



SPRINGS COAST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, November 8, 2023 – 2 P.M.
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Kelly Rice, SWFWMD
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*

*Attended via Teams

Staff Members

Jennette Seachrist
Vivianna Bendixson
Jeremy McKay
Madison Trowbridge
Mandi Rice
Frank Gargano
Robin Grantham

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

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 p.m., on November 8, 2023.

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

2. Action Item: Minutes Approval from July 26, 2023

A motion was made for approval of the July 26, 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Public Input

None.

4. Presentation: FY2025 FDEP Springs Funding Application - Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, provided members with an update of the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) funding request summary by Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP). She also provided summaries on the two FY2025

applications received and the FDEP springs funding requests for the SWFWMD region. Preliminary evaluations for the applications will be given at the January 24 SCSC meeting. Dr. Trowbridge provided a detailed FY2024 timeline. Future Springs Coast Management (SCMC) and Steering committee meeting dates were also provided. She announced that the January 10 SCMC meeting will be a site visit to Three Sisters Springs. Dr. Trowbridge formally invited the SCSC members to the site visit in honor of the SCSC 10-year anniversary.

Chair Rice asked if the Technical Working Group is still in place. Dr. Trowbridge explained that it is currently adjourned.

Chair Rice asked how the committee felt about taking a greater look at the two submitted applications. Ms. Aly Brockway stated she felt it would be beneficial for Hernando County Utilities to further explain the package plant process.

Mr. Gregory Workman inquired about receiving further information regarding the site visit Three Sisters Springs. Chair Rice stated that historically the District does a fantastic job coordinating site visits and to expect additional emails with all necessary information.

5. Presentation: Quantifiable Objective Refinements Updates – Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, provided members with an update on the quantifiable objective refinements including water quality and natural systems. She discussed Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) plans being developed and adopted in accordance with the SWIM Act of 1987. The SWIM Plans identify issues and drivers, management actions and projects and initiatives for the respective system. Dr. Trowbridge provided an overview of the quantifiable objective process and the tentative timeline to complete the process.

Chair Rice asked about the magnitude of the committee's financial efforts regarding the FDEP Springs funding. Dr. Trowbridge explained that within our District there are 24 active projects and 12 of them are multiyear projects, totaling \$98.9 million. This amount does not include FY2024 projects.

Chair Rice asked if there are any positive changes in any of the springs. Ms. Jennette Seachrist responded in the affirmative, but it will take a while to measure effects due to the amount of travel time from the projects in the springshed to the spring vent. Ms. Vivianne Bendixson added that FDEP is updating their Nitrogen Source Inventory Loading Tool (NSILT), which may provide insight into these questions once finalized.

6. Presentation: Florida Water Star – Robin Grantham, SWFWMD

Ms. Robin Grantham, Lead Communications Coordinator, gave an overview of the Florida Water StarSM (FWS) program. FWS is a certification program for residential homes, commercial buildings and institutions focusing on irrigation, landscape, and indoor water use to meet certain water-efficiency measures. Currently, approximately 1,200 people are moving to the state of Florida each year. Within the springs area (Northern Planning Region and Pasco County), the draft 2025 Regional Water Supply Plan shows public supply water demand projections increasing by approximately 55 million gallons per day, or about a 35% increase, by 2045. Likewise, the draft report estimates a population increase within the same springs area of 450,000, or 36%, by 2045. The increases in demand and population growth help to justify the need for water conservation in new developments. Inside the home the program encourages WaterSense[®]-labeled fixtures such as toilets, showerheads and faucets, and ENERGY STAR[®]-rated appliances such as clothes washers and dishwashers.

In the irrigation system, the program limits high-volume irrigation to 60% of the landscape area. The remaining 40% can either have expanded plant beds or groundcover with micro-irrigation, permeable pavers for an outdoor living space, or unirrigated turfgrass. She explained that some

of the irrigation system criteria include pressure regulation to ensure that sprinkler heads meet manufacturers' specifications, check valves to keep spray heads from leaking and micro-irrigation on plant beds.

The program also has landscape criteria such as non-invasive exotic plant species, plant selection based on site conditions and plant placement according to irrigation hydrozones.

Studies conducted by University of Florida and water use analysis by Bay Laurel Utilities found that FWS-certified homes constructed at On Top of the World in Marion County and within the Toho Water Authority found that FWS-certified homes use about 48,000 gallons less water per year compared to traditionally designed homes. The Tampa Bay Water Wise Rebate program offers \$1,000 per FWS-certified home in Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties and the cities of St. Pete, Clearwater, and Tampa. To date there are 11,650 rebates available through Tampa Bay Water totaling \$11,941,250.

Mr. Gregory Workman asked what FWS rebates are being offered to home builders. Ms. Grantham explained the rebates in Polk County have been distributed and are no longer available; however, there are rebates of \$1,000 per FWS-certified home being offered in the Tampa Bay area through a partnership with Tampa Bay Water. To date, none of the rebates have been distributed.

Ms. Brockway asked if builders are constructing FWS-certified homes because they choose to do or if it's because they are mandated. Ms. Grantham explained that builders are predominantly building in Polk County because of mandates. However, DR Horton recently expressed interest in building FWS-certified homes in the Tampa Bay area to participate in the rebates.

Chair Rice asked if existing homeowners are offered rebates for being stewards of water. Ms. Grantham explained that homeowners can participate in rebates outside the FWS program through the District's Cooperative Funding Initiative if available through their utility. Residential homeowners can retrofit homes to meet FWS Bronze certification, but this is rare due to costs associated with retrofitting to meet all criteria.

Chair Rice asked if the ordinances are the biggest driver for builder program participation. Ms. Grantham confirmed that the mandates are what is compelling builders to construct FWS-certified homes.

Chair Rice expressed interest in a FWS presentation being given at a future Governing Board meeting.

7. Adjournment

Prior to adjournment, Ms. Mandi Rice announced to committee members that Mr. Frank Gargano accepted the District's Ombudsman position.

The meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

8. Next Meeting: January 10, 2024 1:30 p.m.

Members from the Springs Coast Steering and Springs Coast Management Committees are invited to join District staff on a site visit to Three Sisters Springs. The site visit will be conducted during the Springs Coast Management Committee's January 10, 2024, meeting from 1:30 – 4:00 PM, weather permitting. The site visit will begin at the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex headquarters (1502 SE Kings Bay Dr, Crystal River, FL, 34429) to learn more about the wildlife refuge complex and visit the center's exhibits. At approximately 2 PM, members will travel in their personal vehicles to the Three Sisters Property (601 Three Sisters Springs Trail, Crystal River, FL 34429) for a walking tour.

