



SPRINGS COAST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 – 2:00 P.M.
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Kelly Rice, SWFWMD
Robert Holmes, City of Crystal River
Rebecca Bays, Citrus County*
Seth Weightman, Pasco County
Alys Brockway, Hernando County (Alternate)
Kathy Bryant, Marion County*
Ken Weaver, FDEP* (Alternate)
Gregory Workman, FWC*
Yesenia Escribano, FDACS*

Staff Members

Jennette Seachrist
Vivianna Bendixson
Jeremy McKay
Madison Trowbridge
Mandi Rice
Randy Smith
Frank Gargano
Carrieann Adkins

*Attended via Teams

Committee Administrative Support

Lauren Vossler

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., on March 6, 2024.

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

2. Action Item: Minutes Approval from January 10, 2024 & January 24, 2024

A motion was made for approval of the January 10, 2024 & January 24, 2024 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Public Input

None.

4. Presentation: FY2025 FDEP Springs Funding Final Evaluations - Dr. Madison Trowbridge, SWFWMD

Dr. Madison Trowbridge, Springs Scientist, provided members with details for the FY2025 application process and the FY2024 Springs Coast Management and Steering Committee timeline. She provided the FY2025 FDEP request and funding summary for the SWFWMD

region. Dr. Trowbridge discussed the two FY2025 applications received, funding criteria, the prioritization matrix and the FDEP Springs Funding final evaluation spreadsheet. Dr. Trowbridge explained that in the fall the District will hear FDEP's project selection, and she also mentioned there were no changes to the final evaluations since the preliminary evaluation.

Mr. Seth Weightman asked how many units would be serviced within the Septic to Sewer District A Phase 2 project. Dr. Trowbridge explained FDEP evaluated this project based on how many lots are present and have septic tanks. Currently, there are 316 units and 44 additional lots.

Mr. Weightman inquired about how many homes are serviced by the Hernando County private package plant. Ms. Vivianna Bendixson explained the FDEP provides guidance on evaluation criteria for package plant decommissioning. The FDEP evaluates these projects based on flow.

A motion was made to approve and forward the final project evaluation and FDEP spreadsheet to the District's Governing Board for approval. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5. Presentation: Springs Protection Zones – Captain Matthew Dellarosa, FWC

Captain Dellarosa, FWC, provided members with an overview of the Spring Protection Zones. Florida Statute 327.45 established the purpose of protecting and preventing harm to the springs, including speed and operation restrictions for vessels, and the possibility of prohibiting anchoring, mooring, beaching, or grounding.

He explained that when developing a protection zone the Commission will consult and coordinate with the water management district, FDEP, and governing bodies for the county in which the zone is located. If the zone includes navigable water of the United States (U.S.), the commission will additionally coordinate with the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Captain Dellarosa provided a summary on the administrative code 68D-24.0035, along with the status of the Weeki Wachee Springs Protection Zone.

6. Presentation: Kings Bay Bull Shark Survey – Dr. Alyssa Andres, Florida State University

Dr. Alyssa Andres, FSU, provided members with an overview of the new Crystal River/Kings Bay (CR/KB) Bull Shark project that launched in 2023. She explained bull sharks help maintain the balance of marine life and a healthy habitat. Bull sharks are a coastal species that can thrive in both saltwater and freshwater.

Dr. Andres explained that the low salinity and relatively stable annual temperature in Kings Bay provides thermal refuge, longer residency, and a greater chance of survival for the bull shark. She mentioned there are no studies of springs used by marine sharks or other such top predators. Residents have witnessed an increase in the presence of baby bull sharks.

Dr. Andres explained the project goals are to:

- Identify shark use of CR/KB and determine if it's a nursery
- Identify shark relationship to springs and potential thermal refuge
- Identify environmental tolerances, where sharks are coming from and contributors to the population
- Engage community, stakeholders and the next generation of scientists in ecological research shark and springs conservation

Dr. Trowbridge asked if a seasonal component was noticed in the reproductive cycles and if that might explain this type of occurrence. Dr. Andres replied in the affirmative. She explained the pupping season typically takes place May through October, which are the warmer seasons that provide thermal refuge.

Mr. Robert Holmes expressed interest in receiving the presentation information and having the bull shark survey presentation given at the next council meeting.

7. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

8. **Next Meeting: July 24, 2024 2:00 p.m.**