



**SPRINGS COAST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026 – 1:30 PM
VIA TEAMS**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Jennette Seachrist, SWFWMD
Audra Curts, City of Crystal River
Ken Cheek, Citrus County
Alys Brockway, Hernando County
Gerrit Van Lent, Pasco County
Moirá Homann, FDEP
Michelle Sempstrott, FWC
Vanessa Bauzo, FDACS
Curt Williams, Agriculture
Suzannah Folsom, Public Supply
Charles Lee, Environmental
Ilia Balcom, Industry
Rick Owen, State Parks
Will Fontaine, FGUA

Staff Members

Jennette Seachrist
Vivianna Bendixson
Virginia Singer
Casie Cutman
Carrieann Adkins

Technical and Administrative Support

Jeremy McKay
Lori Othouse

Presenters

Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD
Casie Cutman, SWFWMD
Kate Spratt, FDEP

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 Management Committee (SCMC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting at 1:30 p.m., on February 18, 2026, via Microsoft Teams.

Ms. Jennette Seachrist, Resource Management Director, called the meeting to order. Roll was called and a quorum was noted.

2. Additions or deletions to the agenda

There were no additions or deletions.

3. **Action Item: Minutes Approval from July 9, 2025**

A motion was made by Mr. Gerrit Van Lent for approval of the July 9, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charles Lee and passed unanimously.

4. **Public Input**

None

5. **Presentation: Quantifiable Objective Updates: Rainbow – Vivianna Bendixson, SWFWMD**

Vivianna Bendixson, Surface Water Improvement and Management Program Manager, presented for Dr. Madison Trowbridge and reviewed the history and purpose of the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act. Our District currently has twelve priority water bodies, which were shown on a map, including all five of our first-magnitude springs. She explained that each spring has its own SWIM Plan with the Quantifiable Objectives and Indicators of Water Quality, Water Quantity, and Natural Systems. An overview of the Rainbow River's specific Indicators and Quantifiable Objectives was presented, showing areas where the river is meeting the thresholds and where it is not. She explained each of the indicators and objectives in detail with supporting numbers/graphs. Currently, the Rainbow River is meeting the threshold for all three water clarity indicators. For Quantifiable Objectives, Rainbow River is meeting Water Quantity targets and Natural Systems targets in the upper portions of the river but is not meeting the targets for Water Quality and the targets for Natural Systems in the lower portions of the river.

Mr. Charles Lee commented that, according to the information given for Water Quality, the nitrate levels exceeded the goal by 800%, which is a large departure from the desired levels. Ms. Bendixson recognized this exceedance and confirmed the importance of nutrient reduction projects in the spring shed.

6. **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 below average, and it is forecasted that dry conditions are predicted to continue over the next few months. She presented graphs showing groundwater levels in the Northern, Central and Southern counties, all indicating below 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. Surface water discharges are below normal levels for the Withlacoochee River, Hillsborough River, Alafia River, and the Peace River. Climate forecasts indicate below normal precipitation in the near-term with normal to possibly above normal precipitation during the summer months.

7. **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. The park's role with the manatees includes education, conservation, and rehabilitation. 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 center, as well as resources for information on the park.

Ms. Alys Brockway commented that it was an excellent presentation and that education can also be entertaining.

Mr. Gerrit Van Lent inquired as to how much Betsy weighs, as the largest manatee at the park. Ms. Spratt responded that Betsy weighs around 2100 pounds. Mr. Van Lent asked if Betsy is still growing, to which Ms. Spratt responded that she is no longer growing in length, but possibly in girth.

8. **Open Discussion**

None.

9. **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is scheduled for July 8, 2026 via Teams.

10. **Adjournment**

Mr. Gerrit Van Lent made a motion to adjourn and the meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.