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**January Board Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, January 28, 2022**

Action items are underlined

**Opening**

* Welcome and introductions – Bob Deyle, See Participant list in Appendix B
* Agenda review – Deyle Passed unanimously

**Postponement of annual general meeting and elections of directors and officers**

* The proposal to postpone was presented by Bob Deyle because the Nominating Committee did not succeed in recruiting a nominee to serve as chair.
* Jim Davis made the motion to postpone the annual general meeting, seconded by Debbie Lightsey, which passed unanimously.

**Minutes of December 17, 2021, meeting** – Tom Taylor **[attached]**

* Albert Gregory made the motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Howard Kessler, which passed unanimously.

**Update on Leon County Comprehensive Wastewater Facilities Plan and septic system pilot program** – Theresa Heiker

* The county is waiting for a resubmittal from the consultant and then the task 5 report will be available on the website.
* The pilot project is underway and we are waiting on test results.
* Q – Can Bob Deyle be notified when the report is available? A – Yes
* Q – Is there any evidence of the effectiveness of the passive in-ground nitrogen reducing biofilter systems including the in-ground biofilters, which have not been studied? Are there cost and functional criteria being evaluated. A – We are considering the passive INRBs to be effective systems and consider them to be an alternative to the NSF 245 systems.
* Q – Have you asked the engineer if they are evaluating the 4 different systems? Have you got information on other testing in the state? A – No.
* Eberhart Roeder at FDEP will be asked to share results of other testing.
* Anna Padilla was introduced. She will be replacing Theresa, who is retiring.

**The Florida Manatee: A Review of the Northern Gulf and Wakulla River** – Michelle Pasawicz, Manatee Management Program Administrator, FWC

* FL Manatees, FL state mammal, breathe every 3-5 minutes and usually birth one calf at a time.
* They travel as far north as Virginia and west to Texas in the summer.
* We will focus on the North Gulf of Mexico, NGOM, north of Taylor County.
* They are dependent on warm water.
* Manatees forage on fresh and saltwater plants. They consume 4-9% of their body weight per day. They may uproot shallow rooted grasses.
* Threats to their submerged aquatic vegetation food include dredging, shoreline construction, nutrient run-off, shading from docks, vessel collisions, propeller wounds and recreational activities.
* The FL Manatee Sanctuary Act protects them, including protection zones, environmental impact assessment commenting, and habitat restoration and monitoring, through regulation and outreach.
* Habitat restoration includes shoreline stabilization, seagrass restoration, dredging for accessibility and mitigation features, like warm water habitats. Cages are used to protect seagrass plots.
* There is a warm-water habitat plan with many partners (https://myfwc.com/media/28270/wwmap.pdf).
* Manatees have been here for millions of years. They were over hunted. Federal Marine Mammal Protection of act in 1972 and Endangered Species Act in 1973 and FL laws help.
* Their status became stable in 2017 and they moved from endangered to threatened by US Fish and Wildlife but protections remain the same.
* We are now in the “conflict” stage where manatee management is balanced with human development and activities.
* N Gulf of Mexico has fewer manatee #s than south Florida. There has been limited telemetry and sighting data on populations.
* Wakulla Springs provides a warm water habitat. No sightings in Franklin County from October until spring. More manatees resulted from removal of vegetation at the Wakulla River park boundary fence and scouring, and changes at the Purdom power plant on the St. marks River have led more manatees to seek thermal refuge at Wakulla Spring.
* Data collection has improved considerably. There are 43 tagged manatees.
* 2019-2020 arial distribution surveys are continuing along a 325-mile route.
* The comparison of 1994-96 to 2020 show differences.
* Maps of hotspots with high numbers help us understand the distribution.
* Natural threats include cold stress, red tide/harmful algal blooms, watercraft collisions, coastal development, entanglement/ingestion, structure death/entrapment. People should call the hotline if they see unhealthy manatees.
* Manatee mortality is monitored to determine the cause of death and locations. Cold stress is the cause in 50% of deaths in the NGOM. Watercraft mortality is the second highest cause, especially at St, Marks and Wakulla boat docks.
* FWC does a lot of signage and outreach.
* NOGM populations, public awareness and partnerships are increasing.
* Q – Are you aware of the manatee counts by boat drivers and that it is hard to see when water is dark? A – Yes, we gather this information and it is appreciated.
* Q – How do you create warm water habitats and where? A – Here is the Warm Water Habitat Action Plan (https://myfwc.com/media/28270/wwmap.pdf). Many warm areas are related to power plants, which create dependencies. There need to be stopovers along the coasts. Crystal River and Wakulla Springs provide warmwater stopovers.
* Q – The Wakulla Springs observation group is assisting a UF student with a manatee study looking at soils and plants at Wakulla Springs, nearby and other places in FL.
* Q – What about new language on springs protection zones. A – this will be used by law enforcement. FWC already has this authority. They are focusing on Weeki Wachee.
* Q – What is the current population estimate statewide. A – 2018 approximately 8800 which is an increase. Population estimates can be found here: https://myfwc.com/research/manatee/research/population-monitoring/

**Appointment of new nominating committee** - Deyle

* Bob is stepping down because of burnout as chair and chief policy analysist. The chair needs only to organize and facilitate meetings and keep the organization moving.
* The Nominating Committee appointed in October has been unsuccessful recruiting a chair nominee. Bob is willing to serve as vice chair only if the chair position is filled.
* We have a ceiling of 15 board members, which can be amended.
* Albert Gregory has agreed to be on a new nominating committee.
* Jim Davis and Cal Jamison volunteered.
* Debbie Lightsey made a motion to approve appointment of the nominating committee, seconded by Gail Fishman, which passed unanimously.

**Springshed and river update** – Cal Jamison

* We have had more rain recently that got all the creeks flowing and levels higher.
* Weekly observation at the spring had 14.8’ visibility reading, which is dark and manatees can’t be seen well.
* Divers were replacing the cable for the Water management District’s flow meter at the spring vent, but couldn’t complete reinstallation of the meter because of high flows.

**Cave exploration updates** – Chris Werner

* We have progress at Spring Creek. Can only dive at low flows with more clearer salt water.
* Have seen a collapse in tunnel one after the last hurricane and can’t access instruments.
* The season may be over for diving because of dark water.
* We have started back at Indian Springs mapping where water is flowing to see where water goes when it is not flowing out of the spring.
* Most caves in the Woodville karts plain have their are bases from when sea level was 300’ lower over 350,000 years ago.
* Q – Is there evidence that the caves go out further in the Gulf. A – There are springs 40 miles out that are flowing. The water is dark and they are hard to see.
* The cable is in for the flow meter but the flow increased and we couldn’t get in.
* People complained about the drought but it is good for diving.
* Turner Sink exploration of another 350’ towards Chips Hole but it is getting really small for safe diving. We have another radio cave locator planned for Chips Hole. This helps correct cave maps. Sonar is also used in the mapping, including the proposed gas station at 267 and 319.

**Legislative update** – Ryan Smart

* Respond to alerts that Ryan sends out. This is the [Florida Springs Council Action Alert.](https://www.floridaspringscouncil.org/action-alert)
* There is a proposal to do away with Soil and Water Conservation Districts. This has been amended to require members to be farmers. This needs to be opposed!

**Membership update** – Deyle

* We have 45 members with $2,155 paid dues. In 2021 there were 46 members.
* A number of new members are from Wakulla County, possibly from WSA work on the wastewater RIB in the county.
* Be sure to renew your membership and recruit others.

**Recognition of Jim Stevenson** – Deyle

* There was a motion by Debbie Lightsey, seconded by Howard Kessler to award and fund a Florida Springs Stewardship plaque to Jim Stevenson, up to $125 which passed unanimously.

**Wakulla County Wildwood golf course master plan** – Deyle

* David Edwards announced a master plan from the consultant including treating wastewater from the treatment facility. The plan is on the WSA website/resources.
* WC will be seeking funds from DEP and WMD. Edwards is asking for WSA endorsement. He will make a presentation at the February WSA meeting. Detailed site analysis will be done after project funding but before construction.
* Q – What about the Moore property? A – Chuck Hess reported that the county is in a wait-and-see mode. It could be a park or a wastewater site in the future. It was purchased from the sewer fund so it will need to be repaid from the general fund and or sale proceeds.

**Draft letter re Southwest Georgia Oil Company** [**comp plan amendment**](http://wakullaspringsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Southwest-GA-Oil-FLUM-amndmnt-cpm21-12-submittal.10-15-21.pdf) **(Wakulla County) See Appendix D** – Deyle

* Cave maps for Chips Hole show location of the caves and site.
* The claim is that containment protection requirements will protect groundwater. Tanks will be above ground, away from the caves and with surface containment structures.
* Gil Damon reported that [Clean Water Wakulla](https://www.cleanwaterwakulla.org/?fbclid=IwAR2VhGI0Mqs0gW0IBbCg2dKgKenJxqxry3FfT8sAbexGyjvUFf3hkG22WRs), is taking the lead on opposing this project. CWW was involved in the Moore site and got 200+ people to a meeting on that. They want no gas station not a better gas station. There would be 40 gallons of runoff from the station that can affect thousands of gallons of freshwater. There is also a proposed car wash that will have pollutants. They have a [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/CleanWaterWakulla/) and people are opposed. They will have a presence at the Feb 14 Planning Commission meeting. They need a legal strategy and ask WSA to help.
* Bob Deyle presented a draft letter to the Wakulla County Planning and County Commissions.
* Current commercial zoning of a small piece of the site is not consistent with the comprehensive plan agriculture designation.
* Property owners do not have a right to a comprehensive plan change.
* Comp plan goals, objectives and policies do not support a change.
* There can’t be a legal challenge until the county makes a final decision.
* Bob Deyle may get an attorney to write a letter.
* C – Grant Gelhardt may have possible attorneys. Who are the commissioners we need to sway? BB Sierra Club is ready to act.
* Q – Are we sure we have a basis for opposing all commercial development or just a gas station. A – They are requesting a Rural 2 category. The owner wants a large gas station, car wash and more and may not want to change plans.
* Q – Is the existing gas station a non-conforming use. How does the Wakulla County handle non-conforming uses? A – Bob has asked but hasn’t gotten an answer. The existing station was there before the Comp Plan. Chuck Hess confirmed that it is a pre-existing non-conforming use.
* Would any spill in the area get to the cave system? A – This is reasonable. Edwards points out that one could say that about any gas station in the county. The mapped cave location is a survey line. The cave is 10-40’ wide. This cave definitely feeds Wakulla Springs. There is a whole drainage system that flows to the cave. Any development will have an impact. There should be no development appropriate for this site. The accuracy of the green line is + or – 140’.
* C – There is a precedent with the proposed gas station at 267 and 61. The state bought the corner. There was litigation.
* C - The parcel was purchased from St. Joe and is included within the Wakulla Springs State Park optimal boundary. We could work for funding this.
* C – We can refer to reviews by hydrogeologists.
* C – Be sure to talk about everyday run off.
* Q – Does the WMD or Wakulla County have requirements for containment from car washes?
* Terry Ryan made a motion, seconded by Cal Jamison to send a letter, after review of the Executive committee, it passed unanimously.
* Tom Tayler recommended writing that Wakulla Springs belongs to everybody; there's no need to mention that you're not a resident.
* Send the letter to the Wakulla News and the Tallahassee Democrat?

**English property PUD amendment (City of Tallahassee)** – Deyle

* The applicant for the proposed amendments to the English Property PUD and rezoning application has scaled back their request to a 36-acre site which remains designated as a Medium Density Residential zoning district (maximum of 20 dwelling units/acre) as in the previous application (see blue framed area in enlarged map segment).
* The original concern was about stormwater runoff into karst features. The current site runoff goes into an existing city stormwater facility so there is not an issue for Wakulla Springs at this time. However, an amendment addressing the remaining larger area is still forthcoming.
* Bob recommends pursuing the land development code issue with the City and the Water Management District and raising it when the remaining PUD amendments are submitted for review.

**Tallahassee solar farm update** – Deyle and Jim Stevenson

* Jim Stevenson has been exploring the use of sheep instead of herbicides.
* Research shows that sheep are OK with airports.
* The FAA has regulations concerning wildlife and an escaped sheep would be considered wildlife. Chicago has used sheep and lamas to control vegetation for years at O’Hare and Midway airports.
* C – BB Sierra Club will send a supporting letter.
* The letter will go to David Byrne with a copy to the City Manager
* Albert Gregory made a motion to have the executive committee send a letter, seconded by Terry Ryan, which passed unanimously.

**Upcoming meetings and events** – Deyle

* February 25 – Annual meeting; elections of directors and officers
* March 25 – TBA

**Adjourn** Cal Jamison made the motion to adjourn, which passed unanimously**.**

**Appendix A**

**Agenda: January Board Meeting**

**Friday, January 28, 2022**

**9:00 to 11:55 am, via Zoom**

**9:00 Opening**

* **Welcome and introductions** – Bob Deyle
* **Agenda review** – Deyle

**9:10 Postponement of annual general meeting and elections of directors and officers**

**9:20 Minutes of December 17, 2021, meeting** – Tom Taylor **[attached]**

**9:25 The Florida Manatee: A Review of the Northern Gulf and Wakulla River** – Michelle Pasawicz, Manatee Management Program Administrator, FWC

**10:10 Update re Leon County Comprehensive Wastewater Facilities Plan and septic system pilot program** – Theresa Heiker **[invited]**

**10:25 Appointment of new nominating committee** - Deyle

**10:35 What’s new?**

* **Springshed and river update** – Cal Jamison
* **Cave exploration updates**
* **What else?**

**10:50 Legislative update** – Ryan Smart

**11:00 Membership update** – Deyle

**11:05 Recognition of Jim Stevenson** – Deyle

**11:15 Wakulla County Wildwood golf course master plan** – Deyle

**11:25 Draft letter re Southwest Georgia Oil Company** [**comp plan amendment**](http://wakullaspringsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Southwest-GA-Oil-FLUM-amndmnt-cpm21-12-submittal.10-15-21.pdf) **(Wakulla County) [attached plus section M of application re Underground Storage Tanks System, Construction and Maintenance Information (pp. 134-135)]** – Deyle

**11:35 English property PUD amendment (City of Tallahassee)** – Deyle

**11:45 Tallahassee solar farm update** – Deyle and Jim Stevenson

**11:50 Upcoming meetings and events** – Deyle

* **February 25** – Annual meeting; elections of directors and officers
* **March 25** – TBA

**11:55 Adjourn**

**Appendix B**

**1-28-22 WAKULLA SPRINGS Board Meeting Participants**

**\* Indicates those present**

Officers

Robert E. Deyle, Chair \*  
Howard Kessler, Vice-Chair \*  
Tom Taylor, Secretary \*   
Jim Davis, Treasurer \*

Directors

Gail Fishman \*

Albert Gregory \*  
Rob Gelhardt \*

Andreas Hagberg \*

Cal Jamison \*  
Brian K. Katz   
Debbie Lightsey \*

Terry Ryan \*

Lindsay Stevens \*  
Jim A. Stevenson \*

Members and Guests

Kathleen Coates \*

Gil Damon \*

Sue Damon \*

Anthony Gaudio \*

Grant Gelhart \*

Scott Hannahs \*

Maddy Hart \*

Theresa Heiker \*

Mark Heidecker \*

Chuck Hess \*

Carlos Herd \*

Mike Keys \*

Lisa Lazarus \*

Brian Lupiani \*

Dallas Marshall \*

Anna Padilla \*

Michelle Pasawicz \*

Paul Thurman \*

Wayne Toothman \*

Sophie Wacongne \*

Edgar Wade \*

Patty Wilber \*

Chris Werner \*

Robert Williams \*

Appendix C



Appendix D

**Draft Letter to Wakulla County Planning Commission**

**[and County Commission] re SW GA Oil FLUM amendment**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

The Wakulla Springs Alliance Board urges you to recommend denial [deny] the application by Southwest Georgia Oil Company to change the Future Land Use map designation of its property on the northwest corner of routes 319 and 267 (CPM21-12) from Agriculture to Rural 2 to enable rezoning the property from Ag to C-2 to allow for development of the site as a gas station.

Doing so would pose a risk of damaging contamination to the Floridan Aquifer and Wakulla Spring. As shown on the maps below, compiled by the Woodville Karst Plain Project (WKPP), the site is situated directly above the Chips Hole cave system which flows toward Wakulla Spring. WKPP Project Director Casey McKinlay has informed the Alliance Board that the cave is only 100 feet below the ground surface at that location. Furthermore, a dye test conducted by WKPP on June 12, 2021, demonstrated a direct connection to the main cave system that flows to Wakulla Spring from the Leon Sinks area. McKinlay estimates that the travel time from that location to the Wakulla Spring main vent is 7 to 8 days. Remediation of a gasoline spill into the cave system would be extremely difficult and may not even be feasible.

A map of a city

Description automatically generated with low confidence

A picture containing text

Description automatically generated

Land use law experts with whom we have consulted confirm that property owners are not entitled to comprehensive plan map changes in Florida. Therefore, this decision is entirely discretionary on the part of the County Commission. Making such an amendment would be inconsistent with all that Wakulla County has done to protect Wakulla Springs and the intent of Comprehensive Plan Conservation Element Objectives 2.0 (Surface Water)[[1]](#footnote-1) and 5.0 (Groundwater).[[2]](#footnote-2)

The more prudent course would be to retain the current Agriculture Future Land Use designation and rezone the southeast corner of this parcel to Ag, so as to correct the current inconsistent zoning of that small corner of the property.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Chair

Wakulla Springs Alliance

cc: David Edwards, County Administrator

Who else?

1. Objective 2.0: Protect surface water quality to ensure that water quality is not allowed to degrade below present conditions, including that of Wakulla Springs, St. Marks Springs, Spring Creek Springs, and the sections of the St. Marks, Wakulla, Sopchoppy and Ochlockonee Rivers and Apalachee Bay that have been declared by Department of Environmental Protection as Outstanding Florida Waters. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Objective 5.0: Ensure that the quality of Wakulla County's groundwater resources are maintained at or above state standards . . . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)