Minutes of the
Meeting of the Board of Directors
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

Board Members in Attendance
Mrs. Laura Russell, Chair; Mr. Ed Burr, Vice Chair; Mr. Kent Shoemaker, Treasurer; Mr. Robert Spottswood, Jr., Secretary; Mr. Jim Etscorn, Governance Committee Chair; Mr. Carlos Alfonso; Mr. Keenan Baldwin; Ms. Kathy Barco; Mr. Christopher Carrere; Mr. Todd Jones; Mr. Joe Neber; Mr. Townsend Tarapani; Mrs. Daphne Wood; Mr. Roger Young, FWC Executive Director

Board Members Not in Attendance
Mr. Rodney Barreto; Mr. Scott Bores; Mr. Preston Farrior; Mr. Josh Kellam; Mr. Jerry Pate

Staff in Attendance
Mr. Nick Wiley; Mrs. Tindl Rainey; Mr. Will Bradford; Ms. Michelle Ashton; Mrs. Francesca Ries; Mrs. Melodie Griffin; Ms. Julie Lane; Mr. Mike Norberg; Mrs. Dani Richter; Ms. Rachael Schirmer; Mrs. Erin Smart; Ms. Mary Sunukjian

Guests in Attendance
Mr. John Lacy, The Lacy Group/Merrill Lynch; Mr. George Warthen, FWC Chief Conservation Officer; Mr. Rett Boyd, FWC Assistant Executive Director

I. Call to Order

Chair Laura Russell called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. and welcomed the Board members, Foundation staff, and FWC representatives attending the meeting.

Chair Russell thanked everyone for their continued commitment to the Foundation's mission and recognized the collaborative efforts of the Board, Foundation staff, and FWC in advancing conservation initiatives throughout Florida. She noted that the meeting would include updates on the Foundation's strategic priorities, fundraising initiatives, conservation programs, financial performance, grant recommendations, governance matters, and legislative activities.

II. Consent Agenda

Chair Russell introduced the consent agenda, which included approval of the minutes from the March 2, 2026 Board of Directors meeting and the Grants Committee's recommendations for grant requests of less than $50,000, as presented in the Board Book.

Mrs. Daphne Wood moved to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Robert Spottswood, Jr. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Protect Florida Springs 2027 (PFS27) Proposals					
Proposal ID	**Project Title**	**Organization**	**Funds Requested**	**Committee Rec**	**Comments**
PFS27-01	Poe Springs Aquaculture and Restoration Project	Alachua County	$8,000	$8,000	Approved at rec. amount
PFS27-02	Lower Santa Fe River Basin Groundwater Nitrate Assessment III	Alachua County	$12,788	$0	Declined
PFS27-03	Is Your Water Well? Expanding Community Science and Stewardship	Aquifer Watch Inc.	$12,300	$0	Declined
PFS27-04	Enhancing the Understanding of Manatee Activity at Wakulla Springs Through Scientific Monitoring and Capacity Development	Clearwater Marine Aquarium	$21,693	$0	Declined
PFS27-05	Examining Environmental and Recreational Factors Influencing Manatee Movement Between Adjacent Spring Systems	Clearwater Marine Aquarium	$21,500	$0	Declined
PFS27-06	Expansion of the Springs Friendly Yards Program	Defenders of Wildlife	$37,491	$0	Declined
PFS27-07	The Importance of Florida Bay to Our Water Supply	Florida Bay Forever Save Our Waters Inc.	$47,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-08	"Leave Only Bubbles" Springs & Manatee Conservation	Florida State Parks Foundation	$40,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-09	What basal resources support the Wakulla River food web? Tracing food quality, assimilation, and trophic positions	Florida State University	$49,345	$49,345	Approved at rec. amount
PFS27-10	H3 Reel Therapy	Healing Hometown Heroes	$43,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-11	Interactive Mollusk Exhibit at the Florida Springs Welcome Center	Florida Springs Institute	$14,050	$14,050	Approved at rec. amount
PFS27-13	Ecological Alarm System: Continuous Metabolic Monitoring at Florida Springs	Florida Springs Institute	$28,319	$0	Declined
PFS27-15	Identifying Primary Anthropogenic Impacts to Manatee Spring Water Quality and Quantifying Time-Variant Effects	Karst Underwater Research	$25,976	$0	Declined
PFS27-16	Multi-Trophic Fish Community Monitoring, Habitat Assessment, and Nutrient Profiling as Early Indicators of Ecosystem Recovery in a Destabilized Floridan Spring System	Minorities in Shark Science	$49,586	$49,586	Approved at rec. amount
PFS27-17	Trophic Structure, Food Web Dynamics, and Population Health of Critical Fish Communities in a Post-Disturbance Floridan Spring System	Minorities in Shark Science	$49,075	$0	Declined
PFS27-18	Verifying a Novel Coastal Freshwater Springs Detection Methodology and Means of Identifying Minimum Springs Thresholds for Ecologically Meaningful Thermal Refugia	Minorities in Shark Science	$42,933	$0	Declined
PFS27-19	How Far Do Public Access-Point Impacts Extend? Quantifying Effects on Vegetation Refuge Habitat in Florida Springs	New College of Florida	$27,830	$0	Declined

Protect Florida Springs 2027 (PFS27) Proposals (continued)					
Proposal ID	**Project Title**	**Organization**	**Funds Requested**	**Committee Rec**	**Comments**
PFS27-20	Non-Invasive manatee parasite detection from eDNA analysis in Florida seagrass beds and inhabitants	Nova Southeastern University	$47,500	$0	Declined
PFS27-21	From Springs to Reefs: Interconnected Florida Ecosystems. LiveBlue Education, Spring Education Days, & Reef Access for Underserved Youth	Ocean Rescue Alliance International	$48,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-24	Spring Discovery Quest	Tampa Bay Butterfly Foundation	$7,182	$0	Declined
PFS27-25	The Environmental Contribution to Microplastic Contamination in Florida Springs	University of Central Florida	$47,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-27	Forever Chemicals in Florida Springs	University of Florida Foundation	$49,999	$49,999	Approved at rec. amount
PFS27-28	Understanding Detailed Links Between Land Use Expansion and Spring Water Quality Using a Case Study at Lafayette Blue Springs, Florida	University of South Florida	$17,384	$17,384	Approved at rec. amount
PFS27-29	Characterization of sulfidic spring microbial communities resulting from rising sea levels and groundwater overconsumption	University of South Florida	$22,876	$0	Declined
PFS27-30	Virtual Kiosks at Wakulla Springs State Park	Woodville Karst Plain Project	$30,000	$30,000	Approved at rec. amount
		Total	**$800,827**	**$218,364**	

Koons-Ayala Marine Fisheries Science and Conservation Endowment 2027 (KMF27) Proposals					
Proposal ID	**Project Title**	**Organization**	**Funds Requested**	**Committee Rec**	**Comments**
KMF27-01	Expansion of Genomic Techniques for Reef Fisheries Management: A Statewide Approach to Protecting Florida's Reef Fish Populations	University of Central Florida	$25,000	$25,000	Approved at rec. amount
		Total	**$25,000**	**$25,000**	

III. FWC Director's Remarks

Mr. Roger Young, Executive Director of FWC, provided updates on the Atlantic red snapper exempted fishing permit litigation, noting that a federal court's temporary restraining order prevented implementation of the planned Atlantic season. He reported that FWC, together with its partners, continues to pursue legal remedies and remains hopeful that a fall season may be possible.

Mr. Young reviewed the proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 state budget, highlighting anticipated funding for FWC programs, including salary increases for sworn law enforcement officers, a cost-of-living additive for certain non-sworn employees in south Florida, funding for career development initiatives, oyster restoration, the Easton Archery Center at Tenoroc, invasive plant control, and habitat restoration. He thanked the Foundation for its advocacy in support of the Easton Archery Center appropriation.

Mr. Young also reported that FWC had restored online access to certain nonresident hunting and fishing license options following public feedback and stated that the agency plans to work with the legislature during the upcoming session to evaluate the overall license fee structure.

Finally, Mr. Young advised that FWC has begun developing its legislative priorities and budget requests for the coming year and looks forward to coordinating with the Foundation to ensure alignment on shared conservation priorities.

IV. Executive Director's Remarks

Mr. Nick Wiley, Executive Director, provided an update on Foundation operations since the March meeting. He expressed his appreciation to the Board and Foundation staff for their continued support and highlighted the strong partnership between the Foundation and FWC, noting the close collaboration on legislative priorities and conservation initiatives.

Mr. Wiley reported on a recent Foundation staff retreat, during which staff reviewed organizational priorities, strengthened collaboration across offices, and developed the proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 organizational goals. He explained that the goals were designed to provide strategic direction for the coming year while supporting the Foundation's long-term mission and objectives.

Mr. Wiley also recommended revising the Foundation's annual planning process so that future organizational goals and annual budgets would be presented together at the spring Board meeting. He explained that aligning the strategic planning and budgeting processes would provide the Board with additional time to review and provide input before the start of the new fiscal year. Board members expressed support for the revised planning timeline.

Mr. Wiley reviewed the proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 organizational goals, emphasizing priorities related to financial sustainability, philanthropic growth, organizational effectiveness, and continued support of the Foundation's conservation mission. He encouraged Board members to provide additional feedback as implementation progresses throughout the year.

Following discussion, Mr. Carlos Alfonso moved to approve the fiscal year 2027 organizational goals as presented. Mr. Townsend Tarapani seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wiley concluded his remarks by thanking the Board for its continued leadership and reaffirming his commitment to advancing the Foundation's mission and strategic priorities.

V. Communications & Events Report

Ms. Michelle Ashton, Director of Communications & Events, began by providing a final recap of the Foundation's 2026 *A Night for Nature* gala, noting that nearly 250 guests attended and that the event generated more than $1.3 million in gross revenue and nearly $900,000 in net proceeds, including more than $300,000 in unrestricted funds. Ms. Ashton thanked the Host Committee, sponsors, Board members, staff, and volunteers for their contributions to the event's success and reported that planning is underway for the 2027 event. Board members commended staff for a successful event and encouraged interested members to participate in next year's planning committee.

Ms. Ashton then presented the quarterly communications report, highlighting continued growth in the Foundation's digital communications, social media engagement, and earned media efforts. She also reviewed the Foundation's specialty license plate marketing initiatives, noting continued growth in the Conserve Wildlife specialty license plate program and discussing opportunities to improve the performance of the Discover Florida's Oceans specialty license plate.

Board members discussed the Foundation's specialty license plate program and the potential benefits of pursuing a Foundation-sponsored specialty license plate, including a possible Florida's Coastal Corridor plate. Staff was asked to evaluate the feasibility and legislative process associated with creating a new specialty license plate and report its findings to the Board at a future meeting.

Ms. Ashton concluded her report by providing an update on the Florida's Coastal Corridor communications campaign, including preparations for the public launch at ICAST, development of campaign branding and

outreach materials, and plans for an interactive educational exhibit to support future community engagement and fundraising efforts. Board members provided feedback on the campaign and expressed support for the initiative.

VI. Fundraising Update

Mrs. Dani Richter, Director of Philanthropy, presented the fundraising report and provided an update on the Foundation's fundraising strategy and development priorities. She reported that staff is preparing for the public launch of Florida's Coastal Corridor, including targeted outreach to major donors through advance communications and engagement opportunities. She also noted that staff will leverage the upcoming ICAST conference to cultivate new corporate partnerships and identify potential cause-marketing opportunities.

Mrs. Richter reported that the Foundation has engaged fundraising consultant Ms. Jenni Henry to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Foundation's development program. The assessment will include a review of fundraising operations, donor engagement strategies, messaging, and the Foundation's donor pipeline, with recommendations to strengthen philanthropic growth and increase unrestricted giving. Ms. Henry will present her findings and recommendations to the Board at its September meeting.

Mrs. Richter also provided an update on the FYCCN Ad Hoc Committee. She reported that the Committee continues to work with FWC staff to evaluate future fundraising opportunities for youth conservation center improvements and is awaiting FWC's long-term vision and planning documents for the Tenoroc Youth Conservation Center. Mr. George Warthen advised that FWC is completing the necessary environmental studies and planning activities to support future fundraising efforts and will distribute updated project summaries to the Board. Mrs. Richter noted that the Ad Hoc Committee would continue to evaluate the project and provide recommendations to the Board regarding the Foundation's potential fundraising role once additional planning information becomes available.

VII. Finance & Audit Committee Report

Mr. Kent Shoemaker, Treasurer, presented the Finance & Audit Committee report. He encouraged Board members to continue supporting the Foundation through their personal philanthropy and professional networks.

Mr. Shoemaker reported that the Foundation remains in a strong financial position, citing continued growth in operating revenues, investments, charitable contributions, and assets under management. He noted that through the third quarter, the Foundation had provided more than $10.8 million in funding for conservation projects and that budget variances were primarily attributable to project timing rather than operational performance.

Mr. John Lacy, the Foundation's investment advisor, reported that the Foundation's investment portfolio remained in compliance with its established investment policies and risk parameters. He further advised that investment performance continued to support the Foundation's financial objectives and budget assumptions.

Mr. Shoemaker presented the proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 operating budget, which had been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Finance & Audit Committee. Board members discussed several budget assumptions, including employee health insurance costs, projected government grant revenue, and investment management fees. Staff responded to the Board's questions and provided additional clarification regarding the budget projections.

Mr. Shoemaker also presented the Finance & Audit Committee's recommendation to revise the Foundation's unrestricted operating reserve policy by reducing the target reserve from 18 months to 9 months of operating expenses.

On behalf of the Finance & Audit Committee, Mr. Shoemaker moved to approve the fiscal year 2026-2027 operating budget and the revised unrestricted operating reserve target of nine months. Mr. Alfonso seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Conservation

Mrs. Tindl Rainey, Managing Director of Programs & Strategy, presented the conservation report and highlighted several recently completed and ongoing conservation initiatives supported through Foundation funding and partnerships. She reported on successful habitat restoration projects at Lake Trafford, Biscayne Bay, and Lake George, emphasizing the Foundation's role in connecting private philanthropy with on-the-ground conservation projects in partnership with FWC and other conservation organizations.

Mrs. Rainey noted that the Foundation continues to advance conservation through strategic partnerships, donor engagement, and collaborative restoration efforts while expanding opportunities for private investment in Florida's natural resources. She also recognized the contributions of Foundation staff across the philanthropy, finance, communications, and conservation teams in supporting the successful implementation of these projects.

Mr. Will Bradford, Managing Director of Finance & Administration, provided an update on several conservation funding initiatives administered by the Foundation. He reported that the Split Oak Forest conservation project is nearing completion following final approval by the Central Florida Expressway

Authority and advised that the Foundation expects to receive approximately $25 million to establish and administer long-term management funding for the property. Mr. Bradford also updated the Board on the Foundation's conservation partnership funds supporting the Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, and additional federal conservation initiatives, noting that several new funding agreements are expected to provide long-term support for conservation projects while generating unrestricted revenue for the Foundation.

During discussion, Mrs. Wood requested an update on the progress of the Foundation-supported Florida panther feline leukomyelopathy research initiative. Mrs. Rainey advised that staff would provide her with additional information regarding the status of the research and recent scientific findings following the meeting.

Mr. Mike Norberg, Coastal Corridor Project Director, presented an update on Florida's Coastal Corridor and the associated legislative project to expand artificial reef habitat throughout Florida. He reported on progress made to establish project administration procedures, develop project selection criteria, coordinate with FWC on the strategic framework, and prepare for the initial competitive solicitation process. Mr. Norberg also highlighted ongoing efforts to build partnerships that will support long-term implementation of the initiative.

Board members discussed the status of the implementation agreement between the Foundation and FWC. Mr. Norberg reported that the agreement was undergoing final legal review and expected to be executed in the near future. Mr. Young advised that FWC would continue working with Foundation staff to finalize the agreement and advance project implementation. Board members also discussed opportunities to promote completed reef projects through future communications and public outreach efforts.

IX. Grant Proposals over $50,000

Ms. Kathy Barco, Chair of the Grants Committee, presented the Grants Committee report. She thanked the members of the Committee for their thorough review of this year's grant applications and noted that the Committee's work has streamlined the Board's grant review process. Ms. Barco reported that the Foundation received 30 applications requesting more than $1 million through the Protect Florida Springs specialty license plate grant program. Based on the Committee's review and recommendations, eight projects totaling $268,000 were approved through the consent agenda.

Ms. Barco then presented two grant recommendations requiring Board approval. She reported that the Committee recommended funding one project through the Protect Florida Springs conservation grant program and one project through the Koons Marine Fisheries Innovation grant program. She advised that

questions raised during the previous Board meeting regarding the Marine Fisheries Innovation project had been satisfactorily addressed, including ownership and deployment of the fish aggregating device in coordination with FWC and project partners.

Ms. Barco also reported that the Flourish program has repaid its grant obligation to the Foundation in full.

Mrs. Wood moved to approve the Grants Committee's recommendations for the Protect Florida Springs tag, PFS27-12 and grant KMF127-01. Mr. Christopher Carrere seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Protect Florida Springs 2027 (PFS27) Proposals					
Proposal ID	**Project Title**	**Organization**	**Funds Requested**	**Committee Rec**	**Comments**
PFS27-12	Validation and Data Publication of SpringsWatch Citizen Science Data from Florida Spring Systems	Florida Springs Institute	$50,037	$50,037	Approved at recommended amount
PFS27-14	Working Title: Beyond the Light	Karst Productions	$53,190	$0	Declined
PFS27-22	Rock Springs Run Assessment	Orange County Environmental Protection Division	$50,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-23	Save Crystal River Springs Academy (SCRSA): Underwater ROV Monitoring & Peer-to-Peer Citizen Science Service Learning in Kings Bay Springs	Save Crystal River	$50,000	$0	Declined
PFS27-26	A Novel Nature-Based Approach to Reduce Algal Toxins and Key Precursors from Florida Springs and Connected Water Bodies	University of Central Florida	$50,000	$0	Declined
		Total	**$253,227**	**$50,037**	

Koons Marine Fisheries Innovation Grant Program 2027 (KMFI27) Proposals					
Proposal ID	**Project Title**	**Organization**	**Funds Requested**	**Committee Rec**	**Comments**
KMFI27-01	Utilizing Smart FADs in Biscayne National Park	FWC – FWRI	$77,000	$77,000	Approved at recommended amount
		Total	**$77,000**	**$77,000**	

X. Government Relations

Mr. Spottswood, Jr., Chair of the Government Relations Committee, presented the Government Relations Committee report. He reported that, while the Foundation did not pursue any independent legislative appropriations during the 2026 legislative session, the Committee worked in support of several FWC legislative priorities. Mr. Spottswood, Jr. also provided an update on legislative funding discussions related to

artificial reef initiatives, noting that a proposed $5 million appropriation was ultimately not included in the final state budget.

Mr. Spottswood, Jr. advised that the Committee has begun coordinating with Foundation and FWC leadership to identify legislative priorities and develop a strategy for the 2027 legislative session. He noted that the Committee will also consider potential government relations priorities as part of the Foundation's ongoing strategic planning efforts.

XI. Governance

Chair Russell, on behalf of the Governance Committee, presented the Governance Committee report. She reported that the Committee has begun the process of identifying candidates to fill upcoming vacancies on the Board of Directors. Chair Russell encouraged Board members to submit recommendations for prospective directors as the Committee begins its recruitment and interview process. Board members also discussed the importance of maintaining a diverse Board with a broad range of professional expertise and perspectives.

Chair Russell further reported that the Foundation's annual conflict of interest disclosure statement has been updated to include an additional disclosure related to relationships with service vendors. She advised that the revision was made as a governance best practice and that no Board action was required.

XII. Open Session

Chair Russell opened the floor for new business or any final items the Board wished to raise. Mr. Alfonso provided an update on ongoing efforts to secure funding for the proposed FWC headquarters. He reported that although previously proposed funding was not included in the final state budget, discussions continue regarding potential funding for project planning and design to support future development of the facility.

Chair Russell announced that the FWC Officers' Association gala will be held on October 24, 2026. She advised that the Foundation would sponsor a table at the event and encouraged Board members and their organizations to consider supporting the event through attendance or sponsorship.

Chair Russell also reminded Board members to make hotel reservations for the September Board meeting and to contact Foundation staff for travel assistance as needed.

XIII. Closing Remarks

There being no further business, Chair Russell thanked the Board and staff for their continued commitment and contributions.

Chair Russell then adjourned the meeting at 4:16 p.m.

Laura Russell _____ 10/6/2026 _____

Mrs. Laura Russell, Board Chair — Date

_____ 10/21/2026 _____

Mr. Robert Spottswood, Jr., Secretary — Date

_____ 10/8/2026 _____

Mr. Nick Wiley, Executive Director — Date