**Wakulla Springs Alliance**

*“Protecting and restoring water quality, spring flow and ecological health of Wakulla Spring.”*

**2017 Board Workshop Report**

**July 30, 2017**

The Wakulla Springs Alliance board met in workshop at Wakulla Springs Lodge, July 26, 2017, to evaluate it current status and to map out the future direction the Alliance should pursue.

The agenda for the workshop is attached hereto as Appendix A.

The agenda was used as a guide but discussion evolved into four major areas the board thought the Alliance should pursue. These areas will be addressed in the following titled sections.

1. **Continuation of Past Strategic Issues**

During a similar workshop in 2014, the board determined that two top priorities should be pursued. Both of these strategies are ongoing and need to be continued as major strategies. The two strategies are attached hereto as Appendix B.

1. **React to and Address Current Opportunities**

There are three opportunities (a though c, below) that the board needs to address in a meaningful and direct way.

1. **Minimum Water Flows and Levels**

The Northwest Florida Water Management District is tasked with establishing minimum water flows and levels. Minimum flows and levels for a given watercourse are the limits at which further withdrawals will significantly harm the water resource or ecology of the area.

The concern voiced at the workshop is that measuring the level of harm is subjective, that there may not be significant data to measure ecological impacts, or that expediency will result in flows and levels being set at current levels even if they are too low.

The board members will engage in the decision-making process to ensure that minimum water flows and levels are set to standards that protect and enhance Wakulla Springs.

1. **St. Marks River and Apalachee Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan**

Surface Water Improvement and Management Plans have been developed pursuant to the SWIM Act which authorizes the Northwest Florida Water Management District to draft these plans. A concern expressed at the workshop was that the plan does not adequately address the protection and enhancement of Wakulla Springs and River.

President Sean committed to addressing a letter to the Northwest Florida Water Management District or as an alternative, having Rob Williams include the Alliances comments in a letter he is writing on behalf of the Apalachee Audubon Society. The letter will detail concerns the Alliance has regarding the Plan vis-a vie Wakulla Springs and River.

Note: A list of tasks that were agreed upon at the workshop are listed in Appendix C for easy access.

1. **Land Acquisition in the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone**

The board members recognized a need to acquire more land in the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone. The most likely source of funding for purchasing land is Florida Forever Funding. There is a need to work with our legislative delegation and partner with other organizations to move the legislative process along so money is spent on land acquisition and that some of the funding is for Wakulla Springs protection.

1. **A more Effective Board**

There were many ideas expressed about how the board and its activities might be changed to make it more effective. There was general agreement that clarification of who are members should be done. Likewise, there was agreement that the bylaws should be reviewed to determine if updates are needed.

An ad hoc committee was appointed to make recommendations for changes to the board, board meetings, memberships, bylaws, et cetera. Ryan Smart is to chair the committee, and Howard Kessler and Bob Henderson are to serve on the committee.

1. **Fundraising for Alliance**

There was general consensus that there needs to be some level of funds for general use by the Alliance. No agreement was made regarding the recommended amount. Three sources were identified as sources to increase the administrate fund.

1. Board members were encouraged to provide an annual contribution. It was suggested that $100/year would be appropriate, although no assessment would be made. The point that application for some grants would require full board participation in financial support was made as an encouragement that all board members make a contribution. It was also pointed out that a board member’s contribution was not limited to a personal contribution, but also included funds solicited on behalf of the Alliance and provided by someone else.
2. A plan to solicit financial support from Alliance members is recommended. This could be done on an ongoing basis and done in such a way as way as to encourage different levels of giving. Secretary Tom Taylor and Treasurer Bob Hendrson volunteered to develop and execute a process to solicit funds from Alliance members.
3. A part of grants for specific projects should be allocated to the administrative fund. This allocation, as a minimum, should cover direct administrative costs, but when possible within the guidelines of the grant include indirect costs.
4. **Initiatives Moving Forward**

There was consensus that several areas needed to be addressed and these were captured in the seven topical areas (a through g) that follow. There were commitments by board members to join work groups that would develop detailed strategies and tasks to address each area.

1. **Educate the Public/Advocate on behalf of the Alliance**

The board members recognized the need to engage the public. Many of the issues the alliance wishes to address are political in nature and the political process is best moved in the desired direction if the public in general is advocating for the issues.

Many ideas on how to engage the public were expressed: a speakers’ bureau, greater use of social media, enhancement to the Alliance web site, use of calendars, partnering with like-minded organizations, organizing and holding public forums, contributing My View columns, hosting a Blog of Alliance supported issues, Spring basin tours, et cetera.

The work group to address this issue: Gail Fishman (chair), Ryan Smart, Debbie Lightsey, Bob Deyle, Bob Henderson, Howard Kessler, and Jim Stevenson.

1. **Land Acquisition/Management**

As expressed in 2c above, this is an important issue for protection of the Springs. It may need to be addressed in the SWIM plan, with the local legislative delegation before and during legislative sessions, with state agencies for funding, working with local government commissions and departments, and gaining public support for protection of the Springs zone.

The work group to address this issue: Rob Williams (chair), Ryan Smart, Cal Jamison, and Albert Gregory.

1. **Water Quality**

The issue of water quality is important to the ecological health of the Springs and surrounding area. The health of flora and fauna found in the spring basin and the Wakulla River is impacted by the quality of the water flowing through and under the protection zone and river bed. There is also a significant economic impact when water quality in the Springs is low.

The work group to address this issue: Bart Bibler (chair), Bob Deyle, Sean McGlynn, and Cal Jamison.

1. **Water Quantity**

Like water quality, water quantity is important to the ecological health of the Springs and surrounding area. It also can have an economic impact on Wakulla and Leon County.

The work group to address this issue: Bart Bibler (chair) and Cal Jamison.

1. **Advancing Science/Research**

The policies that govern protection of Wakulla Springs and River should be based on science and not on self-interest, political whims, or “false truths”. It is important that the Alliance continue to provide sound data on the natural world encompassed within the Wakulla Springs basin, the changes occurring due to human impacts, and other naturally occurring phenomena.

The work group to address this issue: Sean McGlynn (Chair), Bob Deyle, and Cal Jamison

1. **Ecosystem Restoration**

The impacts of human activity on the natural environment have thrown it out-of-balance and many of the beneficial services provided by nature no longer work. It is important was we attempt to manage the Springs Protection Zone, that natural ecosystems be restored to the extent possible.

The work group to address this issue: Sean McGlynn (Chair), Bob Deyle, Rob Williams, and Gail Fishman.

1. **Other Meaningful Comments**

1. The board expressed the need to continue to seek grants for projects.
2. It is important to work with and influence public officials, including staff members.
3. The board should have a presence at meetings of agencies that are open to the public (public hearings, workshops, advisory committees, etc.)
4. The Alliance needs to be a “watch dog” to ensure that public policies do not get adopted without a review to determine the policies’ impacts on Wakulla Springs and River.
5. The Alliance needs to be as proactive as possible and minimally reactive.
6. The Alliance needs to involve members and interested parties in activities of interest to the Alliance. More persons involved will reach beyond the capacity of the board itself.
7. The Alliance needs to support enforcement and strengthening of existing government policies that are needed to protect Wakulla Springs and River.
8. More effort needs to be exerted to properly brand the Alliance.