Wakulla Springs Alliance Meeting

Minutes for October 25, 2019

Sean McGlynn called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

**Present:** Sean McGlynn., Albert Gregory, Cal Jamison, Terry Ryan, Jim Stevenson, Doug Barr, Bob Deyle, Debbie Lightsey, Lindsay Stevens

**Minutes:** No minutes available from Sept meeting at this time. A few hard copies of August meeting distributed for review (not sent out ahead of time. One correction: Bone Blvd should be Boon Blvd. Tabled to November because insufficient time for review.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Approved as submitted.

**Wakulla Spring/Sally Ward Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) Study Update – Paul Thurman NWFWMD**

Paul Thurman of the Northwest Florida Water Management District reported that WMD staff are working to finish preparation of a long-term flow record for Wakulla Spring. They have direct flow measurements from the spring vent back to 1997. They are investigating extending that by extrapolating from the USGS flow gauge at the Shadeville Road (“upper”) bridge. To do so, they have to account for additional inflows to the river downstream of the spring most notably the Sally Ward run and McBride Slough. Stage data are not a useful proxy because the relationship between stage and flow has changed after the recent hurricanes and high flow last December which altered the contours of the river channel.

Once the long-term flow record is completed, they will develop a baseline time series to define pre-impact flow, i.e. before there was any extensive withdrawal of ground water from the aquifer within the springshed.

They have completed surface water stage-flow models for Wakulla Spring and Sally Ward. Kathleen Coates is the lead on developing the groundwater model.

Then will apply a similar method to that used for the St Marks MFL. Doug Barr requested more detailed information on the metrics that will be used to define what will comprise “significant harm” per the statute for the Wakulla and Sally Ward springs, e.g. biological conditions. Paul says the metrics will be similar to, but not identical to St Marks. Outdoor recreation is one example; i.e. depth of water required for canoe passage or a motor boat. With no public boat use, the criterion more likely would be based on the park tour boats.

They should have a draft ready by Spring 2020, but will plan to come back to report to the Alliance as they go along, e.g. details on how pre-impact flow estimated, design of the ground water model, etc.

In response to a question, Paul explained that implementation of the MFL is through the WMD’s withdrawal permitting. They can go back and require modifications to existing withdrawal permits. If the WMD determines that the system has already experienced significant harm or is likely to within the next 20 years, they must also develop a recovery plan that accompanies the MFL. Doug Barr averred that modifications to existing permits is unlikely. He said that had only happened in south Florida extensive over withdrawal had been the impetus for the law in the first place. He also noted that different water management districts have used different modes to define “minimum flow.”

Sean asked how they will address the combined flow of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers below their confluence to determine minimum flow. Paul responded that they would use an estuarine flow model.

**Proposal to Amend the Bylaws Regarding the Nominating Process**

Bob Deyle moved to make the following amendments to section VIII.1.b. of the Alliance Bylaws:

Not later than ~~ninety~~ sixty days before each ~~annual~~ general meeting the Board shall appoint a nominating committee of three Members of the Alliance who are in good standing. The committee shall implement the nominating processes for the election of Directors by the Membership and the election of Officers by the Directors as set forth in Article VI.5. and Article VII.3. respectively. ~~No member of the Nominating Committee may be nominated to fill a vacancy on the Board.~~

The motion was seconded and approved. Bob Deyle will post the amended Bylaws on the website, send a copy to Board Secretary Gail Fishman. He also will update the list of officers and directors on the website.

**Appointment of a Nominating Committee**

The Bylaws call for a three-member committee to develop a list of nominees to the Board of Directors and Officers. Directors are elected by vote of the Alliance membership. Officers are elected by a separate, subsequent vote by the Directors. Jim Stevenson, Debbie Lightsey, and Albert Gregory agreed to serve. Moved and seconded to appoint them. Approved. Bob Deyle will send the committee members a chart with the current appointment status of current directors along with contact information and the deadline for sending the nominations to the Alliance membership prior to the January 2020 general meeting.

**Lake Jackson Restoration Continued – Presentation by Sherry Carpenter**

Sherry Carpenter who currently serves as Manager of Parks and Community Centers for the Leon County Department of Parks and Recreation, formerly served as the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve Manager for two years. She was the principal author of the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve Management Plan which was recently approved by the State Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC). The plan includes a number of action items which Caitlin Snyder, the new preserve manager, is beginning to implement.

Sherry agreed to accompany Alliance members on their tour of Lake Jackson on Friday, November 22 (in lieu of the regular monthly meeting). She will assist Sean McGlynn in developing the tour itinerary.

The tour will commence at the Lee Vause Park shelter at 9:00 am on the 22nd. A brief meeting will be convened to address any pressing business. We will caravan from there to various stops. Sean agreed to resend the internet link for the management plan prior to the field trip.

Sean asked if there is interest in a field trip to Upper Lake Lafayette. Apparently so. He noted that access is over private property so permission would have to be secured to do so.

**Wakulla BMAP Update**

Doug Barr reported that he had analyzed the appropriateness of the 0.35 mg/L nitrate-nitrite Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) that is the basis for the Wakulla BMAP and has estimated that it should be lowered to 0.28 mg/L. He and Sean met with Tom Frick, Director of the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection a while back. All of the spring TMDLs for nitrate-nitrite are based on a single study. Doug says he would like to see development of new data to devise a Wakulla-specific estimate. Frick said they would collect some additional periphyton data which was basis for the assessment. FDEP staff provided their existing data to Doug which was then reviewed by Bob Knight and Sean, both of whom reported no indication of any improvement.

**Springshed Updates**

Cal Jamison reported that visibility at Wakulla Spring was 39.8 feet yesterday, 10 feet better than the previous week. It had been in the 20s or less. It is still tannic although Fisher, Black, and Jump Creeks are still dry. Lost Creek is still flowing but not much. Johnny Richardson reported that the upper reach of Lost Creek is not flowing.

Cal is working on developing access to the Fisher Creek swallet via private property.

He also reported that the US 319 widening has resulted in improved protection of wetland karst features on the east side of the road from highway right-of-way stormwater runoff. He thinks FDOT is trying to do a good job. He suggested we work with the inspectors who make sure things are being done correctly. Albert pointed out that there was a trade-off in loss of public lands for the expanded ROW and the new stormwater ponds. Jim noted that time will tell how well those ponds will actually perform in terms of discharges to the aquifer, e.g. sinks opening up.

Debbie Lightsey proposed that the Alliance play a more active role in monitoring the Capital Circle Southwest (CCSW) widening project from US 90 to Springhill Road, with a focus on enhanced stormwater management along the outlet from the Bradford Chain of Lakes. Lindsay Stevens recommended we get Autumn Calder form Blueprint and staff from FDOT to give us a status report. Gary Cochran from Sierra Club says FDOT has agreed to bridge the entire Bradford Chain of Lakes. Debbie will talk to Autumn about attending the January meeting unless it needs to be sooner.

**River Ecosystem Update**

Bob Deyle reported that alligators are engaging in various forms of mating behavior at the wrong time of the year, probably stimulated by the exceptionally hot weather in September. He also noted the apparent decline of top niche predators, especially osprey and great blue herons. Cal reported finding higher numbers of small fish and snails from his periodic dip nettings at the boat dock. So there may be some improvement in overall biological productivity, but that may not yet have translated into adequate stocks of larger fish size classes needed by the top predators.

**Items From the Floor**

Jim Stevenson noted that the Leon County state legislative delegation will be meeting at the county courthouse at 5 pm Monday. They will take 3-minute statements from citizens. He suggested this will be a good chance to make statements promoting springs protection, etc.

**The Meeting Was Adjourned** at 11:03 am.

Respectfully submitted

Robert Deyle