

Environmental Science Forum (ESF)  
Weedon Island Preserve Cultural & Natural History Center  
St. Petersburg, FL  
Thursday, 4 December 2008  
4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES  
Approved by Forum at March 5, 2009 Meeting

Attendees:

- |     |                     |  |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 1.  | Bruce Hasbrouck     | Forum Member, Co-Chair                       |
| 2.  | Cathy Harrelson     | Forum Member, Co-Chair                       |
| 3.  | Tom Muntz           | Forum Member                                 |
| 4.  | Mark Mueller        | Forum Member                                 |
| 5.  | Lindsay Cross       | Forum Member                                 |
| 6.  | Joseph Maier        | Forum Member                                 |
| 7.  | Dr. Randy Runnels   | Forum Member                                 |
| 8.  | Barbara Hoffman     | Forum Member                                 |
| 9.  | Robert McConnell    | Forum Member                                 |
| 10. | William Davis       | Pinellas County Environmental Management     |
| 11. | Andy Squires        | Pinellas County Environmental Management     |
| 12. | Dr. H. Bruce Rinker | Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division |
| 13. | Lynn Smith          | Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division |
| 14. | Jeanne Murphy       | Citizen                                      |

**Handouts:** Pinellas County Environmental Science Forum Agenda; ESF Meeting Minutes from September 4, 2008; Professional Profiles for New ESF Members and Alternates; Conservation Stewards of Wild Florida; Multiple Pinellas County News Releases regarding ELD Achievements’.

**I. Welcome and Introduction:**

- Co-Chair Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. with a general welcome.

**II. Additional Agenda Items:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson discussed the future of ESF including the frequency of meetings. Ms. Harrelson opened the discussion talking about the low attendance of members to the ESF meetings. Questions were asked whether ESF should disband altogether, meet quarterly, maintain status quo, meet as an ad hoc group, bring issues to the County Administrator as needed, and act as stakeholders? Further, how will Florida’s Sunshine Law fit into any new plans? What changes need to be made in the ESF bylaws? A lengthy group discussion followed with a decision to defer the topic until later.

**III. Wall Springs-McMullen Tract Project (Paul Cozzie, Director CEL)  
Informational:**

- Culture, Education and Leisure Department Director Mr. Paul Cozzie gave a presentation on the history and future plans for Wall Springs County Park. The presentation, for informational purposes only, discussed the various phases of parcel acquisitions and funding that have occurred in the past, as well as those currently taking place. Mr. Cozzie also presented a site plan for development of the McMullen portion of the property and the proposed timeline for developing this future phase. It was noted that the extent of development in future phases has been significantly reduced due to budgetary constraints, as well as concern for the environmental sensitivity associated with certain areas of the park. Upon conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Cozzie took questions from ESF members.
- During ESF discussion of Wall Springs Park, “bat housing” was brought up by Ms. Barbara Hoffman. Bats were recently removed and excluded from the nearby Pinellas Trail bridge owned by the Florida Department of Transportation. The Forum suggested the County consider developing a policy to handle bat colonies on county or public properties. Mr. Cozzie was amenable to the suggestion. After further discussion, Mr. Mark Mueller made a motion to recommend that the county erect a bat colony house at Wall Springs accompanied with education about bats. Motion was seconded by Ms. Lindsay Cross. The vote carried unanimously.

**IV. Environmental Lands Division Updated – Awards, Wilde Tract  
Purchase:**

- Dr. Bruce Rinker, Director of the County’s Environmental Lands Division presented the following as an update for the ESF on the status of and recent recognitions for the Division. During the past two years, the Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division (ELD) lost 30% of its staff positions and nearly 25% of its total budget. These fiscal changes resulted in a reorganized ELD into three service areas: Ecological Services, Education Services, and Support Services. Another consequence was a comprehensive 5-year Strategic Plan with prioritized strategies and objectives. Such changes in staff and budget have forced the ELD to rely heavily on its professional partners and volunteer corps to help fulfill its mission. Despite the severe budget climate; however, the ELD – along with its partners – made significant achievements over the past year, some involving the ESF membership:
  - Preserve Ordinance 08-29 Amendment
  - Charter Amendment

- ELD Strategic Plan
- BOCC-approved Management Plans for Brooker Creek Preserve and Shell Key Preserve
- Land Use/Zoning Changes of ELD properties
- Restoration Projects, Fencing, Prescribed Fires, Programs and Events, Facility Rentals, Outreach, Partnerships
- Interpretive Signage and Exhibits at the ELD Education Centers
- ELD Volunteer Program as the Fastest-Growing Corps of Volunteerism in Pinellas County Government
- Websites for the ELD Education Centers (e.g., see [www.weedonislandpreserve.org](http://www.weedonislandpreserve.org))
- Property Acquisition (778 acres of the Wilde Trust Tract at Brooker Creek Preserve)
- AWIARE or “Alliance for Weedon Island Archaeological Research and Education,” a new nonprofit organization based at Weedon Island Preserve
- Cross-training and Building on Efficiencies throughout the ELD
- Numerous National and Regional Awards and Recognitions (see handout of list with a sampler of press releases)

The ELD now consists of a staff of 32, nearly 600 volunteers, five LIMA officers, and three nonprofit organizations to manage over 15,000 acres of wild lands and waterways in Pinellas County (or 8% of the county’s total area). The impressive list of awards and recognitions represent acknowledgement of effective and long-standing partnerships to achieve its conservation mission.

**V. Approval of September 4, 2008 Meeting Minutes:**

- Ms. Lindsay Cross made a motion to approve the September 4, 2008 meeting minutes. Mr. Tom Muntz seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**VI. Future of ESF:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson suggested Forum members evaluate the existing structure of the ESF. She opened up discussion by mentioning possible alternative structures. For example, dissolving the Forum and instead allow the county to hold less frequent (ad hoc) stakeholder meetings as issues arise; in this case the Sunshine provisions would not apply. The County Administrator could reform the Forum for major issues when strong Forum recommendations to the county are needed. Another alternative is to keep the current Forum structure, but decrease the required meeting frequency by revising the bylaws. Discussion followed with the member consensus settling on maintaining the existing structure but revising the bylaws to require a minimum of four

meetings per year instead of the existing provision for at least six meetings per year. The Forum also discussed the problem of member attendance. It was suggested that if a member or their designated Alternate misses two consecutive meetings, the member could be subject to a recommendation to the County Administrator for dismissal from the Forum. Mr. Andy Squires agreed to bring written bylaw revisions that address the frequency of meetings and member attendance to the next meeting for review, discussion, and possible approval by the Forum.

## **VII. New ESF Members and Alternates:**

- Ms. Jeanne Murphy was introduced as potentially being Mr. Mark Mueller's Alternate. Ms. Murphy handed out a short résumé and spoke with Forum Members.
- Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck made a motion that Ms. Jeanne Murphy be considered by the County Administrator as a full Forum Member. Motion was seconded by Mr. Tom Muntz. Vote carried unanimously.
- Mr. Robert McConnell provided a résumé for Mr. R. Warren Hogg to be his Forum Alternate.
- Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck made a motion to accept Mr. R. Warren Hogg's as Mr. Robert McConnell's Alternate, subject to County Administrator approval. Motion was seconded by Ms. Lindsay Cross. Vote carried unanimously.
- Ms. Lindsay Cross provided a résumé for Mr. Edward T. Sherwood to be her Forum Alternate.
- Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck made a motion to accept Mr. Edward T. Sherwood as Ms. Lindsay Cross's Alternate, subject to County Administrator approval. Motion was seconded by Dr. Randy Runnels. Vote carried unanimously.

## **VIII. Public Comment:**

- Ms. Jeanne Murphy asked about the issue of feral cats that was brought before the BOCC a short time ago. Ms. Murphy inquired if there was any updated information or maybe the subject could be considered as a future ESF agenda item? This subject will be considered for a future ESF agenda item.
- Forum Members asked if the new County Administrator Mr. Bob LaSala might attend the next Forum meeting on February 5, 2009.

Dr. Randy Runnels made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Mr. Tom Muntz. Meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.