

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**Springs Coast Steering Committee**  
Brooksville, Florida      January 29, 2019

The Springs Coast Steering Committee convened at 2:00 p.m., January 29, 2019 at the Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board Room, 2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida.

**Members Present**

Kelly Rice, SWFWMD, Chair  
Ron Oakley, Pasco County  
Kathy Bryant, Marion County  
Angela Chelette, FDACS (via phone)  
Alys Brockway, Hernando County  
Tom Frick, FDEP (via phone)  
Robert Holmes, City of Crystal River  
Scott Carnhan, Citrus County

**Members Absent**

Shannon Wright, FFWCC

**SWFWMD Staff**

Chris Anastasiou  
Sky Notestein  
Jennette Seachrist  
Vivianna Bendixson  
Danielle Rogers  
Frank Gargano  
Kelly Page

**Recording Secretary**

Lauren Vossler

**Others Present**

Bob Titterington, Marion County  
Dr. Gao, Fl. Dept. of Health

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SWFWMD – Southwest Florida Water Management District  
FDACS – Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
FWC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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A list of others present who signed the attendance sheet is filed in the permanent files of the Springs Coast Steering Committee.

**1. Call to Order and Roll**

Committee Chair Mr. Rice introduced Mr. Frank Gargano, the new Government Affairs Regional Manager for the Northern District.

Committee Chair Mr. Rice called the meeting to order. Ms. Kelly Page called the roll and confirmed a quorum.

**2. Action Item: Minutes Approval from 08/29/2018**

*The committee unanimously approved the August 29, 2018 meeting minutes with no changes.*

**3. Public Input-**

*There were no public comments presented.*

**4. Presentation: FY2020 SWFWMD Draft Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) Controls for Sewer Projects – Vivianna Bendixson**

Ms. Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD Project Manager, presented the FY2020 SWFWMD Draft Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) Controls for Sewer Projects, which she discussed two priorities set at the August 2017 Governing board workshop including the septic conversions and package plant decommissioning. Ms. Bendixson discussed the CFI Controls were put in place to protect the District's investment. Ms. Bendixson stated the Controls needed to be met to be eligible for the District CFI funding and reimbursement. The Controls include the project being located within a priority focus

area (PFA), project funding must be 50% from the DEP, 25% from the Cooperator and 25% from the District with studies being an exception (50/50 Cooperator and District). Local ordinances supporting Florida Statutes must also be in place before reimbursement and there will be a repayment clause in the cooperative funding agreement conditions. The District will be making a recommendation to remove the defining enhanced septic systems ordinance.

Kathy Bryant inquired when are people required to hook up once sewer is available, is it an immediate hook up or upon their system failure. Ms. Bendixson replied Florida Statue states hookup is required within 365 days from availability and notification. Once sewer is available the utility should notify the homeowner, then they will have 365 days to hook up, whether the tank is failing or not.

Ms. Bendixson discussed the DEP Springs funding qualifications and explained CFI funding qualifications for septic conversions and package plant decommissioning are more restrictive and may be used in conjunction with a Springs funding request. CFI funding requirements include, project type set as a priority for funding by the Governing Board and Controls must be met. Cooperators who do not qualify for CFI funding for wastewater projects may still apply for the DEP Springs funding. Lastly, Ms. Bendixson introduced other funding opportunities such as State revolving funds, clean water act grants and RESTORE funds.

**5. Presentation: FY2020 Springs Funding Application Preliminary Evaluations – Danielle Rogers**

Ms. Danielle Rogers, SWFWMD Environmental Project Manager, presented the FY2020 Springs Funding Application Preliminary Evaluations, where she showed a historical summary of the FDEP Springs funding since the District has been involved. For FY 2020, there were 16 applications requesting approximately 40 million dollars of FDEP Springs funding. Ms. Rogers explained that each of the projects have been reviewed by the Management Committee at their last 3 meetings, and discussed each project, with map location and a summary.

For Rainbow Springs, there were eleven projects submitted, all within the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) boundary, and only one of the projects within the priority focus area (PFA). The City of Ocala projects submitted two projects for package plant decommissioning and one septic to sewer project. Marion County submitted five projects: one is a waste water treatment facility upgrade and expansion, two package plant decommissioning's, and two septic to sewer projects.

Projects for the Homosassa and Chassahowitzka Springs were combined to represent the shared BMAP boundary. Citrus County submitted two projects, both within the BMAP area and one within the PFA. One project is a package plant decommissioning and the other is a septic to sewer project.

Projects for the Weeki Wachee include three applications, all are found within BMAP boundary and two are within the PFA. Two of these projects were submitted by Hernando County, one for a wastewater treatment facility expansion, the second is an upgrade to advanced wastewater treatment. The third project was submitted by Pasco County and represents a nutrient removal study that funding is being requested for.

Ms. Rogers discussed the process that had been approved previously by the Steering Committee. Applications were submitted in October 2018 to the District for State Springs funding. The preliminary evaluations standardized the information provided in the application and have gone through extensive assessments by the Springs Coast Management Committee. The Management Committee will meet

on February 27<sup>th</sup> to formally approve the recommended applications for funding consideration. The Steering Committee will either approve or modify the recommendations. In April the list will go to the Governing Board for approval and in May it will be submitted to FDEP. Typically, in August through September it is announced which projects were selected to receive the funding through FDEP.

Ms. Rogers gave an overview of preliminary evaluations, including the project type, project description, and if the project has a multiyear funding request. The evaluation shows what springs will benefit from these projects and how many pounds of nitrogen removal the project will provide.

Ms. Rogers discussed the potential of prioritizing the projects.

Mr. Scott Carnhan stated he believed the Management Committee voted last year not to prioritize the projects. Committee Chair Mr. Rice asked for input from Ms. Jennette Seachrist. Ms. Seachrist suggested Mr. Tom Frick from FDEP weight in on any feedback. Ms. Seachrist provided a written statement from Shannon Wright from fish and wildlife.

Discussion ensued regarding the ranking or prioritizing of projects.

A motion was made that the committee leaves ranking as it was last year, as the committee can prioritize projects, but FDEP can rank the projects on factors like the amount of nitrogen load reduction.

Motion fails for a lack of second.

Ms. Kathy Bryant made a motion to instruct the Management Committee to rank the projects. The committee approved the motion and it was seconded.

The committee furthers the discussion on how the projects should be ranked.

Ms. Kathy Bryant suggested hearing from the Springs Coast Management Committee on what ranking system they had used.

Ms. Danielle Rogers replies that each Management Committee member was provided the preliminary project applications, allowed time to review them, then each committee member ranked the projects. Each individual committee member submitted their priority ranking they assigned each project. The scores of all members were tabulated and sorted.

Ms. Kathy Bryant asked what the scoring system was based upon.

Ms. Danielle Rogers responded that the Management Committee members took the list of projects and submitted them in order of highest priority to that committee member. Each member had their own factors they used when deciding. The projects were then assigned a point value and a total score was generated.

Parameters were discussed amongst committee members, they included:

- Local Funding Match - yes or no
- Project Readiness
- Nitrogen Removed
- Cost Per Pound of Nitrogen
- Spring receiving benefit
- Overall best for the environment

Steering Committee members would like the Management Committee to develop non-subjective criteria by which the project information categories would be assigned a rank of high, medium or low, and an overall ranking project ranking.

Committee Chair Mr. Rice made a motion to modify the evaluation form with the following:

- Each category in the Project Information section will be ranked high, medium or low
- A category indicating if local match is present will be added to the evaluation form. If a local match is present it will be given a high ranking. If local match is not present, it will be given a low ranking.
- Project status will be changed to project readiness
- an overall ranking of high, medium or low will be added
- Recommendation will be changed to Overall Ranking

The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Kathy Bryant made a motion to have the Management Committee provide the high, medium, or low-ranking assignment recommendations and those recommendations be reviewed at the next Steering Committee meeting.

The motion was approved unanimously.

**6. Presentation: Homeowner Options for Onsite Sewage Treatment & Disposal Systems – Dr. Gao, Florida Department of Health**

Dr. Gao, of the Florida Department of Health, presented the Homeowner Option for nitrogen-reducing Onsite Sewage Treatment & Disposal Systems, which entailed discussing available nitrogen-reducing onsite wastewater system technologies approved to be used in the state of Florida. Dr. Gao gave information on the history of the conventional septic system and drainfield. Dr. Gao stated that while conventional onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems can remove many pollutants in domestic wastewater, such as phosphorus, total suspended solid, and bacteria, with high removal efficiencies, they are not designed to remove nitrogen very efficiently, and, therefore, are among the many sources contributing nitrogen to groundwater.

In 2016 the Florida legislatures passed the Springs and aquifer protection act which directs the department of environmental protection to, identify outstanding Florida springs impaired for nutrients, delineation priority focus areas (PFA), adopt basing malmanagement action plan by July 1, 2018, and develop OSTDS remediation plans for basins where OSTDSs contribute more than 20% of the total nitrogen among all the sources or if FDEP considers a remediation plan is needed

The beginning phase of the BMAP requirements will only impact the new constructions. Residents applying for new construction permits in a PFA on lots less than one acre have the option of connecting to an open sewer or, installing a non-nitrogen-reducing OSTDS if the applicant demonstrates that the sewer connection will be available within five years or, install a nitrogen-reducing OSTDS using numerous options recognized by the Department of Health (DOH).

Effective on September 17, 2018, DEP implemented an existing septic system upgrade incentive program. Dr. Gao explained the incentive are available to offset homeowner costs to upgrade the current systems to nitrogen reducing systems. The payments will be made directly to registered septic tank contractors and state-licensed plumbers who have registered with DEP for the incentive

program. The incentive program is available for existing systems in PFA of non-agricultural BMAPs only, this also includes pending BMAPs as well.

Dr. Gao discussed the nitrogen-reducing treatment system options. The overall goal of nitrogen removal is at least 65%. To achieve this treatment target, DOH has three options. The first one is nitrogen-reducing aerobic treatment units (ATU), the second is performance-based treatment systems (PBTS), and the third is, in-ground reducing biofilter (INRB) stacked under a conventional drainfield.

Dr. Gao described how a conventional septic system includes a septic tank and a drainfield. ATU adds another component in between the septic tank and the drainfield, which introduces air into the treatment train to facilitate oxidation of the organic material and settling of the total suspended solids. ATUs are required to meet the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF)' NSF 40 standard, which includes 25 mg/L of CBOD5 and 30 mg/L of TSS in the effluent of the treatment system. Some of these ATU systems also meet the NSF 245 standard, which requires the ATUs not only meet the NSF 40 standard but are also able to remove 50% of the nitrogen in wastewater. In Florida, approximately 600 of the 8,000 aerobic treatment units meet the NSF 245 standard. To get a use an ATU for wastewater treatment, the homeowner needs an operating permit, which needs to be renewed once every two years. The homeowner is also required to sign a contract agreement with a third-party maintenance entity (ME) to maintain the system. The ME needs to inspect ATU at least twice each year. The county health department will inspect the system at least once a year. DOH has a list of ATU systems that are approved to be used in Florida as nitrogen-reducing system. The list is posted at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/onsite-sewage/products/documents/245cert-atu-18.pdf>.

Gao also provided information about PBTS. These are the systems designed by engineers having wastewater treatment background and licensed in Florida to treat specified pollutants to a specified level. To qualify for the nitrogen-reducing system, a PBTS must meet the NSF 245 standard to remove at least 50% of the nitrogen in the wastewater. In order to use PBTS for wastewater treatment, a homeowner will need an operating permit that is renewed once every two years and also sign a contract agreement with a third-party ME to maintain the system. The system is required to be inspected by the ME at least twice a year and inspected by the county health department at least once a year. The listed of PBTSs approved to be used as nitrogen-reducing PBTSs are posted at: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/onsite-sewage/products/documents/npbts-components.pdf>.

Dr. Gao also went over the INRB. This treatment system has 18" of unsaturated nitrification media and 12" of lignocellulose/fine aggregate mix denitrification media and at least 6" separation between the bottom of the lignocellulose/fine aggregate layer and the seasonal high-water table. Slightly limited soils are required for the site for INRB installation.

Mr. Chair asked where he could find a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Sky Notestein responded that it is listed on the website under the Steering Committee as a PDF.

- 7. Presentation: Homosassa SWIM Plan Quantifiable Objectives Update – Dr. Chris Anastasiou**  
Dr. Chris Anastasiou, Chief Environmental Scientist, presented the Homosassa SWIM Plan Quantifiable Objectives Update, which entailed, the quantifiable objectives being broken into three focus areas: water quality, water quantity, and natural systems. These objectives are part of the

Surface Water Improvement Management (SWIM) plan used to address the quality of the Homosassa River.

There are five stations in the river, collecting data from the headsprings to the fifth mile downriver. Based on the river's average water clarity, the quantifiable objective is greater than 20 feet river wide and greater than 40 feet in the headsprings. The clarity remains well below the target in both the river and the headsprings.

For the water quantity focus area, the quantifiable objective is to maintain greater than 97 percent of natural flow. The Homosassa River is maintaining 99 percent of natural flow. The river is currently undergoing a reevaluation of the existing MFL and results of that effort may change the quantifiable objective for water quantity with in the next year.

The natural systems focus area is subdivided into two river-wide quantifiable objectives. The first is to maintain greater than 65 percent coverage of desirable habitat, benthic habitat and submerged aquatic vegetation. The second quantifiable objective is to maintain less that 10 percent coverage of invasive aquatic vegetation. As of 2018 there is less than 10% coverage of the invasive submerged aquatic vegetation. The second category of the natural systems quantifiable objective is no net loss of shoreline in natural condition along the river, however, significant ecological shifts are occurring, especially in the lower river.

Ms. Bryant noted that on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 it is the FACT legislative day in Tallahassee. Ms. Seachrist responded that the District will work with the Steering Committee to find a different date that they can meet.

**8. Upcoming Meeting Dates are as follows:**

- a. April 8, 2019
- b. August 28, 2019

**9. Adjournment**

Committee Chair Mr. Rice adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.