

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE FORUM
Thursday, October 5, 2006
MEETING MINUTES
Approval by Forum at November 2, 2006 Meeting

Attendees:

1. Holly Greening	Forum Member, Co-Chair
2. Darden Rice	Forum Member, Co-Chair
3. Dave Kandz	Forum Member
4. Joseph Maier	Forum Member
5. Ann Paul	Forum Member
6. Barbara Hoffman	Forum Member
7. Howard Rutherford	Forum Member
8. Bill Stokes	Forum Member
9. Ray Wunderlich	Forum Member
10. Jake Stowers	Forum Member
11. Mark Mueller (for Melissa Grigione)	Forum Member, Alternate
12. Jan Allyn (for Bruce Turley)	Forum Member, Alternate
13. Mandy Peterson (for Tom Muntz)	Forum Member, Alternate
14. Walt Hoskins (with Barbara Hoffman)	Forum Member, Alternate
15. John Ogden (for Gabe Vargo)	Forum Member, Alternate
16. Elizabeth Warren	Assistant County Administrator
17. Will Davis	Pinellas County Environmental Mgmt.
18. Andy Squires	Pinellas County Environmental Mgmt.
19. Jewel Cole	Pinellas County Attorney
20. H. Bruce Rinker	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
21. Steve Harper	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
22. Lisa Baltus	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
23. Cathy Flegel	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
24. Lynn Smith	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
25. Holly Shiralipour	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
26. Paul Cozzie	Pinellas County CEL
27. Paul Cassel	Pinellas County Development Review
28. Devesh Nirmul	Pinellas County Extension
29. Dave Slonena	Pinellas County Utilities
30. Gordon Beardslee	Pinellas County Planning Department
31. Liz Freeman	Pinellas County Planning Department
32. Pick Talley	Pinellas County Utilities
33. Steve Poling	Citizen
34. Mathew Poling	Citizen
35. Brian Favro	Citizen
36. John Schaffer	Citizen
37. John Sherwill	Citizen
38. Evan Johns	Citizen
39. M. Bowen	Citizen

Cont' Attendees:

40. Desmond Beilie	Citizen
41. Hoze Beilie	Citizen
42. Karen Johns	Citizen
43. Cathie Foster	Citizen
44. Elva M. McPhee	Citizen
45. Jane Williams	Citizen
46. Ray Muller	Citizen
47. Sherl Muller	Citizen
48. John Miolla	Citizen
49. Robert P. Murray	Citizen
50. Don Upchurch	Citizen
51. Roger Kriea	Citizen
52. Lewis Scheuer	Citizen
53. Kenneth S. Rowe	Citizen
54. Fred Phillips	Citizen
55. Kay Travis	Citizen
56. Charles Travis	Citizen
57. Dolorus M. Price	Citizen
58. Edwin E. Price	Citizen
59. Gloria Bruns	Citizen
60. Ron Butcher	Citizen
61. Theresa Blackwell	St. Petersburg Times
62. Barbara Schultz	Citizen
63. Ron Schultz Sr.	Citizen
64. Robert A. Loos	Citizen
65. James Garey	Citizen
66. Sidney Crawford	Citizen
67. H. Patrick Wheeler	Citizen
68. Jackie Salmon	Citizen
69. Herb Salmon	Citizen
70. Lorraine Margeson	Citizen
71. Irene Murray	Citizen
72. Carol Madeira	Citizen
73. Mary Ann Satryh	Citizen
74. Beinhardt L. Satryh	Citizen
75. Kay Warring	Citizen
76. Joan Upchurch	Citizen
77. Mike McDonald	Citizen

Handouts: October 5, 2006 Meeting Agenda; Meeting Minutes of September 7, 2006; Optimization of the Reclaimed Water System presentation booklet; Construction plans for East Lake Youth Sports Complex Expansion.

I. Welcome and Introduction:

A. Public comment Cards

Co-Chair Holly Greening welcomed Forum Members and the public to the meeting. She pointed out public comments are very important and appreciated. Forms are available for the public to address agenda or non-agenda items during the meeting. Three time periods have been reserved for public comments. Written comments may also be provided.

Forum Members introduced themselves.

II. Additional Agenda Items:

- Ms. Greening requested additional items for the agenda. None were offered.

III. Approval of September 7, 2006 Meeting Summary:

- Ms. Barbara Hoffman made two corrections to the September 7, 2006 meeting summary. Both corrections were located on Page 3, Item V. (1) She stated the Friends of “Brooker Creek Preserve, Inc was established as a 501c (3) in 1994, not 1993, and has a 12-year working history with ELD. (2) The mission and goals of the 1993 Brooker Creek Preserve Management Plan were read, not the mission and goals of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, Inc.
- Mr. David Kandz requested his name be added to the attendance record for the last meeting. He was present.
- Minutes were approved with these exceptions noted.

IV. Forum Business:

A. Update on Communications and Website

- Update on Communications and Website: Mr. Andy Squires provided instruction for navigating through the ESF website, especially noting a new section called “Get the Facts.” Any questions or suggestions about the website (www.pinellascounty.org/scienceforum) should be directed to Andy.

B. ESF Member Replacement – recommendations from ESF

- Two nominations have been made to replace Dr. Alison Ormsby, Eckerd College assistant professor. The Co-chairs will contact these candidates

about their interest and availability and then make their recommendation to County Administrator Steve Spratt.

C. Consideration of a Later Meeting time (4:30-7:30?) for Some Meetings

- General support exists among Forum Members for varying meeting times, perhaps 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm on occasion, to assist those constrained by their regular jobs.

D. Future agenda topics – request for written suggestions

- Ms. Greening reminded Forum members to use the Message Board for communication including suggestions for agenda topics.

V. **Brooker Creek Preserve Golf Course Irrigation**

A. ESF Discussion

- Mr. Dave Slonena from the Utilities Department provided a Power Point presentation entitled “Optimization of the Reclaimed Water System: Golf Course Supplemental Irrigation Supply.” His presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session by Forum members and the general public. Highlights of the presentation are provided below.
 1. Purpose of the project is to allow expansion of the County’s reclaimed water system during dry times of the year. This is to be accomplished by developing a seasonal supplemental irrigation supply for the golf course when the reclaimed water is shifted to home irrigation use. The recovered reclaimed water will be used to meet the residential irrigation demands that would otherwise use potable water.
 2. The project is consistent with, and based upon, state and regional water resource management policies. These policies include: utilizing local sources first before importing water from other regions or communities, use the lowest quality water for the intended purpose and maximize the use of reclaimed water for non-potable needs, primarily for irrigation.
 3. This project is a strategic component of Utilities’ Master Reclaimed Water Plan, by placing golf courses on an interruptible reclaimed water supply in order to realize the greatest conservation benefit from our available reclaimed water.
 4. The withdrawal of groundwater from this area is not new. The historical water production from the former wellfield was initiated in 1975 and approached 2 mgd on a 12 month running average. The historical monthly production reached as high as 5 mgd. The proposed quantities will be much lower than the historical production from this wellfield.
 5. The seasonal water level change in the surficial aquifer in the vicinity of the production wells can be as high as 5 feet. The average yearly

water change for the monitor wells presented in the hydrograph was 3.2 feet for the water years 1994-96.

6. A groundwater flow model was run to predict the drawdown from withdrawing the requested quantities of 284,000 gpd. The model results predicted a maximum average 12-month drawdown contour of 0.3 ft. in the Floridan aquifer and 0.1 ft. of drawdown contour in the surficial aquifer.
 7. Additional modeling that depicted the weekly water level drawdown (transient modeling) showed a maximum drawdown of 0.21 ft. in the surficial aquifer and 0.84 ft. in the Floridan aquifer during the peak withdrawal month.
 8. When the predicted water level drawdown is compared to the observed seasonal water level changes, the seasonal water level changes are orders of magnitude greater than the predicted drawdown.
 9. The combination of water level recovery during the wet season when no withdrawal will occur, and the magnitude of the predicted drawdown relative to normal seasonal water level fluctuation during times of groundwater withdrawal, indicate little environmental impact will occur due to the proposed withdrawal.
 10. To ensure no unacceptable environmental impacts occur due to the proposed withdrawal, an environmental monitoring plan will be developed and submitted to SWFWMD for approval in order to detect any adverse impacts to wetlands from the proposed withdrawals.
 11. The largest pump capacity in the production wells will be 300 gpm, which is significantly less than the original pump capacity of 1400 gpm. The reduced pump capacity should not cause saltwater intrusion. Furthermore, Utilities will collect water quality samples from the production wells on a monthly basis and submit the results to SWFWMD. Utilities will also coordinate with Tampa Bay Water to monitor water quality changes associated with a very extensive saltwater monitoring well network in the area.
 12. Utilities will be requesting a 60-day time extension to respond to SWFWMD's questions in order to allow time for the ESF discussion and comment.
 13. Based on the groundwater modeling and the lack of wetland impacts from historic wellfield production the proposed groundwater withdrawals will not cause unacceptable adverse impacts to wetlands and uplands.
 14. Seasonal use of the wells will optimize the reclaimed water system and offset potable use.
 15. The withdrawal of water will be done in an environmentally sensitive manner.
 16. The net benefit to the region will be a reduction of potable water use and reduced environmental stress in wilderness and management areas in other counties with no unacceptable adverse environmental impacts within the Preserve.
- Further, an ad hoc committee will review the details of this project (including the big picture for reclaimed water in the County, the legal agreement with the golf course, permits, and surficial waters from Lake

Tarpon as a substitute) and present its findings during next month's Forum meeting. This committee will consist of Bruce Hasbrouck, Jan Allyn, Jake Stowers, Dave Kandz, and Ann Paul. If other Forum Members are interested in joining, they should speak with Will Davis or Andy Squires right away. Forum Members should contact Will or Andy with requests for County staff to attend this committee meeting.

B. Public Comments

Questions voiced included:

- Will Utilities provide reclaimed water to the golf course if the permit denied? Utilities staff said yes.
- How much would the level of Lake Tarpon be affected if used as a source of water? Utilities staff said just a matter of inches.
- What would happen if wetland stresses were observed from pumping? Utilities said they could turn off the pumps if wetland stress from pumping was observed.

C. Preliminary ESF Findings

Further discussion followed and Ms. Greening charted the preliminary and unofficial pros and cons of such a project.

- Pros included
 - (1) reduces usage of reclaimed water and potable water,
 - (2) provides research opportunity on wetlands inside and outside the pumping area,
 - (3) provides an example of water conservation, and
 - (4) uses reclaimed water versus portable water for residential and business.
- Cons included
 - (1) possible adverse impacts during times of drought,
 - (2) an unworkable sustainable solution to long-term water needs,
 - (3) an unpalatable provision of water to a private non-essential use,
 - (4) a bad precedent for the Preserve,
 - (5) insufficient consideration of other options including using Lake Tarpon water, and
 - (6) a fragmented approach to the big picture of water conservation in Pinellas County.

VI. Recreation Fields at Brooker Creek Preserve

A. ESF Discussion

- Lisa Baltus gave an overview of the pine plantation parcel under consideration off Old Keystone Road, including the history of the parcel. Lisa pointed out that in the 1990's when the pines were planted, ELD intended to harvest the trees eventually, putting earned revenues into continued restoration, and then replant or restore the area to pine flatwoods.

- Paul Cozzie provided background on the existing ball fields including the lease issued by the County and County grants awarded for the project.
- Paul Cassel addressed the land use designations for the parcel indicating the land is zoned as Preservation-Resource Management and to change that designation to allow for the ball fields would require the current land use changed to Open Space Recreation which would require 6 public hearings. These changes are allowed only two times a year by law for parcel of this size. The next time a land use can occur is in mid-to-late March 2007. This entire process will take approximately 6 months, ending about in October 2007. Also a “special exception” is required which will simultaneously be handled with the land use change.

B. Public Comment

A question-and-answer session followed for Forum Members and the general public.

- In response to a question about species occurrence, Dr. Steve Harper, Research Director for ELD, gave an overview of results of different surveys to determine the vascular plants, birds, and butterflies that occur in the pine plantation. By way of rapid assessment, the pine plantation and associated wetland margins support at least 69 species of vascular flora. The scenic horsetrail, which includes planted pine and other community types, supports at least 50 species of birds, 42 of which likely utilize planted pine. Bi-annual surveys conducted from 1999 to 2006 along the scenic horsetrail distinguished butterfly occupancy by habitat type. The planted pines comprised 17% or less of the survey routes and supports 41 of 56 species observed (73%) and 994 of 3219 individuals (31%). The Georgia Satyr (*Neonympha areolata*) was recorded in the planted pines.
- Public comments focused on a perceived “chipping away” at the Preserve and that alternative locations for this kind of active recreation should be considered.
- Questions were asked about the harvest of approximately 9000 trees in the plantation which Ms. Baltus answered, indicating that it was Environmental Lands’ plan to thin the trees in about 4 years and then 5 years later either remove the remainder and replant or allow certain trees to remain to restore the property to a flatwoods community.
- Dr. Bruce Rinker encouraged forum members to uncouple the pine plantation from the proposal for recreation fields. Harvesting these pines is an acceptable silvicultural practice since these trees are a renewable natural resource; such practices can promote forest health and can provide revenue for future restoration projects.

C. Preliminary ESF Findings

- Preliminary Finding on this topic will be taken up at the November meeting.

VII. Subcommittee Report on Coordination of Parks and Environmental Lands Protection Plans

- Friends Proposal
- Draft County Ordinance

Ms. Barbara Hoffman reported that the ad hoc committee had met once for three hours and will have to meet again. She urged the public to send comments to fobcp@tampabay.rr.com.

VIII. Next Meeting Agenda

- Discuss preliminary findings of recreational fields
- Ad hoc committee report on golf course findings
- A Forum member requested staff give an update on the Wall Springs property.
- Forest canopy walkway proposal at Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center
- Blending Facility will not be included on the next agenda, as the County does not anticipate any significant activity.

X. Introduction to Canopy Walkway (Bruce Rinker, time permitting)

- Time did not allow for this presentation.

XI. Public Comments

- Ms. Darden Rice read several written comments by the public.
- One citizen suggested that the Forum add future use of “Evergreen Farm” to its agenda for discussion.

Next meeting will be 2 November 2006 from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm at the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, Tarpon Springs, FL.