Save Lake Weir Annual Membership Meeting

February 23, 2025

The Save Lake Weir (SLW) meeting took place at the Lake Weir Yacht Club. Members arrived around 1:00, and President Reese Bourgeois called the meeting to order at 1:15.

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Kristen Roman, and seconded by Bill Trice.

Treasurer Bonnie Meyer gave the financial update. Currently SLW has a total of $25,055.93 in its accounts.

Reese started the meeting by introducing each board member and asked for nominations to fill Carol Caruso's position on the board. In addition, Reese ask the members to vote on two board members up for renewal, Cliff Forrester and Tom Cartwright. The yays confirmed their appointment. He also recognized past president Jane Sand's 90th birthday and thanked her for all her efforts serving on this board through the years. The next topic of discussion covered some history of the origin of SLW and what the board has worked on over the last several years. This includes an updated website, increased education communications, and most notably the septic to sewer project, including what did not work and why, and what the next steps are. Marion County is in the top 5 counties nationwide for its number of septic tanks, and making substantial changes in this area will be an expensive endeavor. Both state and federal funding will be needed and to that end SLW will be applying every year for a $2 million grant from the state as a first step towards getting the septic to sewer project funded.
Finally, Reese mentioned the recent news article warning citizens about the blue-green algae bloom. As of this meeting, there has been no confirmation from the DEP that the testing had shown toxins. This is different than the brownish colored algae we all see floating around the lake. Any algae spotted should be reported to the DEP so the state has record of its presence.
https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3444948/Algal-Bloom-Reporting-Form

One of the guest speakers, Patrick Burger from JonesEdmunds, cancelled at the last minute.

The other speaker was Trevor Knight, the Water Resources Liaison for the Marion County Board of Commissioners. Topics he covered included:

*Agencies involved with lake issues: 1) FWC – anything to do with fish and wildlife or law enforcement 2) DEP or SWFMD – water quality issues 3) SJRWMD – water supply issues 4) DOH – water health advisories. Trevor acts as the liaison between each of these groups and the County to streamline the communication between a fairly siloed department structure for water topics.

*Lake water sources and lack of flow – There is no inflow or outflow to Lake Weir. The best way for us to create some flow in the lake is to keep the canal between Big and Little Lake Weir cleaned out, and to increase the effectiveness of the culverts under the land bridge to Bird Island. There is a project in the queue with the county to replace the culverts with larger ones, currently waiting on permitting from the Army Corps of Engineers. Also, several members brought up the issue of the muck that has accumulated in front of the culverts, preventing any water from flowing through them. It was recommended for residents to call County Commissioner Matt McClain about the county clearing out the muck. One other possible action considered was to modify the level of the weir.

*Algae removal –Trevor mentioned a project by the SJRWMD on Lake Jessup in Seminole County. This project removes the algae and muck, thereby removing the excess nutrients.

*Septic systems – The question about the recommended timeline for septic pump out was asked. Trevor recommended on average every 4 yrs. Keeping the sludge levels low helps control nutrients entering the lake. The newer, more advanced systems increase the effectiveness of removing nutrients by up to 30-35%. The standard septic systems are 60% effective at removing nutrients while the advanced systems are up to 95% effective. Another question was asked about the County's involvement with septic permits, and Trevor stated that this is not under county jurisdiction but rather the DEP.
On October 1st of this year there will be more funds available for the Septic Grants, incentivizing residents to pump out their septic tanks. There is also grant money available to help residents pay for an irrigation retrofit using smart technology.

Based on members questions Trevor also discussed:
*Other nutrient sources – Wetlands are the largest source of nutrients, especially during hurricane and flooding seasons.
*The FWC sprays for invasive plants, namely Hydrilla, Hyacinth, and Torpedo Grass.

SLW member Don Browning spoke for a few minutes on the impact of Injection Flow from Gainesville/Alachua County.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Submitted by Laura McDonald