



HERNANDO COUNTY WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – May 12, 2025



Date: Monday, March 10, 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

Kathryn Birren called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

| Attendee Name | Title | Attendance |
|-----------------|--|------------|
| Kathryn Birren | Chairman | Yes |
| Maryann Johnson | Vice Chairman | Yes |
| Ron Zellmer | Member | No |
| Chris Licata | Member | No |
| Brian Woolfolk | Member | No |
| Chris Linsbeck | Community Services Director | 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)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – postponed until July 14, 2025

MARINE PATROL REPORT

- Four marine deputies continue patrol our waterways. Two marine deputies are on patrol each day.
- SPZ enforcement: Deputies are facing increased aggression due to enforcement of rule and associated fine.
- HCSO and FWC ticketing databases are separate and do not communicate with one another.
- Need greater enforcement of ISNW in Tarpon Canal.
- Overall positive comments from the public in attendance regarding marine deputies' presence on river.
- Education needs to be more prevalent about the SPZ rule. Are the local businesses providing information to all people who use the river via their business?
- How could technology (body cameras) help deputies enforce rules on the water?

NEW BUSINESS

- Manatee Protection Zone – Mud River - In legal dept. for review of draft ordinance language. Once approved it will be sent to FWC for review and then will go in front of our BOCC for approval

and back to FWC for final approval. Speed zone will be reduced to Idle Speed/No Wake within the MPZ area. FWC is supportive of the MPZ and should be approved and finalized in 2025.

Comments:

- What is the plan for enforcement for the MPZ?
 - Falls to FWC and HCSO.
- How much funds have been spent on this MPZ?
 - FWC has assisted in drafting the ordinance language.
- Why are we not waiting for the results from the Canal Maintenance Study to determine the MPZ boundaries?
 - Data collected by FWC, SWFWMD, and Save the Manatee club were utilized to determine the MPZ boundary.
- Why isn't the MPZ covering all manatee used waters?
 - Additional manatee refuge areas may be requested to be under an MPZ.
- What date will this be for the FWC meeting?
 - This date has not been provided by FWC to date.
- Is there an original request from a citizen for this MPZ?
 - County staff did not have this information at the meeting.
- What percentage of the Mud River is ISNW currently?
 - A large portion is currently under ISNW.

- Weeki Wachee River planting project - The planting of native eelgrass is intended to be completed by June 30th. This will include four-inch pots protected within exclusion devices (cages), plus planting units throughout the planting area. Precise planting locations along the river's southern shoreline are to be determined by the permit applicant and their agent (The Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida and Sea & Shoreline, respectively). There is a picture in the agenda packets that shows the planting areas. The presentation from Fish and Wildlife Foundation will be on June 10th BOCC mtg.

Comments:

- none

- Fertilizer ban – BOCC agenda item (May 13, 2025) - Detailed information about this item can be viewed on our website under BOCC meeting agendas. The draft ordinance is attached for your reference. The contact for questions would be Alys Brockway.

Comments:

- Devon Quirolo (Sierra Club) provided information to committee.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- Navigational marker repairs - HB, Bayport, Gulf pilings/signs are complete. Green signs are on order and have been delayed due to manufacturing issues. Pine Island signs/pilings up next week, followed by Chaz River.
- Canal Maintenance Study - Consultant working on data analysis currently. Results will be presented to the BOCC in August 2025.
- Spoil Island debris - Sent request for cleanup assistance to DEP as they own the spoil islands. That agency is reviewing ownership information to confirm and will follow up once a determination has been made.
- Pine Island – all improvements are to be more resilient to storms. Activities being conducted:
 - Sensitive structures will be removed, such as a restroom trailer, office and storage trailers. Concrete pads and quick-disconnect utility hookups are being constructed for these trailers.
 - A dedicated area for food truck parking is being constructed next to an expanded dining area. The food truck pad will include a quick-disconnect electrical hookup.
 - Changing rooms have been rebuilt.
 - Pavilions have been re-roofed.
 - Approx. 1100 cubic yards of white beach sand has been transported and placed to replenish the sand lost during Hurricane Helene.

- The observation deck has been removed. Its replacement will be incorporated into another project that will raise the existing seawall projected for FY27.
 - The playground has been removed but will be replaced with a new playground later this summer or early fall.
 - Approx. 400 feet of sand retention wall is being constructed.
 - Three sets of outdoor concrete cornhole boards are being installed.
 - New entry and exit gates have been installed.
 - All improvements will be ADA compliant.
- Harvesting Vessel – Hunter’s Lake. The vessel is currently waiting on hydraulic pump parts. Once repaired it will return to Hunter’s Lake to continue harvesting vegetation.
- Lake Lindsey – shredding project - FWC did two rounds of shredding. The initial round took about a week and probably about 12 acres were shredded. FWC left an acre of tussock in areas where sandhill cranes were nesting. The second treatment happened ~6 weeks later. The contractor shredded the tussocks that were skipped the first time, as well as mud that popped up following initial treatment. Approximately 5 acres were shredded the second time. FWC has requested funding for maintenance shredding in the fall. The tussock mud will start to pop up again over the summer, so the County will be watching this lake to determine if and when maintenance harvesting will be needed.
- Weeki Wachee Preserve Park - Completing final edits on the Education and Recreation Management Plan. Final draft will be sent back to SWFWMD this month.
- Artificial Reef project - Still waiting on ACOE permit. And baseline monitoring and collection has been completed. The County is working on Phase II of this project which includes construction and post-monitoring.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

- Will there be a gate attendant at Pine Island? Will staff remove patrons at closing time?
 - The public will need to park and pay via a mobile app. Gate will remain open during operating hours and there will be a Park attendant for any issues and to address maintenance.
- Are faded signs/markers being replaced? Is there a way to have waterfront homeowners use marine safe lights?
 - All faded signs/markers are being addressed. A County ordinance would be required to enforce specific lights adjacent to waterbodies.
- Education is key to making the SPZ successful.
- Can the County assist in cleaning the spoil islands since they have large boats?
 - The County is working with the State (DEP) to determine how to address this issue.
- Kudos given to the Parks Department regarding maintenance of county parks (Anderson Snow, Delta Woods).
- How can the spoil islands be cleaned up?
 - Permissions need to be obtained first, and the County is working with the State (DEP) to determine a path forward.
- How does the Weeki Wachee Preserve Park relate to waterways?
 - The only water component is a kayak launch however Carla Burmann is assisting with environmental components of the park for the County.
- Is the Bass Canal included in the Canal Maintenance Study? Is there any additional testing being conducted on the canal?
 - Yes, it is included in the study. Questions regarding water sampling should be directed to FDEP.
- What is the Weeki Wachee Preserve Park?
 - The County has a leased area (~355 acres) in the Weeki Wachee Preserve for a passive, recreational park.
- What can be done about the pipes located in Bass Canal?
 - Questions about water testing and/or water quality would need to be addressed to FDEP.
- Can the SPZ rule be changed to exclude areas?

- This would need to be addressed with FWC as the Waterways Dept. only maintains the SPZ signs.
- SWFWMD's capacity study provides information supporting the SPZ. This along with supporting documentation of the SPZ provides valuable information to those who do not understand it.
- Community outreach would be beneficial to help spread understanding and clarity on SPZ rule.
- What is the end game for the Weeki Wachee Preserve Park?
 - The approved lease with SWFWMD shows all entities proposed for the park. The County will keep rules that currently apply (from SWFWMD) in the park. So, dogs will be allowed.

WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE / STAFF COMMENTS

- None.

OTHER –

ADJOURNMENT - Chairman (Kathryn Birren) adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Upcoming Meeting(s):

The next regular meeting of the Waterways Advisory Committee will be held on Monday, July 14, 2025, at 6:00 P.M., at the Hernando County Lake House, 1202 Kenlake Ave., Spring Hill, FL, 34606.