**Wakulla Springs Alliance**

**7-17-15 Board Meeting Minutes**

The Wakulla Springs Alliance held a Board meeting on July 17, 2015 at the Renaissance Center, 435 N. Macomb Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room. The draft agenda and list of participants can be found in Appendices A and B. Review the action items are underlined below highlighting commitments and actions Alliance members can help with. This report is based on the acting secretary’s notes and does not capture everything or exactly what was said.

Present: Jim Stevenson, Sean McGlynn, Ron Piasecki, Cal Jamison, Bob Deyle, Zoe Kulakowski, Albert Gregory, John Outland, Debbie Lightsey, Tom Swihart, Mark Heidecker, Johnny Richardson, Gail Fishman

**Opening**

Chairman Sean McGlynn welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting agenda, and everyone introduced themselves. In Secretary Tom Taylor's absence the Board did not review the minutes of the May and June meetings.

Treasurer Howard Kessler also was absent, but the Board reviewed and approved his report (Appendix C). Jim Stevenson has $800 in checks to pass to Howard for deposit. Sean has match from the Friends of Wakulla Springs for the spectroradiometric equipment for the dark water tag grant project. Sean will check with Howard to determine if the Alliance has a tax exempt number. Debbie Lightsey proposed putting out a cup for donations to cover coffee and goodies each month.

**Fallschase**: Description, attributes, status and relation to our Wakulla Springs water protection mission – John Outland, Zoe Kulakowski, and Seán McGlynn

John Outland explained background of efforts to protect Upper Lake Lafayette (ULL) property including land donated to the city from Fallschase development. Zoe Kulakowski discovered parcel was for sale (373 ac) in Spring 2014. This is the last piece of unprotected land surrounding the Fallschase sink. Zoe, John, Sean, and others, including the Buck Lake Alliance, put together an application for a Florida Forever project. The project was accepted by the State Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) and is under active development. Florida Wildlife Federation would be the land manager. Blueprint 2000 has appropriated $1.05 million to help purchase the property. Buck Lake Alliance and others are working to secure other sources of funds as well to supplement state money.

John presented a slide show. The property contains the Fallschase sink for which the surface elevation is the water table; it is a “karst window” directly connected to aquifer. It’s also an active karst basin with numerous sink holes. This is the last large undeveloped parcel along the lake. Purchased by current owners in 2013 for $2+ million. They are asking for $9 million. All of these sinks provide direct recharge to the aquifer. All of the Fallschase watershed lies within the Wakulla Springs springshed. Flow from this travels between the sprayfield on the east and Ames and Kelly sinks on the west. There is a city of Tallahassee well that lies along this route as well.

The property contains seven Native American sites which offer excellent educational opportunities. Limpkins are present as well as and are eating the invasive apple snails. A large wood stork rookery is located further to the east but they feed extensively in ULL when the water level is going down and fish are exposed. A bald eagle nest is located immediately south of the lake. There also is a wild turkey flock, etc. An extensive trail network runs to the south and east of the ULL. Upland protection will minimize erosion and detrimental effects on the lake and the aquifer.

Three of the homes that had been built there have been removed. Remains from one that burned will require removal and cleanup. Decrepit roads and sewers will need some remediation to eliminate safety hazards and improve aesthetics.

Sean had some slides to show but because of time decided to hold off.

**The Future of Wakulla Spring State Park?** - Jim Stevenson, former chief biologist for Florida State Parks

Jim Stevenson reported that the current acting FDEP secretary, Jon Steverson, is actively dismantling the state park system by promoting a multiple-use philosophy of park management supplanting the recreation and preservation mission of the parks. Multiple-use is being integrated into all park management plans. He said that the Florida Park Service staff are gagged on this.

The initial issue was a proposal to allow grazing, timbering, and hunting at Myakka River State Park. Unbelievable press coverage was generated through efforts by Jim and Albert Gregory, working with local concerned citizens.

Park #2 appears to be Payne’s Prairie. Jim and Albert met with a new group being formed there to fend off efforts to allow grazing, timbering, and hunting. Jim suggested that there is no telling which park will be next; it could be Wakulla Springs.

Albert said that FDEP is changing its approach to public involvement in park management planning – no public oral input at the meetings – comments are to be channeled into written comments. Debbie asked if FEDP is free to change this. Albert said state law is not prescriptive about public meeting format.

Gail Fishman suggested that there is an intentional effort to discourage visitation so there will be an economic argument for increasing private use to balance the State Parks budget.

Jim reported that the August Cabinet meeting will be the time for Cabinet members to nominate additional candidates for the FDEP secretary position. Pam Bondi has announced her intent to nominate someone who has not yet applied.

Debbie suggested we should try to get this issue on the agenda of the Cabinet. Albert said he and Jim are encouraging people to write the Governor and the Cabinet to raise concerns with these policies as tied to the choice of FDEP Secretary. Debbie said that many of the lands within the State Park system were acquired for resource protection and recreation and argued that those lands should be precluded from multiple use. Albert said that one Cabinet member said she had received 1200 emails about this. Mark Heidecker suggested getting bipartisan state legislators behind these concerns.

Albert said that individual notes and emails from each of us would be more effective than action by WSA as an organization. Bob Deyle suggested that Jim and Albert draft some talking points for us to use. Debbie also suggested that Jim and Albert visit the Tallahassee Democrat Editorial Board to inform them of this policy change and its implications for Wakulla Springs as well as all parks.

**Split Sink & Chip’s Hole/Cal’s Cave Video, Sally Ward, WSA Position Letter** – Cal Jamison

Sean McGlynn introduced a video produced by the Woodville Karst Plain Project (WKPP) of these sinks which are being affected by the State Parks Service's relaxed rules on diving access. Split Sink and Chip’s Hole/Cal’s Cave also are located near FDOT's proposed stormwater ponds for the US 319 widening project.

Cal Jamison indicated that the Split Sink cave system is only 30 feet below the surface along New Light Church Road. The proposed stormwater management pond is only 300 feet from this cave system. The pond would be excavated to bedrock which is about 15 feet down. Then they will backfill to create a dry detention pond.

Chip’s Hole and Cal’s Cave are located to the east of the Duggar property on the northeast corner of US 319 and SR 267, site of a second proposed stormwater management facility for the US 319 widening project. The WKKP's recent mapping is demonstrating the direct connections from these systems to Wakulla Spring.

Cal showed slides from Sally Ward Spring that illustrate damage to vegetation and the banks around the edge of the spring. He said divers who received a research dive permit from FDEP have cut through roots and destabilized the banks. Ron Piasecki said the permit is not for recreational diving or training. Cal showed that runoff from the road and the mowed grass area at the access point flows directly into the spring. He also observed that erosion from the divers and foot traffic are bringing sediment into the spring.

Jim Stevenson suggested that we recommend building a deck with steps down to the water, but only if diving is to continue there.. Albert pointed out that other locations in the park were opened to recreational diving to take pressure off of Sally Ward and Wakulla Springs. He said that the group diving at Sally Ward now is conducting recreational diving under cover of supposed research diving. Cal said there are rumors that other divers have been sneaking in and diving at night. Albert argued that we should not encourage non-research diving with a deck etc.

Jim said that the FDEP employee who is promoting expansion of diving on “equity” grounds is DEP’s safety officer who also earns income as an independent cave diving instructor..

The WSA Executive Committee submitted a letter on June 29th to WSSP Manager, Pete Scalco, expressing concern with recreational diving in Emerald Sink. No response had as yet been received from FDEP.

Debbie Lightsey argued that we should assert the need for a standard for avoiding physical damage to any spring or sink when use intensity is increased. She suggested that the Alliance draft a letter and send it to the WSSP park manager, FDEP, and the local state legislative delegation. The evidence of erosion and root damage should be telling. She suggested that Cal draft a letter that describes the change in use that has taken place and the impacts and presents an argument for what needs to be done to minimize ensuing damage from expanded use. The problem we must emphasize is abuse of the research dive permit – physical damage to the bank; allegations of mickey mouse research, and after dark diving.

Cal will get a copy of the dive permit/plan issued to the group and determine the extent to which their actions have violated the terms of that. Jim will draft a WSA letter based on that information and send it to the FDEP Secretary with copies to the Tallahassee Democrat, the local state legislative delegation, and the Governor.

**Highway 319 Widening Update** – Albert Gregory and Bob Deyle

Bob Deyle summarized the history leading up to a July 7 meeting that he, Cal Jamison, and Albert Gregory had with Water Management District staff. He reported that the WMD staff, Michael Bateman and Ron Potts, expressed support for the Alliance's concerns. Bateman recommended that Alliance members participate in any future meetings between FDOT, their consultants, and the District. Bob said that he, Cal, and Albert had indicated that we would be pleased to do so.

Bob noted that the District has an explicit set of rules governing Environmental Resource Permits (ERP) in sensitive karst areas but Bateman suggested there might be some conflict between those rules and FDOT rules that govern stormwater management, implying that some compromises might be necessary. Bob reported that Bateman also suggested that wet ponds might be more effective at removing nitrogen. [Eric Livingston subsequently stated in an email to Bob that this is not the case; dry ponds with soil amendments are the most effective.] Bateman also indicated that the District would support the Alliance's recommendation for FDOT to refrain from fertilizer use in maintaining right-of-way landscaping once the project is built.

Bob also noted that Albert had pointed out to the District staff that the Florida Board of Trustees also will be setting conditions as part of the easement to be granted to utilize State Park lands for portions of the expanded right-of-way. He had suggested that coordination with the BOT would be a good idea as the final ERP terms and conditions are being written.

Jim suggested that we meet with FDOT to review the new WKPP data and to discuss the filled sink hole on the Duggar property, dry ponds with soil amendments, and fertilizer use constraints. Bob indicated that he would arrange such a meeting once the WKPP data are available. Zoe Kulakowski observed that ground penetrating radar would not detect fractures and conduits and that the grid size may be too large to have detected the filled sink hole. She suggested that we should argue for more detailed subsurface analysis. Bob will obtain copies of the subsurface analyses conducted for the proposed ponds near the cave system and consult with Zoe who will help articulate what further analysis should be conducted.

Debbie Lightsey reported that FDOT has been responsive to concerns raised with effects of Capital Circle SW expansion and possible impacts on the Bradford Chain of Lakes. In that case Blueprint 2000 money is being used for the project.

**What’s New**

*Milkweed Project* – Gail Fishman

Gail reported that the US Fish and Wildlife Service has obtained a grant for $15,000 to establish milkweed plantings at local schools to support local monarch butterfly propagation. They have collected seeds started plants that local schools can use to create milkweed gardens on school grounds. The project is to be linked to the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail. They will be working to initiate gardens from the coast north to the state line. Plants will be available in the spring.

Bob Deyle suggested they coordinate with Jeff Hugo and Jackie Turner about a possible garden at WSSP, but Gail noted that their grant is to do this through schools especially under-served schools.

*BMAP and Septic Tank Update* – Debbie Lightesy

Debbie reported that she is continuing to prod FDEP to get the revised BMAP out for public review and comment. Some improvement from the last version has been made. Apparently it is still under internal review.

Debbie said that we need more troops involved to push Leon County to get away from central sewer and to embrace the Responsible Management Entity (RME) strategy for wastewater management. She suggested that the Alliance get Sustainable Tallahassee to grab ahold of this issue. She plans to make a presentation to their Board in the Fall. Both Pam Hall and Anthony Gaudio are on the Sustainable Tallahassee Board and are sympathetic.

Debbie also advocated getting the Leon Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment (LAVA) map integrated into the city and county land development codes for site plan review. Debbie will work with Bob Deyle to explore getting the Planning Commission involved in initiating a comprehensive plan amendment to make this happen. Mark Heidecker suggested that the Water Resources Committee also be asked to endorse this.

*Total Maximum Daily Load Standards* – Cal Jamison said that FDEP used to produce 7 TMDLs per year. They are down to one a year now and additional staff cuts further threaten the program.

*License Plate Grant Updates* – Tabled.

*Legislative Report* – Rob Williams and Charles Pattison not present. Tabled.

*Land Acquisition* – Tabled

*Toxic Algae and Springshed Updates* – Bob Deyle and Seán McGlynn. Tabled

**Other Business**

*Data Storage and Retrieval* - Cal Jamison raised the need for a place to store data and information. Dropbox would suffice for internal use. The website would be better for public access. Dan Pennington is webmaster for the Alliance. If we want something done we’ll need to talk with Dan.

*Next meeting* is August 21.

*Wakulla Spring Restoration Plan* - Jim Stevenson said that we have copies of the plan for each city and county commissioner. He has a draft letterl and asked for volunteers to draft personal letters and take them to the commissioners' offices. Debbie will review the plan. Bob Deyle offered to help with the delivery.

**Adjourned 12:15 pm.**

**Appendix A**

**WSA Agenda**

**07-17-15**

**9 am to 12 pm, Renaissance Center**

435 N. Macomb Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room

**9:00 Opening**

Welcome and meeting agenda review

Introductions

Secretary Minutes (will not be present)

Treasurer Report

**9:15 Fallschase:** description, attributes, status and relation to our Wakulla Springs water protection mission **– John Outland and Seán McGlynn**

**9:25 Questions**

**9:30 Jim Stevenson, former chief biologist for Florida State Parks:** The Future of Wakulla Spring State Park?

**9:50 Questions**

**9:55 Emerald and Spit Sink Video, Sally Ward, WSA Position Letter – Cal Jamison**

**10:15 Questions**

**10:20 Highway 319 Widening Update – Albert Gregory and Bob Deyle**

**10:40 Questions**

**10:45 BP grant Opportunities – Howard Kessler**

**11:05 Questions**

**11:10 – 11:20 Break**

*Draft WSA Logo,*

*A Work in Progress*

*Artwork by, Maria Balingit,*

*Limpkin in an Arch*

*from the*

*Wakulla Springs Lodge*

**11:20 What’s New**

License Plate Grant Updates – Bob Deyle

Milkweed Project – Gail Fishman

Land Acquisition – Albert Gregory and Bob Deyle

BMAP and Septic Tank Update – Debbie Lightesy

Legislative Report – Rob Williams and Charles Pattison

Toxic Algae and Springshed Updates – Bob Deyle and Seán McGlynn

**11:50 Other Business**

**12:00 Adjourn**

**Appendix B**

**Board, Advisors and Guests**

\* Indicates 7-17-15 Participants

Board Members

Bob Deyle \*

Albert Gregory \*

Cal Jamison \*

Howard Kessler

Todd Kincaid

Debbie Lightsey \*

Sean McGlynn \*

Charles Pattison

Jim Stevenson \*

Tom Swihart \*

Tom Taylor

Rob Williams

WSA Advisors

Anthony Gaudio

Pam Hall

Julie Harrington

Bob Henderson

Bob Knight

Pam McVety

Dan Pennington

Bob Thompson

Guests

Gail Fishman\*

Mark Heidecker\*

Zoe Kulakowski\*

John Outland\*

Ron Piasecki\*

Johnny Richardson\*

**Appendix C**

Wakulla Springs Alliance

Treasurer’s Report for meeting: July 17, 2015

Checking Balance of statement ending May 31, 2015:

$2,866.59

Activity this month on statement ending June 30, 2015:

None

**Current Balance** **$2,866.59**