



**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP**

District Headquarters, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Monday, September 16, 2013, 5:00 PM

WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP MINUTES

ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS – Newton Cook, WRAC Recreation Issues Chair

- Newton Cook welcomed members, introduced himself and started attendee introductions.

ITEM 2 - RECREATION DISCUSSION, UPDATES, FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:

- Meeting participants were invited to attend a joint Florida Sportsmen Conservation Association and Airboat community barbeque to be held on Saturday, September 21st at Okeetantee to benefit the Wounded Warriors organization featuring a live band and free airboat rides.
- As a result of a fire started by vandals on the Hungryland property, the Florida Sportsmen Conservation Association (FSCA) raised \$500 along with several other individual donations for a total of \$1,400 to offer as reward to anyone that provides information leading to the conviction of the perpetrators. The FSCA has also decided to offer a standing \$1,000 reward to anyone who turns in vandals of any public lands in south Florida and requested permission to post signs stating the reward program on District Lands. District staff will need to review this request internally with the District's Office of Counsel.
 - Additional concerns regarding vandalism taking place at remote locations on publicly owned and accessible lands were discussed.
- A request was made to organize a field trip to identify and possibly remove debris and other items within Water Conservation Area 2 in preparation for a volunteer clean-up project on Earth Day in April 2014.
 - District staff is currently working on an inventory of items that should stay on the property.
- A comment was made for FWC and the District to look into providing hunting opportunities for youths with disabilities.
 - Staff will assist FWC in addressing this request.

- Attendees announced that possible illegal hunting tree stands have been spotted along the C-18 levee to which the group was informed to contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- A statement was made regarding the need to post small game hunting signs at C-23/C-24 to reinforce the hunting boundary area. Staff will forward this request to FWC. There appears to be a make-shift drag racing lane and concern was expressed about its possible interference with hunting.
- Scott Sommer of the Youth Hunting Program of Florida presented the Land Resources Bureau with hand-written letters from over 30 children who participated in the 2012 Youth Hunting Program of Florida thanking the agency for its contributions to the program. (2013 letters are still being collected and will be presented in 2014)
- Future meeting topics and presentations requested included;
 1. Audubon presentation at December WRAC RIW
 2. Update presentation on access to STAs for fishing
 3. Follow-up on posting signs on District property regarding a reward by the FSCA for reported vandalism
 4. Rolling Meadows project status update

ITEM 3 – Corbett Levee Project Overview – John Mitnik, Bureau Chief, Engineering and Construction, Operations, Engineering and Construction Division, SFWMD:

- Staff provided presentation on the current status of the J.W. Corbett Levee system and plans to repair and improve the levee using state funds resulting from the 2013 legislature. The presentation consisted of a time line, conceptual design alternatives and staff recommendations.
- Clarification was given to attendees regarding private property rights to the berm. Staff stated that the Indian Trail Improvement District owns the right to easements across all privately owned berms in the area for maintenance and operations purposes.
- Concerns were expressed in regards to the loss of about 17 acres of wetlands due to construction design, funding and lack of improvement to existing berm. Staff clarified that the stability of the new berm would add to existing protections.

ITEM 4 – Comprehensive Land Assessment Review – Ray Palmer, Section Leader, Real Estate, SFWMD

- Staff provided a presentation on the current status of the District's Land Assessment process and summarized the process and actions that have taken place since the assessment began. Mr. Palmer expressed that next steps would be to conduct in-depth research and analysis on all properties and bring final recommendations to the public and local governments and finally to the Governing Board prior to any exchanges or surplus.
- Attendees commented that the Hungryland property currently listed as a recommendation to retain on the District's list showed as a surplus on the state lands registry and asked about an apparent lease on the property from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) by the District. Staff stated that in an effort to release land information to

the public quickly, FDEP, had not completed its title searches on many properties and that revised information would be uploaded to the state land registry as soon as available. In the meantime, no lands would be surplus or exchanged before complete evaluations have been undertaken.

- Attendees commented that all tracts, especially small tracts in the south such as acres located within the Bird Drive area, should be carefully tracked so that they are defended for public ownership.
- Comments also included recognition of District staff for getting so much information out to the public and allowing a process that kept the public informed and able to participate.
- Attendees asked which parcels may be used to determine the 1700 acre proposed land swap with Palm Beach County related to the Mecca property purchase. Attendees also asked about a rumored rail line proposed for construction along the East Coast Buffer area. Staff responded that they had no information regarding the rail line.

ITEM 5 – Loxahatchee River / Cypress Creek Management Area Update, Jim Schuette, Senior Scientist, Land Management Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD:

- Staff provided an overview of land management activities taking place within the Loxahatchee River and Cypress Creek areas.
- Attendees asked about being given a combination to a gate located off Indiantown Road to allow vehicle access for fishing. Staff explained that through a joint effort with Palm Beach and Martin counties a solution has been worked out to allow for on-line application for a special use license through the District for use of the road and parking. The item has been approved by the District and the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners and is scheduled for the Martin County Board on October 1st.
- Participants asked how the District decides which property can be used for cattle leases and about the benefits of leasing property for cattle grazing. Staff responded that the District leases idle lands awaiting project construction, where possible, to generate revenue for the agency's land stewardship operations and discussed other benefits such as management of vegetation and in-kind services such as fence installation. Staff also stated that the leasing of lands for interim use does not impede the public from recreational use due to terms specified by the lease.

ITEM 6 - Public Use Updates – Dan Cotter, Section Leader, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD:

- Updates were given on the opening of a new public boat ramp at the lock at S65-D, the impending opening of STA 5/6 for public use, which includes a new shelter and restrooms.
- Staff provided an update on hunting areas including the STAs and the newly reopened C-23/C-24 small game hunting area. Staff also thanked the WRAC Recreational Issues Workshop participants for reviewing Public Use Rule 40E-7 which was approved at the September Governing Board for Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

- Chairman Cook requested that District staff look into land ownership opportunities and expansion of hunting activities next year on the former grove lands adjacent to the C-23/C-24 small game hunting area
- A discussion was held regarding the request for a shelter to be installed by volunteers on District property within the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes.
 - District staff expressed its support for the volunteer project but currently does not have the resources to fund the project. A Volunteer contractor would need to permit, and oversee the construction of the new shelter. Staff stated that the District can support the project as funding becomes available by offering an in-house design and materials.
 - A representative of the Kissimmee River Valley Sportsmen's Association stated the KRVSA Board stands ready to volunteer to construct the shelter once the District decides on a proper location. The KRVSA would like the shelter to be located near Miles Point and not at Thomas Landing due to concerns over possible vandalism
- Staff discussed the opening of the Rolling Meadows hunting area for another interim season in coordination with FWC.
 - Participants expressed concern with the rules and regulations concerning weekend-only access and asked that the property be open for more days of hunting.
 - District staff said that they will follow-up with FWC on access during turkey season.
- The KRVSA has volunteered to repair solar lighting at the "Milk Bus" shelter that was damaged by vandals.
- A comment was made thanking District staff for the overview on STA hunting and how the program had expanded nicely over the last several years.

Adjourn

Chairman Cook encouraged participation and announced the following meetings:

September 19; Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge Waterfowl Hunt Meeting

September 26; Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Invasive Plant Management Meeting

December 16; WRAC RIW meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm