

Environmental Science Forum (ESF)  
Weedon Island Preserve Cultural & Natural History Center  
St. Petersburg, FL  
Thursday, 7 May 2009  
4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES  
Approved by Forum at August 6, 2009 Meeting

Attendees:

1.	Cathy Harrelson	Forum Member, Co-Chair
2.	Dr. Randy Runnels	Forum Member, Co-Chair (for Bruce Hasbrouck)
3.	Tom Muntz	Forum Member
4.	Lindsay Cross	Forum Member
5.	Melisa Reiter	Alternate for Doug Robison
6.	Joseph Maier	Forum Member
7.	Libby Carnahan	Alternate for Dr. Randy Runnels
8.	Mark Mueller	Forum Member
9.	Robert McConnell	Forum Member
10.	Barbara Hoffman	Forum Member
11.	Jeanne Murphy	Forum Member
12.	Ann Paul	Forum Member
13.	Ray Wunderlich	Forum Member
14.	Howard Rutherford	Forum Member
15.	William Davis	Pinellas County Environmental Management
16.	Jason Ester	Pinellas County Attorney
17.	Liz Freeman	Pinellas County Planning Department
18.	Lynn A. Smith	Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division
19.	Barbara Snow	Pinellas County Humane Society of Pinellas County
20.	Dr. Nicole Elko	Pinellas County Environmental Management
21.	Sid Crawford	Citizen
22.	Phil Compton	Citizen

**Handouts:** Pinellas County Environmental Science Forum (ESF) Agenda; ESF Meeting Minutes from Thursday, 5 March 2009; Updated List of Members and Alternates For ESF; ESF Alternates Résumés; Governing Principles for a Sustainable Future; Excerptions from The Natural Resource Conservation and Management Element of The Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan; and The Challenges of Accelerating Sea Level Rise.

**I. Welcome and Introduction:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. with a general welcome. Members and audience introduced themselves.

**II. Additional Agenda Items:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson asked for additional agenda items from members.
- ESF member Mr. Joseph Maier requested in writing that the County determine the potential impact on wildlife prior to making “improvements” on County owned or managed properties.
- A discussion took place between ESF members and Mr. William Davis. It was decided that Mr. Davis would determine the policies the County already has in place and will share his findings with ESF members.

### **III. Announcements:**

- Mr. William Davis made the following announcements;
  - Mr. Mark Mueller was reappointed as an ESF member for a two-year period.
  - Ms. Libby Carnahan was approved by the County Administrator as Dr. Randy Runnels ESF Alternate.
  - Ms. Barbara Howard submitted a résumé to become the Alternate for ESF member Mr. Mark Mueller.
  - Ms. Joanne Shrewsbury submitted a résumé to become the Alternate for ESF member Mr. Joseph Maier.
- Mr. Tom Muntz made a motion to submit Ms. Barbara Howard and Ms. Joanne Shrewsbury as Alternates for the County Administrator's approval. Motion was seconded by Mr. Joseph Maier. Motion carried unanimously (12 – yes and 0 – no).

### **IV. Approval of March 5, 2009 Meeting Minutes:**

- Ms. Cathy Harrelson asked for additions or changes to the March 5, 2009 meeting minutes.
- Ms. Barbara Hoffman made a motion to approve the March 5, 2009 meeting minutes. Ms. Lindsay Cross seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (12 – yes and 0 – no).

### **V. Update on Feral Cats Committee - Ms. Barbara Snow, Executive Director, Humane Society of Pinellas, Inc.(Informational):**

- Ms. Barbara Snow, Executive Director, Humane Society of Pinellas, gave an update on the Feral Cat Committee previously reported on at the March ESF meeting. She reported that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) had previously heard opposing views to a feral cat program on many occasions but not solutions. The feral cat group was formed to include stakeholders representing professions impacted by the feral cat population and include:
  - county government employees from Animal Services, Administration, Environmental Management, Consumer Safety (also an experienced wildlife officer), the Health Department, and County Attorney's Office;
  - Animal welfare in Pinellas County represented by the Humane Society and SPCA;
  - Four veterinarians practicing in Pinellas County who also serve on boards for the Humane Society, SPCA, Pinellas County Veterinary Association and who have National Board Certification in feline medicine;
  - a master naturalist in Environmental Education;
  - two chapters of the Audubon Society from Clearwater and St. Pete;
  - a local and national representative of Alley Cat Allies; and
  - a consultant to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) on the feral cat issue.

A representative of a feral cat advocacy organization serves as a consultant.

- Ms. Snow reported that an attorney with expertise on public policy, property rights, and liability from the environmental perspective gave a presentation. A veterinarian from the University of Florida with a national reputation on feral cat programs and spay neuter of feral cats also gave a presentation. Both continue to serve as consultants. A public forum was held for public input to the committee.

- The group is tasked with identifying problems and solutions dealing with the current population and the prevention of more cats becoming feral. Research is gathered on counties in Florida with populations over a half-million as to whether they do or do not have feral cat programs. When the work is completed, the group will draft recommendations to the BOCC. The document will be a public record. Opinions and input continues to be accepted from those unable to attend the public forum up until one day before the last group meeting. Ms.

Snow will accept input until close of business on May 18, 2009 by e-mail ([Barbara@humanepinellas.org](mailto:Barbara@humanepinellas.org)).

- Following Ms. Snow's presentation there was a question and answer session with ESF members.

**VI. Climate Change In County's Comprehensive Plan - Ms. Liz Freeman, Planning Dept. (Informational):**

- Ms. Liz Freeman provided an overview of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan as it relates to planning for climate change and sea level rise. She emphasized while the Plan has some very specific objectives and policies relating to sea level rise and climate change, in fact, it is the implementation of the Plan as a whole that is required in order to make a difference. She provided handouts of the specific policies relating to climate change and some examples of policies in several different elements of the Plan that related to: livable communities, promotion of mass transit, reducing congestion on roads, and encouragement of smaller housing option, etc. Implementation of these types of policies, collectively, can help to reduce our carbon footprint and energy needs. Rather than go over each individual policy in detail, Ms. Freeman focused on two big initiatives the Planning Department is kicking off which will influence how we plan for the future, with an emphasis on a sustainable, disaster resilient future and recognizing the need to adapt to changing sea level conditions. The two initiatives are (1) a focused educational initiative aimed at getting people to think about changing sea levels and the consequences, and (2) a major update to the County's Land Development Code to better address the fact that we are a redeveloping, versus a developing, County. As a result of this Code update, which will include substantial public outreach, we hope to have a better set of regulations that, as they are applied, will gradually result in greater disaster resiliency and overall sustainable land use and land development decisions.

- Following Ms. Freeman's presentation there was a question and answer session with ESF members.

**VII. Managing Pinellas County Beaches for Sea Level Rise - Dr. Nicole Elko, Environmental Management (Informational):**

- Dr. Nicole Elko presented on the implications of accelerating sea level rise on beach restoration projects and beach communities. She explained that sea level has been fluctuating throughout geologic time and global sea level is rising twice as fast today as it was in the 1960s. There is a need for long-term planning in the form of engineering and ecologic studies, cost-benefit analyses, and post-storm redevelopment planning. Local beach municipalities, who have much of the responsibility for this planning, have the least amount of expertise and are looking to higher levels of government for guidance. Planning for accelerating sea level rise is challenging because it is happening so imperceptibly and it is a "not in my lifetime event" for staff and elected officials. Given that the average elevation of Pinellas County's barrier islands is 5 feet above sea level, a projected rise of 3 feet over the next century highlights the need for long-term planning.

- Following Dr. Elko's presentation there was a question and answer session with ESF members.

**VIII. TBEP Model Fertilizer Ordinance Development (Ms. Lindsay Cross, Tampa Bay Estuary Program):**

- Ms. Lindsay Cross, Environmental Scientist at the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, explained that reducing nitrogen inputs to Tampa Bay is a goal of the program and its partners. While local government and private partners, through the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's (TBEP) innovative Nitrogen Management Consortium, have taken steps to reduce

their nitrogen loading, more can be done. Recent estimates suggest that 20% of nitrogen entering Tampa Bay is from residential land uses. To address this source, the TBEP, at the request of its Policy Board, held a series of workshops in the summer of 2008 to develop recommendations for residential fertilizer application. The recommendations and a model ordinance were adopted by the Board in November 2008.

Ms. Cross noted that the goal of the ordinance is to foster continued water quality improvements. Additionally, preventing nitrogen from reaching a waterway in the first place is much less costly than removing it afterwards through stormwater treatment. For example, Pinellas County estimates it will spend \$10 million in capital funds plus \$600,000 annually to remove 7.6 tons of nitrogen/year from Lake Tarpon and Lake Seminole.

The key elements of the regional ordinance include: banning the use of nitrogen fertilizer during the June-September rainy season; prohibiting application of fertilizer within 10 feet of a waterway or wetland; having a 6-foot low maintenance “no mow” zone adjacent to waterways using groundcovers; requiring training and licensing of all site supervisors of lawn care companies; creating a bay wide license/certificate for reciprocal recognition across the region; and restricting point-of-sale nitrogen fertilizer during the rainy season ban. TBEP estimates that there could be a reduction of 84 tons of Nitrogen with a 50% compliance rate.

TBEP is recommending that all governments in the Tampa Bay region adopt the ordinance so that there is consistency, a reduced burden on the lawn care industry, and improved opportunity for education. So far the cities of Gulfport and St. Petersburg have adopted the model ordinance. While neither includes enforcement, the City of St. Petersburg ordinance will include a retail ban starting in 2011. The TBEP is also holding focus groups to test educational messages and methods.

Ms. Cross added that a state model ordinance – SB424 – recently passed that does not include a rainy season black-out period or retail ban.

**IX. Next Meeting (Agenda Items and Date):**

- Co-Chair Cathy Harrelson reviewed proposed agenda items for Thursday, 4 June 2009 meeting:
  - Department of Environmental Mgmt. / Environmental Lands Division Budget
  - Report on existing County Policies concerning the potential impact on wildlife prior to making “improvements” on County owned or managed properties
  - Feral Cats Committee recommendations

**X. Public Comment:**

- None

Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson dismissed forum members at 6:55 p.m.