



A Recap of Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park News and What Lies Ahead . . .

This year 2022 to date has comprised a litany of activities at Wakulla Springs State Park! They ranged across various areas involving the virtual, zoom, and hybrid environments. It is so good to be interacting live with Friends members again! Although we are still holding hybrid meetings (with most still using zoom), there is light at the end of the cavern!

CLIMATE UP CLOSE

In early January, the Friends held a well-attended “Climate Up Close” Panel discussion at the Park’s Administration Building (and virtually). The climate scientists were on a speaking tour of the Panhandle; visiting Tallahassee, Wakulla Springs, and Apalachicola on this latest leg, as they travel to communities throughout the U.S. this year. The climate scientists from NOAA, UC Berkeley, NYU and Harvard University presented on the current state of climate knowledge; what is “Certain or Settled” and what is still “Uncertain” in the field of climate science research. In addition, they discussed how climate change has impacted extreme weather events, including future projections of climate change. Their website is: www.climateupclose.org and their presentation may also be found on the Friends website.

WKPP PRESENTATION

Also, in January, the Friends also had an invited talk from Casey McKinlay, Director of the Woodville Karst Plain Project (WKPP) and expert cave diver, who spoke on the Chip’s Hole cave system. There is currently a rezoning request (from Agricultural to Commercial) to the Wakulla County Planning Commission for a portion of a 7-acre parcel of land located at the Hwy 319 and 267 intersection, at the northwest corner of Bloxham Cutoff in northern Wakulla County, less than 5 miles away from Wakulla Springs.

The new owners (SW GA Oil) are interested to build a 16-pump gas station with a car wash at the site, which sits directly above the Chip’s Hole cave system (which is part of the Floridan aquifer and links to Wakulla Springs). This 7-acre sandy soil area is also above one of the shallower sections (of only 100 feet) of the Chip’s Hole cave system.

Given the sensitive nature of the site (in terms of shallow depth to the cave system and sandy soil) and large risk of storage tank malfunctions and leakage of contaminants, the Friends and Park are very concerned about this site's potential to house a future gas station. Although this item was pulled from the Wakulla County Commission agenda (and a few hours before the commission meeting) on February 22nd, it is expected to resurface perhaps at the end of this year. It should also be noted that the county commission is at the beginning stages of forming a working group to assist in developing "cave setback" requirements as a part of the Springs Protection Ordinance. A representative from the Friends of Wakulla Springs will be included in this working group.

ANNUAL MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 27th

The Friends annual meeting was well-attended this year at the Wakulla Springs Lodge Terrace Room. We are thrilled to induct two additional and talented Board members this year: Dr. Ming Ye and Karen Taylor. We look forward to working with Ming and Karen as they forge out their areas of interest on behalf of the Friends and the Park over these next two years.

Special thanks to Guest Services (Michelle and Jasmine) for providing the space, tables/chairs and drinks for the event. Also, we're so grateful for Park Manager Amy and Dr. Jim Dunbar's presentation(s) on Park updates, and the recent archeological findings at the Park, respectively, and to Park Ranger Kat, who took us on a fabulous boat ride at the conclusion of the meeting.

The President's award went to Cynthia Paulson, who has done such incredible work these last few years in setting up a top-notch membership system for the Friends using Wild Apricot, in addition to managing the social media marketing area. She always has her finger on the Friends pulse and we hope she'll enjoy her next stage in her journey and continue to stay plugged in. We also presented the Wakulla Springs Champion Award to Terry Ryan, Chair of the Tallahassee Sewage and Wakulla Basin Advocacy Group, at the Friends April meeting, for his "Significant contributions and resolute efforts to stop sewage spills and to protect Wakulla Spring and River."



Cynthia Paulson & Pres. Julie Harrington



Terry Ryan & Pres. Julie Harrington

INAUGURAL TALLAHASSEE HISTORY FESTIVAL – HELD MARCH 26th

The Friends was invited by TCC and the Tallahassee Historical Society to participate as an exhibitor in the first Tallahassee History Festival held at Kleman Plaza on March 26th. The event included a variety of speakers including Ms. Althemese Barnes, Dr. AJ Brickler, Dr. Jim Dunbar, Ms DeLaitre Hollinger, and Ms Misty Penton, among others. We enjoyed interacting with the public while showcasing Wakulla Springs State Park, in addition to meeting the other exhibitors.

Linda Keays (and David Shephard) did an amazing job organizing the Friends team, and setting up the Friends table for the event. Linda definitely brought her former Science teacher “A Game” for this event! Thanks also to former Friends President Madeleine Carr and new Friends member (and volunteer) Melanie Watson, for assisting at the Friends table.



Friends Volunteers Linda Keays (on right) and David Shephard

WATER SAMPLING PROGRAM

The regional water sampling program the Friends are involved in, with the University of Florida’s Dr. John Bowden (Dpt. of Physiological Sciences & Veterinary Sciences), has now concluded. We are awaiting the sampling results for levels of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), which will next be uploaded to a website, and made available to the public. Dr. Bowden has also initiated a second research request: testing sediments relating to a manatee study conducted by Dr. Bowden and his Ph.D. graduate student, Emily Griffin. Dr. Bowden has expressed that the website is almost completed, and that he’ll be releasing the first couple sets of data to the website before the end of May.

FRIENDS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN - UPDATE

The Friends “Capital Campaign” is officially underway. Since rolling off the Friends Board in March, Dale Allen graciously agreed to Chair this new committee.

Our first order of business was to conduct an entire boat fleet assessment to better understand the maintenance requirements of each vessel. During February, a marine engineer from Panama City evaluated each of the 8 boats and provided us with their final reports, which we received in late February. It took a few weeks to distribute to the FDEP Division of Recreation & Parks and for everyone to become better informed. At the same time, the FDEP also conducted an inspection

of the boats. In addition, acoustic soundings were performed in order to assess the hull thickness.

Both boat inspection report findings essentially had similar conclusions; these vintage 50+ year old aluminum boats needed immediate attention relating to upgrading/repairing the vessels and adhering to safety and maintenance standards and protocols.

The boats are currently offline while receiving these long overdue safety and maintenance care, and necessary upgrades. A beautiful boat “the Monroe” has been generously provided to the Park from the good folks (Friends of Crystal River & Guest Services International) in Crystal River, until our fleet is ready to launch again.

According to the FDEP press release: “Tours are offered daily between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Availability is limited and reservations are required. Reservations are available online and should be made before arriving at the park.” We’re hoping it will be a matter of only a few months more in order for a few of the river boats to be ready once again for the jungle boat river cruises. We’ll continue to keep you posted on the process of the boat replacements/repairs.



FLY TYING WORKSHOP WITH MR. TOM LOGAN HELD ON APRIL 9TH

On the second Saturday in April, a remarkable fly tying class was held by Tom Logan, of North Florida Fly Fishing Adventures, and a certified Wildlife Biologist, at the Park Admin Building. The Friends members learned the specifics of fly tying including tying both a wet and a dry fly. Tom expressed that he would be happy to provide a follow up workshop soon on the techniques of fly fishing. We can't wait!



Western Coachman by Tom Logan



Fly Tying with Tom Logan

FLORIDA TALKS PROGRAM SERIES

In April, we concluded the monthly virtual series “Florida Talks Program”, based on a second grant awarded by the Florida Humanities Council. Our masterful and informative speakers were: Craig Pittman “Oh Florida”, Diane Roberts “Dream State”, and Cynthia Barnett “The Sound of the Sea: Seashells and the Fate of the Oceans”. The virtual series was recorded and is available on our website if you weren't able to attend (or would like to watch again). Based on positive member feedback and high demand for the speaker series to date, we're planning to reapply for this grant again for the speaker's series to continue this upcoming Spring 2023.

Click the image below to watch the recorded programs.



Craig Pittman



Diane Roberts



Cynthia Barnett

VAL & DAVE LAHART'S DONATION FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In early September, the Friends received a generous donation of \$7,500 from Val and Dave LaHart distributed through the Community Foundation of North Florida. We are so thankful for this kind support from the LaHart's. The Friends VP Dara Wilson and Park Specialist Maria Wilhemy are leading this effort, and have started the planning process on developing an educational program at the Park!

YOU ARE SPECIAL!

As a Member of the Friends of Wakulla Springs, you hold a special place in our organization. Your support to the Friends of Wakulla Springs is the backbone of our association and helps us to crystalize our plans into solutions to continue to serve the needs of Wakulla Springs State Park.

We have now received clearance from FDEP to embark on a Capital Campaign to benefit the Park; details will be forthcoming soon. In addition, we hope to schedule more live events once again including our Annual Classic Car & Motorcycle Show and other events. Other exciting park projects are on the horizon, so please stay tuned for details....

Thank you again for your continued support of Wakulla Springs State Park. We truly appreciate you! Please let me know if you have any comments and/or questions, and look forward to seeing or speaking with you soon!

Sincerely,



Julie Harrington, President

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WakullaSprings.org



FRIENDS OF
**WAKULLA SPRINGS
STATE PARK**

Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park

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