

MINUTES
Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
Regular Board Meeting
Monday July 2, 2012 10:00 a.m.

Attending by conference call: Marci Wilcox, Ed DeHaan, John Thalacker, Carmelo Echevarria.

Attending in person: Peg Hall, Russ Hall, John McPherson, Mark Gluckman,
Refuge Staff: Andrew Gude, Pam Darty, Larry Woodward

Approval Items:

Minutes from April 10, 2012 Board Meeting.

Motion: Russ Hall, to approve.
Second: Mark Gluckman.
Passed by a unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report.

Motion: Mark Gluckman, to approve.
Second: Russ Hall.
Passed by a unanimous vote.

Peg stated that she would like Jerry to start showing income from paddling project separately. Board agreed that this would be a good idea.

Peg reported that Friends received a \$100 contribution from Fla. Humanities council as thank you for Pam's help with the Shell Mound tour.

Date for Next Meeting.

Next meeting set for Monday August 27, 2012, 10:00 a.m.

Discussion Items:

Paddling Project: Vision and Purpose.

It was reported that the event on Saturday in Cedar Key went very well, with 16 people participating, and many dolphins swimming around the kayaks. Pam Darty was thanked for being an excellent guide.

Peg led a discussion on what is potentially the best possible outcome of the Paddling Project. Mark stated that there were two main purposes: to build advocacy and stewardship for refuge. Peg stated that she felt the Cedar Key paddle helped achieve these goals because of the 16 who participated, more than half were not yet members, with 3 expressing a desire to join. People came from all over north central Florida, and were introduced to the Friends group and the Refuge.

Carmelo expressed concern about liability. He noted that the group leader should be clearly identified at the beginning of the trip, and that there should be a short safety briefing. He also suggested that there should be a way of reporting accidents, injuries, etc. He volunteered to work on these issues.

Peg stated that she had a liability release form, but was hesitant to use it on the trip.

Carmelo observed that the paddling group got spread out, that some were not experienced, and there could have been some problems.

Mark agreed that spreading out is a problem, and that there is deep water which could be a safety issue with inexperienced paddlers.

John T. suggested that Friends member Tom Liebert with Cedar Key Kayaks might be consulted on liability forms that might be used, and that Friends should consider sponsoring a kayak/canoe safety course, perhaps like the programs that Friends sponsors at the library.

Marci mentioned the Florida volunteer protection act. John M. explained the volunteer protection act as protecting volunteers and board members.

Peg stated that she felt that waiver forms can be a problem at the beginning of an event, and that the Board needs to work on what the Friends policy should be.

John T. noted that there are the same issues with nature walks, and other Friends outdoor events.

Paddling Panel Issues

Mark stated that the old non-waterproof panels are useful when talking about the project and it is very good to be able to hand out sets free of charge. Andrew stated the he would like to send copies to other

organizations affiliated with refuges. Russ stated that we have 80 complete sets remaining.

A discussion ensued as to the priority for use of the old sets. Suggestions included coastal refuges; tourist and paddler locations in the region, e.g. Marina Hardware in Cedar Key where people come in to go fishing; locked kiosks, libraries, visitor centers; local outlets, people who can help the refuge, etc. Peg will work on priority list to go by before the next meeting.

Mark noted the need to put a sticker on the old sets warning that they are not waterproof.

Hidden Coast Paddling Festival

Mark provided the following information about the Festival: Third annual festival to be held on October 5, 6, 7, and is shaping up to be an exciting event. The theme will be wildlife encounters in the Refuge. Dixie County through the Tourist Development Council contributed \$500. It should be a great opportunity to showcase the Refuge and paddling project, and should begin to link research and paddling. Did not get the grant, but going through the process may help expand our membership and build advocacy and stewardship. Two Groups: Friends and business oriented chamber people. Need two purposes and these purposes need to merge. Festival should help that. A day by day summary of the festival was provided.

Mark suggested that the Friends involvement should be to host a brunch on Sunday, and stated that it's possible that the Friends would be reimbursed for most of the costs. Need Friends volunteers for clean up, welcome and registration, and help with paddles. Paddling committee will develop some group paddles. The event will be showcasing the paddles and let people go self-guided.

Peg encouraged the Board members to put the event on their calendars and try to attend.

Mark asked that the Board establish a dollar amount for the brunch, and suggested \$300. Peg stated that the source of such funds in the budget would be unallocated, support for Refuge where there is budgeted \$1700.

Motion: John M. to set the amount at \$300.

Second: Russ.

Passed by a unanimous vote.

Mark suggested that the meal be catered, and the Board agreed. Mark will look into and bring back proposals.

Managing our Future

Peg suggested the need for a discussion on how we can restructure ourselves in preparation for establishing a successful Nominating Committee and seeking officer candidates for next year. She stated that she had discussed with Andrew what the Board's highest potential might be. She stated that she would like to have a full discussion on this in August.

Peg suggested one idea as being that the vice president, president, and past president positions would be for one-year terms only, rather than 2 years, with the vice president becoming the next president, and the past president responsible for specific committees. She suggested that the vice president would learn about being president while being vice president for a year. She asked the Board members to think about this idea.

Andrew noted that he is working on a Refuge vision to be rolled out on October 1. This would help the Friends with how the Friends can help with that vision.

Mark suggested the need for a discussion of the Suwannee River itself, threats, water withdrawals, etc., and what Friends can do within the limits on political activity.

Peg noted that we need to know the goals of the Refuge and of Friends to determine who should be on the board.

Mark noted that paddling is bringing people from outside to the refuge, and asked whether this should be considered important and that should be pursued.

Information Items:

Refuge Update

Andrew reported the following:

He thanked Larry and Vic for help with the panels, and Pam for help with the Atsena Otie paddle.

He gave an update on the impact of storm on the refuge, hatchlings, voles, docks, etc.

He is close to hiring administrative assistant.

He congratulated Kenny on getting the Outdoorsman of the Year award.

He reported that the Refuge now has a second full-time law enforcement agent.

He is looking at new burns now that the burn bans are off.

The timbering operation on loop road is complete, and road repairs are underway.

Boardwalks are in pretty good shape, with some repairs underway. Atsena Otie dock needs repairs.

Pam reported the following:

That the YCC is here, with 4 here this summer.

She is working on a interpretive history panel for the Town of Suwannee area.

She will have environmental educational program with CKS.

She did a well-received library program at Cross City.

Larry reported the following:

Trying to introduce new kinds of habitats and create more diversity within the refuge, including more freshwater wetlands with greater public access.

A Brazilian pepper project has been funded for the CK Refuge, especially islands. Atsena and Seahorse would be primary areas. Possibility of working with CK Garden Club was discussed.

Membership Committee Report

Marci reported that she is up to date with thank you notes. Life members and those sending donations are getting a personal note.

Communication Committee Report

Peg provided a communication report which is attached. She discussed changes to the report, and summarized the report. She noted that visits to website greatly increased as a result of publicity about the paddling project, and that we should try to get more publicity like this.

Kiosk Committee Report

It was reported that Jay worked on kiosk improvements, and that he asked that anyone who wants to help to get in touch.

Old Business

Great Suwannee River Cleanup participation and date.

It was reported that Richard will organize Town of Suwannee; Jay will likely do Fowlers Bluff. Peg did not commit us to Camp Azalea – needs someone to take charge and make sure it's done right, and will hope to hear from a volunteer.

Research symposium.

Russ reported that he had talked to Jennifer Seavey, and learned that a similar program has already been organized to take place at the Cedar Key community center during the first week in September. He noted that it was actually a symposium on the Suwannee Sound, rather than on the Refuge. Andrew stated that we need to have a terrestrial version at some point. Peg urged Board members to attend the program in September.

New Business

None.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.