



SPRINGS COAST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, July 9, 2025 – 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
Maira Homann, FDEP
Michelle Sempstrott, FWC
Vanessa Bauzo, FDACS
Suzy Folsom, Public Supply
Alana Todd, Regional Planning Council
Dr. Patricia Spellman, Academia
Rick Owen, State Parks

Staff Members

Vivianna Bendixson
Madison Trowbridge
Randy Smith
Carriann Adkins
Frank Gargano
Erin Walters

Technical and Administrative Support

Jeremy McKay
Candice Harris

Presenters

Maira Homann, FDEP
Dr. Madison Trobridge, SWFWMD
Dr. Chris Anastasiou, SWFWMD

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 July 9, 2025, 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 February 25, 2025

A motion was made for approval of the February 25, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

4. **Public Input**
None

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

Dr. Madison Trowbridge reviewed the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act. The SWIM Act directs the water management districts to design and implement plans and programs to improve and manage 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 committees was to review the quantifiable objectives to determine the health of the systems and to make recommendations related to the District's statutory responsibilities. FDEP originally requested that the water management districts review the Springs Funding applications then route them through the Springs Coast committees; however, FDEP recently requested that submittals be completed through the FDEP Springs Funding portal. An email from FDEP has been provided to the SCMC to this portal.

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 beginning in 2028.

Staff recommended the committee approve the 2026 SCMC 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.

Ms. Audra Curts inquired about the methodology regarding the net shoreline loss for Kings Bay. Dr. Trowbridge stated there was originally a study that took the various segments, at specified lengths, to determine if it was a natural shoreline and the type of species present. Approximately ten years later, a comparative analysis was completed, and it was determined there was an increase in the hardened shorelines. Dr. Trowbridge stated she would provide the studies and methodology to Ms. Curts via email.

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 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](#).

Ms. Curts inquired how the STAR report overlaps with the WRWSA/Silver River BMAP for water

use. Ms. Homann advised that the BMAPs only track projects for nitrogen reductions. Water use projects would be found in the Minimum Flows and Water Levels or the Recovery and Prevention Strategies sections within the STAR link previously provided.

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 explaining that it is a natural barrier against erosion, 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. The Charlotte Harbor Estuary is at record low seagrass coverage following back-to-back losses beginning in 2018. Old Tampa Bay reported an 8% loss over the 2022-2024 period and was the only segment in Tampa Bay to report a negative change. In 2024, about 78,000 acres of grass were mapped across the entire Suncoast region.

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.

Mr. Ken Cheek asked if there is any indication that it would cause the seagrass to transition to more of the algae-related bottom. Dr. Anastasiou said there are explanatory reasons as to why there is a shift and provided an overview.

9. **Open Discussion**

None.

10. **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2026 via Teams.

11. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.