



HERNANDO COUNTY WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – September 8, 2025



Date: Monday, September 8, 2025

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Location: Hernando County Lake House
1202 Kenlake Ave, Spring Hill, FL 34606

The meeting agenda and back-up material are available online at:
<https://www.hernandocounty.us/departments/departments-n-z/public-works/aquatic-services/waterways-advisory-committee/agendas-and-minutes>

CALL TO ORDER

Maryann Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Attendee Name	Title	Attendance
Kathryn Birren	Chairman	No
Maryann Johnson	Vice Chairman	Yes
Ron Zellmer	Member	Yes
Brian Woolfolk	Member	Yes
Lucas Johns	Member	Yes
Chris Linsbeck	Community Services Director	No
Rob Talmage	Parks & Recreation Administrator	Yes
Carla Burrmann	Department Manager, Aquatic Services and Waterways	Yes
Lt. Reak	HCSO Marine Patrol Deputies	Yes
	Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission	No

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL / MODIFICATION OF AGENDA (Limited to Staff and Committee Only)

- Motion to approve agenda by Brian Woolfolk. Second by Ron Zellmer. Approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Motion to approve minutes by Brian Woolfolk. Second by Ron Zellmer. Approved unanimously.

MARINE PATROL REPORT

- School back in, waterways are slowing down.
- Three marine deputies patrolling waters.
- SPZ and alcohol citations are being issued.

Citizen's Comments for HCSO.

- What is the age for wearing a personal floatation device (PFD)?
 - *Any person under 6 years of age must wear a PFD while on a vessel.*
- Bow-riding allowed on vessels.
 - *In Florida, it is not illegal to bow ride, as the law changed in 2016 with the passage of HB 703, which redefined careless operation to require a threat to a person outside the vessel. However, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) still strongly advises*

against bow riding because it is dangerous and increases the risk of falling overboard, injury, or drowning.

- If ½ cent sales tax is approved, will HCSO Marine Deputies wear body cameras?
 - *If required by the Sheriff, body cameras will be worn.*
- Limited number of law-enforcement officers on the Weeki Wachee River during Labor Day weekend.

NEW BUSINESS

- Discussion to remove Brian Woolfolk from the WAC by Policy No. 06-01
 - *Mr. Woolfolk stated he would be in regular attendance going forward and that he did notify HC staff of each absence. Mr. Woolfolk notified staff on 4/30/25 that he would not be in attendance for the 5/12/25 meeting. Notification of absence from the other meetings (3/10/25, 7/14/25) was not provided to staff.*
- Idle Speed/No wake zone signs for the cut through between the Mud and Weeki Wachee Rivers.
 - *An ISNW sign has been installed at the canal side of the cut through.*
 - *Lucas Johns requested to 'hijack' this agenda item to speak on the Manatee Protection Zone. He handed out hardcopies of his proposal (attached).*
 - *Maryann Johnson asked if this proposal could be presented to the BOCC.*
 - *Decision was made to speak with the County Administrator for further guidance.*
- Airboat ordinances and operating areas. Specifically, discuss adding a no commercial airboat operating zone within 150 ft. of a private residence and 100 ft. of the coastline.
 - *Lucas Johns made a motion to bring this issue to the BOCC. Maryann Johnson asked for a second and that's when the crowd started yelling about wanting to comment on the issue before the motion was voted on.*
 - *Airboat Captain Carey (Gibson) and Lucas Johns squabbled back and forth for a few minutes.*
 - *Maryann Johnson tabled the discussion to move meeting along.*
- Kayak flags for commercial operations. For commercial and private kayas operating within a wake zone is it required to display a flag to help identify their position?
 - *Lt. Reak stated it was not required.*
- Update on seagrass mitigation area south of Hernando Beach Channel.
 - *The signs were required for the seagrass restoration/mitigation project. As this project has been completed, FWC has requested the signs be removed. All signs excluding two pilings that have bird racks on them have been removed.*
- Hernando County webpage updates.
 - *The Public Information Office (PIO) is continuing to work on updates to the webpage.*
- Signs on the Weeki Wachee River – old/faded or overgrown with vegetation.
 - *Staff traveled up and down WWR and cleaned/replaced signs as needed and trimmed vegetation.*
- Are PFDs required when operating a paddle board?
 - *Yes, they are considered a vessel.*
- Hurricane preparedness guide.
 - *Copies of the guide were provided to attendees and can be viewed online at:*
<https://www.hernandocounty.us/home/showpublisheddocument/8412/638205162395900000>

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Creation of Natural Resources Department – 10/1/2025.
 - *Result of combining the Environmentally Sensitive Lands program and Aquatic Services/Waterways Department.*
- Introduction of the new Field Supervisor, Matt Harrington.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

- Why isn't the County actively removing vegetation from Hunter's Lake?
 - *The County will launch the harvesting vessel as water levels allow. Currently the water levels are too low at Hunter's Lake with the boat ramp having inches of water thus causing restrictions on the County's ability to safely launch a vessel.*
- Waterways webpage is inadequate and needs to be updated.
 - *The Public Information Office (PIO) is working on updating the County's website.*
- How is the RESTORE funds being spent by the Waterways Department.
 - *The Artificial Reef project is the only active RESTORE project under Waterways Dept.*
- How can we address the invasive species at Hernando Beach? Updated plant ordinance?
- Lake Townsen pier is in poor condition.
- Is water being diverted from Hunter's Lake to other counties?
 - *Hunters Lake is naturally a closed lake, but development of Spring Hill has resulted in a surface water outflow from the lake in its southwest corner. No diversions are identified.*
- What is the status of the artificial reef project?
 - *State permits have been issued, and the County is expecting the federal permit by end of 2025.*
- Would the HCSO be able to enforce a 25 mph for the MPZ proposed by Lucas Johns?
 - *The HCSO does not have ability to determine vessel speed at this time.*
- Will residents on the Weeki Wachee River be sent a survey for the MPZ?
 - *BOCC direction was to send survey to all residents west of Shoal Line Blvd.*
- Who needs to be contacted regarding the health of Hunter's Lake?
- Can boat rentals be operated from county boat ramps?
 - *Docking facilities shall not be used for commercial purposes. Refer to Chapter 22, section 22-17 in the County's Code of Ordinances.*
- How to have rezoning of Neptune's Grotto denied?
 - *Contact Planning & Zoning Department.*
- How to remove the collapsed bridge on west side Shoal Line Blvd?
 - *Code Enforcement is working with property owner to address the issue.*
- Is it possible to have the boat ramp and access at Hunter's Lake dredged?
 - *This project is on the CIP list for FY27.*

WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE / STAFF COMMENTS

- None.

OTHER –

ADJOURNMENT – Vice Chairman (Maryann Johnson) adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Upcoming Meeting(s):

The next regular meeting of the Waterways Advisory Committee will be held on Monday, November 9, 2025, at 6:00 P.M., at the Hernando County Lake House, 1202 Kenlake Ave., Spring Hill, FL, 34606.