



SPRINGS COAST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026 – 2:00 P.M.

VIA TEAMS

2379 BROAD STREET

BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Kelly Rice, SWFWMD, Chair
Robert Holmes, City of Crystal River
Seth Weightman, Pasco County
Moiria Homann, FDEP
Gregory Workman, FFWCC
West Gregory, FDACS

Presenters

Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD
Casie Cutman, SWFWMD
Kate Spratt, FDEP

Staff Members

Jennette Seachrist
Mandi Rice
Randy Smith
Vivianna Bendixson
Madison Trowbridge
Carrieann Adkins
Devon Villareal
Anna Brulte
Virginia Singer
Robin Speidel
Erin Walters

Technical and Administrative Support

Jeremy McKay
Lori Othouse

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., March 4, 2026.

Committee Chair Rice called the meeting to order. Roll was called and a quorum was confirmed.

2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda

There were no additions or deletions.

3. Action Item: Minutes Approval from July 23, 2025

A motion was made for approval of the July 23, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. **Public Input**

None

5. **Action Item: Approve Meeting Dates – Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD**

Due to a scheduling conflict, staff proposed changing the July Springs Coast Steering Committee meeting date from July 22nd to July 29th. District Staff reached out to the SCSC members to coordinate and ensure quorum. Seven of the nine committee members confirmed availability to meet July 29th. No changes were recommended for the Springs Coast Management Committee.

The next approved 2026 Springs Coast Management Committee meeting date is July 8.

The next proposed 2026 Springs Coast Steering Committee meeting date is July 29.

A motion was made to approve staff recommendation. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6. **Presentation: Quantifiable Objective Updates: Rainbow River – Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD**

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, began the presentation by reviewing the purpose and history of the Surface Water Improvement & Management (SWIM) Act. Under this act, the District currently manages 12 priority water bodies, including three estuaries, four lake systems, and five first-magnitude springs systems. Each springs system has its own unique SWIM plan, which is not a regulatory document, rather, it assists in the planning and use of resources using an adaptive management approach. The Quantifiable Objectives and Indicators were reviewed, which includes Water Quality, Water Quantity and Natural Systems focus areas. Each system has its own targets and thresholds.

The Rainbow River's Indicators and Quantifiable Objectives were presented, showing that objectives were being met for Water Quantity, but were not being met for Water Quality or Natural Systems. Water Clarity Indicators are also being met and appear to be stable. Flows, overall, have decreased due to a drier 2025 but are expected to increase. Desirable Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) is being met in the upper river, but not in the lower river. Likewise, the target for Invasive SAV is being met in the upper river, but not in the lower river.

7. **Presentation: Hydrologic Conditions – Casie Cutman, SWFWMD**

Casie Cutman, Data Analyst with the Hydrologic Data Section, presented information on current rainfall distribution as well as distribution over the last 12 months. Hydrologic conditions remain mostly below average, and it is forecasted that dry conditions are predicted to continue over the next few months.

Ms. Cutman presented graphs showing groundwater levels in the Northern, Central and Southern counties, with the Northern and Southern counties showing below normal levels and the Central counties recently reaching normal levels.

Surface water levels in the Northern Lakes, Tampa Bay Lakes and Lake Wales Ridge Lakes are all at or below normal levels; only the Polk Upland Lakes have remained at normal levels. All lakes are continuing to show a downward trend as well.

Surface water discharges are below normal levels for the Withlacoochee River, Alafia River, and the Peace River. The Hillsborough River has reached normal levels due to recent rainfall in February.

Climate forecasts predict a 40% - 50% chance of above normal temperatures and equal chances of above or below normal rainfall over the next three months. Forecasts also indicate below normal precipitation in the near-term with normal to possibly above normal precipitation during the summer months, then decreasing to possible below normal toward the end of summer and into fall.

8. Presentation: Manatees, Rescues and Rehabilitation – Kate Spratt, FDEP

Kate Spratt, FDEP and Park Services Specialist at Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, helps provide wildlife education through her online broadcast, “Manatee Monday” as well as to as many as 300,000 visitors to the park each year. Ms. Spratt began her presentation explaining the park’s history and purpose in the community, dating back to the 1960s, which includes not only educating the public but also resource management, ecological restoration, water monitoring and research opportunities.

The park’s role with the manatees includes education, conservation and rehabilitation. Education is provided in the park through staff and volunteers as well as outreach and virtual programs. There are various ongoing conservation efforts in the park, including water quality and monitoring, the Manatee Watch program, and seasonal and year-round sanctuaries for the manatees. The park is a part of the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership and provides care and rehabilitation for non-critical residents. There are two non-releasable manatees, Ariel and Betsy, who are under full-time care at the park and are unable to live in the wild.

Ms. Spratt shared several current events at the park and renovations to a new interactive visitor’s center, as well as repairs being made from past hurricane damage. She concluded by giving several resources for further information on the park.

9. Announcements and Other Business

Mr. Robert Holmes requested information regarding a proposed asphalt plant on County Road 495 in Citrus County. Mr. Rice replied that we would keep him apprised of any information we receive, and Ms. Seachrist let him know that we will follow up with him and have the appropriate staff answer his questions. Mr. Holmes was in agreement with this.

10. Next Meeting: July 29, 2026 at 2 pm

The next meeting is scheduled for July 29, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. via Teams.

11. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.