

Big Bend Environmental Forum
October 29, 2009 Meeting Summary
Florida Trail Office, Tallahassee

In attendance:

Kent Wimmer, Executive Secretary, Florida Trail Association
Elizabeth Platt, Recording Secretary, Apalachee Audubon
Howard Kessler, Treasurer, Concerned Citizens of Wakulla County
Steve Urse, UU Green Sanctuary and Sustainable Tallahassee
Neil Fleckenstein, Tall Timbers
Ron Piasecki, Friends of Wakulla Springs
Anne Van Meter, Friends of Wakulla Springs
Janet Findling, League of Women Voters of Tallahassee

Treasurer's Report

Kessler reported a balance of \$2152.39. He has not yet received the bank statement for October.

The BBEF has received 2009 dues from: the Florida Native Plant Society, FL Trail Association, UU Green Sanctuary, Concerned Citizens of Wakulla County, Apalachee Audubon, Friends of Wakulla Springs, Apalachee Land Conservancy.

Organizations that have yet to pay their 2009 dues are: Trust for Public Lands (check to be sent), Florida Wildlife Federation (Kessler to follow-up), Big Bend Group of the Sierra Club (Kessler to follow-up), 1000 Friends of Florida (Kessler to follow-up), Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation (Kessler to follow-up).

Kessler reported that invoices for dues for 2010 will be sent out in January.

Discussion Items

1. **St. Marks NWR Land Acquisition Plan.** **Platt** reported the US Fish and Wildlife Service is hosting two public meetings concerning the proposed land acquisition plan for the St Marks National Wildlife Refuge which proposes to acquire over 35,000. The first public meeting will be held November 17 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM in Crawfordville at the Wakulla County Library's Children's Reading Room. The second public meeting will be held November 19 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM in the Leon County Leroy Collins Library in Meeting Room A. Comments are being accepted through November 30. The proposal can be found at:
<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/planning/LA/StMarksDraftEAsinglePgDoc.html>
2. **Fundraiser for CCOW.** **Kessler** reported that political satirist Roy Zimmerman will be appearing at American Legion Hall in Tallahassee (Lake

Ella) at 8:00 PM Friday, November 13, and tickets are \$10 in advance. This is a fundraising event for CCOW.

3. **Capital City to the Sea Trail.** **Kessler** reported that Wakulla County and the DEP Office of Greenways and Trails are supporting an interconnected system of multi-use trails (hiking, biking) that links Tallahassee, St. Marks, Sopchoppy, and Panacea using existing and new trails, public lands and rights of way. **Wimmer** reported the FTA is working with the FDOT to establish a section of the Florida Trail in the US 98 right of way between the Wakulla River and the Tallahassee St. Marks Trail. (Kent is trying to get DOT right-of-way as a hiking trail also. Kessler is presenting the Capital City to the Sea Trail to the CRTPA in November. Wimmer also reported that FTA and the City of Sopchoppy have agreed to designate the city as a Gateway Community to the Florida Trail (this helps promote Sopchoppy and the Florida Trail.
4. **2010 Candidates Forums.** **Urse** suggested that the BBEP host a candidate's forum in February or March 2010 to get candidates to talk in more depth about their positions. Discussion focused on picking a few key seats. The group did not take any action to support a spring forum. The LOWV will do forums with state candidates.

Wimmer reported the dates for the 2010 Candidates Forums have been set for Thursday, August 5, 2010 for the August 24 primary, and Thursday October 7 for the November 2 general election. These will be held from 6:00 to 9:00 PM in the Commission Chambers at City Hall in Tallahassee. Findling reported the candidates forums have been posted on local website of the League of Women Voters, and she and the League have been informing other organizations of these dates.

5. **Drilling.** Rep. Rehwinkle has said everything will be held hostage for oil drilling in the upcoming session.
6. **Presentation on Wakulla Springs.** **Piasecki** reported that Dr. Todd Kincaid will present results of recent studies in the Wakulla Springshed that bear on the water budget for the springs. The presentation will be in the Terrace room at the Wakulla Springs Lodge the evening of November 17, 2009 from 7:00 - 8:30 PM. This is a special program sponsored by the Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park and there is no charge. They recommend that you come early for a great dinner at the lodge then join us for the presentation.

Piasecki also reported he is helping to develop a curriculum with Wakulla High School that focuses on the water quality in Gulf and its impact on tourism and other industry. He will try to get a school in Leon County to

cooperate. They would like to target students to help design experiments and include the public. This would be rolled out in February.

7. **Extension of I-185 from through Red Hills to Jefferson County.** **Fleckenstein** reported that GA DOT is killing this project because of the significant environmental impact. Tall Timbers advocacy lead to this project being dropped.
8. **Coal plant in Early County, Georgia.** **Fleckenstein** reported that this proposed plant on Chattahoochee River has been in litigation for two years. The Georgia Supreme Court has remanded the case to a lower court, but the financing for the project using old technology has been lost.
9. **The next BBEF meeting will be at 5:00 PM on January 21, 2010 at the Florida Trail Office in the Woodcrest Office Center.**