

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: January 6, 2009

Date Submitted: December 18, 2008

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator
Lindsay Stevens, Assistant County Administrator
Melissa Corbett, Planner II

Subject: Board Consideration of Wakulla Springshed Regional Partnership
Memorandum of Understanding

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item requests Board consideration of the Wakulla Springshed Regional Partnership Memorandum of Understanding, which will be presented at an upcoming Wakulla Springs Restoration Workshop on February 25 and 26, 2009.

Background:

On July 5, 1994, the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners showed their commitment to protecting the Wakulla Springshed by adopting the Wakulla Springs Water Quality Protection Ordinance (the "Ordinance"). This document created additional regulations for properties surrounding, and North of, the Northern portion of the Wakulla River and Wakulla Springs. It primarily sets forth requirements for the handling or storage of regulated substances in quantities greater than five gallons. Some of the substances regulated by the Ordinance include pesticides and gasoline. Because of the relatively large amount regulated (five gallons), a typical residence would not be affected by these requirements; thus, it primarily impacts commercial activities. The Ordinance also requires reporting of any discharges of regulated substances to the County Planning or Emergency Management office and that businesses utilize discharge prevention practices. Additionally, any proposed zoning or land use changes within the Protection Area must be closely reviewed for consistency with the Ordinance and any other applicable provisions of the Land Development Code or the Comprehensive Plan. This protection zone was expanded to encompass the entire Wakulla Springs basin area lying within the County on April 21, 2008 by the Board of County Commissioners.

Wakulla County is not the only entity to recognize the importance of Wakulla Springs. On May 11th-13th of 2005, a workshop was held to address the health of Wakulla Springs and was titled "4th Annual Hydrogeology Consortium Workshop: Solving Water Pollution Problems in the Wakulla Springshed of North Florida". This workshop allowed a wide variety of entities and citizens to learn about the ecological health of the Springs and what could be done to alleviate the pollution problems being experienced there. A report "Degradation of Water Quality at Wakulla Springs, Florida: Assessment and Recommendations" was produced to consolidate the findings and recommendations to come forth from this workshop (Attachment #1).

Multiple efforts, such as the County wide requirement for Performance Based Septic Tanks and the expansion of the Springs Protection area mentioned herein, have been undertaken since the 2005 workshop to address pollution reduction. The County also participated in a multi-jurisdictional Wakulla Springshed workshop on April 10, 2008, which built upon past workshops on the spring basin and for the first time brought together Leon and Wakulla Counties and the City of Tallahassee representatives to discuss this issue. To further these efforts, a Wakulla Springs Restoration Workshop is scheduled for February 25 and 26, 2009. Wakulla County, in addition to Leon County and the City of Tallahassee, are being asked to participate in this two day event and to all commit to considering ways to reduce the pollutants entering our waters and take appropriate actions to ensure this pollutant reduction. A \$5,000.00 contribution towards this workshop was previously approved by the Board. Scheduled at the end of the forum is a time for all of the government entities to once again show their commitment to protecting the Springs by jointly signing a Memorandum Of Understanding (Attachment #3).

Analysis:

The February 2009 workshop will focus on the pollution that enters the Springshed from on-site and central septic systems and what steps might be taken to address these issues. As such, the Memorandum Of Understanding includes language which asks local governments to consider ways to manage these septic systems, such as through a common regional wastewater entity. In addition, commitments are also requested in additional areas such as government-led measures to reduce pollutants from entering stormwater.

This document is being presented to the Board in advance of the February meeting in order for the Board to have an opportunity to evaluate the Memorandum and suggest potential alterations for its wording or content. Should the Board agree to support the inter-local efforts provided for in the Memorandum, or Board-directed changes to the Memorandum, the Chairman, and any attending Commissioners, will be asked to sign the document at the end of the February Workshop. As such, the presence of all of the County Commissioners is requested for this important event.

Options:

1. Approve the Wakulla Springshed Regional Partnership Memorandum of Understanding in its current form.
2. Approve the Wakulla Springshed Regional Partnership Memorandum of Understanding with Board directed changes.
3. Do not approve the Wakulla Springshed Regional Partnership Memorandum of Understanding.
4. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1 Staff in Wakulla County, as well as other government entities, has had an opportunity to evaluate the proposed Memorandum and make suggested changes. The draft under consideration allows the Board to direct staff to explore what measures may assist in improving the water quality of Wakulla Springs through Interlocal efforts.

Attachment(s):

1. 2005 Workshop Report “Degradation of water quality at Wakulla Springs, Florida: assessment and recommendations”.
2. Draft Agenda for the February 25 and 26, 2009 Wakulla Springs Restoration Workshop.
3. Draft Wakulla Springshed Regional Partnership Memorandum of Understanding.