



SPRINGS COAST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, July 26, 2023 – 2:00 PM
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

John Mitten, SWFWMD (Alternate)
Robert Holmes, City of Crystal River
Rebecca Bays, Citrus County
Alys Brockway, Hernando County (Alternate)
Kathy Brayant, Marion County*
Cisco Pavez, Pasco County (Alternate)*
Ken Weaver, FDEP (Alternate)*
Gregory Workman, FWC
West Gregory, FDACS*

Staff Members

Vivianna Bendixson*
Jeremy McKay
Madison Trowbridge
Mandi Rice
Frank Gargano

Committee Administrative Support

Lauren Vossler

*Attended via Teams

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

1. Call to Order and Roll

The Springs Coast Steering Committee (SCSC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District met for its regular meeting at 2:00 p.m., on July 26, 2023.

Committee Chair Mitten called the meeting to order. Ms. Lauren Vossler called the roll and confirmed a quorum.

2. Action Item: Minutes Approval from March 8, 2023

A motion was made for approval of the March 8, 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Public Input

Mr. Ken Frink announced his retirement as the City Manager of the City of Crystal River and introduced his replacement, who will also replace him on the Springs Coast Management Committee (SCMC).

4. Action Item: FY2025 FDEP Springs Funding Final Process – Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD

Ms. Vivianna Bendixson, Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program Manager, presented the FY2025 Springs Funding process. She gave a brief description of the water quality, quantity, and land acquisition criteria, along with the FY2025 prioritization matrix.

Ms. Bendixson discussed application changes which included correcting minor clerical errors, labeling funding tables with the fiscal year, and updating the header with a new picture and due date.

Chair Mitten mentioned committee members should give input and feedback on the FDEP Springs Funding process because the members represent all the stakeholders that go into the process.

A motion was made to approve the FY2025 Springs Funding application, evaluation, and prioritization process. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5. Action Item: Approve Future SCSC Meeting Dates – Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD

Ms. Vivianna Bendixson, SWIM Program Manager, provided members with a detailed proposed FY2024 timeline.

A motion was made to approve future Spring Coast Steering Committee meeting dates. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. Action Item: Homosassa Quantifiable Objective Refinements, Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, provided a summary on the Homosassa River quantifiable objectives including water quality and natural systems. She discussed redefining quantifiable objectives as different river portions, moving water clarity to an indicator status, updating the minimum flows target as adopted, and redefining desirable submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) targets.

A motion was made to approve refinements to the quantifiable objectives as recommended by District staff.

- ***Update minimum flows target as adopted***
- ***Redefine water clarity as an indicator***
- ***Define water clarity evaluated as headsprings and middle portions***
- ***Define natural systems evaluated as tidal freshwater habitat, transition, and estuarine portions***
- ***Redefine desirable submerged aquatic vegetation targets***

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Ms. Rebecca Bays asked how SWIM Plan quantifiable objectives tie in with the Homosassa River Alliance and that group's restoration work being done in the river. Dr. Trowbridge explained the SWIM plans provide a framework for all stakeholders, including the Homosassa River Alliance, to help stakeholders prioritize projects and initiatives.

Ms. Bays asked what the consideration is for a gas station located in Homosassa that needs a permit issued from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for underground storage tanks. This area is a high coastal flood zone and is contributing to current damages to the springs. Dr. Trowbridge explained the SWIM plans are more of a guided framework for projects and are not a regulatory document such as a Basin Action Management Plan (BMAP) or a minimum flow and level (MFL). Mr. Randy Smith mentioned this is more of a FDEP regulatory issue. Chair Mitten mentioned this is part of the data

collection analysis portion that helps the county commissioners or the regulatory agencies to demonstrate causes or potential effects.

7. Discussion: BMAP Updates – Ken Weaver, FDEP

Mr. Ken Weaver, FDEP, provided members with a BMAP update. He mentioned as of July 1, 2023, FDEP published the 2022 Statewide Annual Report (STAR). Mr. Weaver discussed House Bill 1379 which provided positive changes to the BMAP program and added additional protection for BMAPs and the Florida springs. He mentioned FDEP has a legislative requirement to update all BMAPs by July 1, 2025, along with updating the Nitrogen Source Inventory Loading Tool (NSILT) numbers that go into the Springs BMAP and modeling information. Based on recent data and land use, FDEP will start scheduling public workshops and providing the information to the District.

Mr. Weaver said by the end of 2023, announcements will be made regarding BMAP meetings concerning updates, along with proposed language updates and stakeholder feedback. Mr. Weaver provided members with a summary of the BMAP schedule, the link to the STAR report, and the BMAP website.

8. Adjournment

Prior to adjournment, a discussion ensued regarding if the Springs Committee is permitted to write letters of recommendation for the Crystal River Restoration Program, in which the state has funded \$42 million. The program added 84 additional acres, triggering the need for a United States Army Corps of Engineers permit. These permits are not being released in a timely manner and Crystal River is in danger of losing planning time.

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

9. Next Meeting: November 8, 2023 at 2:00 pm