

**Meeting of the Board of Directors
Pinckney Hill Plantation
March 2, 2020
Monticello, FL**

Members in Attendance:

Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair; Mr. Preston Farris, 2nd Vice-Chair; Mrs. Kathy Barco, Treasurer; Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director; Mr. Ignacio Borbolla; Mr. Seth D. McKeel, Jr.; Mr. John Pope; Mr. Steve Swindal; Mrs. Daphne Wood; and Mrs. Donna "Boo" Rawson.

Members not in Attendance:

Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Vice-Chair; Ms. Connie Parker, Secretary; Mrs. Laura Russell; Mr. Steve Crisafulli; Mr. Adam Putnam; Mr. Tucker Fredrickson; Mr. Paul Avery; and Mr. Jerry Pate.

Guests & Advisors in Attendance:

Fund Manager Mr. John Lacy, The Lacy Group/Merrill Lynch; Ms. Tindl Rainey, FWC; and Mr. Daniel Parker, FYCCN.

Staff in Attendance:

Mr. Andrew Walker; Mr. Will Bradford; Mrs. Erin Smart; Ms. Michelle Ashton; Ms. Stefani Harrison; Ms. Danielle Cummings; and Ms. Anita Forester.

I. Call to Order & Chair's Remarks - Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair

Mr. Corbett called the meeting to order at 9:00 am with a roll call establishing a quorum. He welcomed and thanked all for attending.

II. Consent Agenda - Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair

Minutes: The meeting minutes of the December 10, 2019 teleconference board meeting were presented and reviewed. Mr. Steve Swindal made a motion for approval, seconded by Mr. Seth McKeel. Motion carried unanimously.

New Staff Member: Mr. Will Bradford introduced Ms. Anita Forester as the Foundation's new Grant Programs Administrator. Ms. Forester was previously the Coordinator for Project WILD with the FWC and will be working in the Foundation's Tallahassee office managing incoming grants and following up with grantees' progress.

Departing Staff Member: The Foundation's Senior Accountant Ms. Erin Smart is furthering her career in becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and has taken a new position with the Florida Auditor General to complete her certification.

III. FWC Report - Mr. Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director

Mr. Sutton reported the FWC's current projects and initiatives before dinner the previous night, (Sunday, March 1). The report included an update from the FWC's Red Tide/Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force, new approaches on invasive plant management, invasive species featured in the Super Bowl, coral restoration, the Annual Everglades Coalition Conference, Southwest Florida Water Management District, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF), and a Law Enforcement Officer Award.



IV. FYCCN Update & Direction - Mr. Daniel Parker, FYCCN Director

Mr. Daniel Parker gave a presentation on his goals and direction as the new director of the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (FYCCN). He was assisted in his presentation by Ms. Forester for her experience as the Project WILD Coordinator, a program that ensures conservation education is provided in Florida schools and is offered through the FYCCN.

According to Mr. Parker, a clear outline with documented success needs to be produced to improve and assess the FYCCN. To do this, Mr. Parker has begun integrating the customer-relations management service, Salesforce, to collect and interpret data gathered from the summer camps and school programs. With the new system, the FWC can better track the program’s progress, prove the FYCCN model works, and determine whose program is the best in the nation: Florida or Texas.

V. Foundation CEO’s Remarks - Mr. Andrew Walker, President & CEO

Mr. Walker began his remarks with a side-by-side comparison of the Foundation’s current standings compared to the Spring of 2016. These comparisons are shown below.

Spring 2016 YTD	Spring 2020 YTD
\$201 K Bear Tag	\$201 K Beer Tag
\$95 K Springs Tag	\$149 K Springs Tag
\$107k Deer Tag	\$182 K Deer Tag
\$1.43 Net Income	\$3.83 M Net Income
\$13.7 M Funds Under Management	\$32.3m Funds Under Management
4.5 Month of Reserves	14 Months of Reserves
\$958 K for Conservation - 1 st 6 months	\$2.5 M for Conservation - 1 st 6 Months

The Foundation is operating at 91 percent programmatic efficiency currently and has accumulated an \$800,000 operating surplus over the last 30 months (from September 2017 to March 2020).

Palm Beach Shooting Complex: The complex is still waiting on final permits before it can open. Once approved, the shooting range could open in 30 days.

Grasshopper Sparrow: The FWC Florida grasshopper sparrow captive-breeding program, based at White Oak Conservation, began four years ago as the last hope of restoring the species. Approximately 150 birds were released into the wild in 2019 and early 2020, and FWC biologists recently spotted one of the 2019 birds. Nesting season in May and June will tell us whether the captive birds are capable of nesting and successfully rearing young.

Stony Coral Tissue-Loss Disease: Stony coral tissue-loss disease now extends 40 miles west of Key West, but has not reached the Dry Tortugas. FWC is planning a March coral-collecting expedition to the Tortugas; this will be the sixth coral rescue cruise. Corals collected on this trip will be housed at our **Florida Coral Rescue Center** in Orlando, which will be accepting its first corals on March 12th from Nova Southeastern University. We have committed \$150,420 to the project’s startup, using grant funds from Bass Pro Shops and the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation in Washington DC. As previously reported, Disney is providing \$170,000 per year for three years for its operation while SeaWorld is donating \$200,000/year in in-kind staffing. The Center can hold between 600 and 700 rescued corals. Meanwhile, we are working with FWC Commission Chairman Robert Spottswood to identify Florida Keys hotels and other businesses that are prospective donors to our new **coral conservation fund**, in which Comm. Spottswood’s Key West Marriott Resort is our first partner. The Nature Conservancy has also offered us use of **Ballast**

Key to cultivate and thank major donors to the coral effort. Ballast Key is owned by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary with the buildings managed by The Nature Conservancy.

Proposed Online Raffle: Foundation staff met recently with corporate donor Brandt Information Services and its CEO, Richard Wise. Mr. Wise suggested FWC and the Foundation consider creating a raffle on the FWC hunting and fishing license renewal website that offers highly sought-after hunting tags as prizes. Oklahoma made \$1 million and Tennessee made \$500,000 from similar tag raffles. Brenda Brand, who administers the site, has expressed enthusiasm, and Mr. Walker has asked Foundation attorney Mark Barber to draft a set of rules that satisfy state law.

Additional Remarks: The Foundation was considering having our next in-person board meeting on the Conservancy of Southwest Florida's campus in Naples to see the work we funded for their python program. The **October 4th to 5th 2020** meeting dates were not available, but the Foundation will arrange a future in-person board meeting there. The October meeting will be held instead in **Orlando** to allow board members to visit the Florida Coral Rescue Center.

VI. **Proposed FWC Land Acquisition Grant - Mr. Andrew Walker, President & CEO**

FWC and the FL DEP have been negotiating to purchase a 578-acre Gulf County property adjacent to the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area. The acquisition of this mesic flatwoods habitat would offer added protection from encroaching development, safeguard habitat for numerous species, facilitate prescribed burning within the WEA, and expand recreational opportunities for the public, including hunting. It's within the St. Joe Timberland Florida Forever project site and is ranked "high priority" for acquisition by the State. The land is selling for \$1,336 per acre with a total asking price of \$772,200, which matches the appraised value.

Mr. Walker stated this proposed purchase meets the criteria for increasing public hunting lands for which the Foundation has been holding in reserve \$200,000 in WFF (deer) plate revenues. The Division of State Lands at DEP has agreed to fund most of this acquisition but it and FWC have requested \$200,000 from our Foundation to complete the deal.

A motion was made by Mr. Corbett to approve the grant, seconded by Mr. John Pope and passed unanimously by the board.

VII. **Committee Reports**

a. **Fundraising - Ms. Laura Russell, Mr. John Lacy, Mr. Tucker Frederickson, and Mr. Andrew Walker**

A Night for Nature Final Preparations: *A Night for Nature* is officially one month away, on Friday, April 3 at the Pelican Club in the Jupiter Inlet. The sponsor goal for *A Night for Nature* was \$500,000 and at the time of the meeting, the Foundation had reached \$552,000 and had met Mr. Corbett's \$50,000 challenge match, with a few more sponsorships expected in the next few weeks. All auction items have been procured, and videos and the program booklet are nearly complete.

The coronavirus has now made its way into Florida and the Foundation will consider delaying the event if the virus makes it unlikely that people will attend the dinner. Ms. Ashton stated Pelican Club is open to changing the date without penalty.

Major Gifts Report: Mr. Bradford handed out the Foundation's Major Gifts report for the past three months. The Foundation had received 32 \$5,000+ gifts totaling \$565,000, year to date.

Coral Fund Solicitation Letter: As noted above, the Foundation is working with Commissioner Spottswood to send letters to a variety of hotels and resorts to donate to our new Coral Conservation Fund. His Key West Beachside Marriott Hotel is adding a dollar to each guest's bill, unless he or she opts out, that will go to the fund. If 25-30 companies join the Key West Marriott Hotel in this initiative, the Foundation could raise \$1 million a year for the coral fund.

Recent Donor Meetings & Proposals - Ms. Danielle Cummings: Ms. Danielle Cummings reported on recent foundation and corporate grants, outstanding proposals, and proposals under preparation. Florida Bay sponge restoration, stony coral tissue-loss disease, the Florida grasshopper sparrow, Suncoast Youth Conservation Center replacement kayaks, summer camp scholarships, Brazilian pepper removal on FWC lands, bats, and Florida panthers are among the FWC programs for which she is fund raising.

b. Governance - Ms. Donna "Boo" Rawson

Thanks to Mr. Ignacio Borbolla, the Foundation has a new Board Member candidate -- Francisco "Curro" Bergaz. He is Mr. Borbolla's neighbor in South Carolina, when not in Miami. He was born in Spain and is a member of the Bacardi Family. Mr. Bergaz is an avid outdoorsman and is passionate about conservation and particularly getting youth back into nature

Mr. McKeel made the motion to appoint Mr. Bergaz to the Foundation's Board, seconded by Mr. Steve Swindal. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Bergaz' three-year term will begin immediately.

c. Finance, Investment & Audit - Mrs. Kathy Barco, Mr. Will Bradford, Mr. John Lacy, Mr. Andrew Walker

The Foundation's financials are going well and the finance committee had one of their shortest meetings the previous week.

2nd Quarter Financials: Mr. Bradford discussed the Foundation's finances. The Foundation's total assets have increased 14 percent in the last six months and are now worth over \$32 million. The operating funds now have a \$209,000 surplus, which is well ahead of the Foundation's benchmark. In decline since 2010, sales of the Foundation's "Conserve Wildlife" (bear) tag has had a slight uptick, putting sales back to where they were in 2016.

Investment Report: The stock market has been declining since news of the coronavirus has spread and is down 12 percent at present. John Lacy and Mark Anderson have been doing an excellent job buffering our portfolio from the worst of the market's losses, and we're down only two to three percent since the first of the year.

Longer-Term Financial Planning: Mr. Bradford and Mr. Walker shared the chief questions they will be addressing in looking long-term at the Foundation's financial health. They invited feedback from the Board.

d. Communications - Ms. Michelle Ashton, Director of Communications

Ms. Michelle Ashton reported the Foundation has been experiencing an uptick in website visits, especially on the *A Night for Nature*-related pages and "Who we are" page. Ms. Ashton expects to see continued growth in website traffic in the final runup to *A Night for Nature*. The

Foundation's social media pages also appear to be performing well with the animal-focused posts performing the best. Social media is being used to publicize *A Night for Nature*.

The Foundation continues to send its monthly e-newsletter to about 45,000 people, with an open rate of 28 percent (slightly higher than the industry average).

Ms. Ashton walked the Board through the 2019 Annual Report. It will be mailed to all supporters the week of March 9th. She asked board members to let her know if they'd like extra copies or if there is anyone members would like us to mail directly.

Florida Coral Rescue Center: Announcement of the Center's launch is on hold until we have a better sense of the unfolding coronavirus situation, as there may be little media or public interest presently in non-pandemic stories. We worked with Tampa design firm Trickey Jennus to design the Center's logo.

Decision on Bear Tag Redesign: The multiple audiences we've polled have not identified a clear winner among the three Ringling College student designs created to date, nor has polling identified one overwhelming factor that people rely on when choosing a plate. Ms. Ashton asked the board to choose among three options: (1) The design with a standing, prominent bear in palmetto, (2) the "old Florida" plate with a prominent sandhill crane and a bear in the background, or (3) ask Trickey Jennus to create several new designs.

After discussion, Chairman Corbett made a motion to create new designs, seconded by Mr. Swindal. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Government & Legal Affairs - Mr. Seth McKeel, Steve Crisafulli, and Mr. Andrew Walker

Resolution of "I DO": Mr. McKeel announced that Mr. Tim O'Neil's claim on the "I DO" trademark, which started the lawsuit, has been removed. The Foundation is free to use "I DO" and can now re-think how to incorporate the phrase into our marketing.

Change of Law Firms (same atty, Mark Barber): Mr. McKeel announced that the Foundation's lawyer, Mr. Mark Barber, is moving to Dinsmore & Strohl. The Foundation will remain with Mr. Barber and wrap up its other work with Nelson Mullins Broad & Cassel.

Overview of Legislative Session: The session will be heading to the budget conference process later in the week. To date, much of the conference has not been related to the Foundation. The session still has time to end on time (Friday, March 13). There have been no attacks on the WFF (deer) license plate this year from the Florida Sportsmen's Land Trust. The Foundation has suggested to Mr. Sutton and his real estate staff that FWC approach the Land Trust for help in future land purchases.

VIII. "Conserve Wildlife" (Bear) Grant Applications - Mr. Will Bradford, COO

Board members were provided in advance with a notebook containing all of this year's applications from FWC for grants from the Conserve Wildlife specialty license plate fund. The Foundation has \$525,000 available this year. Mr. Bradford directed the Board's attention to the notebook's summary page, which organizes the proposals into six high-priority, three medium-priority, and four lower-priority tiers.



After thoughtful discussion of each proposal, the Board funded eight projects for a total of \$503,775, as follows:

1. Training FWC personnel to subdue wildlife and scare bears using Tasers: Received full funding of \$27,750.
2. Assessment of the epidemiology of a neuromuscular disorder impacting bobcats and the endangered Florida panther: Received full funding of \$150,000.
3. Support for captive breeding of endangered Florida grasshopper sparrows: At Mr. Walker's suggestion, received partial funding of \$140,000; Mr. Walker and Ms. Cummings believe the remaining \$50,000 can be raised from private and public sources.
4. Perception of climate change risk and adaptation strategies for wildlife species and habitats in Florida Keys: No funds were granted.
5. Effects of outreach messages on landowner attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to Florida's Wildlife Management Areas: Received full funding of \$31,350 but was not supported by two board members.
6. Restoration of the Mussel Community in Lake Trafford: Received full funding of \$65,000.
7. Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance, Wetland Ecosystem Support Team: No funds were granted. Board will look at the proposal again once the proposal provides the acreage of the land supported.
8. Implementing Predation Management for the Protection of Imperiled Beach Nesting Birds in Northeast Florida: Received full funding of \$41,692. The Foundation had funded the previous phase of the project and is expecting a progress report in six months.
9. Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail - Guide Development and Distribution: \$19,500 awarded.
10. Phenology and Climate: A study of Crustaceans: Did not receive any funding.
11. Improving resilience of *Vallisneria americana* populations by enhancing source population diversity: Did not receive funding.
12. Investigating potential tropicalization of fishes and their cleaning stations found along hardbottom ledges of the West Florida: Receiving \$28,483 in funding.
13. Social Carrying Capacity for Burmese Pythons in Southern Florida: Not funded.

IX. Open Session - Mr. Richard Corbett, Chair

New Business & Emerging Issues: Coming at the beginning of meetings on Sunday afternoon or evening, board attendance at field trips has been spotty. Several board members expressed their liking for having informative presentations at Sunday dinner or during Monday's meeting. Mr. Bradford and Mr. Walker said they'd be happy to include such sessions regardless of whether or not a field trip is planned.



XI. Executive Session as needed

The Board then met in Executive Session, joined at one point by Mr. Walker. The Board passed the following resolutions,

- 1) *The Foundation is responsible for 100 percent of the direct third-party cost of each employee’s portion of Employee Benefits offered by the Foundation. The Foundation will make an annual health savings or health reimbursement account contribution, that amount to be determined annually. This policy shall remain in effect at the will of the Board or as allowed by law.*
- 2) *Immediately (30 days maximum) draft and release an RFP for a Professional Employment Organization. Engagement made no later than 30 days from proposal closure. No employee impact until new health care plan in place thru a PEO.*

There being no further business, Chair Corbett adjourned the meeting at 1:30 pm.

Ms. Connie Parker, Secretary

Date

Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Board Chair

Date

Mr. Andrew Walker, CEO

Date

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