

Minutes

General Membership, Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges

Tuesday, August 9, 2011, Dow Woods Unit, SBNWR & Chili's Restaurant, Lake Jackson, Texas

The meeting unofficially began at ~10:00 AM under the new pavilion at the Dow Woods Unit of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. Here the membership was introduced to the inaugural class of refuge Junior Naturalists, which was finishing a class on plant collecting and preservation. This pilot program offered 15 sessions for 16 fifth and sixth grade students from five area school districts. The students were selected on the basis of their short essay on why they wanted to participate in this program. They came from a pool of 30 children nominated by science teachers.

Dow Woods Open House

Friends President Ed Barrios announced that a "grand opening" of the Dow Woods Unit will be held on Saturday, October 15th with ceremonies involving dignitaries from The Dow Chemical Company, Brazoria County, and possibly the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD awarded the \$200,000 grant for the DW trails.).

General Meeting

The membership moved to Chili's Restaurant in Lake Jackson. 18 voting members were present, along with four employees of the TMCNWRC¹ and two guests¹. The business meeting was called to order at 11:23 AM.

Revision of Bylaws

Ed Barrios reviewed the proposed changes to the Friends Bylaws (copies of this draft changes were previously sent to the voting membership.). The major revisions would increase the number of board members to 15, would authorize a minimal out-of-pocket spending capability for chapter officers (\$400) and non-officer board members (\$150) that would not require prior approval by the board, and would simplify membership categories. Sharon Steward moved and Jeanne Manry seconded to accept the Bylaws as amended. The motion passed with no dissent.

Ed Barrios noted that Friends is required by our charter to execute a partnership agreement with the TMCNWRC; this had never been done. Ed, TMCNWRC Project Leader Jennifer Sanchez, and Friends board member Denis Mudderman are developing this agreement under the USFWS template. Once accepted, our Bylaws will again need revision to comply with the partnership agreement.

Financial Report

¹ Texas Mid-coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Treasurer Krissy Plunkett reported that our current balance is \$163,102.45, with \$142,954.80 being restricted to spending on dedicated grants, and the balance of \$20,117.65 being general funds available for discretionary spending.

Grants

Marty Cornell noted that Friends currently is working on twelve active grants having a grant value of \$480,787, with in-kind obligations of \$125,792 (Much of these moneys have already been received and spent). Since the inception of Friends, including the value of the active projects, Friends has been granted more than \$743,040, with an in-kind contribution of \$213,099 (Grants in our early years are unclear). [Note that fundraising and monetary donation revenues from Migration Celebration are not included in this grant tally. Since 2006, income from Migration Celebration activities have totaled \$161,194.08 with net revenue after expenses of \$32,990.11]

Our Dow Woods project is the largest in progress, funded by three grants (\$200,000 from the TPWD, \$20,000 from the Dow Chemical Company, and \$69,525 as a Challenge Cost Share from the USFWS).

The Dow Community Grant program has just awarded Friends with a \$25,000 grant to build a boardwalk over Otter Slough near the BNWR headquarters office. Work will shortly begin on this project. We have applied to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for a \$5,000 grant to build the Otter Slough trail associated with this boardwalk.

Ron Bisbee reported that Friends has been awarded a grant of \$32,000 by the USFWS under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act for our fourth mottled duck wetland restoration project.

Friends has applied to the Houston Endowment for a \$300,000 grant for pre-acquisition funds to effect the purchase of ten tracts in the Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem. We are optimistic that this grant will be awarded.

Conserving the Future Conference

Ed Barrios and Neal McLain reviewed this conference that they recently attended on behalf of the FOBWR. Details are available on our website. Ed noted that many chapters do not charge dues to active volunteers, and suggested that we should consider adopting this policy. [Note: this would require a change in our Bylaws].

Phenology Presentation

Bill Ostrand, USFWS zone biologist headquartered at the TMCNWRC, gave a stimulating talk on phenology. This discipline utilizes citizen scientists to collect data, and the membership was shown how to participate via the National Phenology Network.

The meeting was adjourned about 2:30 PM.

Submitted by Marty Cornell, substituting for Friends Secretary Edgar Johnson

ⁱ Voting Members Present:

Ed Barrios
Ron Bisbee
Barbara Burkhardt
Marty Cornell
Justina Dent
Mickey Dufilho
Sarah Heller
Phil Huxford
Donna Jablecki
Jeanne Manry
Neal McLain
Kathlene Murray
David Plunkett
Krissy Plunkett
Archie Pratt
Sharon Stewart
Tom Taroni
Tory Tvedt