



PO Box 532
Cedar Key, FL 32625
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January 14, 2021

Kathleen A. Burchett, Refuge Supervisor Area II
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Dear Ms. Burchett,

The board of directors of the Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWRs is in receipt of your letter of December 30, 2020. To the best of our knowledge our Friends group has never had a formal agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and thus there is nothing to dissolve by mutual consent.

To the contrary since our founding by local citizens in 2002, we have been an independent voice, unaffiliated with any government agency, strongly and actively promoting the value and importance of our Refuges to the region and the nation. We have been a bridge between the Refuges and the community. For 20 years, we have been working with the Refuges, informally and collegially, to achieve their conservation and preservation mission by building understanding and appreciation through public contact, active communication, and community interaction. We shall continue to do so.

The terms of the current Partnership Agreement are problematic because although they may be "crafted to conform to Federal requirements, which govern such partnerships," in our view they may infringe on our IRS requirements and Florida standards of expected operating practices, which govern our 501(c)(3) status. Until we know what changes will be made to the Friends policy and to the Partnership Agreement when it is updated in the spring, we believe it is not responsible of us to agree to its terms. If changes remove the barriers, we will consider becoming formally affiliated with the Service's internal Friends program. Until then, we will carry on as independent and active promoters of the mission and purpose of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges.

Sincerely,

Peg Hall

Peg Hall, president-elect

Cc: Ernest Clarke, Dan Frisk, Andrew Gude, Directors of Friends of Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWRs

Friends is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), membership organization. Through voluntary action, we support the Refuges and their work to conserve the region's wildlife and the places they need to thrive. We invite you to enjoy their pristine and primitive beauty with us.