



SPRINGS COAST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, July 23, 2025 – 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
Ryan Amsler, Hernando County
Gerrit Van Lent, Pasco County*
Ken Weaver, FDEP*
Gregory Workman, FWC*
West Gregory, FDACS *

Staff Members

Jennette Seachrist
Mandi Rice
Randy Smith
Vivianna Bendixson
Madison Trowbridge
Carrieann Adkins
Devon Villareal
Taylor Grennan

Presenters

Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD
Chris Anastasiou, SWFWMD
Maira Homann, FDEP*

Technical and Administrative Support

Jeremy McKay
Barbara Matrone

*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., July 22, 2025.

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 March 5, 2025

A motion was made for approval of the March 5, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. Public Input

Joel Greifzu expressed concerns with the committee on the degradation of the Weeki Wachee Springs and the increase in the Water Use Permits for the area.

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

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, reviewed the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act of 1987. The SWIM Act directs the water management districts to design and implement plans and programs to improve and manage Districts SWIM priority water bodies. The District maintains a list of priority surface waters and develops plans to protect and restore them. In 2014, the Springs Coast Steering, Springs Coast Management and Technical Advisory committees were formed to assist in developing the plans for the five first-magnitude spring systems. Dr. Trowbridge advised that once these plans were established, the intent of the committee was to review the quantifiable objectives to determine the health of the systems and to make recommendations related to the District's statutory responsibilities. Also in 2014, FDEP requested the water management districts solicit and evaluate the FDEP Springs Funding Applications. The Springs Coast Committees have been utilized for this effort. Recently, FDEP has requested that funding applications are submitted directly to FDEP through the Protecting Florida Together portal. An email from FDEP has been provided to the SCSC to this portal. The Springs Coast committees will no longer be required to solicit and evaluate FDEP Springs Funding applications.

Dr. Trowbridge reviewed the upcoming FY2026 meeting dates advising that the quantifiable objective updates will be reviewed in detail over the upcoming fiscal year. In 2027, staff plan to request approval to reconvene the Technical Working Group and begin updating the SWIM plans in 2028.

Staff recommended the committee approve the 2026 SCSC meeting dates.

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

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

Dr. Trowbridge presented the quantifiable objective updates which included an overview of the status of each system, focusing on the targets that are not currently being met. A review of the quantifiable objectives and indicators was provided for Rainbow River, Weeki Wachee River, Crystal River/Kings Bay, Homosassa River, and Chassahowitzka River.

Mr. Robert Holmes asked where the salinity is captured and tracked within the reports. Dr. Trowbridge advised that information is not included in the quantifiable objectives; however, there are water quality gages included in various areas and surface sites have quarterly measurements taken. More information about salinity is included on the Springs website.

7. Presentation: 2024 STAR Reports Updates – Moira Homann, FDEP

Moira Homann, FDEP, provided an overview of the Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP) and the next steps for the BMAP updates. She outlined the key components and provided a historical timeline related to BMAPs. She summarized information regarding the BMAPs for the four basins within the district. These include Crystal River/Kings Bay, Homosassa/Chassahowitzka Springs, Weeki Wachee and Rainbow Springs/River, Silver Springs/Upper Silver River.

Ms. Homann provided an update regarding key BMAP components and project/management strategies. She also provided information on project reporting that is included in the State-wide Annual Report (STAR). Ms. Homann highlighted specific projects and provided the following STAR link - [STAR 2024 Intro](#).

8. Presentation: Springs Coast Seagrass Mapping – Dr. Chris Anastasiou, SWFWMD

Dr. Chris Anastasiou, Ph.D., Chief Water Quality Scientist, provided an update of the 2024 Springs Coast seagrass mapping results. Dr. Anastasiou spoke of the many benefits of healthy seagrass including stabilizing sediment and reducing turbidity in the water. Seagrass also helps remove excess nutrients from the water, sequesters and stores carbon, provides habitat for fish and shellfish, and is an important food source for manatees and sea turtles. Seagrasses are also sensitive to water quality degradation and are a primary indicator of overall estuarine health.

The seagrass mapping program began in 1988 and has been noted as one of the longest-running and most comprehensive aerial seagrass mapping programs in the world. There are two regions: the Suncoast and the Springs Coast. The Suncoast ranges from Clearwater Harbor south to Charlotte Harbor and covers about 1,263 square miles and is mapped on a two-year cycle.

Dr. Anastasiou provided an overview of the mapping process, discussing three elements: aerial image acquisition, photointerpretation and field verification. Results are based on aerial photography using fixed-wing manned aircraft designed for collecting digital imagery. The digital images are processed and signed off by the District's survey supervisor and are given to photo interpreters, who then create the maps.

Dr. Anastasiou discussed the different seagrass mapping conventions which are continuous, patchy and attached algae. He then presented the 2024 results as compared to the previous 2022 results. Dr. Anastasiou gave a quick recap of the Suncoast results which include St. Joseph Sound/Clearwater Harbor, Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, Lemon Bay and Charlotte Harbor. The results were mostly positive with either no change or modest gains in all the Suncoast estuaries, except Charlotte Harbor, which saw a 6% loss in seagrass.

Dr. Anastasiou then discussed the results of the Springs Coast which include the Waccasassa Bay, Withlacoochee, Crystal Bay, Homosassa, Chassahowitzka, Weeki Wachee, Aripeka, Pithlachascotee and Anclote. He presented tables showing the percentage change from 2020 to 2024 for both inshore and offshore segments. In 2024, the map showed 581,000 acres of seagrass, which is the largest in the state of Florida and one of the largest in the country. When comparing the 2024 results with 2020 there was a very slight reduction of 5,654 acres which is a 1% change.

Dr. Anastasiou concluded by showing maps from 2007 to 2024 and discussed the time series and how they extended the maps and expanded over five time periods. The number of Springs Coast seagrasses are consistent from 2016 to 2024 and there are no major changes across the region. Overall, the dominant signature remains seagrass. The habitat mosaics of sponges, corals, attached algae and hard bottom habitat are all very common in the offshore regions. The region has continued to be a relatively stable and resilient seagrass ecosystem over time.

9. Announcements and Other Business

Mr. Holmes asked how studies and programs are coordinated between St. Johns Water Management District and SWFWMD. Ms. Jennette Seachrist advised it is very similar as St. Johns has a MFL program and their own springs system. Coordination is made between the two entities, and they have the same reporting requirements.

10. Next Meeting: March 4, 2026 at 2 pm

The next meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. This hybrid meeting will be both in person and via Teams.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 p.m.