

Environmental Science Forum (ESF)
Weedon Island Preserve Cultural & Natural History Center
St. Petersburg, FL
Thursday, July 15, 2010
4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES
Subject to Forum Approval

Attendees:

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| 1. | Cathy Harrelson | Forum Member, Co-Chair |
| 2. | Lindsay Cross | Forum Member, Co-Chair |
| 3. | Tom Muntz | Forum Member |
| 4. | Mark Mueller | Forum Member |
| 5. | Dave Bruzek | Forum Member Alternate for Howard Rutherford |
| 6. | Jeanne Murphy | Forum Member |
| 7. | Dr. Randy Runnels | Forum Member |
| 8. | Robert McConnell | Forum Member |
| 9. | Ray Wunderlich | Forum Member |
| 10. | Barbara Hoffman | Forum Member |
| 11. | Ann Paul | Forum Member |
| 12. | Pat Smoot | Forum Member Alternate for Tom Muntz (observing) |
| 13. | Joanne Shrewsbury | Forum Member Alternate for Joe Maier |
| 14. | Andy Squires | Pinellas County Environmental Management |
| 15. | Steve Harper | Pinellas County Environmental Management |
| 16. | Jason Ester | Pinellas County Attorney's Office |
| 17. | Dave Kandz | Citizen |
| 18. | Sidney Crawford | Citizen |

Handouts: Pinellas County Environmental Science Forum Agenda; ESF meeting minutes from May 6, 2010; Draft ESF Bylaws revised May 2010.

I. Welcome and Introduction

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson called the meeting to order with a general welcome. Each ESF member or alternate in attendance introduced themselves.

II. Additional Agenda Items

- None

III. Announcements

- Mr. Tom Muntz stated that Ms. Patti Smoot had been approved as his alternate.
- Mr. Sidney Crawford gave a brief overview of the recent Gulf oil spill meeting. He noted that there is no imminent beach fall expected for the Tampa Bay area. He stated that there was a large and varied audience and that the topics included potential impacts to habitat, remote sensing and buoy monitoring.

IV. Approval of October 1, 2009 Minutes

- Ms. Barbara Hoffman added the line “It was noted that the cone of influence for the wellfield drawdown is within the border of Brooker Creek Preserve and the highest potential drawdown for the whole project is within the Preserve.” to Item VIII. Dr. Randy Runnels asked to remove the term “at the State” after the line “Dr. Randy Runnels expressed concern, based on his experience at the State,” in Item VII. Ms. Lindsay Cross made a motion to approve the May 6, 2010 meeting minutes with the above corrections. Mr. Mark Mueller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Nominations/Elections of New Policy and Science Co-Chairs

- Mr. Bob McConnell nominated Ms. Cross as the new Science Co-Chair. Ms. Harrelson agreed to serve again as the Policy Co-Chair. Mr. Muntz stated that he would continue serving as the Policy Co-Chair back-up and Dr. Runnels stated that he would serve as the Science Co-Chair back-up.

A motion was made by Ms. Ann Paul to elect Ms. Cathy Harrelson as the Policy Co-Chair, with Mr. Tom Muntz as the back-up, and Ms. Lindsay Cross as the Science Co-Chair, with Dr. Randy Runnels as the back-up. Ms. Jeanne Murphy seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Proposed Bylaw Revisions

- Mr. Andy Squires summarized each proposed revision to the ESF bylaws. In Section 3.1, the change will allow ESF members to take meeting minutes. In Section 9.1, the revision will streamline how future revisions to the bylaws occur. ESF members agreed with the revisions and had no additional changes. Two meetings are still needed before the revised bylaws become effective. At the next meeting, the bylaws need at least a 2/3 majority vote of approval. Then at the second (following) meeting the bylaws will become effective.

Mr. Muntz suggested adding Mr. Dave Bruzek as a member, rather than an alternate. The Forum suggested that Mr. Bruzek speak with Mr. Howard Rutherford about his attendance. Ms. Cross asked whether Dr. Joseph Dorsey was still being considered as a Policy member. Mr. Squires mentioned that the ESF had not yet made a recommendation to County staff. Ms. Cathy Harrelson said she would check with Dr. Dorsey to see if he was still interested.

VII. Proposed Restructuring of County Environmental Programs

- Mr. Squires and Mr. Paul Cozzie discussed the proposed restructuring of County environmental programs for the upcoming fiscal year. It was noted that nine staff from the Environmental Lands (EL) Division will be merged into the Department of Culture, Education, and Leisure Services (Parks). The Preserves will be patrolled and maintained by Park Rangers and cleaning schedules will be similar to the Parks. Infrastructure needs will be handled by the trade and construction crew. Dr. Steve Harper will oversee Natural Resources and

Historical Resources management plans, with assistance from Ms. Pam Leasure and Ms. Lisa Baltus. The Preserve education centers will be staffed and programmed through the Extension Service and the County will add two volunteer coordinator positions to manage the volunteer efforts. Education center hours are not expected to change. The core programs offered at the Preserves will also be expanded to include sustainability initiatives.

Dr. Runnels was concerned that parks may receive more attention because there is more public usage. Mr. Cozzie replied that some preserves, such as Shell Key, may receive more attention under the new program. The major focus areas for natural resource management at both parks and preserves will be prescribed burns and invasive exotics control. Ms. Harrelson asked about science-based specialists remaining. Mr. Cozzie noted that there is scientific expertise from the EL and Extension staff. Mr. Mueller asked if the Park Rangers will have law enforcement capabilities since the LIMA unit has been disbanded. Dr. Harper replied that there will be five Sheriff officers – three marine and two for EL, along with assistance from Oldsmar police at Brooker Creek, that will use LIMA equipment.

Ms. Cross asked if there would be any changes to the management plans. Dr. Harper thought that the plans may continue to be implemented by combining with park staff, stressing the priorities of prescribed burning and exotics control. Land managers may have additional time to devote to management, as infrastructure issues such as maintaining board walks or restrooms, would be handled by parks staff. Dr. Runnels recommended that the maintenance staff clean the mowers after working at each site so as to not transmit exotic vegetation between the parks and preserves.

Ms. Harrelson asked about revenue sources. Mr. Cozzie noted that there will likely be a \$3 fee for parks, preserves, botanical gardens and Heritage Village and a \$5 fee for Ft. DeSoto. The County is talking with the Turnpike Authority to determine if the fees could be deducted from the Sunpass.

VIII. Shell Key Management Plan Permitted Activities

- Dr. Harper described that a 2008 management plan for Shell Key includes two types of permitted activities – site use and large group (>50 people) permits. Within the past five years, there have been 63 site use permits for scientific research. Camping permits are also available at no cost; however, the permit requires people to acknowledge and agree to all regulations, such as no pets, no fires, and the need to use portable toilets. This agenda item was added to discuss an incident with an un-authorized low altitude helicopter flight over the island in recent weeks. The helicopter was being used by the Film Commission (through the County's Communications and Visitor's Bureau) to film a commercial. Staff was told that there would be filming in the air and water; however, there were no specific requests to do anything by helicopter at Shell Key. Ms. Pam Leasure had provided a map of Shell Key Preserve, a list of restrictions and information on nesting birds to the group filming. The intention was to film activities at the public beach area and to abide by all restrictions. However, the helicopter hovered at low altitude and dropped off a film canister. This activity reportedly disturbed

the birds. Dr. Harper noted that Pinellas County does not have the authority to regulate airspace but can provide information related to bird nesting and other environmental concerns.

Dr. Harper explained that there were some very negative attacks on County staff that were not warranted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is investigating the helicopter incident and determining whether any penalties will be assessed. It was suggested that better education and communication with the Film Commission may be necessary. The Film Commission often has a short time line; however, it is important that it passes along needed information. Ms. Harrelson was surprised that the County does not receive revenue when companies or individuals take pictures or videos on County property. Mr. Cozzie noted that there are costs associated with extra services, such as traffic control and that the fee issue will probably come up during upcoming discussions about the incident. Ms. Harrelson thought that having a fee, even a small one, creates a recognition of value and may be a way to include a ranger or staff member during activities. Mr. Mueller agreed that on-site supervision could be useful and hoped that Sea-Doo would voluntarily pay the County for the impacts. The Federal Aviation Administration may need to update its maps with altitude restrictions. Ms. Paul suggested including areas such as Honeymoon and Caladesi Islands on these maps and she apologized for some of the comments made by birders to County staff.

IX. County Oil Spill Plans and Preparations

- Mr. Squires noted that the Department of Emergency Management has had daily contact with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and is learning from experiences in Louisiana. The probability of oil reaching Pinellas County is only between 0-20% due to the loop current; however, a major storm could change the probability estimate. Any oil that arrives will be of a more weathered consistency, such as tar balls. The County is working with the state and British Petroleum (BP) to get information about training, which is being conducted by BP on a county-by-county basis. Volunteers are being signed up through Volunteer Florida and submitted to Keep Pinellas Beautiful. Approximately 4,000 volunteers have signed up and could be used for pre-impact cleaning of debris; however, hazardous waste training is required to clean oil.

The County is also working on updating the area contingency maps of sensitive areas. The USCG has to determine appropriate strategies and generally do not try to protect the beaches because they are easier to clean compared to other coastal habitats. The County has performed water and sediment quality sampling at eight sites, will be collecting and freezing water samples collected at 34 additional sites, and will be applying for cost reimbursement from BP. The baseline data include testing for hydrocarbons, dissolved organic carbon, grain size, and polyaromatic hydrocarbons.

Mr. Squires also discussed the County's planned beach nourishment projects for Treasure Island and Upham Beach, which experienced considerable erosion last winter. If oil ends up contaminating the beaches or borrow areas, the State would shut the project down until the oil is removed. The County is in discussions with

the State and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about how to facilitate a BP-funded cleanup if needed. Postponing the project could also impact tourism. Currently the temporary T-groins at Upham Beach are designed to be replaced with permanent limestone rock structures in a few years. Ms. Harrelson asked if the County has an evacuation plan related to the oil spill. Mr. Squires had not heard of one, but thought that USCG Incident Command would help to coordinate any efforts with the pertinent State and County government agencies.

X. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.