SAVE LAKE WEIR NEWSLETTER

The Save Lake Weir Association is committed to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the magnificent natural beauty that is Lake Weir.

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February 2025

Reese Bourgeois, President
Bill Trice, Vice President
Laura McDonald, Secretary
Bonnie Meyer, Treasurer

Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, February 23, 2025, 1:00 PM

The annual meeting will be held at the Lake Weir Yacht Club, 13830 SE 145th Avenue Rd, East Lake Weir. The Yacht Club is located 2.5 miles east of Ocklawaha. Turn west from CR 25 onto SE 139th Place and drive to the end of the road. Dessert will be served at 1:00 pm. The meeting will start approximately at 1:30 pm. Board of Directors for the coming year will be elected. Members are encouraged to bring to the Board of Director's attention their concerns and anything they feel the board should address this year.

Membership

Your dues must be current in order to vote at this meeting and receive newsletters. Annual dues are $10 per person per year and $100 per person for a life membership. Enclosed for your convenience is a return envelope and membership card to be filled out and returned. *Life members should use the membership card only to update email, address, and phone numbers.* If you have not received an email from us this year, we need to confirm a correct email address. According to the by-laws, if annual dues are delinquent more than one year, membership is terminated. We need your membership in order to be an effective organization. You are able to join or renew your membership online. Go to www.savelakeweir.com and click Pay Online (top right). Thanks to all of the new members that joined throughout the year in 2024. There are still a number of new residents on Lake Weir so invite your neighbors!

Recognition of Board members

Greg Wiley – At Large
Reese Bourgeois - Little Lake Weir
Carol Caruso - East Lake Weir
Cliff Forrester - Sunset Harbor
Bill Trice – At Large
Tom Cartwright - At Large
Bonnie Meyer - Weirsdale
Jane Sands - Ocklawaha
Laura McDonald - At Large

Elections

Three seats on the board shall be filled by election each year as stated in the By-Laws. Current board members Cliff Forrester and Tom Cartwright have agreed to continue to serve. Carol Caruso has decided not to re-run for election – we thank Carol for her many years of service.

We are currently seeking volunteers to fill this board member position to replace Carol. Please reach out to Reese Bourgeois at 386-208-6146 or email us at savelakeweirclub@gmail.com if you are interested in becoming a member of the board.

Cliff Forrester – Cliff is currently serving on the Save Lake Weir board as the Sunset Harbor representative after having served as the Treasurer for 20 years. He as his wife Beth moved here from Michigan 38 years ago. They have owned property in the Southwood subdivision in Sunset Harbor since 1978 and lived there permanently since 1984. Cliff stays busy trimming trees and playing golf. He is concerned about the future of Lake Weir and has agreed to continue serving the cause on the board of directors.

Tom Cartwright - Tom bought a house with his wife Stephanie on Bird Island 38 years ago. Along with their two sons Michael and Brian, they have spent many summers and weekends fishing, boating, and swimming at Lake Weir. Now with their three grandchildren, the whole family continues to enjoy the lake life. Also, Tom's brother and his wife recently moved to Lake Weir. Tom retired after practicing medicine for over 35 years in Ocala. He previously served on the Marion County Water Quality board and continues to be concerned about the environment and water quality at Lake Weir.

Speaker at Annual Meeting – Patrick Burger, PE, Senior Project Manager from JonesEdmunds

Patrick Burger is a seasoned Water Resources Engineer with over 30 years of experience in water resource management, strategic planning, and project leadership. He spent much of his career at the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), where he managed over $74 million in cost-share projects, developed advanced groundwater modeling tools, and created evaluation metrics for flood protection and septic-to-sewer programs. Currently serving as a Senior Project Manager at Jones Edmunds, Patrick continues to provide innovative solutions for water resource challenges. He holds a Master of Engineering in Hydraulics and Hydrology and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Florida and is a licensed Professional Engineer. Outside his professional life, Patrick is an entrepreneur and outdoor enthusiast with a passion for biking, hiking, and travel.

Introduction to New Water Resources Liaison for Marion County

Trevor Knight is the Water Resources Liaison for the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. He has been with the County since the beginning of 2023 and oversees outreach and education efforts pertaining to water conservation in Marion County. Outreach efforts are focused on efficient home water use, water quality protection, responsible fertilizing, stormwater management, wastewater management, and Florida's unique water resources. Trevor has spent his career working in freshwater fisheries and waterways management throughout Florida, Mississippi, and Texas.

Current Projects and Updates

Lake Watch

We have an active Lake Watch program in conjunction with the University of Florida. Six of our members collect water samples every month across the Big and Little Lake Weir, and Sunset Harbor. The recent rains have led to a dramatic improvement in water quality, moving from an average of 4 feet in depth (Secchi measurement device) to 6 feet, with an occasional reading registering even deeper. Let's hope this stays in place. If you want to join in this effort, let Reese know.

Update on Moving from Septic to Sewer

Residents from Lake Kingsley southwest of Jacksonville reached out to Save Lake Weir to talk of the progress they had made in getting the Florida DEP to move forward on funding a septic to sewer conversion. Their first step was to have a contamination source study done by an environmental consulting firm, which highlighted some key sources of septic from a nearby military base. The identification of the source and the resulting impact on the lake led the DEP to fully fund the septic to sewer conversion – the project is still underway.

As follow up, we met with our commissioner, Matt McClain, several county officials, and JonesEdmunds Environmental Consulting to see if this approach would be appropriate for Lake Weir. The consensus by the end of the meeting was that it is clear from the map of septic systems in the Lake Weir watershed (over 2000) that septic systems are the leading contributor to the deterioration of the lake. The county felt that a $150,000 study to determine point sources of pollutants would be a waste of money. The county submitted a $2 million dollar grant request to the DEP last year to fund the design phase of a sewer system for the north shore of Lake Weir (including Ocklawaha). It was rejected but it has been the experience of the county that the DEP will eventually fund projects of this nature. JonesEdmunds will work with the county to maximize the wording of the grant, and it will be submitted each year until it is approved. Once the design phase for the north shore is completed, the project will be considered 'shovel ready' and the DEP is much more likely to fund the implementation phase of the project.

Bottom line – we are still years away from any sewer system but if the design grant gets accepted, we would probably be 4-5 years away from seeing an actual sewer system on the north shore. The same process would be repeated as sewer implementation occurs around the lake.

Communication Update

Last summer, Save Lake Weir mailed out an informational letter concerning the Algae Bloom and what homeowners can do to mitigate its growth. This is a complex issue with many factors contributing to the algae growth, only some of which can be controlled. Fertilization is one; another is shoreline vegetation. By self-regulating a no winter fertilizer schedule, residents can enjoy both green lawns and clean water. Also included in this letter was the Silver Springs BMAP chart showing the annual loading numbers. This chart illustrates that septic is the highest driver of nitrates at roughly 30%, with urban turf grass fertilizer as the second highest source at 20%.

This past fall, a postcard was mailed to residents reminding them of ways to be Septic Smart. Included in this information were details about grant money that Marion County offers to help residents with their septic maintenance, pump-out, and inspection costs.

Guide to Homeowners Waterfront Living

You can help Protect, Preserve, and Restore Lake Weir by making some simple changes:

1. **Join the Save Lake Weir Association**
2. **Keep Septic Tanks and Drains Buffered from the Lake**
    a. Keep them away from the water's edge and be sure they are in proper working order. Washing machine and sink grey water should be filtered through a septic system before reaching the lake.
3. **Leave the Shoreline Undisturbed**
    a. Don't remove shoreline or shallow vegetation. This important plant life traps and filters any contaminants or harmful nutrients from entering the lake. This plant life is the last line of defense for the lake.
    b. Incorporate a swale that can catch runoff and provide treatment of the storm water
    c. Maintain at least a 10-foot low-maintenance zone between your yard and beach. In this area, use plants that are Florida Friendly, which reduces the need for fertilizer
    d. Property owners must obtain a county permit before clearing any vegetation along more than half of the shoreline bordering their property or more than 50 feet — whichever is less – see 369.20 Florida Aquatic Weed Control Act.
4. **Report Violators**
    a. Report offenders by calling Chris Haggerty at of Florida Wildlife at (352) 726-8622
5. **No Phosphates**
    a. Use detergents that do not contain phosphates. Excessive phosphates act as a nutrient, causing too much algae growth in the lake. Algae steals the oxygen, killing the fish and plant life of the lake.
6. **Fertilize and Spray Carefully**
    a. Toxins and the high load of nutrients found in fertilizers are damaging to the lake. Avoid getting these chemicals in your driveway or on the street, as they add to the storm run-off and end up in the lake.
7. **Be careful with Grass and Leaves**
    a. Don't blow or wash yard waste into the street where it could enter the lake, instead bag them or start a mulch pile. Mulch is beneficial to your yard but hurts the lake.
8. **Wash Your Car on The Grass**
    a. Run-off from washing your car in the driveway or the street makes its way into the lake and damages it.
9. **Don't Litter**
    a. Wrappers, cans, and bottles pollute the lake, become hazards for boaters, and depreciate the aesthetic of the lake.
10. **Be a Responsible Boater**
    a. Restrict high speed boating to deeper waters and be mindful that the oil, gasoline, and trash that you allow into the water damages the lake.
11. **Clean Up After Your Pets**
    a. Pet droppings harm the lake, so please be sure to properly dispose of your pet's droppings. Don't bathe your pet in the lake, as detergents harm the lake.