



SPRINGS COAST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, May 24, 2023 – 1:30 PM
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Michael Molligan, SWFWMD
Ken Cheek, Citrus County
Alys Brockway, Hernando County
Josh Kramer, Marion County
Micah Minaberry, Pasco County
Ken Weaver, FDEP
Will Fontaine, FGUA
Michelle Sempstrott, FWC
Cori Hermle, FDACS
Suzy Folsom, Public Supply
Sarah Vitale, Regional Planning Council
Alana Todd, Industry
Patricia Spellman, Academia
Rick Owen, State Parks
Charles Lee, Environmental

Staff Members

Vivianna Bendixson
Randy Smith
Frank Gargano
Madison Trowbridge
Virginia Singer
Jeremy McKay

Committee Administrative Support

Lauren Vossler

FDACS – Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection
SCMC – Springs Coast Management Committee
FGUA – Florida Governmental Utility Authority

FWC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
SWFWMD – Southwest Florida Water Management District
SCSC – Springs Coast Steering Committee
TWG – Technical Working Group

1. Call to Order and Roll

The Springs Coast Management Committee (SCMC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting at 1:30 p.m., on May 24, 2023, via Microsoft Teams.

Mr. Michael Molligan, Employee, Outreach & General Services Director, called the meeting to order. Roll was called and a quorum was noted.

2. Action Item: Minutes Approval from February 22, 2023

A motion was made for approval of February 22, 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Public Input

None

4. Discussion: FY2024 FDEP Springs Funding Update and Lessons Learned – Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD

Ms. Vivianna Bendixson, Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program Manager, provided members with a detailed FY2024 application process, along with the FY2023 SCMC and SCSC timeline. She provided the FY2024 FDEP request summary by Basin

Management Action Plan (BMAP) and the FDEP Springs funding summary for the SWFWMD region. She anticipates that FDEP will make project selections in the fall. Ms. Bendixson provided a breakdown of the FY2024 applications, criteria, and the prioritization matrix.

Ms. Bendixson discussed lessons learned from the FY2024 process. She mentioned that the larger font size used for the FDEP spreadsheets worked well. She discussed the tentative FY2025 process, criteria, and prioritization review.

Ms. Brockway mentioned her preference for the larger print for the FDEP spreadsheets.

Ms. Bendixson discussed upcoming tasks and the tentative FY2024 SCMC and SCSC meeting dates. She proposed a site visit to the Three Sisters Springs for committee members at the January 10th meeting. Most committee members agreed they would appreciate a site visit in January.

Ms. Bendixson mentioned that the SCSC passed along its thanks and gratitude to the SCMC for all its hard work reviewing the project applications and the success of projects receiving grant funding from the FDEP Springs Grant.

5. Discussion: Technical Working Group Update Homosassa – Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, provided an overview on the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plans. She discussed the current quantifiable objectives for the Homosassa River including water quality, water quantity, and natural systems focus areas. She provided an update on the status of these quantifiable objectives.

Mr. Molligan asked if there had been any significant projects completed that were anticipated to improve water quality at this time. Dr. Trowbridge responded in the affirmative; however, she is uncertain how long the remediation will take before the results are seen.

Dr. Spellman inquired about how the natural flow rate was established for the Homosassa River. Dr. Trowbridge explained it is based on the minimum flows and levels (MFL) and the MFL has a set target.

Dr. Trowbridge provided the potential refinements that were discussed at the Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings. These potential refinements include redefining water clarity and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) targets to different river portions, redefining water clarity as an indicator, redefining the desirable SAV target, and including the established MFL target. These potential refinements are similar to those approved for Rainbow River, Crystal River/Kings Bay, the Weeki Wachee River, and the Chassahowitzka River.

Mr. Charles Lee expressed concerns about redefining water clarity as an indicator. Discussion ensued about the data and literature discussed at the TWG meetings.

Dr. Tootoonchi asked if phosphorus was a target and if could be included as one, along with what the timeline for salinity is across the river and if it has fluctuated within a year. Dr. Trowbridge explained nitrate was included as a target in support of FDEP's total maximum daily loads. She explained salinity fluctuates depending on the tides and time of year.

Dr. Spellman asked if the District has looked at the changing coastal boundary along with different climate and recharge effects and how it is influencing discharge, and if that might affect water quality. Dr. Trowbridge explained that they have indirectly investigated these factors, and she is willing to provide additional data.

Ms. Brockway asked if there is a separate set of SAV targets for Halls River, or an addendum separating that portion. Dr. Trowbridge explained the data will still be collected but will not be included in the quantifiable objective updates presented to the committees.

Mr. Owen asked about any springs influence coming from the Halls River. Dr. Trowbridge responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Cheek asked if the US HWY 19 construction had any influence on the water clarity testing for the Halls River. Dr. Trowbridge explained that this was investigated at TWG meetings; however, impacts to the river from the US HWY 19 construction were not identified from the data analysis.

6. Presentation: Salt Tolerance Variability Among Different Ecotypes of *Vallisneria Americana* – Dr. Mohsen Tootoonchi, University of Florida

Dr. Mohsen Tootoonchi, Assistant Scientist with University of Florida, provided members with a presentation on salt tolerance variability among different ecotypes of *Vallisneria americana*. He tested 24 different ecotypes from Florida. He discussed salt stress can cause mature plant death, reduced plant size, decreased growth rates and suppressed sexual and asexual reproduction.

Dr. Tootoonchi discussed that plant response to saline conditions is significantly affected by the salt type used in an experiment. This effect is due to differences in elemental composition of salts. He mentioned in a study, effects of salinity induced by Instant Ocean aquarium salt was similar to seawater collected from the ocean. Instant Ocean appears to be an effective proxy for mimicking seawater.

In this study, they used Instant Ocean for testing salt tolerance of *Vallisneria americana*. He explained that salt tolerance differed among ecotypes, and most ecotypes were impacted by increased salinity at 5 parts per thousand (ppt), stopped their growth at 10 ppt and decayed at 15 ppt. Only one ecotype tolerated 15 ppt. Dr. Tootoonchi explained on average, *V. americana* ecotypes from Florida had a lethal concentration, or LC50, of 5 ppt.

Ms. Balcom asked which ecotype tolerated 15 ppt salinity. Dr. Tootoonchi answered that it was the Bird ecotype.

7. Open Discussion

As a future meeting topic, Ms. Folsom mentioned reviewing the changes from HB 1379 / SB 1632 Environmental Protection (passed this session and approved by the Governor) and any impacts on the activities of the Steering, Management or Technical committees.

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.