

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**Springs Coast Steering Committee**  
Brooksville, Florida      August 28, 2019

The Springs Coast Steering Committee convened at 2:00 p.m., August 28, 2019 at the Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board Room, 2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida.

**Members Present**

Robert Holmes, City of Crystal River  
Kelly Rice, SWFWMD, Chair  
Tracy Straub, Marion County (alternate) (via phone)  
Ron Oakley, Pasco County  
Wayne Dukes, Hernando County  
Greg DeAngelo, FDEP (alternate) (via phone)  
Scott Carnahan, Citrus County  
Shannon Wright, FFWCC  
Jessica Stempien, FDACS (alternate)

**Members Absent**

**SWFWMD Staff**

Jennette Seachrist  
Danielle Rogers  
Frank Gargano  
Claire Stapley  
Meagan Finneran  
John Campbell  
Matt Vinzant  
Randy Smith

**Recording Secretary**

Lauren Vossler

**Others Present**

Ken Frink, City of Crystal River  
Alys Brockway, Hernando County  
Will Fontaine, FGUA

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SWFWMD – Southwest Florida Water Management District  
FDACS – Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
FWC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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A list of others present who signed the attendance sheet is filed in the permanent files of the Springs Coast Steering Committee.

**1. Call to Order and Roll**

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

**2. Action Item: Minutes Approval from 4/08/2019**

*The committee unanimously approved the April 8, 2019 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

**3. Public Input**

*There were no public comments presented.*

**4. Action Item: FY2021 Springs Funding Final Evaluations and Prioritization Process – Danielle Rogers**

Ms. Danielle Rogers, environmental project manager, provided the members with the proposed process for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) springs funding application and evaluation process. Ms. Rogers informed committee members they should have received a list of the tentatively selected projects from FDEP and she will continue to keep members informed as she receives updates from FDEP. Ms. Rogers informed committee members that the application is similar to last year's, however, forms were added to prompt applicants to fill out further documentation.

- a. **Project Evaluation Ranking**
- b. **Rankin Matrix and Criteria**

*Please note a and b are discussed together in the following paragraphs.*

Ms. Rogers explained the ranking matrix in FY2020 will automatically calculate the ranking of each project. They are also requesting the application will contain an overall recommendation based on the matrix criteria the committee is set to approve. This year's proposal is to put the calculations on the preliminary evaluations based on translating the application and standardizing it. Ms. Rogers explained all projects that are recommended for funding consideration will be populated on the FDEP spreadsheet and those are the only applications being forwarded to FDEP to review for consideration.

Ms. Rogers also provided a summary of the approved water quality criteria from the previous fiscal year. She informed members of the criteria that was chosen for the applications and how they receive a high, medium or low ranking.

Ms. Rogers informed committee members that the management committee brought forth a recommendation for modification on the local match category. Last year's local match criteria were defined by a local match being present or not, and if the applicant was paying for the connection cost. This year the management committee is recommending that definition be changed and instead reflect the dollar amount of the match.

Ms. Rogers provided an overview of the water quantity criteria. She explained that they would like to define the criteria upfront rather than getting the applications and then trying to come up with the criteria.

Ms. Shannon Wright thanked staff for the effort that was put into the formula and ranking. She also inquired whether the qualifiers are being made available to the applicants, so they know what is being evaluated. Ms. Rogers clarified that they are posted on the website, however, they can be provided to the applicants.

Mr. Kelly Rice asked if items could be shared that would not be eligible for cooperative funding but would be considered for springs funding. Ms. Jennette Seachrist responded, by identifying some items that would be eligible for FDEP springs funding but are not prioritized by the District Governing Board, such as the wastewater treatment upgrades and expansions. However, the Governing board has prioritized funding for septic conversion projects in the priority focus areas.

Ms. Tracy Straub inquired about the comment made regarding cooperative funding being available for septic projects, and if the applicants for those types of projects apply for both springs funding and cooperative funding. Mr. Rogers stated yes, one would apply for both types of funding.

Ms. Rogers informed members the District will be reaching out to stakeholders to see if they would like to set up pre-application meetings for the springs funding applications, that way the applicants can be walked through the calculations, matrix, and how the scores are generated.

***A motion was made to approve the FY2021 springs funding application and evaluation process. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.***

**5. Action Item: Approve Future SCSC Meeting Dates – Danielle Rogers, SWFWMD**

Ms. Rogers provided committee members with the proposed FY2021 timeline. She also discussed the anticipated Management Committee and Steering Committee meeting dates.

*A motion was made to approve the future Springs Coast Steering Committee meeting dates. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.*

**6. Action Item: Approve Springs Coast Management Committee recommendation to add FGUA to the Management Committee – Randy Smith, SWFWMD:**

Mr. Randy Smith, Natural Systems and Restoration bureau chief, informed committee members the FGUA was formed in 1999. It operates 80 systems over 13 counties and serves over 100,000 customers. FGUA purchased the City of Dunnellon's water and sewer utility in October 2018, which is in one of the priority focus areas. Mr. Smith also informed committee members that FGUA submitted three FY2020 septic to sewer projects and they have actively attended every Springs Coast Management Committee meeting.

*A motion was made to approve Springs Coast Management Committee recommendation to add FGUA to the management committee. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.*

**7. Presentation: Weeki Wachee Springs, Summary of Cave Exploration: Matt Vinzant, SWFWMD**

Mr. Matt Vinzant, project manager, discussed his role as the director with Karst Underwater Research. Karst is a not-for-profit organization committed to the exploration, education, and preservation that specializes in challenging dives. Mr. Vinzant explained that Karst topography is a landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks such as limestone. Acidic water begins to break down the surface of bedrock in joints, forming larger cavities and drainage systems. Mr. Vinzant provided a timeline of the exploration of the Weeki Wachee/Twin Dees cave (divers are only able to enter the cave during times of extreme drought). The last time Karst was able to enter was in 2012. The Weeki Wachee cave is 407 feet deep, currently making it the deepest cave in Florida. Mr. Vinzant expressed that the dives are about 12 to 16 hours long and divers spend around four hours in the decompression chambers.

Mr. Robert Holmes inquired about the average temperature in the Weeki Wachee underwater caves. Mr. Vinzant replied on average the temperature is 73 degrees and in the northern areas of the state the water can get to about 71 degrees.

Ms. Shannon Wright asked if Mr. Vinzant stops and rests during these dives. Mr. Vinzant replied yes, for every 15 minutes they are down in a cave they are required to decompress for two hours.

Mr. Ron Oakley asked if the guidelines are anchored down in the caves somehow. Mr. Vinzant explained that they tie them to rock out cropping's, if he is in a passage with smooth wall, sometimes he will use a PVC tubing and stake it into the wall or in the middle of the path.

**8. Members Comments**

Mr. Robert Holmes presented a letter on behalf of Crystal River to the Steering Committee regarding proposed modifications to Florida Statutes relating to water use permits for bottled water. Mr. Holmes discussed the threat of the natural spring water being mechanically removed from the springs and sold by water bottlers.

Mr. Ron Oakley asked if a bottling company is reaching out to get a permit. Mr. Holmes explained it is not a bottling company but a person, asking to go from 75,000 gallons a day to 200,000 gallons a day. As of now this person is still in the process of applying for the permit.

Mr. Oakley asked if this permit is being done through SWFWMD and FDEP and if there are rules in place showing there is reason for requiring this water. Mr. Brian Armstrong replied that the District is currently reviewing the permit application and that every permit is evaluated based on current statutes.

Ms. Straub asked whether the term "coastal river" is defined in the statute. Mr. Ken Frink responded he does not believe that is defined in the statute.

**9. Adjournment**

Committee Chair Rice adjourned the meeting at 3:06 p.m.