



**Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, December 7, 2022**

***Members in Attendance***

Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Chair; Mr. Preston Farrior, Vice-Chair; Mrs. Laura Russell, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair; Mrs. Kathy Barco, Treasurer; Mr. Paul Avery; Mr. Ignacio Borbolla; Mr. Steve Crisafulli; Mr. Joshua Kellam; Mr. Seth D. McKeel, Jr.; Mr. John Pope; Mr. Kent Shoemaker; Mr. Robert Spottswood, Jr.; Mr. Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director; Mrs. Daphne Wood.

***Members not in Attendance***

Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair Emeritus; Ms. Connie Parker, Secretary; Mr. Jerry Pate; Mr. Tucker Fredrickson; Mr. Adam Putnam; Mrs. Donna "Boo" Rawson; Mr. Steve Swindal.

***Guests & Advisors in Attendance***

Ms. Tindl Rainey, FWC Chief Communications Officer.

***Staff in Attendance***

Ms. Michelle Ashton, Mr. Will Bradford, Ms. Cindy Fay, Mrs. Danielle Richter, Ms. Anita Forester, Ms. Rachael Schirmer, Ms. Erin Smart, Ms. Lauren Srodka and Mr. Andrew Walker.

**I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks - Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Chair**

Chairman Alfonso called the meeting to order at 2:08 pm Eastern standard time after quorum was established. He welcomed everyone and noted this is the last meeting for Board Members Kathy Barco, Connie Parker, and Boo Rawson and thanked them for their leadership and hard work over the past nine years. Chair Alfonso also noted this is the last Board meeting prior to our March 31 *A Night for Nature* gala and encouraged everyone to continue working hard on sponsorships.

**II. Consent Agenda - Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Chair**

September 19, 2022 Minutes: Motion made by Mrs. Barco to approve minutes of the June 14, 2022 meeting as presented; seconded by Mr. Borbolla. Unanimously approved.

Recent Grant Reports: Mrs. Wood expressed her appreciation for the submission of these reports by the grantees. She noted the bags of mussels being eaten by alligators at Lake Trafford (grant CWT22-08) as one of those unexpected outcomes of working in the field that requires biologists to adapt their projects. She expressed some concern over the relatively high per-acre cost of restoration under grants WFF20-01 and WFF22-32. Mr. Walker reminded the Board that in the former case we had previously discussed this with the grantee, and the cost pertains to the difficulty of conducting burns on smaller, but important tracts in the increasingly fragmented central Florida landscape. Ms. Forester said she's scheduled to talk to the biologists next week and is planning to visit the latter project, Rolling Meadows, and will report back at the next Board

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meeting on her impressions. Mr. Farrior moved to accept the reports as submitted; Mr. Borbolla seconded. Unanimously approved.

### III. FWC Director's Remarks – Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director

Mr. Sutton began by adding his personal thanks for Mrs. Barco, Mrs. Rawson, and Ms. Parker's service with the Foundation, and in Mrs. Barco's case, as an FWC Commissioner, as well.

Gopher Tortoise: Mr. Sutton said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recent decision not to list the Florida gopher tortoise as threatened or endangered has created an anticipated misunderstanding. Rather than understanding the Service's decision is due to the success of FWC's tortoise management program, some are interpreting this to mean the tortoise no longer needs any form of protection or mitigation.

Skyway Fishing Pier, Tampa Bay: The agency is developing recommendations on how to reduce the high number of brown pelicans being hooked on fishing lines as anglers reel their fish in from the water 25 – 30 feet below them. He anticipates some form of fishing gear will be banned from use there, as hundreds of pelicans are being hooked.

Rising Role of the Foundation: Mr. Sutton noted that as Foundation revenues have increased, so has the Foundation's ability to assist the agency at critical times. Foundation funds -- \$178,000 in total -- allowed the agency to assist more than 100 FWC staff badly affected by Hurricane Ian. He suggested highlighting this at *A Night for Nature*. He also said the Foundation was recognized at the most recent Commission meeting for its support of the IRL manatee feeding effort.

Right Whales: FWC is opposing the Service's proposed new restrictions on recreational fishing in right whale calving grounds as overly broad and not likely to achieve the desired effect. FWC is basing its position on its many years of leading right whale conservation in Florida waters.

Apalachicola Estuary: Last year FWC closed the Bay for five years to begin restoration of the oyster population. Mr. Sutton reported that FWC has received \$20 million from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation toward that end, with the first \$7 million being used to create new oyster habitat in portions of the Bay with ideal salinity.

Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network: Mr. Sutton said the pre-bids have been received for four capital improvements at the Joe Budd camp near Tallahassee, which include a classroom building, bathroom, and shooting range. He also announced that Constance Wade is the new director of the Suncoast YCC in Apollo Beach, and that FYCCN has hired its first bilingual outreach person to work in school districts with high proportions of Hispanic students. Plans are also underway to hire Tenoroc's first camp director with the aim to host the first day camp there in 2023. Chair Alfonso added that he and Mr. McKeel had recently met with Publix Charities, which reaffirmed its desire to support creating an overnight camp at Tenoroc.

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#### IV. Foundation President's Remarks - Mr. Andrew Walker, CEO

Manatee Lettuce Feeding: Mr. Walker began his report by noting the generosity of Duda Farms, which has agreed to sell us up to 400,000 pounds of lettuce at \$0.45/lb – 50 percent less than the next-best offer and below the average of \$.56/lb spent last year.

DeLuca (Destiny) Ranch Update: It's been two years since the Foundation committed \$110,000 to Ducks Unlimited to endow DU's conservation easement over the 27,000-acre DeLuca Ranch in Osceola County. Fee title is held by the University of Florida. UF has now committed \$1.3 million to fund 15 ecological and agricultural research projects, including studies of wild turkey propagation and control of Old World Climbing Fern. UF is also using drones to map the property's habitats and has installed 48 trail cameras and audio recorders to survey wildlife, which has been confirmed to include Florida panthers. The property is also receiving increasing use by 4-H, Future Farmers of America and Gold Star children who have lost a parent in the military. Gold Star youth are participating in hunting and gun safety programs and weekend hunts organized by the groups holding hunting leases. The \$110 million value of the DeLuca's gift to UF and DU is also being used by the latter to attract federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act matching dollars. \$6.1 million of the DeLuca value was used most recently to match \$5 million in NAWCA funds used to re-flood 50,000 acres within the Everglades National Park.

Indian River Lagoon Carbon Bank Feasibility Study: The contract is signed, and TerraCarbon will spend the next six to eight months assessing the potential for funding further seagrass restoration via the sale of carbon credits. We are funding 12 restoration sites currently in the IRL, Biscayne Bay, and St. John's River (Lake George).

FYCCN: We're finishing up the scope of work and contract with Lake|Flato Architects for designing an overnight camp at Tenoroc and a series of improvements at the Everglades Youth Conservation Camp.

Funding for Panther Habitat Protection and Coral Propagation: Our \$2.2 and \$4.9 million proposals to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for panther habitat and coral propagation were declined – NFWF received \$1.1 billion in requests for the \$85 million it had available for its inaugural America the Beautiful Fund grant cycle. The coral proposal has another shot when NFWF announces the next Coral Conservation Fund grant cycle in January. We'll have to come up with new potential funders for the panther work.

FWC Biologist Samantha Hagedorn and Inspector Kyle Patterson: Mr. Walker thanked members of the Board for having contributed to a fund to help Ms. Hagedorn, who was severely injured by decompression sickness following an otherwise routine dive in the Florida Keys. The Foundation is also making a gift to the family of FWC law enforcement Inspector Patterson, who was killed while on duty this summer.

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Finally, Mr. Walker thanked the Board and staff for an extraordinary year of progress, the recent declines in the stock market notwithstanding.

#### V. **Communications Report - Ms. Michelle Ashton, Director of Communications**

Communications October to December Report: Ms. Ashton reported the following:

1. Our social media audience grew 9.5 percent this year to 23,246 across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Linked In, despite a number of people dropping Twitter as a platform.
2. Our monthly e-newsletter and other eblasts now reach 45,178 people and have a 50 percent open rate and a 0.2 percent unsubscribe rate.
3. Earned media placements continue to increase, with notable pieces in Garden & Gun, National Public Radio and elsewhere. CBS News will be visiting the Florida Coral Reef Center in January.
4. We have raised \$196,700 so far from the raffle and should easily surpass \$200,000 by the end of the month. This is four times what we've received previously from *auctioning* a Contender 21 Sport fishing boat. The winners will be drawn December 30<sup>th</sup>.
5. Social media manager Ms. Schirmer has launched our TikTok site.

#### VI. **Fundraising - Mrs. Danielle Richter, Director of Philanthropy**

Year-End Priorities: Mrs. Richter began her report by noting three fundraising priorities – feeding manatees, the Coral Fund, and funds for Foundation operations via *Night for Nature* sponsorships.

Major Gifts Report: From August 31<sup>st</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>, the Foundation had received 13 gifts of \$5,000 or more, which totaled \$148,000, according to Mrs. Richter, who predicted strong giving for the last six weeks of the fiscal year, including a third Keys business joining the Coral Fund. Four proposals were submitted to various foundations recently, and Ms. Srodka has identified several foundations that fund operations, to which we'll apply.

Planned Giving: Mrs. Richter said that 12 individuals have created their wills using our online software, FreeWill. Statistics show that planned giving donors also tend to increase their annual giving.

Night for Nature Sponsorships: Mrs. Russell encouraged fellow board members to rely on staff for providing sponsorship materials and other support as each member pursues additional sponsors. Mrs. Richter said we're about half way to our goal of raising \$350,000 in unrestricted sponsorships, which is part of the larger goal of netting ~\$700,000 over all. She thanked the Board for its work thus far and gave a special thanks to Mr. Frederickson, who has brought in several large gifts and auction items in the past few weeks. A number of Board members noted their intent to support the event again this year. Chairman Alfonso suggested members of the Board join the next Night for Nature committee call.

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## VII. Finance and Audit - Mrs. Kathy Barco & Mr. Will Bradford, COO

FY23 1st Quarter Report and 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr Trends: Mrs. Barco began by saying the Foundation is doing better than it looks based on the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter financial statements, thanks to partial recovery of the market during the first half of the second quarter and an upswing in contributions. Mr. Bradford said the Foundation had posted a total surplus (ops + program) of \$3.5 million as of today, and an estimated \$30,000 - \$50,000 operating surplus, with three weeks to go in the quarter. Sales of our specialty license plates are up 24 percent over a year ago.

## VIII. Governance – Carlos Alfonso & Andrew Walker for Mrs. Rawson

Chairman Alfonso began by saying Mr. Crisafulli has agreed to chair the Government Affairs committee for calendar year 2023. The proposed 2023 slate of officers are Carlos Alfonso, chair; Preston Farior, vice-chair; Laura Russell, 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-chair; Seth McKeel Jr., Treasurer, and Robert Spottswood Jr., Secretary. A motion to approve the officers was made by Mr. Shoemaker, seconded by Mr. Borbolla. Motion passed unanimously.

New Candidates: Ms. Valerie Boyd and Mr. Keenan Baldwin were presented to the Board for its consideration as new members. Both have expressed a desire to serve if elected.

Ms. Boyd hails from Naples and began her career in real estate and banking specializing in land development and rezoning. She has also been involved as a community and political leader in Florida and held appointments from three Florida Governors, including chairing the South Florida Water Management District and serving as a Commissioner of Transportation for State of Florida. She has chaired and served on many state and national environmental sustainability commissions.

Mr. Baldwin lives in Tampa and is a partner in Shibumi Capital Partners. He's the son of Jennifer and Lowry Baldwin, long-time Foundation supporters. An outdoorsman, he manages the family's 11,000-acre, conservation easement-protected Stolen Saddle Ranch in Arcadia, and was honored by FWC earlier this year for his restoration efforts on behalf of native species including white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, and wild turkeys. He is in the process of making it a gopher tortoise recipient site.

Mr. Borbolla moved to elect Ms. Boyd and Mr. Baldwin to the Board, pending a final meeting with each candidate; Mr. Shoemaker seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## IX. Grants - Ms. Anita Forester, Grant Programs Administrator

Grants calendar: Because of the increasing number of springs and deer tag grant applications the Board must consider at every fall meeting, the staff has proposed moving the spring applications to the December meeting of the Board. Several Board members noted that December is a difficult time to go through so much material and asked that the staff bring forward other options at the April meeting.

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Discover Florida Oceans Specialty Plate: The following grants were approved from this fund, which has approximately \$30,000 in it currently:

- *Leadership Training for 2023*, Division of Marine Fisheries Management, FWC. \$8,500 approved.
- *Gamefish tagging in Florida waters & Greater Amberjack migration research*, Gray FishTag Research, \$10,000 approved.

FWFF Coral Fund: The following grant was approved from this fund, which has ~\$14,000 currently:

- *I.CARE Coral Camp: Educating South Florida students in coral restoration*. I.CARE, \$10,000 approved.

**X. Open Session- New Business and Emerging Issues**

- Chair Alfonso told the Board he has asked the staff to develop further the concept and a budget for a young professionals organization, to be presented at the April meeting.
- The April 23-24, 2023 Board meeting will be held in Naples at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. The September 17-18, 2023 Board meeting will be held in Yulee at White Oak Conservation.

**XI. Closing Remarks- Carlos Alfonso, Chair**

Chair Alfonso again thanked Mrs. Barco, Mrs. Rawson and Ms. Parker for their years of service to the Foundation and conservation. There being no further business, the meeting was concluded at 3:35 pm.

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Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Board Chair

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Date

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Mr. Robert Spottswood Jr., Secretary

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Date

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Mr. Andrew Walker, CEO

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Date

