set aside on reports; currently \$2,000.
- b. Communications & Publications Committee Report and Recommendations. A written report is attached and Debbie Meeks reported that they will be requesting more money next year in the amount of \$2,500 for various projects. The Committee will be making website changes, doing kiosk work, publishing brochures, etc. It has been decided that the Friends website will be hosted by Weebly. Jaime Jerrels will be working on an update of the Board's website page and will be requesting photos and quotes.
- c. Inventory Report. Carmelo reported on various issues, including the waterproof paddling panels and setting up the booths for the various festivals.

The next meeting will be on November 20.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.