

City of Crystal River



Agenda Packet
for
Regular Council Meeting
Monday, April 23rd, 2018
7:00 p.m.



Agenda
Crystal River City Council
Regular Council Meeting
Monday, April 23rd, 2018 @ 7:00 p.m.
Council Chamber, City Hall

Jim Farley, Mayor
Ken Brown, Council Seat #1/ Vice Mayor
Mike Gudis, Council Seat #2
Pat Fitzpatrick, Council Seat #3
Robert Holmes, Council Seat #5

Dave Burnell, City Manager
George G. Angeliadis, City Attorney
Mia Fink, City Clerk

NOTICE TO PUBLIC

Any person who decides to appeal any decision of the Governing Body with respect to any matter considered at this meeting will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose may need to provide that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. (Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes)

Any person requiring reasonable accommodation at this meeting because of a disability or physical impairment should contact the City of Crystal River, City Manager's Office, 123 N.W. Highway 19, Crystal River, Florida, 34428 (352) 795-4216, at least two (2) days before the meeting.

GENERAL MEETING PROCEDURES

1. In consideration of others, we ask that you follow a few basic rules:
 - A. Please turn cell phones off, or place on vibrate. If you must make a call, please step out into the hallway, in order not to interrupt the meeting.
 - B. If you must speak to someone in the audience, please speak softly or go out into the hallway, in order not to interrupt the meeting.
 - C. Personal comments/remarks, directed to Council or the public, are not allowed and are considered out of order.
2. Public comment is allowed two (2) times during the Council meeting:
 - A. **Public Input:**
The general public will be allowed three (3) minutes to speak during the *Public Input* section at the beginning of the meeting. The topic is open.
 - B. **Public Input:**
The general public will be allowed five (5) minutes to speak during the *Public Input* section at the end of the meeting. The topic is open.

1. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Roll Call.....City Clerk Fink
- B. Invocation.....Council member Holmes
- C. Pledge of Allegiance.....Mayor Farley
- D. Recognition of Elected Officials in Attendance.....Mayor Farley

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

3. PRESENTATIONS

- A. Arbor Week Proclamation.....Crystal River Tree Board
- B. National Women's Health Week Proclamation.....American Lung Association

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Motion to approve minutes from the Regular City Council meeting held April 12, 2018
- B. Monthly Departmental Reports for the month of March
- C. Motion to appoint Michael Martin to the Planning Commission Alternate Seat No. 2 and Gregory Acker to At-Large Seat No. 6

6. PUBLIC INPUT

(Time Limit of Three Minutes)

7. PUBLIC HEARING

8. CITY ATTORNEY

9. CITY MANAGER

- A. Discussion and comparison of the two proposals for Three Sister Springs Property by United States Fish and Wildlife Service and City of Crystal River Staff
- B. Motion to approve the United States Fish and Wildlife Services Plan for management of the Three Sisters Springs property
- C. Motion to approve the City of Crystal River's Alternate Plan for management of the Three Sister Springs property

10. CITY COUNCIL

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Mayor Farley
 - *Waterfronts Advisory Board*
- B. Vice Mayor Brown

- *Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority*
 - *Crystal River Main Street*
- C. Council member Fitzpatrick
- *Metropolitan Planning Organization*
- D. Council member Gudis
- *Tourist Development Council*
 - *Library Governing Advisory Board*
 - *Florida League of Cities*
 - *Citrus County Community Charitable Foundation Board*
- E. Council member Holmes
- *Keep Citrus County Beautiful*
 - *Springs Coast Steering Committee*

12. COMMUNICATIONS

13. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

- A. Mayor Farley
- B. Vice Mayor Brown
- C. Council member Fitzpatrick
- D. Council member Gudis
- E. Council member Holmes

14. PUBLIC INPUT

(Five Minute Time Limit)

15. ADJOURNMENT

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, every five minutes, a woman in the U.S. is told she has lung cancer; and

WHEREAS, lung cancer is the #1 cancer killer of women in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, the lung cancer death rate in women has almost doubled over the past thirty-seven years; and

WHEREAS, advocacy and increased awareness will result in more and better treatment for women with lung cancer and other lung diseases and will ultimately save lives; and

WHEREAS, LUNG FORCE is the national movement led by the American Lung Association, with the mission of making lung cancer history—uniting women to stand together with a collective strength and determination to lead the fight against lung cancer and for lung health.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Jim Farley, Mayor of the City of Crystal River, hereby declare the **second full week in May** as **“Women’s Lung Health Week”** throughout the City of Crystal River, and encourage all residents of Citrus County to learn more about the detection and treatment of lung cancer

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 23rd Day of April, 2018.



Jim Farley,
Mayor of Crystal River

PROCLAMATION

Whereas, in 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees; and

Whereas, Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation; and

Whereas, trees provide oxygen, help purify the air, play an important role in the water cycle, help neutralize wastewater, and stabilize the soil; and

Whereas, trees are an economic asset to our City, increasing property values, and enhancing shopping areas; and

Whereas, trees wherever they are planted, are a source of joy and spiritual renewal,

Now, therefore, I, Jim Farley, Mayor of the City of Crystal River, Florida, do hereby proclaim the week of April 23rd through April 29th, 2018 as

ARBOR WEEK

and encourage each citizen to participate in tree planting activities during this week.

In Witness thereof: I have hereto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Crystal River to be affixed in the City of Crystal River on this 23rd day of April, 2018.



Jim Farley, Mayor

Attest:



Mia Fink, City Clerk



City of Crystal River



Minutes from the
Regular Council Meeting held
Monday, April 9th, 2018
@ 7:00 p.m.



**Minutes of the
Crystal River City Council
Regular Council Meeting
Monday, April 9th, 2018 @ 7:00 p.m.
Council Chamber, City Hall**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Farley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Council Present: Mayor Farley, Vice Mayor Brown, Council member Gudis, Council member Holmes

Council Absent: Council member Fitzpatrick

Staff Present: City Manager Dave Burnell, City Attorney Angeliadis, City Clerk Fink, Finance Director Michelle Russell, Public Works Director Beau Keene, and Planning and Development Services Director Jackie Gorman.

Mayor Farley led in the Pledge of Allegiance and Council member Gudis led the invocation.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion to adopt the agenda was made by Council member Gudis; seconded by Vice Mayor Brown. Motion carried 4-0.

3. PRESENTATIONS

A. Springs Protection Awareness Month Proclamation.....Mary Kassebaum, SWFWMD
Mayor Farley presented the proclamation to Ms. Kassebaum who thanked Council for acknowledgment of April as Springs Protection Awareness month.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

A. Motion to approve minutes from the Regular City Council meeting held March 26, 2018

B. Motion to appoint Lora Klein to the Waterfronts Advisory Board Seat No. 7 - Regular Resident

Background: [Agenda sheet Requested Motion: Motion to appoint Lora Klein to the Waterfronts Advisory Board Seat No. 7 - Regular Resident.

Summary: Ms. Klein would be seated in Seat NO. 7. Mr. Olen "Ray" Oates was seated in seat No. 7; however, Mr. Oates had to resign from the board because he was no longer a City resident and Seat No. 1 Regular Non-Resident At-Large (county) and Seat No. 6 – Regular Non-Resident At-Large (county) were already filled. Ms. Klein would be fulfilling the remainder of Mr. Oates's term who was appointed to fulfill a term through 5/27/2020. Ms. Klein would then be eligible for another full term upon completion of the current partial term.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval.

End of Agenda Sheet]

C. Motion to approve a revised memorandum of understanding for the 2018 Kings Bay Pirate Fest

Background: [Agenda sheet Requested Motion: Motion to approve a revised memorandum of understanding for the 2018 Kings Bay Pirate Fest.

Summary: The City special events department, along with Citrus Sertoma, will once again be hosting the Kings Bay Pirate Fest on Saturday, May 19, 2018. The attached MOU includes subsequent revisions to the initial version submitted to Council and requires approval by Council.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval

End of Agenda Sheet

Vice Mayor Brown requested item 5C to be pulled from the agenda.

Motion to approve the consent agenda (excluding item 5C) was made by Council member Gudis; seconded by Council member Holmes. Motion carried 4-0.

Vice Mayor Brown inquired about the revisions made to the agreement and City Manager Burnell clarified that the revisions were due to changes in operational expenses.

Motion to approve a revised memorandum of understanding for the 2018 Kings Bay Pirate Fest was made by Vice Mayor Brown; seconded by Vice Mayor Gudis. Motion carried 4-0.

6. PUBLIC INPUT

(Time Limit of Three Minutes)

Jack Huegel- 743 SE 1st Court- Crystal River-Spoke regarding upcoming Three Sisters Springs management decision, websites, and continued use of the term National Wildlife Refuge that attracts tourism, noting financial impact on city budget was not a concern.

Phil Jannarone- 1405 SE 5th Avenue- Commented on upcoming Three Sisters Springs management decision, noting financial impact on city budget was a concern.

Mike Engiles- Crystal River Watersports- Inquired about a proposed special meeting for upcoming Three Sisters Springs management decision, requesting it is held in the evening.

Joyce Palmer-Refuge Manager – CRNWR- USFWS- Requested an update on status of city management plan proposals and potential revisions.

City Manager Burnell provided an update and confirmed that the items would be included on the upcoming City Council meeting scheduled for April 23. Council questions were addressed regarding the status of each of the plans, revisions and a related comparative document.

John Lakich- Park Manager- Crystal River Preserve State Park- Spoke regarding upcoming workshop scheduled for Thursday, April 26 at 5:30 PM to discuss the Unit Management Plan update.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

8. CITY ATTORNEY

9. CITY MANAGER

A. CRA Annual Report

Background: Agenda Sheet Requested Motion: None – Presentation of CRA Annual Report

Summary: Florida Statutes require the Community Redevelopment Agency, on or before March 31st of each year, to submit a report of all activities for the preceding fiscal year. The report includes a complete financial statement setting forth its assets, liabilities, income, and operating expenses as of the end of each fiscal year along with CRA related activities. The Agency is also required to publish in the newspaper a notice to the effect that such report has been filed with the county or municipality and that the report is available for inspection during business hours in the offices of the City and County Clerk. In addition it is recommended (not required) that the report be sent to the taxing entities who contribute to the CRA trust fund with a cover letter stating who to contact for more information.

Attached you will find the 2018 (FY 2016/2017) Annual Report for the Crystal River Redevelopment Agency for your review. The City auditors do not express an opinion at this time on the statements mentioned above because they are preliminary drafts and we have not as yet completed all of the auditing procedures which we consider necessary. These preliminary drafts are for review and discussion purposes only and are, therefore, subject to change.

An ad will be placed in the Chronicle and copies will be mailed to the Board of County Commissioners and County Clerk. A copy of the report will be available in the Crystal River City Clerk's office for public inspection.

Staff Recommendation: None

End of Agenda Sheet]

City Manager Burnell presented the plan to Council noting its focus on the Riverwalk project, Main Street activities, façade grants, and City sponsored events.

Council discussion was held regarding the financial data provided, sidewalk projects and the width of the Riverwalk.

B. Discussion regarding Pickleball in Legrone Park

Background: [Agenda Sheet **Requested Motion:** "None --- Discussion Only" --- Pickleball at Legrone Park.

Summary: Several years ago pickleball came up on staff's radar as a potential park activity addition. Since then Council has briefly discussed the possibility of adding pickleball to Legrone Park on two occasions. Current budget funding will only allow for the over- striping for shared use with the tennis courts. Staff became concerned of the public's acceptance of altering the tennis courts. Therefore, as a test, removable marking tape has been installed on the west tennis court at Legrone Park.

This has made the pickleball players happy but appears to have upset a small group of the tennis players. In the 2018 CIP budget there is an allowance of \$2,000.00 for pickleball at Legrone Park; no additional funds are currently being requested for the FY2019 budget.

If Council desires to implement pickleball at Legrone Park, three options are provided for consideration:

1) Over-stripe one, some, or all of the existing tennis courts, making them dual use. In lieu of permanent striping, Staff recommends using removable tape which only costs about \$30 per court and can be pulled up in the event of a USTA-sponsored tournament.

2) Over-stripe the basketball court and install a net such that the basketball court effectively becomes one half court (which would inhibit activities of the basketball players who run full-court games). The cost for this option is estimated at \$8,000 to \$10,000.00, which would include fencing.

3) Install a new freestanding pickleball court with fencing; cost is estimated at \$45,000.00 (or \$65,000 for two courts).

Options 2 and 3 require additional funding through the budget process.

Staff Recommendation: N/A

End of Agenda Sheet]

City Manager Burnell provided a brief overview of the item and

Phillip Castillo- Tennis Pro Discussed concerns regarding impact of court modifications to tennis league play, previous efforts to restore courts, and a proposal to modify existing basketball court to accommodate pickleball.

Council discussion was held regarding frequency of use for the various courts at the facility, potential concerns associated with each of the plans presented, potential costs and the potential to develop a new court.

C. Discussion regarding "Super Preemption" and "Complaint for Declaratory Relief"

Background: [Agenda sheet **Requested Motion: None – Discussion regarding "Super Preemption" and "Complaint for Declaratory Relief"**

Summary: On April 2, 2018 10 South Florida cities and certain Elected Officials from those cities filed a lawsuit in Leon County Circuit Court against Governor Rick Scott, Attorney General Pam Bondi, and others, all in their official capacity, alleging that certain provisions of section 790.33, Florida Statutes ("Super Preemption") are unconstitutional. A copy of the lawsuit is attached.

The Super Preemption contained in 790.33, Florida Statutes, impacts local elected officials throughout the state.

The seven count complaint seeks declaratory relief and requests that it be heard on an expedited basis. This is the first preemption statute that provides for personal penalties and removal from office with no hearing.

The City Manager would like to provide Council members with an opportunity to discuss implications of such legislation and subsequent filing of the suit.

Staff Recommendation: None

End of Agenda Sheet]

City Manager Burnell provided a brief overview of the item and purpose of bringing the item before Council. Discussion was held regarding potential impacts to local officials and personal penalties. City Attorney Rey briefed Council members on the suit, the legislation on which the suit is focused and potential implications.

City Manager Burnell inquired about a potential policy position Council might wish to take and City Attorney Rey reviewed options. Consensus was reached for staff to draft a resolution supporting the suit.

10. CITY COUNCIL

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Mayor Farley
 - *Waterfronts Advisory Board* - Provided an update on previous shoreline survey discussion, noting that the City already has a tree inventory.
- B. Vice Mayor Brown
 - *Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority*
 - *Crystal River Main Street*-Discussed vacant property registry project and a recent tour by Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council representatives.
- C. Council member Fitzpatrick
 - *Metropolitan Planning Organization*
- D. Council member Gudis
 - *Tourist Development Council* – Announced upcoming meeting was scheduled for Wednesday at 9 a.m.
 - *Library Governing Advisory Board*
 - *Florida League of Cities*
 - *Citrus County Community Charitable Foundation Board*- Discussed hospital funding, intended uses and potential projects.
- E. Council member Holmes
 - *Keep Citrus County Beautiful*-
 - *Springs Coast Steering Committee*- Reported discussion on springs WW CFI projects, programs to eliminate septic and potential impacts to state budget.

12. COMMUNICATIONS

13. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

- A. Mayor Farley- Discussed an email issue that occurred over the weekend.
- B. Vice Mayor Brown- Discussed attendance to the Holocaust Memorial- and a film shown called “My Great Grandpa’s Arm”.
- C. Council member Fitzpatrick
- D. Council member Gudis- BOCC Discussed upcoming BOCC meeting regarding R.E.S.T.O.R.E. Act funding.
- E. Council member Holmes

14. PUBLIC INPUT

(Five Minute Time Limit)

Phillip Castillo- Tennis Pro- Discussed facilities at Legrone Park, his role in teaching and maintaining the tennis courts and underutilization of the basketball court at the park, offering to assist with design and proposal for pickleball court retrofit. Mayor Farley inquired about the utilization of the basketball court at Legrone and City Manager Burnell confirmed that staff would monitor it.

Tom Gotterup-6083 W. Fairhope Court- Spoke on email issues discussed by Mayor Farley, noting others that experienced similar issues and IRS spam calls.

Barbara Schook- Discussed the tennis courts at Legrone Park, her experience coaching a women's tennis league, the schedule, and the impact that pickleball striping has on tennis games.

Vice Mayor Brown discussed the importance of ensuring public access to the courts for residents and City Manager Burnell confirmed the city had no documentation regarding the leagues or schedules.

Peter Weber- Inquired about basketball courts near City Hall, noting that tennis courts at Bicentennial Park were plentiful.

Jack Huegel- 743 SE 1st Court- Discussed the proposed USFWS Management Plan for Three Sisters Springs, noting concerns with certain provisions including the 25 year term, reimbursement clause, proposed parking lot size, and reference to grant compliance rather than contract. He discussed the Annual Stewardship Report.

Pat Hardy- Discussed quality of tennis courts at Bicentennial Park and recent replacement of a portion of them to pickleball which caused the group to utilize Legrone Park. Council member Gudis inquired about the size of league, consisting of approximately 11 teams and 150 people and Ms. Hardy confirmed courts were open to all.

David Leslie- Expressed concerns regarding a recent suspension of permit issuance for temporary use tents caused by a recent car tent show. City Manager Burnell and Planning and Development Services Director Jackie Gorman provided clarification regarding the status of pending legislation to align city ordinance with that of the County ordinance. Discussion was held during which Mr. Leslie noted that the permit was for fireworks sales and City Manager Burnell provided clarification regarding exemptions for fireworks sales.

Mrs. Castillo- Discussed stipulation of Mr. Castillo's utilization of Legrone Park tennis courts requiring rescheduling of lessons to accommodate public use.

Ralph Duball- 940 SE 5th Avenue- Inquired about status of the next phase of the Kings Bay Restoration project and City Manager Burnell provided an update on the status of the contract.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Farley adjourned the meeting at 8:31

City of Crystal River



DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS SUMMARY

March 2018



Departmental Monthly Reports Summary

FINANCE DEPARTMENT: No Report available at agenda deadline.

CLERK'S OFFICE:

During the month of March Clerk's office staff attended and prepared minutes for - meetings, handled - public records requests, handled - lot purchase/sales inquiries and - deed inquiries, prepared and filed 0 liens, prepared and filed - release of liens, and prepared -- agendas and - agenda items, performed - notarizations, and the Clerk's office facilitated 0 bid openings. Clerk's office staff published advertising and notices of meetings, ordinances and workshops. Staff provided admin support to the Waterfronts and Community Services Department. Staff facilitated legal and IT requests, managed cellphone account, FEMA reporting, printer and postage reports, maintained the Golf Cart registry and handled golf cart registrations.

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

CRFD responded to 45 calls during the month of March, with 8 calls being canceled. There were 35 calls in city of which were canceled, 10 outside of city calls 2 of which were canceled. Total water usage for the period was approximately 2,800 gallons.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES: No report available at agenda deadline.

PERMITTING & INSPECTIONS:

During the month of March there were 42 permits issued for a total of \$14,762.50. There were a total of 100 inspections of which 135 were building inspections, and 1 final fire inspection and 0 fire plan reviews. The inspections were performed as follows:

Ed Hollenbeck, Building Official – (133)
Mark Jones, CBO – (01)
Mike Dow, Fire Inspection – (01)

PUBLIC WORKS:

Parks: Nothing new to report.

Personnel: Two Maintenance Work II positions were filled; the mechanic position was advertised.

Facilities: Interviews with the shortlisted architectural firms for the new City Hall feasibility study Request for Qualifications were held and Council accepted the selection committee's recommendation of Long & Associates out of Tampa.

Public Water: Had numerous discussions with Florida Rural Water Association and FDEP regarding grant opportunities for replacing aging water meters with automatic read.

Public Sewer: The engineering consultant and Staff addressed a Request for Additional Information from the FDEP related to the review of the wastewater treatment plant permit renewal application. An aeration mixer was repaired and reinstalled.

CRA: The ribbon cutting for the Riverwalk landward section was conducted. Took delivery of railing to replace the existing green sidewalk railing; replacement has commenced.

Roads: The U-turn signal at US-19 and Kings Bay Drive was installed. The FY2018 thermoplastic pavement striping and marking project was approved by Council and work began.

Drainage: A collapsed storm drain crossing NE 12th St. was replaced.

Grant Projects: Staff continued working with FEMA and Division of Emergency Management re: the mitigation grant for sanitary lift station emergency pumping --- the requirement to design to the 500-year flood

elevation has posed challenges. The Wastewater Master Plan being performed under the Indian Waters Phase I grant project was submitted to Staff for review and comment.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

St. Patrick's Day on Citrus Avenue was a great success with our dog parade, dog contests, vendors, and live music in the streets. This event was attended by approximately 500 people throughout the day. The annual Easter Egg Hunt was held at Hunter Springs Park this year with beautiful weather. Children and Families of all ages came out to hunt Easter Eggs, win prizes, have photos with the Easter bunny and play in the petting zoo and bounce houses. We estimate we had about 300 people for this event. Planning continues for many upcoming events including Music Under the Stars, Movie on the Beach and Kings Bay Pirate Fest.

WATERFRONTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES:

Three Sisters Springs had a total of 6,412 visitors in March, approximately 1,933 more visitors than the previous month. Staff is continuing to answer visitor questions about the springs, manatees, tour operators, rentals and about the attractions in this area. A rules and regulations sign was purchased and installed at the front gates to the property. A group of 20 students is assisting staff on projects for next season.

During the 2017-18 Manatee Season:

- Roughly 30,368 visitors rode the trolley and visited the boardwalk at Three Sisters Springs.
- We had a 50% increase in visitation compared to the previous season. During the 2016-17 season we had about 20,229 visitors.
- Annual pass sales increased about 20%
- Each day City staff assisted hundreds of Crystal River visitors in person, emails, telephone, and on social media.
- The Three Sisters Springs Facebook page increased from 8,700 likes to 23,000.
- Manatees were present in the springs for most of the season. There were a couple weeks in February where there were zero manatees.
- Our ratings have improved. We are now at 4.8/5 stars on Facebook and a 4.5/5 star rating on Google for the Three Sisters Springs Center.

Business Licensing: No report available at agenda deadline.

Code Enforcement:

12 new cases prepared for hearing.

5 cases taken to hearing

Investigated 1 complaint, verified and prepared case folder.

Observed 17 violations, prepared case folders.

Closed 25 cases.

0 Case referred to County.

Rescheduled hearing for RV parking.

Continued to investigate resort rentals to ensure continued compliance.

Working with attorney to set a special hearing for repeat vacation rental violator case.

Park Rangers:**Hunter Springs Park**

Park Ranger staff attended a meeting with residents from near Hunter Springs Park to address residents' concerns in the area. Staff also noticed a gate near the Boardwalk in Hunter Springs Park was removed and left on the ground.

Staff encountered a woman at Hunter Springs Park placing a stick sign in the ground. Staff notified her that she couldn't place a sign in the ground for a business. Staff asked if she had a business permit to which she responded that she did not. Staff advised her where she could obtain one and code enforcement code enforcement.

Yeoman Park

The park was closed on March 1 due to a water/gas issue.

Three Sisters Springs

The park rangers go to Three Sisters to conduct a security check on the property as well as check for excessive trash.

Water Patrol:

During March foul weather disoriented or distressed paddle crafters and other vessels requiring the transport/safe return to port of no less than 6 paddle crafters by staff. Most of these vessels lacked proper safety equipment and/or life jackets were not worn or accessible at the time of distress.

Potential violations observed while on patrol (not all potential violations observed or reflected): 39 vessel speed concerns, 16 no dive flag where required, 33 paddle craft or boats without proper safety equipment, 3 trespassers at Three Sisters, 12 alcohol violations within Spring Run, 21 paddle crafts/vessels interfering with the navigation of other vessels, 3 vessels breaking loose from mooring and/or adrift, 1 vessel washing ashore/beached.

CRYSTAL RIVER CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Item Summary

Meeting Date: April 23, 2018

Agenda Item Number: 5C

Requested Motion: Motion to appoint Michael Martin to the Planning Commission Alternate Seat No. 2 and Gregory Acker to At-Large Seat No. 6.

Summary:

In February of 2018 Planning Commission At-Large Seat No. 6 became vacant. Planning Commissioner Gregory Acker, previously holding Alternate Seat No. 2, is recommended for appointment to At-Large Seat No. 6.

The City Clerk's Office received an application from Michael Martin in March of 2018. Staff has reviewed the application and found that Mr. Martin is eligible to serve on the Planning Commission.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval.

Funding Information:

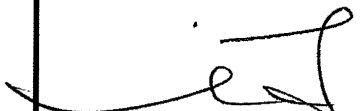
Project Cost:

Funding Source:

Amount Available:

Finance Department Approval: _____

Approvals:



Originating Department



City Manager

City Attorney (if applicable)

Attachments: Updated Roster

Council Action:

Approved _____ Denied _____ Deferred _____ Other _____

**CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER
PLANNING COMMISSION**

3 Year Terms

MEMBER TYPE/ SEAT #	NAME/ADDRESS	APPOINTED	TERM END	WORK EXPERIENCE
At Large per LDC 8.02.02(E)(2) Seat #1	Chair Robert Froehling 1360 NW 19 th Ct. Crystal River, FL 34428 795-4222 loggerheadkey@tampabay.rr.com	03/10/08(O) 1/9/12 (A) 03/09/15(R) 09/25/17	9/30/20 Eligible for an additional full term	Retired from IBM
Construction per LDC 8.02.02(E)(2) Seat #2	Doug Smith P. O. Box 1792 Crystal River, 25322 795-6405 (Does not have email)	10/13/08(O) 8/30/10 (A) 09/09/13(R)	09/30/13 09/30/16 09/30/19	General Contracting
Office Mgr. per LDC 8.02.02(E)(3) Seat #3	Vice Chair Keith Raym 1290 NW 19 th Ct. Crystal River, FL 34428 352-221-2533 Goin.fishin@aol.com	10/01/09(O) 4/28/14(A) 9/30/2015(R)	09/30/18 Eligible for an additional full term	Retired Business Owner Retired Police Officer
At-large per LDC 8.02.02(E)(4) Seat #4	Charles Kish 209 SE 2 nd Place Crystal River, FL 34428 795-6406(H) 563-4717(B) Charles.kish@pgnmail.com	10/01/09(O) 8/27/12 (R) 9/30/2015(R)	09/30/18 Eligible for an additional full term	Progress Energy
Architect per LDC 8.02.02(E)(4) Seat #5	Max Barnes 377 NW 14 th Place Crystal River, FL 34423 352-257-9516 gmaxbarnes@gmail.com	10/13/08(O) 09/25/17 (A)	09/30/20 Eligible for an additional full term	C.P.A. Real Estate Development
At-large per LDC 8.02.02(E)(4) Seat #6	Gregory Acker 387 NW Magnolia Circle Crystal River, FL 34428 352-586-9695 greg.acker@qcdatabase.com	03/10/08(O) 04/23/18 (A)	09/30/19 Eligible for an additional full term	Project Management and Quality Control (energy production), Contractor
Property Appraiser per LDC 8.02.02(E)(3) Seat #7	Phillip Jannarone 1405 SE 5 th Ave. Crystal River, FL 34428 564-1725 Jann1@tampabaay.rr.com	10/13/08(O) 1/28/13 (A) 03/12/12(R) 03/09/15(R) 9/30/2015(R)	09/30/18 Eligible for an additional full term	General Contractor
Alternate Seat No. 1	Charles Botts 130 NE 4 th Avenue Crystal River, FL 34429 212-1248 (C) chebotts@yahoo.com	10/01/09(O) 06/12/17 (A)	09/30/16 09/30/19	Public Administration
Alternate Seat No. 2	Michael Martin 1520 NW 20 th Avenue Crystal River, FL 34428 352-267-4093 Randym@TDPools.com	10/01/09(O) 04/23/18 (A)	09/30/20	State Registered Pool Contractor

CRYSTAL RIVER CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Item Summary

Meeting Date: April 23, 2018

Agenda Item Number: 9A

Information Only: Presentations, discussion and comparison of the two proposals for Three Sister Springs Property by United States Fish and Wildlife Service and City of Crystal River Staff.

Summary: City Staff and Representatives from United States Fish and Wildlife will make verbal or Power Point presentations on highlights of the attached plans and address City Council questions related to the each proposal and the differences.

As current management entity for the property, USFWS will first outline their plan and address Council questions.

City staff will then outline the alternate management plan for the property and address Council questions.

City Attorney will also provide input on the two plans from a legal perspective.

Open discussion to follow related to each plan as presented with staff and/or USFWS Representative to address any further questions.

Staff Recommendation: NA

Funding Information:

Project Cost: NA

Funding Source:

Amount Available:

Finance Department Approval: _____

Approvals:

Originating Department



City Manager

City Attorney (if applicable)

Attachments:

Council Action:

Approved _____ Denied _____ Deferred _____ Other _____

CRYSTAL RIVER CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Item Summary

Meeting Date: April 23, 2018

Agenda Item Number: 9B

Requested Motion: Motion to approve the April 2018 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Draft Management Plan for the Three Sisters Springs Property.

Summary: The USFWS can play a vital role in management of Three Sisters Springs and would like to continue managing the property. The Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge has been working cooperatively with the City to update the management plan and intends to work together with the City to develop the property as mutually agreed upon. The Refuge has assisted the City in meeting the intent of the Florida Communities Trust in granting funds to the City for purchase of the property and 19 of the 21 covenants have been initiated, are ongoing, or have been completed. We are prepared to invest significant funding into permanent structures, given certain conditions including a long-term lease to invest funds on lands not federally owned, sharing of entrance fees collected, and the ability to implement the plan once approved by City Council.

The USFWS has developed infrastructure for public access and enjoyment, including an access road, a 1,500-foot boardwalk, a picnic pavilion, temporary entrance gate, and 1.75 miles of trails. Next steps include construction of a permanent entry gate and booth, landscaping, and fencing at the public entrance off Three Sisters Springs Trail; new interpretive panels on existing trails; permanent public restrooms; manatee viewing platforms along Magnolia Springs; an observation platform for viewing wetland wildlife (herons, egrets and fish); and trail improvements, including wheelchair accessible surfaces. The USFWS will also develop environmental interpretation and education programs to connect people with nature at this unique site.

Staff Recommendation: NA

Funding Information:

Project Cost:

Funding Source:

Amount Available:

Finance Department Approval: _____

Approvals: *NA*

Originating Department

City Manager

City Attorney (if applicable)

Attachments: USFWS Management Plan; Pros and cons of retaining USFWS partnership; Status of FCT Covenants; Accomplishments under the 2010 plan; April 18, 2017 letter to City Manager; November 15, 2017 letter to City Manager

Council Action:

Approved _____ Denied _____ Deferred _____ Other _____

Draft Management Plan for the Three Sisters Springs Property
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
April 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Three Sisters Springs project included the public acquisition of a 57-acre site that contains three, second-order springs known as the Three Sisters Springs that play a critical role in both manatee protection and efforts to restore water quality in the Kings Bay/Crystal River spring shed. The property is located immediately south of downtown Crystal River, Florida, and originally was a part of a natural, forested wetland ecosystem adjacent to Kings Bay. In the early 1970's the trees in the forested wetland were removed and an eight-acre lake was dredged in the center of the site. The dredged material was used to fill the immediate wetlands area with the intent of creating a site suitable for residential development.

The successful effort to acquire the site resulted in the property being owned by both the City of Crystal River (City) and Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) managing the property as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge from 2010 until present. The City, Service, and the SWFWMD developed a management plan in 2010 to ensure that the project site will be developed in accordance with the terms and conditions imposed by the Declaration of Restrictive Covenants agreed to by the City and FCT. This revision of that plan reflects changes in management goals for the property, including proposed capital improvements, and the timeline for their accomplishment based on current funding and staffing.

The Three Sisters Springs property will be managed for the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources, and for outdoor recreational and educational opportunities compatible with those goals. A Three Sisters Springs Coordination Committee comprised of the refuge manager, city manager, a representative from the SWFWMD, and a liaison from city council will meet regularly to enhance coordination among the partners and to act as a bridge between the partners and city council.

Many goals identified in the 2010 plan have been accomplished through multiple entities (i.e., SWFWMD, City, Service, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) working together to provide funding, in-kind services and expertise. The SWFWMD led habitat enhancement projects including the creation of a 6-acre treatment wetland to reduce nutrient loading to the Kings Bay, restoration of one acre of hydric hammock, shoreline stabilization within the springs and the planting of native vegetation in specific areas. The Service plans to establish native upland vegetation and buffer zones, a pollinator garden, and to continue control of exotic and invasive plants and animals.

The Service developed infrastructure for public access and enjoyment, including an access road, a 1,500-foot boardwalk, a picnic pavilion, temporary entrance gate, and 1.75 miles of trails. Next steps include construction of a permanent entry gate and booth, landscaping, and fencing at the public entrance off Three Sisters Springs Trail; new interpretive panels on existing trails; permanent public restrooms; manatee viewing platforms along Magnolia Springs; an observation platform for viewing wetland wildlife (herons, egrets and fish); and trail improvements, including wheelchair accessible surfaces. The

Service will also develop environmental interpretation and education programs to connect people with nature at this unique site.

The City developed the Three Sister Springs Welcome Center and Transit system to route all public visitors into and out of the property year round. The City will continue to operate the transit service and will consider variations to the route to promote new stops in the future if desired.

Three Sisters Springs has become a critical resource for the observation and protection of the manatee, while also playing a key role in the restoration and maintenance of water quality within the Kings Bay/Crystal River springs system. The improvements included in this plan will further enhance natural resources on site and the visitor experience that will be in keeping with the area's reputation as "Florida's Nature Coast".

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary..... 1

Introduction 5

Purpose 6

Project Consistency with City’s Comprehensive Plan 6

 Conservation Element..... 6

 Recreation Element..... 6

 Coastal Management Element..... 7

Natural and Cultural Resources 7

 Natural Communities 7

 Wetlands and waterbodies 7

 Uplands 8

 Wildlife and Plants 8

 Manatee Management 9

 Restoration..... 10

 Water Treatment Wetlands 10

 Exotic Plant Program..... 10

 Feral Animal Program 11

 Listed Plant Species..... 11

 Listed Animal Species..... 11

 Archaeological, Cultural, and Historical Resources Protection..... 11

Structures and Improvements 11

 Acknowledgement and Boundary Signs 11

 Existing Physical Improvements..... 11

 Proposed Physical Improvements..... 12

 Tier 1: 12

 Tier 2: 13

 Tier 3: 13

 Improvements considered but eliminated from the plan 16

 Estimated Costs of On-Site Physical Improvements 17

Permits 18

PUBLIC USES..... 19

Water Access to the Springs 19

Land Access to the Springs..... 19

Fishing 19

Environmental Education and Interpretation..... 20

Festivals & Special Events 20

MANAGEMENT ISSUES..... 20

 Coordinated Management..... 20

 Bicycle/Walking Access 22

 Trolley Access..... 22

 Maintenance 23

 Law Enforcement 23

 Concessions..... 23

STAFFING..... 23

Monitoring and Reporting 24

 Annual Stewardship Report 24

Management Plan Revisions..... 25

Figure 1. Proposed new or improved existing facilities, infrastructure, and improved habitat conditions
..... 26

APPENDIX A: Status of Declaration of Restrictive Covenants..... 27

APPENDIX B: Accomplishments under the 2010 Three Sisters Springs Management Plan..... 30

APPENDIX C: Additional Accomplishments not identified in the 2010 Three Sisters Springs Management
Plan 32

APPENDIX D: Public Use by Land 34

APPENDIX E: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expenditures and investment in Three Sisters Springs 35

Appendix F: April 2017 Letter to City of Crystal River requesting update to Management Agreement.. 36

Appendix G: November 2017 response to City of Crystal River termination notice 38

INTRODUCTION

The Three Sisters Springs project included the public acquisition of a 57-acre site that contains three, second-order springs known as the Three Sisters Springs (TSS) that play a critical role in both manatee protection and efforts to restore water quality in the Kings Bay/Crystal River spring shed.

In addition to the three second-order springs found on the site itself, there is a second order spring (Magnolia Springs) located along the western perimeter of the property and another second-order spring (Idiot's Delight) located along the southeastern portion of the property. The man-made waterway fed by Magnolia Spring is a seasonal sanctuary for manatees with a second sanctuary located at Idiot's Delight where the spring run feeds into a waterway that flows into Kings Bay. During cold weather, manatees heavily utilize the two warm-water sanctuaries and the Three Sisters Springs themselves.

The Three Sisters Springs property was originally part of a larger forested wetland ecosystem located adjacent to Kings Bay. In the 1970s, the property was cleared and filled with the intent of creating a building site suitable for residential development. A development plan involving the construction of more than 300 residential units had been approved at the time a multi-agency cooperative effort was initiated to bring the site under public ownership. However, prior to completion of the site plan and permitting requirements, the property ownership group acknowledged the environmental importance of the site, and agreed to work with a coalition of conservation groups to see if a feasible plan could be developed to acquire the property for conservation purposes, while also continuing to move forward with development plans in the event the conservation acquisition effort failed.

As a cornerstone in this conservation endeavor, the City of Crystal River (City) agreed to serve as the lead agency in what ultimately was a successful application for a Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant. The acquisition effort was further bolstered by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) stepping forward with Florida Forever funding to be used as the match for the FCT grant funding, which resulted in SWFWMD holding a 30% ownership interest in the site.

The Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Friends) and the National Wildlife Refuge Association took on the leading role in raising \$2.7 million in private funding. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$3.0 million to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for land acquisition, with the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, and the Citrus County Tourist Development Council also providing financial support. The \$2.7 million in private financial support came from The Felburn Foundation and several other environmental groups, as well as a multitude of private citizens and various civic clubs. Funding from the Service and The Felburn Foundation ultimately went to acquire the Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) and related water value from the site owners.

The successful effort to acquire the site resulted in the property being owned by both the City of Crystal River (City) and Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) managing the property as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) from 2010 until present. The City, Service, and the SWFWMD developed a management plan in 2010 to ensure that the project site will be developed in accordance with the terms and conditions imposed by the Declaration of Restrictive Covenants agreed to by the City and FCT. This revision of that

plan reflects changes in management goals for the property, including proposed capital improvements, and the timeline for their accomplishment based on current funding and staffing. As explained further herein, this management plan describes the development of visitor facilities and services on-site, habitat restoration needs, and the potential construction of a visitor welcome center off-site. The project site will be managed for the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources, and for outdoor recreation compatible with those goals.

PURPOSE

The Three Sisters Spring project was pursued by a broad array of public and private partners for the purposes of:

- Creating superb outdoor-oriented recreational and educational opportunities such as wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, environmental education, fishing, for both the citizens and visitors to Crystal River, compatible with the all purposes of the project;
- Conserving, protecting and enhancing natural resources;
- Protecting and recovering endangered West Indian Manatees and other fish and wildlife;
- Restoring native habitat and biodiversity;
- Protecting water quality and quantity in Kings Bay, Florida; and
- Protecting the scenic and open space qualities of the Three Sisters Springs property.

PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Three Sisters Spring project supports the City's Comprehensive Plan in a number of ways, as indicated below:

Conservation Element

The Conservation Element states that "the City shall protect and conserve the natural functions of rivers, bays, wetlands, estuarine, and marine habitats, in order to assure the protection of fisheries, native flora and fauna and associated habitat, and especially species designated as endangered, threatened or species of special concern under the Endangered Species Act." [Objective 1.3] There is also language that states that "No net loss of essential upland habitat for endangered or threatened species or species of special concern will be permitted." [Objective 1.6] In addition, there is language that states that "the present quality of surface and groundwater entering Kings Bay and Crystal River will be maintained." [Objective 1.11] The Three Sisters Springs project clearly supports these objectives by protecting manatee habitat and the present quality of water entering Kings Bay, both through protection of the springs themselves and by providing for wetlands treatment of storm water runoff from adjacent commercial and residential areas.

Recreation Element

The Recreation Element states that "public access to natural resource-based parks will be provided to assist in meeting Crystal River's recreation demands without diminishing the overall quality of those resources." [Goal #1] Specific objectives that will be supported by the Three Sisters Springs

project include increasing the amount of public fishing pier access [Objective 1.1]; establishing one mile of nature trails within Crystal River [Objective 1.3]; establishing a program for the identification, designation, management and protection of environmentally sensitive lands [Objective 1.4]; and providing for a sufficient quantity and distribution of open space to meet the City's needs [Objective 3.1]. By providing open space, protection of the natural resources, and a nature trail, the Three Sisters Springs project is both consistent with and strongly supportive of the goals set forth in the Recreation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Coastal Management Element

The Coastal Management Element establishes that the City shall "ensure the protection and enhancement of significant vegetative communities which support wildlife through preserving the diversity and viability of Coastal habitat areas." [Objective 1.1] it further establishes that the City will "increase public access to the Coastal Area's natural resources through acquisition of new property, which will be consistent with the public's needs and the natural resource capacity of the selected area." [Objective 5.1] The Three Sisters Springs project will preserve the viability of the on-site habitat areas and increase public access to a natural coastal setting, with appropriate management oversight.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Natural Communities

Prior to extensive residential and commercial development in and around the project area, the property consisted of a forested wetland system that surrounded the second-order springs known as TSS. Spring magnitude is a category based on the volume of flow from a spring per unit time. There are eight magnitude categories; first-magnitude springs discharge the greatest amount of water at 100 or more cubic feet per second (cfs) and a second order magnitude discharges 10 to 100 cfs (Meinzer 1927).

The topography, hydrology, and vegetation of the site have been altered considerably since the 1940's (City, Service, and SWFWMD 2010, 2012). Currently, the site is generally comprised of open space with scattered trees. A hardwood fringe surrounds the perimeter of the property and provides a buffer around the spring boils and run. Much of the open area was bedded for the planting of pine seedlings and limestone rock but the seedlings were removed and the ground was leveled by the Service during 2011 and 2012.

Wetlands and waterbodies

Early aerial photographs of the property, as well as the remnant vegetation along its perimeter, seem to indicate that the property was originally a mesic or hydric hammock. Three springs are located on its periphery. Magnolia Springs is located on the western margin, Idiots Delight on the southern margin, and the TSS on the southern end of the TSS property. Magnolia Springs reportedly had rock spires and an extensive cave system that collapsed around 1963. Idiots Delight is a group of three vertical shafts that are at least 20 feet deep. The opening of the largest shaft is approximately five feet wide. The springs known as "Three Sisters Springs" are located north of Idiots Delight. TSS consists of three major springheads: Pretty Sister, Deep Sister, and Little Sister, which comprise a complex of three "lobes," aligned on a northwest-southeast axis, with an approximate total length of 250 feet. The springs, as well as the waterways or runs that they feed, are heavily utilized as seasonal sanctuaries by manatees.

Beginning in the late 1950s, property development began in earnest in the Kings Bay area. Development began on the 57-acre property in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A series of canals had been excavated south and west of the parcel between 1960 and 1974. Clearing of the parcel's extensive forested wetland began by 1974. An 8-acre lake, now known as Lake Crystal, was excavated in the property's center to provide spoil material to fill in the wetlands and create upland areas suitable for residential development (City of Crystal River, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Southwest Florida Water Management District 2012).

In 2015, a 6-acre treatment wetland on the eastern side of the property was created by the SWFWMD in accordance with the Covenants and PMP. This created wetland filters stormwater run-off from approximately 100 acres of nearby commercial and residential land and helps reduce nutrient loading to Kings Bay. The wetland was designed to be a tidally influenced marsh dominated by emergent vegetation. As part of this effort, a one-acre hydric hammock was restored in the southeastern corner of Lake Crystal using material excavated during construction of the treatment wetland on site. Lake Crystal is now 7 acres in size with steep slopes characteristic of most borrow pits and has a maximum depth of 40 feet.

Uplands

The uplands within the project site consist of grasses, herbaceous plants, and scattered red cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*). The perimeter of the springs and the property includes red maple (*Acer rubrum*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), Virginia willow (*Itea virginica*), sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), red cedar, American elm (*Ulmus americana*), sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*), pop ash (*Fraxinus caroliniana*), wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), laurel oak (*Q. laurifolia*), water oak (*Q. nigra*), and white basswood (*Tilia americana var. heterophylla*).

Wildlife and Plants

Florida sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis pratensis*, state threatened), Southeastern American kestrels (*Falco sparverius Paulus*, state threatened), wood storks (*Mycteria Americana*, federally threatened), and Florida manatees (federally threatened) have been identified using the site, as well as herons, egrets, and ibis (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 2013, City of Crystal River, the Service, and SWFWMD 2010, 2012). Alligators (federally threatened by similarity of appearance) have been confirmed in Lake Crystal and the adjacent springs and canals.

Currently, there are no known federally endangered or threatened plant species on the site.

Non-native and nuisance plant and animal species have been identified by Service staff and intergovernmental partners as one of the priority management issues. Invasive species found in the uplands of TSS include exotic Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*), Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), wild taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), torpedo grass (*Panicum repens*), and lantana (*Lantana camara*). Other non-native plants may also be present as they are found in nearby uplands, including skunk vine (*Paederia foetida*) and chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*). Feral cats (*Felis catus*) occasionally roam the site. Non-native animals include Cuban tree frogs (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*) and island apple snails (*Pomacea canaliculata*) (City of Crystal River, the Service, and SWFWMD 2010, 2012).

Additionally, numerous species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians currently use the site.

Manatee Management

The project area is one of the most important properties in Florida for the West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*). To illustrate, 489 manatees, representing approximately 8% of the entire Florida Manatee population, were observed using this site during a cold front in February 2016. The manatees use the springs on the property, which deliver millions of gallons of 72 degrees Fahrenheit water each day, to avoid exposure to debilitating cold water temperatures that create a physiological need for warm water for their survival. As previously mentioned, the protection of manatees was one of the driving goals of the project. Three Sisters Springs is particularly important to mothers with newborn calves.

Several large boulders and pilings were placed in the spring run by a previous landowner to prevent motor boats from accessing the spring run and the Three Sisters Springs. The boulders impeded the movement of manatees in and out of the springs during low tide, thus making the springs unavailable to manatees for 20% to 30% of the time. The boulders were removed by the Service in 2010 to improve manatee access throughout the tide cycle and the number of manatees using the springs has increased significantly since that time.

The refuge strives to protect warm water habitat at Three Sisters Springs for manatees when they need to be there to survive while maintaining public access. Dramatic increases in manatee ecotourism in Kings Bay coupled with increases in the overall manatee population has led the refuge to evaluate human and manatee interactions within the springs and to develop and implement science-based management protocols to protect manatees. Initially, the refuge closed portions of the springs to human activity (e.g., lobe closures), restricted use of paddle craft during manatee season, and required commercial guides to escort their visitors into the springs. The refuge has contracted the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Sirenia Project to analyze movements of telemetry-tagged manatees monitored by satellite in combination with environmental information such as water temperature and level in the Gulf, Crystal and Salt Rivers and local springs to provide valuable insight into their habitat use patterns relative to measurable ambient conditions. Manatees showed the expected pattern of more occurrences in the springs when Gulf temperatures were relatively cold (i.e., less than 20 °C). A detailed look at manatee GPS locations revealed that when Gulf water temperatures at Shell Island were colder than 17 °C, manatee habitat use patterns shift from the Gulf to higher occurrences in Three Sisters Springs and the adjacent springs known as Idiot's Delight. Thus, the Service now closes Three Sisters Springs to all human activity when Gulf temperatures at Shell Island drop to 17 °C and the springs remains closed until temperatures rise above 17 °C for 24 hours or longer.

In order to provide for the protection of resting manatees, the Refuge maintained a comprehensive protocol for closing the springs complex at the most critical times throughout the 2016/17 winter season based on environmental and biological parameters. Uniformed staff evaluated the environmental conditions and manatee locations and behavior within the springs several times a day, and closed the springs to public access as appropriate. USGS continued to monitor manatee locations by satellite through the 2017/18 season and Refuge staff monitored manatee use of the springs. The Refuge will use analysis of the telemetry data and observational data collected to write a management plan for protection of manatees at Three Sisters Springs.

In keeping with the intent of maintaining and sustaining quality visitor experience while at the same time providing adequate protected areas for manatees, Service will continue to utilize existing federal authorities or rulemaking processes to manage the balance of visitors and manatees. Three Sisters

Springs will remain open to the public during non-manatee season for swimming, paddle boarding, and canoeing/kayaking.

Magnolia Springs was designated as a manatee sanctuary under the Endangered Species Act and is therefore closed to public access by water during the winter months. Construction of observation platforms on the western side of the property will improve manatee viewing opportunities at Magnolia Springs.

Restoration

The uplands areas on the property will be converted to an upland forest community by planting live oaks, red cedar, cabbage palms, wax myrtle, and other species native to the area. Some areas will remain open to attract a variety of wildlife species. Nest boxes have already been provided for bluebirds and a bat house has been installed. As resources are available, a garden with native species may be planted to attract butterflies and other pollinators. Restoration of mesic and /or hydric hammock on the site will require removal of fill material, which can be costly. Replanting of mesic hammock (typical species include Shumard oak, white ash, beech, Florida maple, southern magnolia, laurel oak, and pignut hickory) will be limited primarily to areas surrounding the springs and along the canal that flanks the southern and western borders of the property. Planting a live oak/cabbage palm forest would not require removal of fill.

Following acquisition of the property in 2010, refuge staff documented significant erosion of the shoreline within the springs. The shoreline was eroded and undercut up to 4 feet as a result of years of direct and indirect human and manatee activity. The erosion caused sediment to enter the spring vents, trees along the shoreline to fall into the springs, and/or tree islands to break away from the shore resulting in an overall loss of shoreline habitat. This posed a safety concern for manatees and visitors due to falling trees and potential entrapment if the shoreline caverns collapsed. The Service partnered with University of Florida, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and The Nature Conservancy to document the shoreline conditions and develop alternatives to stabilize the banks. The Service funded initial shoreline surveys and obtained the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit for the bank stabilization project; FWC purchased the 1,800 ton of limestone rock used to stabilize the bank; and the SWFWMD ultimately funded the design and construction which was completed in 2016 and native vegetation was planted around the springs. SWFWMD is now proposing to stabilize the spring run and the canal banks along the border of the entire property by 2020.

Water Treatment Wetlands

As discussed above, SWFWMD completed construction of a 6-acre treatment wetland on the eastern side of the property in 2016 and will maintain the wetland for three years post-construction. The Service will then assume management/maintenance responsibility of the wetland including control of invasive and exotic plants. The refuge proposes to construct one viewing platform overlooking the wetlands.

Exotic Plant Program

The property contains exotic plants including Brazilian pepper; cogon grass and air-potato which are all listed as Category I species on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council list. All exotic and invasive vegetation was removed from the entire property in 2013 by a licensed contractor. Spot treatments are conducted

annually by refuge staff to keep infestations under control. Another full treatment of the property by a qualified contractor is planned for 2018. The "Exotic Pest Plant Council's List of Florida's most invasive Species" will be used to identify invasive exotic plant species.

Feral Animal Program

Currently, there are no feral animals on the property and since purchase this has only been one animal removed (a feral cat). The property will continue to be monitored for introduction of exotic/nuisance animals. If any feral animals are found on the site, they will be removed by qualified personnel.

Listed Plant Species

There are no listed plant species known to occur on the site.

Listed Animal Species

The West Indian manatee, Florida sandhill crane (state threatened) and wood stork (federally threatened) have been identified using the site. The development of the site will be done in such a manner to enhance the habitat used by listed species, with a strong emphasis on protecting the manatee habitat.

Archaeological, Cultural, and Historical Resources Protection

There are no known archaeological, cultural, and historical resources on the site. The Service will notify the City and the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found indicating an archeological or historic resource at the project site, and will also take appropriate measures to protect such resources. The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archeological or historic sites that may be found or identified on the project site will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Division of Historical Resources within the Department of State. The management of the archeological and historic resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes specifically Sections 267.061 2(a) and (b).

STRUCTURES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Acknowledgement and Boundary Signs

There is a sign at the entrance of the property that acknowledges the property was acquired using funds from the Florida Communities Trust and the SWFWMD. The sign also acknowledges the managers of the property (FWS) and major financial contributors (the Felburn Foundation, SWFWMD, Jane's Trust, Citrus County, Citrus County Tourist Development Council, the City of Crystal River and FWS). The sign will be landscaped in native xeric vegetation.

Existing Physical Improvements

Existing facilities and infrastructure include a 1,500 linear-foot boardwalk that is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, approximately 1.75 miles of unimproved trails, a picnic pavilion, two kiosks with six interpretive panels, a visitor access gate, fee booth, a partially paved access road entering

the property from Three Sisters Springs Trail, an unimproved dirt parking area, a public access trolley to the property from off-site managed by the City of Crystal River, a gate and dirt access road for emergency vehicles and staff/volunteer access from Kings Bay Drive, temporary toilets and hand washing station, a weather shelter, bird nesting boxes, and a bat house. Year-round public access to the property is permitted for wildlife-dependent recreational activities including wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

Proposed Physical Improvements

This plan proposes improvements to existing infrastructure and habitat conditions described above and construction of additional facilities to further develop on-site recreational activities and improve and diversify visitor experience (Figure 1, Table 1). The property has been zoned by the City as "conservation lands" which has a five percent limit for impervious surfaces. All facilities would be built to current code and all required permits would be obtained. Funding is currently available to implement the project components described under Tier 1 and those projects will be completed within two years from the date this plan and updated management agreement are approved and signed by all parties. Project components described under Tier 2 would be implemented within 3 to 8 years of that date if funding is available. Tier 3 would be implemented in the future as funding becomes available.

Tier 1:

A permanent fee booth (up to 144 square feet (s.f.)), entrance gate, landscaping, and fencing would be constructed at the public entrance off Three Sisters Springs Trail to replace the temporary facilities previously installed.

Seven new interpretive panels would be installed along existing trails.

A freestanding public restroom (up to 1,200 s.f.) would be constructed to replace the temporary toilets and handwashing station. Restrooms may include a changing room.

Two viewing platforms (up to 150 s.f. each) would be built along the trail bordering the Magnolia Springs on the western edge of the property for observation of manatees using the springs, particularly during the cold weather months.

One observation platform (up to 150 s.f.) would be constructed on the treatment wetland to enhance wildlife (e.g., birds, alligators, and fish) and wetland plant/habitat viewing opportunities.

Improvements would be made to the approximately 1.75 miles of nature trails, including installing wheelchair accessible surfaces such as boardwalks, paving, or natural or pervious materials. The trails provide visitors with a view of the springs and treatment wetlands and would connect the proposed outdoor class room or environmental education center (Tier 3), manatee viewing platforms, pier, and restrooms to the existing picnic pavilion and boardwalk. Trails would be used for wildlife viewing, bird watching, photography, and environmental education and interpretation. Benches would be installed along the trails and shade areas would be established with native plantings.

Temporary accessible parking spaces would be constructed near the boardwalk. These temporary spaces would be used until permanent parking facilities are constructed under Tier 2. Additional utilities, including water, electric power, fiber optic, sewer, and li station would be installed on the property to service the existing and newly constructed facilities.

A vegetative buffer (25 to 50 feet wide) comprised of native plants would be established along the property boundary bordering Magnolia Springs and other areas as needed.

Structural improvements to guardrails on the boardwalk were required to meet building code even though the boardwalk was deemed structurally sound by an independent structural engineer. The improvements were completed in 2017 and the boardwalk was inspected and certified by a structural engineer that the boardwalk meets local building codes.

The entire property will be treated for exotic and invasive plants by an experienced and licensed contractor during 2018.

Tier 2:

An outdoor environmental education facility (up to 1,000 s.f.) would be built on the south side of Lake Crystal with a parking lot to accommodate up to 10 vehicles and 2 buses. The facility may be open air or a screened porch with ceiling fans, electrical outlets, etc. to support a projector and viewing screen. The facility may include a small air conditioned space. The facility would provide education and interpretation for visitors ranging from kindergarten through adulthood. Educational programs may include but are not limited to the ecology of the springs, the use of the springs as a manatee sanctuary, manatee ecology, manatee habitat, water quality, wetland ecology, and wildlife stewardship/conservation. Amenities included in the center could be limited to interactive displays within the building with class instruction occurring in the outdoor classroom. All facilities would be built to blend in to the natural setting. Additional parking spaces may be necessary to provide accessible parking near other constructed facilities and/or to meet operational needs. The need for additional spaces, the number, and their location will be evaluated by the Three Sisters Springs Coordination Committee described under the Coordinated Management section on pages 20 and 21.

Up to two accessible docks or piers (up to 500 s.f.) would be constructed on the south side of Lake Crystal to provide limited recreational, catch-and-release fishing. The property will not be open to fishing until the Service has evaluated the use through the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). A draft CCP is expected in 2019.

A weather shelter would be built on an existing concrete slab (up to 450 s.f.) to provide shelter for visitors during poor weather conditions.

A maintenance shed (up to 150 s.f.) would be constructed to house tools and equipment needed for maintenance of the property and facilities.

The access roads from both entrance gates (i.e., the visitor and emergency/service gates) and the remainder of the unimproved parking area would be resurfaced (approximately 54,200 s.f.) as needed to reduce dust using permeable materials where feasible.

Up to 34 acres of native vegetation, including a pollinator garden would be planted with native vegetation.

Tier 3:

This plan includes an off-site visitor center (2,000 to 12,000 s.f.). That facility would not be built by the Service nor would it be built on Service-owned or managed lands.

Littoral shelves would be created at strategic locations along the bank of Lake Crystal to provide wetlands and improved aquatic habitats for fish and wildlife.

A Children’s Nature Trail and/or Adult Art Trail that would education visitors on native wildlife and habitats is proposed. The trails could include bird nests; animal dens; replicas of wildlife and their tracks and scat; etc.

Table 1. Proposed facilities, infrastructure, habitat improvements, and public use opportunities on the uplands at TSS.

Visitor Facilities, Infrastructure, and Improvements	Existing	Proposed	Documents used to inform Plan (yes, if supported - no, if not mentioned or opposed)		
			Deed of Restrictive Covenants	2016 Community Working Group Recommendation	2010 Project Management Plan
Tier 1: Funding currently available, construction expected within 2 years of signed agreement.					
Entrance	Existing	Construct a permanent entrance fee booth (144 s.f.), gate, landscaping and fencing	No	No	Yes
Interpretive signage	2 Existing kiosks with 6 panels each	Add 7 new interpretive signs, update and improve existing kiosk panels	Yes	Yes	Yes
Restroom building	None	Construct a restroom	Yes*	Yes	No
Viewing platforms along Magnolia Springs	None	Construct two viewing platforms (up to 150 s.f.) along Magnolia Springs manatee sanctuary	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Wetland area viewing platform	None	Construct a viewing platform (up to 150 s.f.) at the edge of the wetland restoration area	Yes*	Yes	Yes

Nature trails	Existing	Improve approximately 1.75 miles of existing trails (resurface with boardwalk, paving, natural and pervious materials)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Temporary parking lot	Existing dirt parking lot	Construct accessible parking spaces	Yes	Yes	Yes
Utilities	Limited utilities for restrooms	Add utilities such as water, electric, phone, sewer, lift station	No	No	No
Vegetative buffer	None	Proposed along Magnolia Trail (approximately 0.15 miles) and along property boundary where needed.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boardwalk enhancement	1500-linear foot boardwalk	Enhance support posts to meet code	No	No	No
Exotic and invasive plant control	Initial treatment conducted in 2013. Spot treatments conducted annually thereafter.	Exotic/Invasive plant removal by chemical and hand-pulling	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tier 2: Projects to be completed as funding becomes available (3-8 years to fund/construct).					
Outdoor environmental education facility	None	Develop an outdoor education facility (up to 1,000 s.f.)	No	Yes	Yes
Parking lot for education center and/or outdoor classroom	None	Up to 12 parking spaces including accessible spaces and buses	No	Yes	Yes

Piers or docks	None	Construct one or two piers/docks (up to 500 s.f.) on Lake Crystal	Yes	Yes	Yes
Weather shelter	10 x 15 aluminum carport over concrete slab	Construct a cover over the existing concrete slab (450 s.f.) to provide shelter for visitors during weather events	No	No	No
Maintenance shed	None	Construct up to 150 s.f. Maintenance shed	No	No	No
Roads	Existing entrance road	Resurface 54,200 s.f. of access road to reduce dust	Yes	Yes	Yes
Native plants	None	Proposed to restore an estimated 34 acres of native plants including a pollinator garden	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tier 3: Long-term planning, unknown time frame.					
Off-site visitor center	None	Develop an off-site visitor center (2,000 to 12,000 s.f.)	No	Yes	Yes
Littoral Zones	None	Construct littoral zones in Lake Crystal	No	No	Yes
Children's Nature Trail and/or Adult Art Trail	None	Educate visitors on native wildlife and habitats using replicas of bird nests, animal dens, fish, wildlife, animal tracks and scat	No	No	No

* Not specifically identified in the covenants but will count towards the minimum of four recreational facilities required by the Florida Communities Trust.

Improvements considered but eliminated from the plan

During development of this plan, many different options were considered. Table 2 identifies components that were considered but not included in this plan.

Table 2. Components considered but eliminated from the Plan.

Components	Reason for Elimination
On-site visitor center (10,000 to 12,000 s.f.)	Not supported by community working group
Semi-permeable overflow parking area (1,175 s.f.) and 65-space parking lot	
Bunkhouse (2,000 s.f.)	
Maintenance building (1,700 s.f.)	
Recreational vehicle (RV) pad with water and sewer	
Canoe/Kayak Launch	
Children's splash pad	Not consistent with wildlife-dependent recreation

Estimated Costs of On-Site Physical Improvements

Table 3 includes costs (2017 dollars) associated with the design and building of the facilities and infrastructure identified above.

Table 3. Estimated costs of proposed improvements

Item	(2017 dollars)
Tier 1: Funding currently available, construction expected in 2 years.	
Fee booth (144 s.f.), entrance gates, landscaping, and fencing	\$100,000*
Interpretative signage (8 signs, 6 panels)	\$20,000**
Free standing restrooms (1,200 s.f.)	\$350,000*
Restroom site work, 30 space parking lot w/ accessible parking, landscaping	\$250,000*
Restroom utilities: water, sewer, electricity	\$115,000*
Two manatee and one wetland viewing platforms (up to 150 s.f. each)	\$60,000*
Nature trails (1.75 miles long, 5 ft. wide, granular)	\$75,000*
Vegetative buffer along boundary as needed (25 to 50 s.f. wide)	\$35,000*
Exotic/invasive plant removal	\$35,000**
Tier 2: Projects to be completed as funding becomes available (2 to 8 years to fund/construct)	
Outdoor environmental education facility (1,000 s.f.)	\$350,000

Item	(2017 dollars)
Pier or dock (1 or 2 up to 500 s.f.)	\$125,000
Weather shelter (concrete pad existing, 450 s.f.)	\$10,000
Maintenance shed (approximately 150 s.f.)	\$2,500
Resurface road (less than 1 acre)	\$500,000 to \$600,000
Upland native plant restoration (34 acres)	\$50,000
Wetland native plant restoration (17 acres; if wetland restoration desired, only 17 acres of upland would be planted instead of 34)	Up to \$200,000
Pollinator garden	\$5,000
Tier 3: Timeframe unknown	
Off-site visitor center (2,000 to 12,000 s.f.)	\$1M to \$5.5M
Littoral zones	TBD
Children's nature trail/Adult Art Walk	TBD

Funding Source: *Service, **Refuge, +Friends

PERMITS

Development work may include the construction of facilities such as an education center, observation platform(s), a dock or pier, restrooms, trails, parking lot, and signage. Restoration activities will include exotic plant removal and native vegetation planting.

A number of potential permits and/or orders and authorizations for development and restoration activities have been identified. These can include:

- o A City of Crystal River building permit;
- o A Citrus County Florida Development Order/Permit;
- o A Citrus County Florida Development Order issued by the Citrus County Building Division for any activities not specifically exempted by land development code;
- o A State Programmatic General Permit (SPGP) for minor work located in waters of the United States;
- o A Noticed General Environmental Resources Permit issued by the Southwest Florida Water Management District in conjunction with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection;
- o A Nationwide Permit 27 for stream and wetland restoration activities issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and
- o An authorization to use Sovereign Submerged Lands.

As part of the FCT grant conditions, and to ensure that other permitting requirements are not missed, the agencies listed below will be contacted prior to initiating any site development activities as appropriate.

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources
- Southwest Florida Water Management District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

PUBLIC USES

Water Access to the Springs

The public currently accesses the springs by water, either by swimming in through the spring run or by paddle craft. No motorized craft, such as motorboats, jet skis, etc., are allowed in the springs or the spring run. During manatee season, no canoes, kayaks or other paddle craft are allowed in the springs. Visitors may access the springs by water by swimming or snorkeling into the springs. Management activities will include providing compatible, wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities for visitors while optimizing use of the springs for manatees. Compatible uses of the site will likely include existing in-water uses, managed to enhance visitor experience and minimize manatee disturbance. The Service may enact partial or complete closure of Three Sisters Springs to people when environmental conditions warrant additional protection for manatees. Any additional management actions concerning the protection of manatees in the springs and adjacent areas will be made independent of this plan and with input from the public as provided for by federal law.

Land Access to the Springs

At present, the public is prohibited from accessing the springs from land and are also prohibited from accessing the shoreline and property from the water. In as much as the water bottoms are included in the acquisition, access to the water bottoms from land and water will be managed. Management actions will include preserving shoreline vegetation, controlling erosion, and maintaining water clarity. Consistent with these actions, access to the water from land and vice versa will continue to be restricted. Manatee rescues and regular maintenance activities will be the only exceptions to these restrictions. Land-based uses will include the use of an observation boardwalk to provide visitors with an opportunity to view manatees from shore; gates in the boardwalk will be provided to allow access to the shoreline by law enforcement and Service personnel, but will be locked to prevent public access.

Fishing

Fishing in the springs is not compatible with currently planned visitor activities or with manatee protection, and therefore will not be allowed in the springs. However, there are opportunities for limited fishing in the man-made lake and a pier/dock is planned. If fishing is determined to be a compatible use through the refuge's comprehensive conservation planning process, disturbance from

angling activities and fishing gear litter would be minimized and these uses would be controlled and monitored. All fishing activities would be restricted to a designated fishing pier(s). Fishing would not be permitted on any other area of the property in order to minimize wildlife disturbance. The pier(s) will be ADA-compliant and would be of sufficient size to accommodate several individuals at one time. The springs and the canal banks along the perimeter of the property will be closed to fishing year-round.

Environmental Education and Interpretation

The refuge will continue to conduct environmental education and interpretive programs on the property. The refuge has established a free interpretive program for visitors. The program includes guided tours, walks and public education along the trails and boardwalk. The tours focus on native vegetation around the springs and the wetland, wildlife, springs, and history of the property. Birdwatching tours are also conducted during fall and spring migration and the winter when species diversity is higher. Almost 90 species of birds have been seen on the property. The refuge plans to continue these programs and develop additional year-round educational activities as visitor facilities are developed.

The Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Friends) and the refuge have developed a successful environmental education program with the Homosassa Elementary School that has been implemented annually since 2012. The program targets 4th and 5th graders and the lesson plans are geared to enhance knowledge of the state science curriculum. Armed with magnifying glasses and clipboards, students are transported to the Salt Marsh Trail on the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge to learn about food webs, ecosystems and salt marsh habitat, photosynthesis, and the water cycle. The 5th graders' standardized test scores were the highest in the state of Florida in 2015 and continue to be the highest in the school district every year. The elementary school administration feels that this hands-on program is a strong factor in their students' success.

We piloted the program with the Crystal River Primary School (CRPS) on the Three Sisters Springs property during the 2016/2017 school year. The (CRPS) was impressed with the program and requested that we conduct the program as a teacher training this past fall. The Friends and refuge plan to continue development of this educational program with the CRPS.

Festivals & Special Events

The project site may be used for festivals and special events that are oriented toward conservation/appreciation of natural resources, wildlife protection, and other environmental themes.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Coordinated Management

The Three Sisters Springs property will continue to be managed by the Service. The Service has broad experience in co-managing property with municipal and state governments. The Service will hold a management agreement over the land and water to manage the property as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System. The governance of refuges follows the

National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act, as amended, the Refuge Recreation Act, and other regulatory statutes that apply to all lands owned or managed by the Service.

The management agreement will span a minimum length of 20-years and will obligate the Service to manage the project in such a way as to allow the City to comply with the Declaration of Restrictive Covenants (Appendix A). The agreement may be modified at any time by mutual written consent of the parties and may be terminated by either party for any reason upon six (6) months advance written notice to the other party.

The Service is restricted in using appropriated funds to make permanent improvements to property not owned by the federal government unless authorized by statute or if the following conditions are met (GAO-01-179SP Appropriations Law-Vol. IV, pages 16-206 to 16-210):

1. The improvement must be incident to and essential for the effective accomplishment of an authorized purpose of the appropriation;
2. The amount of the expenditure must be reasonable;
3. The improvement must be for the principal benefit of the United States government; and
4. The interests of the United States government in the improvement must be protected.

Condition 4 can only be met at Three Sisters if the Service will continue to have management authority for at least the estimated life of the structures and improvements made. Therefore, if the City terminates the agreement before its expiration, then the City agrees to reimburse the USFWS prior to final termination for the depreciated costs of all capital improvements placed on the land through the agreement from this point forward.

All parties agree that no activity will be conducted or permitted on the property that adversely impacts the volume of flow from the Three Sisters Springs or the quality of the water being discharged therein. It is expressly agreed by all parties that public access to the spring for kayaking/canoeing, swimming, snorkeling, diving and wildlife observation does not adversely impact the integrity of the springs, as long as they are properly managed.

Once this management plan and/or any revision to the plan is approved by all parties, the Service and/or City may proceed with implementation of elements within the plan without requiring further approval by City Council. A Three Sisters Springs Coordination Committee (Coordination Committee) comprised of the refuge manager, city manager, a representative from the SWFWMD, a resident of Crystal River selected by the committee through an application process, and a liaison from city council will meet regularly to enhance coordination among the partners and to act as a bridge between the partners and city council. The committee will provide valued input on management goals for the property and review and evaluate progress through regularly scheduled committee meetings. All partners will have input upfront during planning efforts for development of visitor services and activities allowed on the property and through the 30% design phase of capital improvements through this committee. Public engagement is required on proposed capital improvements and development of planning documents on federally owned or managed lands. Therefore, public input will generally follow federal policy and guidelines. If consensus cannot be reached by the committee on a particular issue, the refuge manager will consult with committee members and make a final decision consistent with National Wildlife Refuge System mission and policy.

Bicycle/Walking Access

An extension of the City's Crosstown Trail was completed by the City to provide for access to the Three Sisters Springs property. Entry into the property will require payment of an entrance fee. Bicycle and pedestrian entrance fees will be used by the Service to maintain the property and facilities, including the land-based nature and hiking trails within the property.

Trolley Access

The City for the last three years has changed its overall departmental structure to provide transportation and entrance gate control for year round access to the PROPERTY. This included development of a Three Sister Springs Welcome Center and Transit system to route all public visitors into and out of the property in accordance with a November 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Service and the City. The route provides stops at a public park and in the CRA to enhance the visitors experience and support downtown economic development. These changes have improved the economic health of this area and new private investment in this area. The City will continue to operate the transit service and will consider variations to the route to promote new stops requested by either party. Changes may or may not change the ticket cost based on the time and distance of the proposed change. If in the future the City decides to discontinue the trolley, the Service would require a 6-month notice to make alternative arrangements to replace the City-managed trolley.

The Welcome Center and Transit System will be operated as an Enterprise Fund where the costs of providing transportation services to the general public on a continuing basis will be financed or recovered primarily through user charges. The Three Sisters Springs Coordination Committee may periodically decide that net income is appropriate for specific capital improvements or maintenance projects.

Funds from ticket sales will be shared with the Service once the refuge has established an entrance fee under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). The Service will receive up to 30% of the ticket price (i.e., \$3 to \$5 per person) and the balance will go to the City. The Service's portion of entry fees will be waived for visitors holding a valid federal pass. Ticket prices may change as required to meet expenses incurred during operation of the Welcome Center and Transit System. Changes to ticket prices must be approved by the Coordination Committee and City Council annually.

Funds from ticket sales may be used by the City for all costs associated with Three Sister Springs Enterprise Fund, which may include:

- Website and ticketing systems;
- Interpretive;
- Welcome Center Operational Costs;
- Transit Operational Costs;
- Labor costs directly related to Three Sisters Springs;
- Advertising Costs; and
- Any maintenance related directly to the Three Sister Springs Enterprise Fund.

Funds received by the Service must be spent in accordance with the REA and may include development of visitor services, visitor information, interpretation and signs; habitat restoration directly related to

wildlife-dependent recreation; and repair, maintenance, and facility enhancement directly related to visitor enjoyment, visitor access, and health and safety. This includes annual or routine maintenance, deferred maintenance, and capital improvements.

Maintenance

The Service will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of all the facilities and infrastructure on the Three Sisters Springs property.

Law Enforcement

The Refuge Complex has two full-time Federal Wildlife Officers that work staggered schedules to provide coverage 7 days a week. These officers cover law enforcement issues on Three Sisters and should be called for any incidents. However, the Service does not have exclusive jurisdiction over the Three Sisters property nor does the refuge have the resources to provide 24-hour/7days per week law enforcement response to the property. The Service exercises proprietary jurisdiction over the property, which essentially means State and local officers can respond to any type of criminal incident if refuge officers can't be reached or are not available. The Service estimates that 25% of officer time will be spent patrolling the Three Sisters Springs property by land or water. Additional officers may be provided by the Service at special events or particularly busy times of the year if needed.

Concessions

If in the future the City decides to discontinue the trolley, the Service may provide visitor access through a concession contract in accordance with Service policy.

It is acknowledged that the City must provide 60 days written notice to FTC on the lease of any interest, the operation of any concession, or other contracts of a similar nature, and that execution of any such document requires review and approval by FCT.

STAFFING

There are currently 9 full-time employees currently working at the Refuge Complex. Staff is comprised of Refuge Managers, a Visitor Services Specialist/Refuge Ranger, Law Enforcement Officers, a Biologist, a Natural Resource Planner, an Administrative Specialist and Maintenance Workers. Initially, management would be achieved by staff allocating an estimated percentage of their time at no less than the rates and projected annual costs listed below. These costs will be covered under the existing refuge budget until entrance fees are established. Please note that all staffing and management actions proposed are contingent upon the availability of funding through the Federal government budget process. Note that the refuge is currently allocating approximately 32% of overall staff time at an estimated annual cost of \$301,715 during Fiscal Year 2017.

Cost Estimates for Current Staffing/Management

Refuge Manager – 20% FTE	\$ 30,000
Deputy Manager – 10% FTE (Vacant)	\$ 15,000
Wildlife Biologist – 10% FTE	\$ 10,000
2 Law Enforcement Officers – 25% FTE each	\$ 55,000
Visitor Services Specialist/Refuge Ranger (Vacant) – 20% FTE	\$ 20,000

2 Maintenance workers – 10% FTE	each	\$ 15,000
<u>Maintenance budget</u>		<u>\$ 25,000</u>
TOTAL		\$170,000

Once an entrance fee is established, the refuge will seek to add positions to increase management and education at the site, including a full-time Volunteer Coordinator/Refuge Ranger and possibly two fee collectors depending on the level of involvement desired by the City. The City currently staffs the fee booth 7 days a week. Once the property has been fully developed, anticipated user fee collections may reach approximately \$402,500 annually (e.g., average ticket sales of \$11.50 per person X 35,000 visitors). The Service’s portion of the entrance fees (i.e., \$105,000 to \$175,000) will be used in accordance with the REA, including additional staff salary and benefits, the upkeep and maintenance of the property and facilities, development of visitor programs and activities.

Cost Estimate for Increased Management if City continues operation of the Trolley/Fee Booth

Volunteer Coordinator/Refuge Ranger – 100% FTE	\$100,000
<u>Maintenance</u>	<u>\$25,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$125,000

Cost Estimates for Increased Management if Service operates the Trolley/Fee Booth

2 Fee Booth Collectors – 100% each FTE	\$100,000
Volunteer Coordinator/Refuge Ranger – 100% FTE	\$100,000
2.5 Bus Drivers – 100%	\$150,000
<u>Maintenance</u>	<u>\$25,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$375,000

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The following will be monitored and reported by the Service and the City:

- Number of visitors;
- Breakdown in ticketing categories and sales;
- Number of manatee/human disturbance issues;
- Temporary spring closures;
- Annual update to list of birds and/or other wildlife using the property;
- Removal of exotic plants; and
- Infrastructure needs or concerns.

These findings will be compiled in a report and given to FCT, SWFWMD and the Service on an annual basis, with such report to be filed by no later than January 30th of each year.

Annual Stewardship Report

The City of Crystal River and FWS will prepare an Annual Stewardship Report, due to FCT on January 30th of each year. The report will evaluate the implementation of the Management Plan.

MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISIONS

It is acknowledged that written approval must be requested from FCT before undertaking any site alteration or physical improvement that is not addressed in the approved management plan. Once the plan and/or any revision to the plan is approved by all parties, the Service and/or City may proceed with implementation of elements within the plan without requiring further approval by City Council.

FIGURE 1. PROPOSED NEW OR IMPROVED EXISTING FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND IMPROVED HABITAT CONDITIONS



APPENDIX A: STATUS OF DECLARATION OF RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

1. The future land use and zoning designations of the project site shall be changed to conservation, outdoor recreation, open space or other similar category.
Completed.
2. At least four recreational facilities, such as a canoe/kayak launching platform, fishing pier, picnic pavilions and wildlife platforms shall be provided. The facilities shall be developed in a manner that allows the general public reasonable access for observation and appreciation of the natural resources on the project site without causing harm to those resources.

Partially complete. A boardwalk with 5 viewing platforms and a picnic pavilion have been constructed. The canoe/kayak launch has been removed from the plan due to lack of community support. Two manatee viewing platforms, an observation platform over the wetlands and a fishing pier/dock are planned for the future.
3. The project shall provide access facilities to an existing open water shoreline, such as a canoe/kayak launching platform and fishing pier.
Initiated. The canoe/kayak launching platform has been proposed for removal from the plan. Design and location of the fishing pier was addressed in an Environmental Assessment and will be installed contingent upon agreement by the City and funding.
4. A permanent recognition sign, at a minimum size of 3' X 4', shall be maintained at the entrance area of the project site. The sign shall acknowledge the project site was purchased with funds from the Florida Communities Trust Program and the Recipient.
Complete.
5. Interpretive signs or kiosks shall be provided on the project site to educate visitors about the natural environment or history of the area.
Complete. However, additional interpretive signs are being developed.
6. At least 12 regularly scheduled educational classes or programs shall be provided at the project site per year. These programs shall promote the protection of environmental resources.
Complete/On-going. The refuge conducts guided tours and interpretive programs for free to the public during manatee season and plans to expand the schedule year round. Two of these tours are offered twice daily: "Beyond the Boardwalk" and "A Walk Through the Wetlands." Additionally, two Birdwatching Tours were offered per week resulting in up to 30 programs per week during manatee season.
7. The natural communities that occur on the site shall be preserved and appropriately managed to ensure the long-term viability of these communities.

Complete/On-going. The shoreline of the springs was restored using sandbags and boulders to prevent erosion and shoreline collapse. Native wetland vegetation was planted along the shoreline and vicinity of the boardwalk. Restoration is planned for the remaining areas, including a butterfly/pollinator garden contingent upon agreement from the City.

8. The project site shall be maintained in a manner that protects and enhances the listed and non-listed native wildlife species and their habitat. Periodic surveys shall be conducted of listed species using the project site.
Complete/On-going. Bird surveys are conducted regularly as well as a floristic inventory. Manatee use of the springs is monitored regularly and human access is restricted to protect manatees during cold weather events.
9. The location and design of any parking facility shall be designed to have minimal impacts on natural resources. The parking area shall incorporate pervious materials wherever feasible.
Complete, although needs improvements.
10. The quality of surface waters shall be improved by the installation of storm water facilities on the project site that provide wildlife habitat and/or open space in a park like setting. The development of the storm water facilities shall be coordinated with and constructed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District.
Complete.
11. Any proposed storm water facility for the project site shall be designed to provide recreation open space or wildlife habitat.
Complete. The storm water treatment wetland was planted with native vegetation and attracts a variety of wildlife, particularly water birds. An observation platform will be constructed overlooking the wetland contingent upon agreement by the City.
12. A significant portion of the upland area on the project shall be planted with native vegetation.
Partially complete/On-going. A variety of native hardwoods were planted to help stabilize the bank around Three Sisters Springs, restore areas that had significant amounts of Brazilian Pepper removed during 2013, provide future shade along the boardwalk, and create a buffer between Three Sisters Springs and the neighboring properties. A total of 60 trees were planted, including the following species: eastern red cedar, bald cypress, water tupelo/black gum, sweetgum, red maple, sassafras, Walter's viburnum, and buttonbush. Restoration is planned for the remaining open areas, including a butterfly/pollinator garden contingent upon agreement from the City and funding.
13. A significant portion of the wetland area on the project shall be planted with native vegetation.
Complete.
14. Exotic vegetation shall be removed from the project site.
Complete/On-going. The exotic and invasive vegetation was removed from the entire property in 2013. Maintenance treatments are conducted annually by refuge staff.

15. An ongoing monitoring and control program for invasive vegetation including exotic (non-native) and nuisance native plant species shall be implemented at the project site. The objective of the control program shall be the elimination of invasive exotic plant species and the maintenance of a diverse association of native vegetation. The management plan shall reference the Exotic Pest Plant Council's List of Florida's Most Invasive Species to assist in identifying invasive exotics on the project site.
Complete/On-going. The exotic and invasive vegetation was removed from the entire property in 2013. Maintenance treatments are conducted annually by refuge staff.
16. A feral animal removal program shall be developed and implemented for the project site.
Complete/On-going. Since 2010, only one feral animal has been documented and removed from the project site.
17. Prior to the commencement of any proposed development activities, measures will be taken to determine the presence of any archaeological sites. All planned activities involving known archaeological sites or potential site areas shall be closely coordinated with the Division of Historical Resources in order to prevent the disturbance of these sites. Information on significant historical and archaeological sites shall be provided to the Division of Historical Resources for the purpose of updating the Florida Master Site file.
Complete/On-going, as appropriate. No archaeological sites are known to exist on the property.
18. A safe pedestrian sidewalk connection shall be provided between the project site and the sidewalk network in the adjacent neighborhood.
Complete.
19. A nature trail of at least one quarter mile shall be provided on the project site.
Complete. Approximately 1.75 miles of trails currently exist on the site.
20. The development and management of the project site shall be coordinated with the agencies managing the Cross Town Trail, to ensure the project site is managed as part of a linked land-based trail system.
Complete.
21. Neither the Recipient nor any third party shall pump, withdraw, divert from or impound on the FCT project site ground or surface water for the purposes of commercial or industrial use.
Complete.

APPENDIX B: ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER THE 2010 THREE SISTERS SPRINGS MANAGEMENT PLAN

2010 Management Plan Elements	2010 Projected Completion	Year Completed	Responsible Party	Cost
Remove unwanted existing structures (dock picnic tables with shades, barbeque pit, storage shed, scrap metal and barbed wire/chain link fence)	Not specified	2010	USFWS	labor/materials
Remove Boulders	Not specified	2010	USFWS	labor/materials
Creation of Nature Trail	2012	2012	USFWS	labor/materials
Entrance sign with FCT recognition	2012	2012	USFWS	unknown
Bat box	Not specified	2013	USFWS	labor/materials
Feral animal removal program	2012 then annually	2017	USFWS	labor/materials
Educational programs	2012 then annually	2010 annually through scheduled tours, 2016/17 manatee season conducted 30 weekly interpretive programs	USFWS	labor/materials
Exotic plant removal	2012 then annually	2010 to present by staff, 2013 by contract, 2018 contract scheduled	USFWS	2013 \$25,000; plus annual cost of labor/materials
Wildlife survey/monitoring	2012 then annually	2011 (annual CBC), 2015 to present (regularly scheduled bird surveys)	USFWS	labor/materials
Installation of First Observation Platform	2012	2011 as part of boardwalk	USFWS	Included in boardwalk \$280,000
Installation of Second Observation Platform	2014	2011 as part of boardwalk	USFWS	Included in boardwalk \$280,000

Upland restoration	2012-2016	2011 limited planting of 60+ trees	USFWS	labor/materials
Parking Facilities	2012	2011 temporary entrance road, turn-around loop, and parking area	USFWS	included in \$782,502 contracted costs
Bluebird boxes	Not specified	2012 10 boxes installed, currently have 20 boxes	USFWS	labor/materials
Bike rack	2015	2014?	USFWS	unknown
Landscaping	2012-2016	2015 limited	USFWS	labor/materials
Plant survey/monitoring	2012 then annually	2015, 2016, 2017	USFWS	labor/materials
Interpretive Signs/kiosks	2014	2015, 2016, 2018	USFWS/SWFWMD	\$12,800
Remove pine plantation and hip rows	Not specified	2011/2012	USFWS/Friends of CRNWRC	labor/materials
Picnic Pavilion	2014	2013 including trail from boardwalk to pavilion	USFWS/Friends of CRNWRC	\$19,126
Creation of Wetland Treatment Area and 1 acre of hydric hammock in Lake Crystal	2012	2015	SWFWMD	\$561,000
Amend Future Land Use Designation	2012	2010	City	
Amend Zoning Designation	2013	2012	City	
Bike trail access from Crosstown Trail	2015	Completed	City	
<i>Kayak/Canoe Launch</i>	2014	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>
<i>Volunteer Trailer Pads</i>	2015	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>
<i>Fishing Pier</i>	2015			
<i>Education Center</i>	2015			
<i>Photo monitoring</i>	2012 then annually	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>

APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS NOT IDENTIFIED IN THE 2010 THREE SISTERS SPRINGS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Elements not specifically identified in the 2010 plan		Year Completed	Responsible Party	Cost
Purchase of water rights/easement		2010	USFWS/private donations	USFWS: \$3,225,000 Private: \$1,775,000
Main entrance redesigned to improve safety and new entrance gates		2016	USFWS/FLAP Grant	included in \$782,502 contracted costs
Bank Stabilization Conceptual Design Report by The Nature Conservancy		2012	TNC/FWC/USFWS	\$42,887 TNC \$42,887 State Wildlife Grant funded by USFWS
Bank stabilization survey and permitting		2012	USFWS/Friends of CRNWRC	\$12,500
Bank stabilization obtained 1,800 tons of rock from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission		2015	USFWS/FWC	\$60,000 included in \$100,000 FWC contributed to total cost of bank stabilization project
Permanent access road, guard house, underground utilities along new road, swing gates and retention swales		2015	USFWS and Federal Lands Access Program Grant to City	included in \$782,502 contracted costs plus \$380,628 Federal Lands Access Program grant

Temporary restrooms		2014	USFWS (and City since 2015/16)	FWS purchased one portable toilet (city rents two)
Boardwalk with 5 viewing areas		2011	USFWS	\$280,000
3SS Master site plan design		2014	USFWS	\$144,170
Temporary Entrance Road, electronic gate and concrete pad for daily visitation		2014	USFWS	included in \$782,502 contracted costs
design, engineering, surveying, permitting a 3SS entrance and roadway		2015	USFWS	\$82,100
Boardwalk handrails reinforced and boardwalk certified that meet code		2016	USFWS	\$35,000
Identified need for bank stabilization/received Univ. of FI report on proposed solutions		2010/2011	USFWS	labor/materials
Bank stabilization construction		2016	SWFWMD/FWC	SWFWMD: \$663,000 FWC: \$100,000
Wetland culvert outfall area, wetland plant maintenance, and additional manatee grates.		2015/2016	SWFWMD	\$10,000

APPENDIX D: PUBLIC USE BY LAND

Public Use by Land		Year Completed	Responsible Party
Monthly open houses during Manatee season		2010, 2011, 2012, 2013	USFWS
Daily access during manatee season		2014/15	USFWS/Special Use Permit holder
Daily access during manatee season		2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18	USFWS/City as Special Use Permit holder
Daily access year round		2017	USFWS/City as Special Use Permit holder
Manatee use and human interaction research to manage public access to springs		2011 to 2018	USFWS

APPENDIX E: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE EXPENDITURES AND INVESTMENT IN THREE SISTERS SPRINGS

USFWS investment:	Amount	
Capital Improvements	\$1,323,978	
Resource management (manatee research/exotic plant removal)	\$60,000	
Bank Stabilization (State Wildlife Grant)	\$42,887	
Purchase of water rights	\$3,225,000	
Total	\$4,651,865	
Friends of CRNWRC investment:	\$87,227	
Federal Lands Access Program grant:	\$380,628	
Annual Investment:	FY 16 and 17	Annual Value
Staff time (11 to 12 employees)	32%	\$276,000 to \$301,715
Volunteer hours donated (≥\$23.56 per hour)	10,000 to 14,000	\$231,000 to \$329,840
Maintenance		\$25,000
Total		> \$527,000

APPENDIX F: APRIL 2017 LETTER TO CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER REQUESTING UPDATE TO MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Chassahowitzka, Crystal River, Egmont Key, Passage Key,
and Pinellas National Wildlife Refuges
7798 South Suncoast Boulevard
Homosassa, Florida 34448
Phone: (352) 382-1040 Fax: (352) 795-7961
April 18, 2017



Dave Burnell
City Manager
City of Crystal River
123 Northwest Highway 19
Crystal River, FL 34428

Mr. Burnell,

Thank you for your letter requesting that the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) establish a 50- to 100-foot buffer between existing walking trails and the shoreline on the Three Sisters Springs property to minimize erosion and disturbance to residential neighbors. That request was made in accordance with the "Management Agreement for Certain Land Located Within the City of Crystal River (City), Citrus County, State of Florida" (Management Agreement) between the City, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), as well as the Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan (PMP) developed by the City, the SWFWMD, and the Service. As you and I discussed during a January 19, 2017, meeting, and as I discussed with City Council during the January 25, 2017, City Council Workshop, the Service will not invest any more money in improvements to the property until we meet to update our Management Agreement and PMP for the Three Sisters Springs property. This process will help us establish priorities for the short- and long-term management of the property and improve the coordination between the City and the Refuge to accomplish common goals.

I met with you and Mayor Farley on February 7, 2017, to discuss these items and we agreed to meet weekly to update the Management Agreement and set management priorities. I attempted to schedule subsequent meetings for which you were unavailable until Monday, April 3, 2017. During that meeting and a follow up meeting held April 12, you informed me that you have been tasked by City Council to formulate three cost alternatives for management of the Three Sisters Property instead of updating the Management Agreement and PMP. The alternatives include comparison of costs to the City if the City managed the Three Sisters Springs property independently, if the City managed the property in partnership with the Refuge, and if the Refuge managed the property independently. You asked me to assist in developing the second and third alternatives and to include reasonable timelines for management milestones. The Refuge would like to continue managing the Three Sisters Springs property and is more than willing to assist in developing the alternatives. Working together to improve communication and coordination is imperative in enhancing our ability to effectively manage the property.

The Service has funding available to construct a visitor contact station/environmental education facility, free-standing public restrooms, and manatee observation platforms; and to improve the existing trails. The Refuge drafted an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze the potential effects of those proposed construction activities on the environment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970. On May 9, 2016, the City Council requested that the Service participate in upcoming Community Working Group (CWG) meetings to reach consensus among local stakeholders on actions and priorities for the Three Sisters Springs property. As a result, the Refuge put the EA on hold until the CWG reached agreement on 6 priorities and presented their recommendations to the City Council on October 24, 2017. Those recommendations have now been incorporated into a new EA to be released for public comment in the near future.

The Service is restricted in using appropriated funds to make permanent improvements to property not owned by the federal government unless authorized by statute or if the following conditions are met (GAO-01-179SP Appropriations Law-Vol. IV, pages 16-206 to 16-210):

1. The improvement must be incident to and essential for the effective accomplishment of an authorized purpose of the appropriation;
2. The amount of the expenditure must be reasonable;
3. The improvement must be for the principal benefit of the United States government; and
4. The interests of the United States government in the improvement must be protected.

Condition 4 can only be met at Three Sisters if the Service will continue to have management authority for at least the estimated life of the structures and improvements made. If our management authority ends prematurely, the City and/or SWFWMD would be required to reimburse the Service for the pro-rated value or fair market appraisal of the structures and improvements made to the property from this point forward. The Refuge must request that our Management Agreement be updated to include those conditions in writing prior to expending any appropriated funds on structures and improvements at Three Sisters Springs.

I look forward to our continued partnership in managing Three Sisters Springs. If you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting to update our Management Agreement and PMP, please contact me at (352) 436-7156 or by email at joyce_palmer@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Joyce Palmer
Wildlife Refuge Manager

CC: Kathleen Burchett, Area Supervisor, SE Region, National Wildlife Refuge System, Service
David Viker, Chief, Southeast Region, National Wildlife Refuge System, Service
Jim Farley, Mayor, City
Michael Gudis, Vice-Mayor, City
Pat Fitzpatrick, Council Member, City
Ken Brown, Council Member, City
Robert Holmes, Council Member, City
Carmen Sanders, Land Resources Manager, Operations & Land Management Bureau, SWFWMD

APPENDIX G: NOVEMBER 2017 RESPONSE TO CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER TERMINATION NOTICE



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Chassahowitzka, Crystal River, Egmont Key, Passage Key,
and Pinellas National Wildlife Refuges
7798 South Suncoast Boulevard
Homosassa, Florida 34448
Phone: (352) 382-1040 Fax: (352) 795-7961
November 16, 2017



Dave Burnell
City Manager
City of Crystal River
123 Northwest Highway 19
Crystal River, Florida 34428

Mr. Burnell,

I received your August 21, 2017, letter notifying the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) of the City of Crystal River's (City) intent to terminate the Service's agreement with the City and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to manage the Three Sisters Springs property (Property) as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The "Management Agreement for Certain Land Located Within the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, State of Florida" (Management Agreement) may be terminated by the City and/or the SWFWMD if either party determines that the Service has failed to manage the Property in accordance with the provisions of the 2010 Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan (PMP) or the Management Agreement, and then only after we have been given a period of not less than three (3) months to correct documented performance shortfalls.

According to your letter, the Service's performance has been deficient in four areas: (1) planning, (2) public access, (3) funding and staffing, and (4) capital improvements. While we acknowledge that PMP implementation has not progressed as desired, we dispute that the Service has been deficient in these areas. Specific reasoning and examples are contained in the attached document. In general, implementation has been impeded by a lack of unified vision among the parties and within the broader public, miscommunications between the Service and the City, and limitations in appropriated funds.

We respect the City's and SWFWMD's right to determine the fate of the Property. However, we feel that the Service can play a vital role in management of the Property given certain conditions. Therefore, we have and will continue to work in good faith with the City to both develop management scenarios and to update the PMP, as agreed upon so that the City Council has the information needed to make informed decisions on the future direction of the Property. We have proceeded with or intentionally delayed projects over the last two years based on the requests and/or direction (and some cases lack of direction) from the City and/or City Council.

Regardless, the Refuge has assisted the City in meeting the intent of Florida Communities Trust in granting funds to the City for purchase of the Property and 19 of the 21 covenants have been completed or are ongoing. We are also prepared to invest significant funding into permanent structures, but must ensure a long-term lease to do so.

I look forward to our continued partnership in managing Three Sisters Springs. If you have any questions, please contact me at (352) 436-7156 or by email at joyce_palmer@fws.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Joyce Palmer
Wildlife Refuge Manager

CC: Kathleen Burchett, Area Supervisor, Southeast Region, National Wildlife Refuge System, Service
David Viker, Chief, SE Region, NWRS, Service
Jim Farley, Mayor, City
Michael Gudis, Vice-Mayor, City
Pat Fitzpatrick, Council Member, City
Ken Brown, Council Member, City
Robert Holmes, Council Member, City
Ken Frink, SWFWMD
Lauren Reamy, Deputy Legislative Director, Senator Rubio
Gary Clark, Chairman of Florida Community Trust

Attachment

ATTACHMENT

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service response to issues raised by the
City of Crystal River in its August 21, 2017, letter

Planning

City comment: *The SERVICE, to date, has failed to follow certain provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and 602 FW 3 Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process, which exposes the property to potential closure by legal action.*

Response: Refuges are established to protect wildlife and habitat, with specific purposes. Comprehensive conservation plans (CCP) are prepared to ensure that the use of refuge lands and waters meets those purposes and to help fulfill the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). Plans address the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats and facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation while providing a forum for public involvement during the decision-making process. The Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) initiated the planning process in 2008 but put the plan on hold to incorporate management of the Three Sisters Springs property (Property) in the document. The Refuge has recently resumed its CCP development and held a final public scoping meeting October 26, 2017. We expect to complete the planning process and release a final plan by June of 2019.

Although the CCP is not yet completed, the Refuge completed and released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in June 2017 on the Development of Visitor Services Facilities, Infrastructure, and Habitat Improvements at Three Sisters Springs that evaluated proposed wildlife-dependent recreational activities to determine their appropriateness and compatibility in relationship to the purposes of the Refuge and the mission of the NWRS. Wildlife observation and photography; environmental education and interpretation; scientific research and monitoring; land-based commercial services; commercial wildlife and nature photography, filming, and other art forms from land; and bicycle use were determined to be appropriate and compatible public uses for the Refuge. This process satisfies applicable regulations, Service policy, and National Environmental Policy Act and Refuge Improvement Act requirements. All legislative and policy requirements to prevent the closure of the Property by legal action have been completed by the Service.

Public Access

City comment (in part): *Operations of the site for public use have been limited for the first six (6) years following execution of the AGREEMENT. The location remained closed to the general public for the first four (4) years, excluding approximately four (4) "Refuge Days" events per year.*

Response: Public access was limited until 2014 because the Refuge had neither developed visitor services facilities on the Property nor a wildlife-dependent recreation program, including an access fee, as identified in the 2010 Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan (PMP). Opening refuge lands to public access for wildlife-dependent recreational activities and establishing an entrance fee is a lengthy (i.e., 9 to 12 months) process involving significant public input into the activities proposed and fees established. The Refuge has initiated that process concurrent with the CCP. In the interim, the Refuge has provided public access to the

Property through other mechanisms, initially by holding open house events without charge, followed by facilitating the use of an independent, locally-owned commercial operator (i.e., River Ventures, LLC) to conduct tours under a Special Use Permit (SUP). When manatee use of Three Sisters Springs and the subsequent visitor demand increased exponentially, the City requested to operate those tours internally under a SUP and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The initial SUP holder did an excellent job for the unpredicted volume of people visiting the springs during the 2014/2015 manatee season. The Refuge Manager has consulted with previous staff and completed an evaluation of all reviews of the permit holder's performance. The reviews focused on the SUP holder's operation of the land-based tours during that manatee season that were posted on Trip Advisor, Facebook, Google, and Yelp, and articles written in the Citrus County Chronicle (Chronicle). Only one negative complaint was posted on any of those online venues. The complaint focused on the length of time the customer had to wait in line for the shuttle to the Property. The only complaint identified in the Chronicle was from residents along Kings Bay Drive that were unhappy that the SUP holder was using the entrance on Kings Bay Drive to access the Property for the tours. The Chronicle complaint was not related to the quality of the service provided by the SUP holder. Residents' complaints were resolved when construction of the entrance on Three Sisters Springs Trail was completed in 2015. Additionally, the SUP holder's satisfactory performance resulted in the City Council approving a 30-day extension to their contract, and a councilmember stating River Ventures was "doing a great job maintaining control." Likewise, Three Sisters Springs was named the second best spring to visit in Florida during spring 2015 by Agape Voyage. This nomination is based on the number of people who visited the Springs and other factors such as "popularity, the length of the river, amenities and, of course, ratings from other people who have been found online."

Since at least February 2015, City Council has publicly expressed that they want to solely control public access to the land portion of Three Sisters Springs. The timing coincided with an exponential increase in the popularity of manatee viewing from the boardwalk that the Refuge constructed on the Property and a corresponding increase in local tourism. City Council convened a tourism workshop in April of that year to determine how to harness the economic benefits for the City as "City Council decided to take a different direction with Three Sisters Springs, in that the City will try to take over the land portion...." Subsequently, in May 2015, City staff proposed that the City would "1) organize visitors offsite to educate and bring them into the Refuge via shuttle, 2) maintain a gate to allow visitors via shuttle, bicycles and walk-ons into the Refuge, and 3) maintain orderly site via education and supervision of visitors." The Refuge would be responsible for managing the swim-with manatees program, monitoring manatee habitat on the Property and managing Refuge lands. The party responsible for maintenance of facilities and grounds was not determined at that time.

The Refuge agreed to the City's request to act as a concessionaire and, during the last two manatee seasons, the City has accomplished items 1 and 2 above in accordance with USFWS policy through a MOU and SUP. Reviews of the City's performance posted on Trip Advisor, Facebook, Google, and Yelp are similar to those posted for River Ventures in terms of quality with one exception. Guests, both local and nonresident, frequently complained about the high fees charged by the City for the trolley service and walk-on access. The fees rose from \$6.00 per

adult when River Ventures was operating the shuttle service to \$15.00 per adult during manatee season and \$7.50 during the off-season under the City's operation of the trolley service. Additionally, visitors that walk onto the Property from nearby residences are charged the same fee as visitors that take the trolley to the Property. The City's response to those that complain emphasize that "100% of the proceeds go back into paying for local jobs and developments at Three Sisters Springs." However, the City has not invested any money into site development or facilities and grounds maintenance on the Property. The Refuge has invested considerable time and money in both.

This past year, the Refuge opened the entire Property for visitor access to existing trails in addition to the boardwalk and agreed to year-round access as we are committed to providing a quality visitor experience. In addition to providing daily boardwalk interpreters, the Refuge developed and implemented interpretive programs and birding tours of the Property throughout manatee season. Two of these tours were offered twice daily, "Beyond the Boardwalk" and "A Walk Through the Wetlands". Additionally, the birdwatching tours were offered twice weekly, resulting in 30 programs per week. All programs were presented to the public free-of-charge, well received, and widely attended by Refuge visitors (i.e., over 2,000 visitors). These programs were provided to diversify the visitor experience and engage visitors, particularly on warm days when no manatees were present.

Funding and Staffing

City comment: The necessary funding set forth in the plan is substantial in nature and adequate to operate the refuge... During the last several years however, existing staff has been reduced further minimizing contributions to the operation of the property. It is evident that the SERVICE is not meeting its obligation to provide services as expressed in the PLAN. In recent discussions, it has been determined that only a portion of the operational requirements will be satisfied and only after the SERVICE develops and implements a fee package for the property.

Response: The Refuge is not only meeting but significantly exceeding the predicted annual staff investment identified for initial management. The 2010 Three Sisters Springs PMP identifies that 10 to 25 % of 8 staff members time for an average 17.5% of those 8 positions combined, would be invested by the Refuge to manage the Property. The actual percentage of 11 staff members' time committed to management of Three Sisters Springs during Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 was 32% at a cost of \$276,000. Despite declining budget and staffing levels, our committed staff time during FY2017 increased to 32% of 12 staff members' time. The Refuge currently has 9 full-time permanent employees and one temporary hire which is similar to our 2010 staffing level. We are currently holding 3 positions vacant with plans to fill at least one in the near future.

The PMP states if funds are available, we would seek to add positions (i.e., up to seven positions costing \$545,000) to manage the site when it is fully developed which included establishment of an entrance fee to pay for those additional salaries and the \$200,000 annual maintenance fund (see pages 15 to 16 of the PMP). The Refuge has not yet established an entrance fee as identified in the PMP to hire additional staff dedicated to the Property or to fund maintenance needs. The Refuge has supported staff, volunteers, and maintenance needs solely from our annual budget. Site development and construction have been funded through both Regional and Refuge funds. For example, the Refuge spent 27% (i.e., \$297,000) of our total FY2016 budget on the Property,

as well as \$1,465,130 on site development and construction (e.g. temporary fee booth and gate, entrance road, boardwalk, etc.) since FY 2012 for an average of \$366,282 per year over the last 4 years.

Many state and federal land management agencies rely heavily on a volunteer work force and non-profit partnerships to meet daily demands. Similarly, the City initiated a volunteer program to supplement its own workforce this summer. The Refuge also has a well-developed and extremely dedicated volunteer force that donated almost 10,000 hours to the management of Three Sisters Springs during FY 2016 at an estimated value of \$231,000 (i.e., \$23.56 per hour according to independentsector.org) and 14,322 hours during FY 2017 at an estimated value of \$345,733 (i.e., \$24.14 per hour according to independentsector.org). Additionally, the non-profit organization Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Friends group) has also provided approximately \$90,000 in financial support for the acquisition of the Property, permit requirements for the shoreline stabilization, construction of the pavilion, and various other projects. Refuge volunteers and the Friends group are and will continue to be an invaluable asset to management of the Property regardless of our staffing and funding levels. We accomplish more with their strong support than the Refuge would independently.

Capital Improvements

City comment: The PMP includes a "projected timeline" based on funding availability that extends through 2016. The City has expressed concern that all projects identified in the plan were not completed by then.

Response: Of the 26 projects specified in the PMP, the Refuge was responsible for 20, the City was responsible for 3, and SWFWMD was responsible for 3. Twelve of the projects have been completed by the Refuge or are inherently recurring/umending projects such as control of exotic and invasive plants and feral animals or educational programs. Three projects have been initiated but not completed such as limited installation of interpretive signs and the construction of a temporary parking area instead of permanent. The majority of the capital improvements the Refuge has not completed have been a point of contention with the local community, including the canoe/kayak launch, an education center, volunteer pad, and permanent parking facilities. As a result, the City sponsored a Community Working Group (CWG) that met last summer/fall to reach consensus among local stakeholders on actions and priorities for the Property. The City Council also requested that the Service participate in these meetings at the May 9, 2016 Council meeting. We agreed and placed a draft EA that included the facilities mentioned in your letter on hold until the CWG reached agreement. The CWG reached consensus, presented their recommendations to the City Council on October 24, 2016 and then reconvened to prioritize those recommendations. The Refuge has incorporated the CWG recommendations into a new EA that was released for public comment on June 23, 2017. The Service has funding available to construct a permanent entrance booth, gate, fencing, free-standing public restrooms, and three additional observation platforms; and to improve the existing trails, temporary parking, and landscaping. Once the EA is finalized and our management plan and agreement are updated, we can initiate construction.

As we have discussed previously (i.e., during the January 25, 2017 City Council Workshop and via an April 18, 2017 letter), the Service will not invest any more money in improvements to the

Property until we update our Management Agreement and PMP for the Three Sisters Springs Property. This process will help the Refuge establish priorities for the short- and long-term management of the Property and improve the coordination between the City and the Refuge to accomplish common goals. The Service also informed the City that progress on capital improvement projects might “be slowed or stopped because of City actions to remove USFWS from the Property” during a May 26, 2015 Council meeting. At that time, the Service had committed to spending approximately \$1.5 million if the City and Refuge came to agreement on operating the site in a “collaborative manner.” We discussed at that time that the Service would “request return of its capital investment if a mutually beneficial resolution [was] not reached” as the Service is restricted in using appropriated funds to make permanent improvements to property not owned by the federal government unless authorized by statute or specific conditions are met. Those conditions include that the improvements must be for the principal benefit of the United States Government and that the interests of the United States Government in the improvements must be protected (GAO-01-179SP Appropriations Law-Vol. IV, pages 16-206 to 16-210). Those conditions can only be met for the Property if the Service will continue to have management authority for at least the estimated life of the structures and improvements made. If the Service’s management authority ends prematurely, the City and/or SWFWMD would be required to reimburse the Service for the pro-rated value or fair market appraisal of the structures and improvements made to the Property from this point forward. The Refuge must request that our Management Agreement be updated to include those conditions in writing prior to expending any appropriated funds on structures and improvements at Three Sisters Springs.

The Refuge would like to continue managing the Property and has been working cooperatively with the City to update the PMP. Our intention is to work together with the City to develop the Property as mutually agreed upon. We have proceeded with or intentionally delayed projects over the last two years based on the requests and/or direction (and some cases lack of direction) from the City and/or City Council. We are prepared to invest significant funding into permanent structures, but must ensure a long-term lease to do so. Regardless, the Refuge has assisted the City in meeting the intent of Florida Communities Trust in granting funds to the City for purchase of the Property and 19 of the 21 covenants have been completed or are ongoing.

Pros to maintaining partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Experience in habitat management.
- Experience in exotic/invasive plant control.
- Experience in habitat restoration.
- Experience in manatee management.
- Experience developing public facilities.
- Experience managing public access to conservation lands.
- Experience managing concessionaires.
- Experience developing public outreach and education materials.
- Experience developing interpretive programs for visitors.
- Experience developing education programs for school groups.
- Biological expertise (plants, mammals, birds, ecology, springs, wetlands, etc.).
- Experience managing federally listed species and related outreach and education with the public (land and water).
- Experience managing commercial activities on federally owned or managed lands in fair and equitable manner.
- Experience developing tourism opportunities with local governments.
- Federal nexus requires thorough analysis of environmental impacts from construction activities.
- Public engagement is required on proposed capital improvements on federally owned or managed lands. This can create feeling of buy-in for activities and projects.
- The Service has identified approximately \$925,000 to invest in capital improvements on the property.
- Approximately one-third of refuge staff time spent (~ \$301,000) on management of the property annually at no cost to the City of Crystal River or its' citizens.
- All maintenance and repairs conducted and funded by the refuge at no cost to the City of Crystal River or its' citizens.
- Legal liability falls on refuge/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at no cost to the City of Crystal River or its' citizens.
- Established Refuge volunteer program locally which includes a network of support nationally and internationally.
- Established Refuge Friends group provides additional financial and in-kind resources.
- National and international recognition of National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS).
- Mission of NWRS is in alignment with Florida Community Trust requirements:
 - "to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."
- Mission of NWRS is in alignment with public sentiment for passive, natural, outdoor experience at Three Sisters.

Additional benefits identified in published studies listed below.

Banking on Nature 2013: Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (CRNWR) visitors have significant economic impact on local economy (Carver and Caudill 2013).

- Over 400,000 visitors to CRNWR annually
 - Total recreation (non-consumptive and fishing) expenditures \$24.2 million
 - 278 jobs
 - \$11.5 million employment income
 - \$4.6 million tax revenue

2012 Visitor Satisfaction Study: Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge visitor perception and experience (Dietsch et al 2013):

- 90% of CRNWR visitors feel that refuges, compared to other public lands, provide a unique recreation experience.
- 40% of CRNWR visitors surveyed had been to the refuge multiple times (avg. of 7 times) within 12 months, 60% only once.
- 58% learned of refuge through friends and relatives, 14% from local community.
- 27% live within 50 miles of the refuge; 73% nonlocal visitors.
- 92% U.S. citizens.
- 71% of local visitor's sole purpose of the trip was visiting the refuge.
- 50% of nonlocal visitor's primary purpose for their trip was to visit the refuge.
- Most popular activities:
 - Wildlife observation 69%
 - Non-motorized boating 44%
 - Photography 40%
 - Bird watching 26%
- Primary reason for most recent visit related to:
 - Manatee viewing 30%
 - Non-motorized boating 24%
 - Wildlife observation 18%
 - Motorized boating 11%
 - Swimming 5%
- Visitor Satisfaction:
 - 90 % satisfied with recreational activities and opportunities
 - 86% satisfied with information and education about the refuge and its resources
 - 87% satisfied with services provided by employees or volunteers
 - 92% satisfied with refuge's job of conserving fish wildlife and their habitats.

Amenity Values of Proximity to National Wildlife Refuges (Taylor, Liu and Hamilton 2012):

- Owning a home near a national wildlife refuge in urban areas increases the value of homes 7-9% and helps support the surrounding community's tax base. Refuges boost property values because refuges protect against future development while preserving scenic vistas and other "natural amenity benefits associated with open spaces."

Cons to maintaining partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Required to seek public input on programs and activities on federally owned or managed lands may require increased waiting period.
- Federal nexus requires thorough analysis of environmental impacts from construction activities which requires increase in planning time to complete project and project may require modifications from input received in the process.
- Refuge budgets dependent on Congressional appropriations on annual basis.

APPENDIX A: STATUS OF DECLARATION OF RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

1. The future land use and zoning designations of the project site shall be changed to conservation, outdoor recreation, open space or other similar category.

Completed.

2. At least four recreational facilities, such as a canoe/kayak launching platform, fishing pier, picnic pavilions and wildlife platforms shall be provided. The facilities shall be developed in a manner that allows the general public reasonable access for observation and appreciation of the natural resources on the project site without causing harm to those resources.

Partially complete. A boardwalk with 5 viewing platforms and a picnic pavilion have been constructed. The canoe/kayak launch has been removed from the plan due to lack of community support. Two manatee viewing platforms, an observation platform over the wetlands and a fishing pier/dock are planned for the future.

3. The project shall provide access facilities to an existing open water shoreline, such as a canoe/kayak launching platform and fishing pier.

Initiated. The canoe/kayak launching platform has been proposed for removal from the plan. Design and location of the fishing pier was addressed in an Environmental Assessment and will be installed contingent upon agreement by the City and funding.

4. A permanent recognition sign, at a minimum size of 3' X 4', shall be maintained at the entrance area of the project site. The sign shall acknowledge the project site was purchased with funds from the Florida Communities Trust Program and the Recipient.

Complete.

5. Interpretive signs or kiosks shall be provided on the project site to educate visitors about the natural environment or history of the area.

Complete. However, additional interpretive signs are being developed.

6. At least 12 regularly scheduled educational classes or programs shall be provided at the project site per year. These programs shall promote the protection of environmental resources.

Complete/On-going. The refuge conducts guided tours and interpretive programs for free to the public during manatee season and plans to expand the schedule year round. Two of these tours are offered twice daily: "Beyond the Boardwalk" and "A Walk Through the Wetlands." Additionally, two Birdwatching Tours were offered per week resulting in up to 30 programs per week during manatee season.

7. The natural communities that occur on the site shall be preserved and appropriately managed to ensure the long-term viability of these communities.

Complete/On-going. The shoreline of the springs was restored using sandbags and boulders to prevent erosion and shoreline collapse. Native wetland vegetation was planted along the shoreline and vicinity of the boardwalk. Restoration is planned for the remaining areas, including a butterfly/pollinator garden contingent upon agreement from the City.

8. The project site shall be maintained in a manner that protects and enhances the listed and non-listed native wildlife species and their habitat. Periodic surveys shall be conducted of listed species using the project site.

Complete/On-going. Bird surveys are conducted regularly as well as a floristic inventory. Manatee use of the springs is monitored regularly and human access is restricted to protect manatees during cold weather events.

9. The location and design of any parking facility shall be designed to have minimal impacts on natural resources. The parking area shall incorporate pervious materials wherever feasible.

Complete, although needs improvements.

10. The quality of surface waters shall be improved by the installation of storm water facilities on the project site that provide wildlife habitat and/or open space in a park like setting. The development of the storm water facilities shall be coordinated with and constructed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Complete.

11. Any proposed storm water facility for the project site shall be designed to provide recreation open space or wildlife habitat.

Complete. The storm water treatment wetland was planted with native vegetation and attracts a variety of wildlife, particularly water birds. An observation platform will be constructed overlooking the wetland contingent upon agreement by the City.

12. A significant portion of the upland area on the project shall be planted with native vegetation.

Partially complete/On-going. A variety of native hardwoods were planted to help stabilize the bank around Three Sisters Springs, restore areas that had significant amounts of Brazilian Pepper removed during 2013, provide future shade along the boardwalk, and create a buffer between Three Sisters Springs and the neighboring properties. A total of 60 trees were planted, including the following species: eastern red cedar, bald cypress, water tupelo/black gum, sweetgum, red maple, sassafras, Walter's viburnum, and buttonbush. Restoration is planned for the remaining open areas, including a butterfly/pollinator garden contingent upon agreement from the City and funding.

13. A significant portion of the wetland area on the project shall be planted with native vegetation.

Complete.

14. Exotic vegetation shall be removed from the project site.

Complete/On-going. The exotic and invasive vegetation was removed from the entire property in 2013. Maintenance treatments are conducted annually by refuge staff.

15. An ongoing monitoring and control program for invasive vegetation including exotic (non-native) and nuisance native plant species shall be implemented at the project site. The objective of the control program shall be the elimination of invasive exotic plant species and the maintenance of a diverse association of native vegetation. The management plan shall reference the Exotic Pest Plant Council's List of Florida's Most Invasive Species to assist in identifying invasive exotics on the project site.

Complete/On-going. The exotic and invasive vegetation was removed from the entire property in 2013. Maintenance treatments are conducted annually by refuge staff.

16. A feral animal removal program shall be developed and implemented for the project site.

Complete/On-going. Since 2010, only one feral animal has been documented and removed from the project site.

17. Prior to the commencement of any proposed development activities, measures will be taken to determine the presence of any archaeological sites. All planned activities involving known archaeological sites or potential site areas shall be closely coordinated with the Division of Historical Resources in order to prevent the disturbance of these sites. Information on significant historical and archaeological sites shall be provided to the Division of Historical Resources for the purpose of updating the Florida Master Site file.

Complete/On-going, as appropriate. No archaeological sites are known to exist on the property.

18. A safe pedestrian sidewalk connection shall be provided between the project site and the sidewalk network in the adjacent neighborhood.

Complete.

19. A nature trail of at least one quarter mile shall be provided on the project site.

Complete. Approximately 1.75 miles of trails currently exist on the site.

20. The development and management of the project site shall be coordinated with the agencies managing the Cross Town Trail, to ensure the project site is managed as part of a linked land-based trail system.

Complete.

21. Neither the Recipient nor any third party shall pump, withdraw, divert from or impound on the FCT project site ground or surface water for the purposes of commercial or industrial use.

Complete.

2010 Management Plan Elements	2010 Projected Completion	Year Completed	Responsible Party	Cost
Remove unwanted existing structures (dock picnic tables with shades, barbeque pit, storage shed, scrap metal and barbed wire/chain link fence)	Not specified	2010	USFWS	labor/materials
Remove Boulders	Not specified	2010	USFWS	labor/materials
Creation of Nature Trail	2012	2012	USFWS	labor/materials
Entrance sign with FCT recognition	2012	2012	USFWS	unknown
Bat box	Not specified	2013	USFWS	labor/materials
Feral animal removal program	2012 then annually	2017	USFWS	labor/materials
Educational programs	2012 then annually	2010 annually through scheduled tours, 2016/17 manatee season conducted 30 weekly interpretive programs	USFWS	labor/materials
Exotic plant removal	2012 then annually	2010 to present by staff, 2013 by contract, 2018 contract scheduled	USFWS	2013 \$25,000; plus annual cost of labor/materials
Wildlife survey/monitoring	2012 then annually	2011 (annual CBC), 2015 to present (regularly scheduled bird surveys)	USFWS	labor/materials
Installation of First Observation Platform	2012	2011 as part of boardwalk	USFWS	Included in boardwalk \$280,000
Installation of Second Observation Platform	2014	2011 as part of boardwalk	USFWS	Included in boardwalk \$280,000
Upland restoration	2012-2016	2011 limited planting of 60+ trees	USFWS	labor/materials
Parking Facilities	2012	2011 temporary entrance road, turn-around loop, and parking area	USFWS	included in \$782,502 contracted costs
Bluebird boxes	Not specified	2012 10 boxes installed, currently have 20 boxes	USFWS	labor/materials
Bike rack	2015	2014?	USFWS	unknown

Landscaping	2012-2016	2015 limited	USFWS	labor/materials
Plant survey/monitoring	2012 then annually	2015, 2016, 2017	USFWS	labor/materials
Interpretive Signs/kiosks	2014	2015, 2016, 2018	USFWS/SFWWMD	\$12,800
Remove pine plantation and hip rows	Not specified	2011/2012	USFWS/Friends of CRNWRC	labor/materials
Picnic Pavilion	2014	2013 including trail from boardwalk to pavilion	USFWS/Friends of CRNWRC	\$19,126
Creation of Wetland Treatment Area and 1 acre of hydric hammock in Lake Crystal	2012	2015	SFWWMD	\$561,000
Amend Future Land Use Designation	2012	2010	City	
Amend Zoning Designation	2013	2012	City	
Bike trail access from Crosstown Trail	2015	Completed	City	
Kayak/Canoe Launch	2014	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>
Volunteer Trailer Pads	2015	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>
Fishing Pier	2015			
Education Center	2015			
Photo monitoring	2012 then annually	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>	<i>Removed from plan</i>

Elements not specifically identified in the 2010 plan

	Year Completed	Responsible Party	Cost
Purchase of water rights/easement	2010	USFWS/private donations	USFWS: \$3,225,000 Private: \$1,775,000
Main entrance redesigned to improve safety and new entrance gates	2016	USFWS/FLAP Grant	included in \$782,502 contracted costs
Bank Stabilization Conceptual Design Report by The Nature Conservancy	2012	TNC/FWC/USFWS	\$42,887 TNC \$42,887 State Wildlife Grant funded by USFWS
Bank stabilization survey and permitting	2012	USFWS/Friends of CRNWRC	\$12,500

Bank stabilization obtained 1,800 tons of rock from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission		2015	USFWS/FWC	\$60,000 included in \$100,000 FWC contributed to total cost of bank stabilization project
Permanent access road, guard house, underground utilities along new road, swing gates and retention swales		2015	USFWS and Federal Lands Access Program Grant to City	included in \$782,502 contracted costs plus \$380,628 Federal Lands Access Program grant
Temporary restrooms		2014	USFWS (and City since 2015/16)	FWS purchased one portable toilet (city rents two)
Boardwalk with 5 viewing areas		2011	USFWS	\$280,000
3SS Master site plan design		2014	USFWS	\$144,170
Temporary Entrance Road, electronic gate and concrete pad for daily visitation		2014	USFWS	included in \$782,502 contracted costs
design, engineering, surveying, permitting a 3SS entrance and roadway		2015	USFWS	\$82,100
Boardwalk handrails reinforced and boardwalk certified that meet code		2016	USFWS	\$35,000
Identified need for bank stabilization/received Univ. of FI report on proposed solutions		2010/2011	USFWS	labor/materials
Bank stabilization construction		2016	SWFWMD/FWC	SWFWMD: \$663,000 FWC: \$100,000
Wetland culvert outfall area, wetland plant maintenance, and additional manatee grates.		2015/2016	SWFWMD	\$10,000

Public Use		Year Completed	Responsible Party
Monthly open houses during Manatee season		2010, 2011, 2012, 2013	USFWS
Daily access during manatee season		2014/15	USFWS/Special Use Permit holder
Daily access during manatee season		2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18	USFWS/City as Special Use Permit holder
Daily access year round		2017	USFWS/City as Special Use Permit holder
Manatee use and human interaction research to manage public access to springs		2011 to 2018	USFWS



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Chassahowitzka, Crystal River, Egmont Key, Passage Key,
and Pinellas National Wildlife Refuges
7798 South Suncoast Boulevard
Homosassa, Florida 34448
Phone: (352) 382-1040 Fax: (352) 795-7961
April 18, 2017

Dave Burnell
City Manager
City of Crystal River
123 Northwest Highway 19
Crystal River, FL 34428

Mr. Burnell,

Thank you for your letter requesting that the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) establish a 50- to 100-foot buffer between existing walking trails and the shoreline on the Three Sisters Springs property to minimize erosion and disturbance to residential neighbors. That request was made in accordance with the "Management Agreement for Certain Land Located Within the City of Crystal River (City), Citrus County, State of Florida" (Management Agreement) between the City, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), as well as the Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan (PMP) developed by the City, the SWFWMD, and the Service. As you and I discussed during a January 19, 2017, meeting, and as I discussed with City Council during the January 25, 2017, City Council Workshop, the Service will not invest any more money in improvements to the property until we meet to update our Management Agreement and PMP for the Three Sisters Springs property. This process will help us establish priorities for the short- and long-term management of the property and improve the coordination between the City and the Refuge to accomplish common goals.

I met with you and Mayor Farley on February 7, 2017, to discuss these items and we agreed to meet weekly to update the Management Agreement and set management priorities. I attempted to schedule subsequent meetings for which you were unavailable until Monday, April 3, 2017. During that meeting and a follow up meeting held April 12, you informed me that you have been tasked by City Council to formulate three cost alternatives for management of the Three Sisters Property instead of updating the Management Agreement and PMP. The alternatives include comparison of costs to the City if the City managed the Three Sisters Springs property independently, if the City managed the property in partnership with the Refuge, and if the Refuge managed the property independently. You asked me to assist in developing the second and third alternatives and to include reasonable timelines for management milestones. The Refuge would like to continue managing the Three Sisters Springs property and is more than willing to assist in developing the alternatives. Working together to improve communication and coordination is imperative in enhancing our ability to effectively manage the property.

The Service has funding available to construct a visitor contact station/environmental education facility, free-standing public restrooms, and manatee observation platforms; and to improve the existing trails. The Refuge drafted an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze the potential effects of those proposed construction activities on the environment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970. On May 9, 2016, the City Council requested that the Service participate in upcoming Community Working Group (CWG) meetings to reach consensus among local stakeholders on actions and priorities for the Three Sisters Springs property. As a result, the Refuge put the EA on hold until the CWG reached agreement on 6 priorities and presented their recommendations to the City Council on October 24, 2017. Those recommendations have now been incorporated into a new EA to be released for public comment in the near future.

The Service is restricted in using appropriated funds to make permanent improvements to property not owned by the federal government unless authorized by statute or if the following conditions are met (GAO-01-179SP Appropriations Law-Vol. IV, pages 16-206 to 16-210):

1. The improvement must be incident to and essential for the effective accomplishment of an authorized purpose of the appropriation;
2. The amount of the expenditure must be reasonable;
3. The improvement must be for the principal benefit of the United States government; and
4. The interests of the United States government in the improvement must be protected.

Condition 4 can only be met at Three Sisters if the Service will continue to have management authority for at least the estimated life of the structures and improvements made. If our management authority ends prematurely, the City and/or SWFWMD would be required to reimburse the Service for the pro-rated value or fair market appraisal of the structures and improvements made to the property from this point forward. The Refuge must request that our Management Agreement be updated to include those conditions in writing prior to expending any appropriated funds on structures and improvements at Three Sisters Springs.

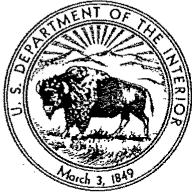
I look forward to our continued partnership in managing Three Sisters Springs. If you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting to update our Management Agreement and PMP, please contact me at (352) 436-7156 or by email at joyce_palmer@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Joyce Palmer
Wildlife Refuge Manager

CC: Kathleen Burchett, Area Supervisor, SE Region, National Wildlife Refuge System, Service
David Viker, Chief, Southeast Region, National Wildlife Refuge System, Service
Jim Farley, Mayor, City
Michael Gudis, Vice-Mayor, City
Pat Fitzpatrick, Council Member, City
Ken Brown, Council Member, City
Robert Holmes, Council Member, City
Carmen Sanders, Land Resources Manager, Operations & Land Management Bureau,
SWFWMD



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Chassahowitzka, Crystal River, Egmont Key, Passage Key,
and Pinellas National Wildlife Refuges
7798 South Suncoast Boulevard
Homosassa, Florida 34448
Phone: (352) 382-1040 Fax: (352) 795-7961
November 16, 2017

Dave Burnell
City Manager
City of Crystal River
123 Northwest Highway 19
Crystal River, Florida 34428

Mr. Burnell,

I received your August 21, 2017, letter notifying the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) of the City of Crystal River's (City) intent to terminate the Service's agreement with the City and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to manage the Three Sisters Springs property (Property) as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The "Management Agreement for Certain Land Located Within the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, State of Florida" (Management Agreement) may be terminated by the City and/or the SWFWMD if either party determines that the Service has failed to manage the Property in accordance with the provisions of the 2010 Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan (PMP) or the Management Agreement, and then only after we have been given a period of not less than three (3) months to correct documented performance shortfalls.

According to your letter, the Service's performance has been deficient in four areas: (1) planning, (2) public access, (3) funding and staffing, and (4) capital improvements. While we acknowledge that PMP implementation has not progressed as desired, we dispute that the Service has been deficient in these areas. Specific reasoning and examples are contained in the attached document. In general, implementation has been impeded by a lack of unified vision among the parties and within the broader public, miscommunications between the Service and the City, and limitations in appropriated funds.

We respect the City's and SWFWMD's right to determine the fate of the Property. However, we feel that the Service can play a vital role in management of the Property given certain conditions. Therefore, we have and will continue to work in good faith with the City to both develop management scenarios and to update the PMP, as agreed upon so that the City Council has the information needed to make informed decisions on the future direction of the Property. We have proceeded with or intentionally delayed projects over the last two years based on the requests and/or direction (and some cases lack of direction) from the City and/or City Council.

Regardless, the Refuge has assisted the City in meeting the intent of Florida Communities Trust in granting funds to the City for purchase of the Property and 19 of the 21 covenants have been completed or are ongoing. We are also prepared to invest significant funding into permanent structures, but must ensure a long-term lease to do so.

I look forward to our continued partnership in managing Three Sisters Springs. If you have any questions, please contact me at (352) 436-7156 or by email at joyce_palmer@fws.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Joyce Palmer
Wildlife Refuge Manager

CC: Kathleen Burchett, Area Supervisor, Southeast Region, National Wildlife Refuge System, Service
David Viker, Chief, SE Region, NWRS, Service
Jim Farley, Mayor, City
Michael Gudis, Vice-Mayor, City
Pat Fitzpatrick, Council Member, City
Ken Brown, Council Member, City
Robert Holmes, Council Member, City
Ken Frink, SWFWMD
Lauren Reamy, Deputy Legislative Director, Senator Rubio
Gary Clark, Chairman of Florida Community Trust

Attachment

ATTACHMENT

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service response to issues raised by the
City of Crystal River in its August 21, 2017, letter

Planning

City comment: *The SERVICE, to date, has failed to follow certain provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and 602 FW 3 Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process, which exposes the property to potential closure by legal action.*

Response: Refuges are established to protect wildlife and habitat, with specific purposes. Comprehensive conservation plans (CCP) are prepared to ensure that the use of refuge lands and waters meets those purposes and to help fulfill the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). Plans address the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats and facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation while providing a forum for public involvement during the decision-making process. The Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) initiated the planning process in 2008 but put the plan on hold to incorporate management of the Three Sisters Springs property (Property) in the document. The Refuge has recently resumed its CCP development and held a final public scoping meeting October 26, 2017. We expect to complete the planning process and release a final plan by June of 2019.

Although the CCP is not yet completed, the Refuge completed and released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in June 2017 on the Development of Visitor Services Facilities, Infrastructure, and Habitat Improvements at Three Sisters Springs that evaluated proposed wildlife-dependent recreational activities to determine their appropriateness and compatibility in relationship to the purposes of the Refuge and the mission of the NWRS. Wildlife observation and photography; environmental education and interpretation; scientific research and monitoring; land-based commercial services; commercial wildlife and nature photography, filming, and other art forms from land; and bicycle use were determined to be appropriate and compatible public uses for the Refuge. This process satisfies applicable regulations, Service policy, and National Environmental Policy Act and Refuge Improvement Act requirements. All legislative and policy requirements to prevent the closure of the Property by legal action have been completed by the Service.

Public Access

City comment (in part): *Operations of the site for public use have been limited for the first six (6) years following execution of the AGREEMENT. The location remained closed to the general public for the first four (4) years, excluding approximately four (4) "Refuge Days" events per year.*

Response: Public access was limited until 2014 because the Refuge had neither developed visitor services facilities on the Property nor a wildlife-dependent recreation program, including an access fee, as identified in the 2010 Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan (PMP). Opening refuge lands to public access for wildlife-dependent recreational activities and establishing an entrance fee is a lengthy (i.e., 9 to 12 months) process involving significant public input into the activities proposed and fees established. The Refuge has initiated that process concurrent with the CCP. In the interim, the Refuge has provided public access to the

Property through other mechanisms, initially by holding open house events without charge, followed by facilitating the use of an independent, locally-owned commercial operator (i.e., River Ventures, LLC) to conduct tours under a Special Use Permit (SUP). When manatee use of Three Sisters Springs and the subsequent visitor demand increased exponentially, the City requested to operate those tours internally under a SUP and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The initial SUP holder did an excellent job for the unpredicted volume of people visiting the springs during the 2014/2015 manatee season. The Refuge Manager has consulted with previous staff and completed an evaluation of all reviews of the permit holder's performance. The reviews focused on the SUP holder's operation of the land-based tours during that manatee season that were posted on Trip Advisor, Facebook, Google, and Yelp, and articles written in the Citrus County Chronicle (Chronicle). Only one negative complaint was posted on any of those online venues. The complaint focused on the length of time the customer had to wait in line for the shuttle to the Property. The only complaint identified in the Chronicle was from residents along Kings Bay Drive that were unhappy that the SUP holder was using the entrance on Kings Bay Drive to access the Property for the tours. The Chronicle complaint was not related to the quality of the service provided by the SUP holder. Residents' complaints were resolved when construction of the entrance on Three Sisters Springs Trail was completed in 2015. Additionally, the SUP holder's satisfactory performance resulted in the City Council approving a 30-day extension to their contract, and a councilmember stating River Ventures was "doing a great job maintaining control." Likewise, Three Sisters Springs was named the second best spring to visit in Florida during spring 2015 by Agape Voyage. This nomination is based on the number of people who visited the Springs and other factors such as "popularity, the length of the river, amenities and, of course, ratings from other people who have been found online."

Since at least February 2015, City Council has publicly expressed that they want to solely control public access to the land portion of Three Sisters Springs. The timing coincided with an exponential increase in the popularity of manatee viewing from the boardwalk that the Refuge constructed on the Property and a corresponding increase in local tourism. City Council convened a tourism workshop in April of that year to determine how to harness the economic benefits for the City as "City Council decided to take a different direction with Three Sisters Springs, in that the City will try to take over the land portion...." Subsequently, in May 2015, City staff proposed that the City would "1) organize visitors offsite to educate and bring them into the Refuge via shuttle, 2) maintain a gate to allow visitors via shuttle, bicycles and walk-ons into the Refuge, and 3) maintain orderly site via education and supervision of visitors." The Refuge would be responsible for managing the swim-with manatees program, monitoring manatee habitat on the Property and managing Refuge lands. The party responsible for maintenance of facilities and grounds was not determined at that time.

The Refuge agreed to the City's request to act as a concessionaire and, during the last two manatee seasons, the City has accomplished items 1 and 2 above in accordance with USFWS policy through a MOU and SUP. Reviews of the City's performance posted on Trip Advisor, Facebook, Google, and Yelp are similar to those posted for River Ventures in terms of quality with one exception. Guests, both local and nonresident, frequently complained about the high fees charged by the City for the trolley service and walk-on access. The fees rose from \$6.00 per

adult when River Ventures was operating the shuttle service to \$15.00 per adult during manatee season and \$7.50 during the off-season under the City's operation of the trolley service. Additionally, visitors that walk onto the Property from nearby residences are charged the same fee as visitors that take the trolley to the Property. The City's response to those that complain emphasize that "100% of the proceeds go back into paying for local jobs and developments at Three Sisters Springs." However, the City has not invested any money into site development or facilities and grounds maintenance on the Property. The Refuge has invested considerable time and money in both.

This past year, the Refuge opened the entire Property for visitor access to existing trails in addition to the boardwalk and agreed to year-round access as we are committed to providing a quality visitor experience. In addition to providing daily boardwalk interpreters, the Refuge developed and implemented interpretive programs and birding tours of the Property throughout manatee season. Two of these tours were offered twice daily, "Beyond the Boardwalk" and "A Walk Through the Wetlands". Additionally, the birdwatching tours were offered twice weekly, resulting in 30 programs per week. All programs were presented to the public free-of-charge, well received, and widely attended by Refuge visitors (i.e., over 2,000 visitors). These programs were provided to diversify the visitor experience and engage visitors, particularly on warm days when no manatees were present.

Funding and Staffing

City comment: The necessary funding set forth in the plan is substantial in nature and adequate to operate the refuge... During the last several years however, existing staff has been reduced further minimizing contributions to the operation of the property. It is evident that the SERVICE is not meeting its obligation to provide services as expressed in the PLAN. In recent discussions, it has been determined that only a portion of the operational requirements will be satisfied and only after the SERVICE develops and implements a fee package for the property.

Response: The Refuge is not only meeting but significantly exceeding the predicted annual staff investment identified for initial management. The 2010 Three Sisters Springs PMP identifies that 10 to 25 % of 8 staff members time for an average 17.5% of those 8 positions combined, would be invested by the Refuge to manage the Property. The actual percentage of 11 staff members' time committed to management of Three Sisters Springs during Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 was 32% at a cost of \$276,000. Despite declining budget and staffing levels, our committed staff time during FY2017 increased to 32% of 12 staff members' time. The Refuge currently has 9 full-time permanent employees and one temporary hire which is similar to our 2010 staffing level. We are currently holding 3 positions vacant with plans to fill at least one in the near future.

The PMP states if funds are available, we would seek to add positions (i.e., up to seven positions costing \$545,000) to manage the site when it is fully developed which included establishment of an entrance fee to pay for those additional salaries and the \$200,000 annual maintenance fund (see pages 15 to 16 of the PMP). The Refuge has not yet established an entrance fee as identified in the PMP to hire additional staff dedicated to the Property or to fund maintenance needs. The Refuge has supported staff, volunteers, and maintenance needs solely from our annual budget. Site development and construction have been funded through both Regional and Refuge funds. For example, the Refuge spent 27% (i.e., \$297,000) of our total FY2016 budget on the Property,

as well as \$1,465,130 on site development and construction (e.g. temporary fee booth and gate, entrance road, boardwalk, etc.) since FY 2012 for an average of \$366,282 per year over the last 4 years.

Many state and federal land management agencies rely heavily on a volunteer work force and non-profit partnerships to meet daily demands. Similarly, the City initiated a volunteer program to supplement its own workforce this summer. The Refuge also has a well-developed and extremely dedicated volunteer force that donated almost 10,000 hours to the management of Three Sisters Springs during FY 2016 at an estimated value of \$231,000 (i.e., \$23.56 per hour according to independentsector.org) and 14,322 hours during FY 2017 at an estimated value of \$345,733 (i.e., \$24.14 per hour according to independentsector.org). Additionally, the non-profit organization Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Friends group) has also provided approximately \$90,000 in financial support for the acquisition of the Property, permit requirements for the shoreline stabilization, construction of the pavilion, and various other projects. Refuge volunteers and the Friends group are and will continue to be an invaluable asset to management of the Property regardless of our staffing and funding levels. We accomplish more with their strong support than the Refuge would independently.

Capital Improvements

City comment: The PMP includes a "projected timeline" based on funding availability that extends through 2016. The City has expressed concern that all projects identified in the plan were not completed by then.

Response: Of the 26 projects specified in the PMP, the Refuge was responsible for 20, the City was responsible for 3, and SWFWMD was responsible for 3. Twelve of the projects have been completed by the Refuge or are inherently recurring/unending projects such as control of exotic and invasive plants and feral animals or educational programs. Three projects have been initiated but not completed such as limited installation of interpretive signs and the construction of a temporary parking area instead of permanent. The majority of the capital improvements the Refuge has not completed have been a point of contention with the local community, including the canoe/kayak launch, an education center, volunteer pad, and permanent parking facilities. As a result, the City sponsored a Community Working Group (CWG) that met last summer/fall to reach consensus among local stakeholders on actions and priorities for the Property. The City Council also requested that the Service participate in these meetings at the May 9, 2016 Council meeting. We agreed and placed a draft EA that included the facilities mentioned in your letter on hold until the CWG reached agreement. The CWG reached consensus, presented their recommendations to the City Council on October 24, 2016 and then reconvened to prioritize those recommendations. The Refuge has incorporated the CWG recommendations into a new EA that was released for public comment on June 23, 2017. The Service has funding available to construct a permanent entrance booth, gate, fencing, free-standing public restrooms, and three additional observation platforms; and to improve the existing trails, temporary parking, and landscaping. Once the EA is finalized and our management plan and agreement are updated, we can initiate construction.

As we have discussed previously (i.e., during the January 25, 2017 City Council Workshop and via an April 18, 2017 letter), the Service will not invest any more money in improvements to the

Property until we update our Management Agreement and PMP for the Three Sisters Springs Property. This process will help the Refuge establish priorities for the short- and long-term management of the Property and improve the coordination between the City and the Refuge to accomplish common goals. The Service also informed the City that progress on capital improvement projects might “be slowed or stopped because of City actions to remove USFWS from the Property” during a May 26, 2015 Council meeting. At that time, the Service had committed to spending approximately \$1.5 million if the City and Refuge came to agreement on operating the site in a “collaborative manner.” We discussed at that time that the Service would “request return of its capital investment if a mutually beneficial resolution [was] not reached” as the Service is restricted in using appropriated funds to make permanent improvements to property not owned by the federal government unless authorized by statute or specific conditions are met. Those conditions include that the improvements must be for the principal benefit of the United States Government and that the interests of the United States Government in the improvements must be protected (GAO-01-179SP Appropriations Law-Vol. IV, pages 16-206 to 16-210). Those conditions can only be met for the Property if the Service will continue to have management authority for at least the estimated life of the structures and improvements made. If the Service’s management authority ends prematurely, the City and/or SWFWMD would be required to reimburse the Service for the pro-rated value or fair market appraisal of the structures and improvements made to the Property from this point forward. The Refuge must request that our Management Agreement be updated to include those conditions in writing prior to expending any appropriated funds on structures and improvements at Three Sisters Springs.

The Refuge would like to continue managing the Property and has been working cooperatively with the City to update the PMP. Our intention is to work together with the City to develop the Property as mutually agreed upon. We have proceeded with or intentionally delayed projects over the last two years based on the requests and/or direction (and some cases lack of direction) from the City and/or City Council. We are prepared to invest significant funding into permanent structures, but must ensure a long-term lease to do so. Regardless, the Refuge has assisted the City in meeting the intent of Florida Communities Trust in granting funds to the City for purchase of the Property and 19 of the 21 covenants have been completed or are ongoing.

CRYSTAL RIVER CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Item Summary

Meeting Date: April 23, 2018

Agenda Item Number: 9C

Requested Motion: Motion to approve the City of Crystal River's Alternate Plan to manage the Three Sister Springs property.

Summary: This alternate plan has been developed in response to a unanimous vote by the Crystal River City Council (City) to put United States Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) on notice for failing to meet contractual obligations of the Management Plan (Plan) The Plan is a document containing contractual obligations the City must meet, with Florida Community Trust (FCT) as trustee of the property. The original intent was to have the Service manage and do the majority of improvements on site as documented in the 2010 Plan which shows capital and operational goals.

Originally, the City did not plan to have any responsibility relating to site operations. The Service requested that the City help meet the public access requirements of FCT and to assist in public education on the water. This was due to public outcry, poor visitor experiences, along with funding and regulatory issues within the Service. The City's role changed substantially over time in order to meet public demand for use of the property. City Council agreed to assist and the City took on the majority of operational functions at Three Sisters Springs, with the City having the most to lose. Crystal River was once a fishing village, then became a bedroom community for Duke Energy, and now it has become a tourist destination for outdoor water-related activities. Good or bad, this has become the life blood of our community.

The City now operates a Welcome Center, provides transportation in and out of Three Sisters, manages all visitors to the Three Sisters site and employs fourteen full or part-time personnel during manatee season. This year's budget included all required positions to operate independently utilizing no City tax dollars. The capital investment to meet many of the required improvements is also addressed with no City tax dollars expended.

This alternate plan lays out how the City would operate Three Sisters Springs without the Service's management. The intent of the original plan does not change as described in the original Executive Summary, except for changing the manager of the property from the Service to the City. The Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (CRNWR) will remain but the Three Sisters and the three springs would be excluded if this alternate plan is approved. This plan will require FCT approval.

Staff Recommendation: Senior staff members have agreed and believe the operations/ management accomplished to date at Three Sister Springs and development of an alternate plan that is realistic is the best choice for the City of Crystal River. It achieves the following: Local accountability, lower ticket price, all monies collected remain local, maintains superior customer service, ability to adjust to changing environments, better assures site improvements that will be approved by Council and the citizens of Crystal River have an opportunity for direct input, an opportunity for improved local pride in our City, policies and development to enhance changes to promote local usage.

All Senior staff members will however respect and follow whatever determination by City Council.

Funding Information:

Project Cost:

Funding Source:

Amount Available:

Finance Department Approval: _____

Approvals:

Originating Department



City Manager

City Attorney (if applicable)

Attachments: Alternate Plan, Comparison of plans, Marketing Data and Summary of Chronicle Articles.

Council Action:

Approved _____ Denied _____ Deferred _____ Other _____

Proposed Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018



**Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Agreement 2018
Table of Contents**

Subject	Page
Executive Summary 2018	1
Original Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
City's Current Operation Role at Three Sisters	5
Current City Staffing during Manatee Season	6
Purpose	7
New Purpose (Off Season Access)	7
Project Consistency with City's Comprehensive Plan	7
Conservation Element	7
Recreational Element	8
Coastal Management Element	8
Natural and Cultural Resources	8
Natural Communities	8
Manatee Management	9
Restoration	10
Water Treatment Wetlands	10
Exotic Plant Program	10
Feral Animal Program	11
Listed Animal Program	11
Archaeological, Cultural, and Historical Resource Protection	11
Structures and Improvements	11
Acknowledgements and Boundary Signs	11
Existing Improvements	12
Platforms	13
Nature Trails	13
Kayak/Canoe Launch	13
Picnic Pavilions	13
Fishing Docks	13
On-Site Restrooms	14
Education Station (New)	14
Off-Site Welcome Center	14
Trolley Transportation	14
Volunteer Trailer Pads (Removed)	15
Roadway and Parking Facilities	15
Entrance	15
Landscaping	15
Wetland Buffer	15
Stormwater Facilities	15
Hazard Mitigation	15
Interpretive Signs	16
Information and Directional Signage	16
Permits	16
Estimated Costs of On-Site Physical Improvements...	17

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Executive Summary 2018

This alternate plan has been developed in response to a City of Crystal River (City) Council vote 5 – 0 putting United States Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) on notice of failing to meet contract obligations of the Management Plan (Plan) (see Attachment 1). The plan is a document with contractual obligations the City has made with Florida Community Trust (FCT) trustee of the property. The original intent was to have the Service manage and do the majority of improvements on site as documented in the 2010 Plan which shows capital and operational goals (see Attachment 2).

Originally, the City did not have any plans to have any site operational responsibilities. The Service requested that the City help meet the public access requirements of FCT and to assist in public education on the water. This was due to public outcry, poor visitor experiences, funding and regulatory issues within the Service. The City's role changed substantially overtime in order to meet public demand for use of Three Sisters Springs. City Council agreed to assist and the City took on the majority of operational functions at Three Sisters Springs with the City having the most to lose. Crystal River was once a fishing village then became a bedroom community for Duke Energy and now it has become a tourist destination for outdoor water related activities. Good or bad this has become the life blood of our community.

The City now operates a Welcome Center, transportation in and out of Three Sisters, manages all visitors to the Three Sisters site and employs fourteen full or part-time personnel during manatee season.

This alternate plan lays out how the City would operate Three Sisters Springs without the Service's management. The intent of the original plan does not change as described in the original Executive Summary listed below, except for changing the manager of the property from the Service to the City. The Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (CRNWR) will remain but the Three Sisters and the springs would be excluded if this alternate plan is approved.

Original Executive Summary

Three Sisters Springs property came under public ownership in 2010 through a multi-agency partnership focused on conserving three second-order magnitude springs and lands that surround them. The project is aimed at protecting these significant natural resource values from environmental degradation that would be caused by the development of proposed residential single-family and multi-family homes as well as the potential for a bottled water facility. The Three Sisters Springs site has been under the management of the CRNWR and represents what is arguably the most significant site for West Indian manatee protection in all of Florida.

The Three Sisters Spring property is located immediately south of downtown Crystal River, Florida and was originally a part of a natural wetland ecosystem adjacent to Kings Bay. In the early 1970's the trees in the forested wetland were removed and an eight-acre lake was

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

dredged in the center of the site. The dredged material was used to fill the immediate wetlands area with the intent of creating a site suitable for residential development.

In 2008, a 300+ unit residential development project was planned for the site. However, prior to completion of the site plan and permitting requirements, the property ownership group acknowledged the environmental importance of the site, and agreed to work with a coalition of conservation groups to see if a feasible plan could be developed to acquire the property for conservation purposes, while also continuing to move forward with development plans in the event the conservation acquisition effort failed.

As a cornerstone of this conservation endeavor, the City of Crystal River agreed to serve as the lead agency in what ultimately was a successful application for a FCT grant. The acquisition effort was further bolstered by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) stepping forward with Florida Forever funding to be used as the match for the FCT grant funding, which resulted in SWFWMD holding 30% ownership interest in the site, SWFWMD further committed to creating a wetlands area on site to provide stormwater treatment for runoff from adjacent commercial and residential areas.

The Friends of the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex, now Crystal River Wildlife Refuge Complex (Friends) and the National Wildlife Refuge Association took on the leading role in raising \$2.7 million in private funding. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$3.0 million to the Service for land acquisition, with the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, Citrus County Tourist Development Council also providing financial support. The \$2.7 million in private financial support came from The Felburn foundation and several other environmental groups, as well as a multitude of private citizens and various civic clubs. The Service funding and the Felburn ultimately went to acquire the Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) and related water value from the site owners.

Since the inclusion of Crystal River/Kings Bay as a priority water body in its Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) program in 1988, SWFWMD has pursued strategies and programs to improve water quality condition in this unique tidal-influenced first-magnitude spring system. In keeping with those efforts, SWFWMD has committed to pursuing stormwater treatment via the construction of the previously-mentioned treatment wetlands on the Three Sisters Springs site. To further the environmental impact of this site, SWFWMD has also committed to including element in the wetland design that will attract birds and other wildlife.

The Service has committed to managing the overall site in cooperation with the City and SWFWMD once the property is acquired. The Service will manage the property as part of the Crystal River NWR under a management agreement with the City and SWFWMD. SWFWMD will be involved with the site through the completion of construction of the treatment wetland and will then turn the wetland over to the Service for management and maintenance.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Given the prime opportunities for land-based manatee observation at the Three Sisters Springs site, Service has developed plans to install at least one observation platform adjacent to the springs for viewing of the manatee. The environmental experience will be further enhanced through the development of an on-site environmental center that will focus on manatee and the complex Kings Bay ecosystem. The site will also offer public amenities such as the creation of a natural trail, a canoe/kayak launch, youth fishing areas on the lake, and additional bird habitat through creation of the wetland treatment area.

The conservation of the Three Sisters Springs property fulfills the City's long-term goal of creating a water front open space with trails and connection to Kings Bay. Additionally, the City is working to further bolster the City's eco-tourism trade and City will be providing safe pedestrian/biking access from its downtown area to the Three Sisters Springs site. That access will connect the Three Sisters Springs site to the City's other waterfront parks and the various water-based activities that define City of Crystal River.

With time, the Three Sisters Springs site is expected to become a critical resource for the observation and protection of the manatee, while also playing a key role in the restoration and maintenance of water quality within the Kings Bay/Crystal River springs system. The environmental education center, nature trails and restored wildlife habitat will further enhance an environmental experience that will be in total keeping with the area's reputation as "Florida's Nature Coast".

Introduction

Three Sisters Springs project involved the public acquisition of a 57-acre site that contains three second-order springs that play a critical role in both manatee protection and efforts to restore water quality in the Kings Bay/Crystal Springshed.

The site was originally a part of wetlands ecosystem located adjacent to Kings Bay. In the 1970s, the property was cleared and filled with the intent of creating a building site suitable for residential development. A development plan involving the construction of more than 300 residential units had been approved at the time a multi-agency cooperative effort was initiated to bring the site under public ownership.

In addition to the three second-order springs found on the site itself, there is a second-order spring, Magnolia Springs, located along the western perimeter of the property and another second-order spring, Idiot's Delight, located along the southeastern portion of the property. The man-made waterway fed by Magnolia Springs is a seasonal sanctuary for manatee with a second sanctuary located where the spring run feeds into a waterway that flows into Kings Bay. During cold weather, manatees heavily utilize the two warm-water sanctuaries and Three Sisters Springs.

The successful effort to acquire the site resulted in the property being owned by both the City and SWFWMD, with the Service managing the property to this point and time. The City gave a

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

six month notice to the Service in May 2017 for failing to manage the property in accordance with the provisions of the Plan. The revision of the Plan is based on the position the City has taken.

Many good things have happened to Three Sisters Springs, the manatee, and tourism in Crystal River since Three Sisters was acquired. The attraction to come to Crystal River and swim with the manatee is far greater than most thought just eight years ago. The partnership with SWFWMD, the Service and the City is different than expected from the beginning of this partnership. In 2010 the Service received its largest budget year and since then overall budgetary reductions nationwide have been crippling. There has been a severe reduction in staffing and funding by the federal government for utilization toward operation and capitalization of the Three Sisters Springs property.

The City has made a number of changes since 2010 based on tourism outside and inside of the Three Sisters Spring property; city staff was expanded for managing its two waterfront parks and other public water front areas using Park Rangers. The City established an on water presence to promote education related to the swim with program for manatee. The City now manages the waterfront parks with park rangers seven days a week sun up to sun down. For the third consecutive year the City has managed land access to Three Sisters Springs property utilizing a Welcome Center, a transportation system specifically for Three Sisters Springs to bring people on and off of the property, sales and ticketing, marketing and employees for daily operation and management. 2017 was the first year the site was open outside of manatee season. This was done primarily with City employees and coordination with the Service to assist in meeting the FCT goal of providing access to public properties.

The Service will continue total management of all portions of the remaining refuge and sanctuaries focuses on ecosystems/monitoring/enforcing all in water manatee protections and educational efforts for the visitors and students. In order to control access into the springs during cold weather, Idiot's Delight will be expanded to close access to the spring run. Although they are a committed group, the structure and funding limitations of the Refuge have made it difficult for the Service to meet commitments to FCT on a capital improvements standpoint as well as operational commitments. The two partners in ownership SWFWMD and the City have exceeded their individual scope of work within the management plan.

In accordance with the terms of the FCT grant, the City of Crystal River has revised the management plan to remove the Service from the responsibility of completing the FCT grant commitments and responsibility for land management of the 57-acre site. This new management plan updates the timeline and makes revisions to items within the Plan. As explained further herein, this Management Plan describes the ultimate development of boardwalks, trails, restrooms, two (2) fishing piers, multiple (8) viewing platforms for viewing of manatee and birds, two (2) picnic pavilions and a future educational center on or off site. SWFWMD has completed the watershed restoration and creation of a treatment wetland on-

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

site that will treat stormwater from adjacent commercial and residential areas prior to such runoff being released into Kings Bay/Crystal River spring system, thus improving the water quality of Kings Bay. The project site will be managed for the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources, and for outdoor recreation compatible with those goals.

It is important to note that through feedback from multiple stakeholders, the decision was made to support the site with an off-site Welcome Center with transportation services to the site. This was done in order to minimize the net impact of cars on the site.

In the same time period, our partner in the ownership in the physical property, SWFWMD and the City have far exceeded their contractual obligations in the requirements set in the Plan. SWFWMD's investment to date is \$1,323,873 (see Attachment 3), with a new project is being studied to continue bank stabilization along the shoreline of Three Sisters Springs.

The City has spent \$1,423,298 to meet its requirements of the Plan, this was primarily through the relocation of Three Sisters Springs Trail for the Crosstown Trail Connection of \$1,038,298, starting the entrance, bringing utilities to the site and funding for the Main Entrance in the sum of \$385,000. This does not include investment in the Three Sisters Visitor Center, transportation system or visitor operations run under an Enterprise Fund at no cost to the tax payers of Crystal River.

It is also important to note the City during this same period has completed other projects with SWFWMD and/or FDEP to improve water quality in the Kings Bay Watershed as a goal of the Three Sisters Project. These other City managed projects have an added value of over fifteen million dollars.

Three projects in the county changing septic to sewer in almost 500 homes very near Kings Bay.

Reclaim project that sends all the City's treated wastewater to Duke Energy reducing the nitrogen loading to the watershed and ultimately into Kings Bay. It also reduced water withdrawal at Duke Energy.

Hunter Springs Park was renovated which included providing stormwater water quality treatment, stabilizing the shoreline, and developing a living shoreline.

City's Current Operation Role at Three Sisters

Overall, the City manages the day to day access by visitors in and out of Three Sisters Springs. This includes the following activities:

- Maintaining Three Sisters Website.

- Advance Ticketing

- Facebook Monitoring with clarifications and marketing

- Marketing and work with TDC to promote

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Maintaining and operate visitor center

Operating and maintain trolley transportation system.

Port-o-let maintenance and solid waste removal

Evening security checks

Coordinating with the Service on any events

Current City Staffing during Manatee Season

4 Trolley Drivers	1 x 40 Hours per week (6 months per year)
3 x Part-time	
4 Visitor Experience Specialist	2 x 40 Hours per week (6 months per year)
2 x Part-time	
1 Visitor Experience Coordinator	1 Full-Time
Manager	50%

The staff is down-sized during off season to reduce cost.



A full-time Water Patrol staff person and a part-time Sheriff's Deputy work with the operators, residents, and visitors to promote safety and proper swim with the manatee behaviors. City Water Patrol also supports and/or requests assistance from Citrus County Sheriff, FWC and the Service as needed to resolve issues on the bay. This is currently and planned as Enterprise Fund/CRA funded positions.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Purpose

The Three Sisters Spring project was pursued by a broad array of public and private partners for the purposes of:

- Providing and focusing public access to the site.
- Creating superb outdoor-oriented recreational and educational opportunities such as wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, environmental education, fishing, for both the citizens and visitors to Crystal River, compatible with the all purposes of the project;
- Conserving, protecting and enhancing natural resources;
- Protecting and recovering endangered West Indian manatee and other fish and wildlife;
- Restoring native habitat and biodiversity;
- Protecting water quality and quantity in Kings bay, Florida: and
- Protecting the scenic and open space qualities of the Three Sisters Springs property.

New Purpose (off season access)

The original agreement focused on the winter months when manatee are present in large numbers, but now that the City operates the site year round, new aspects are proposed to be added. Presently during summer months it is hot and dry with minimal shade protection.

- Providing shaded areas for observation of wildlife or places to rest during a walk of the site.
- Consider a catch and release program for educational or family purposes.
- In the long-term development different appropriate ecosystems.

Project Consistency with City's Comprehensive Plan

The Tree Sisters Spring project supports the City's Comprehensive Plan in a number of ways, as indicated below:

Conservation Element

The Conservation Element States that " the City shall protect and conserve the natural functions of rivers, bays, wetlands estuarine, and marine habitats, in order to assure the protection of fisheries, native flora and fauna and associated habitat, and especially species designated as endangered, threatened or species of special concern under the Endangered Species Act" (Objective). There is also language that states that "No net loss of essential upland habitat for endangered or threatened species or species of special concern will be permitted" (Objective). In addition, there is language that states that "The present quality of surface and groundwater entering Kings Bay and Crystal River will be maintained" (Objective). The Three Sisters Springs project clearly supports these objectives by protecting manatee habitat and the

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

present quality of water entering Kings Bay, both through protection of the springs themselves and by providing for wetlands treatment of stormwater runoff from adjacent commercial and residential areas.

Recreational Element

The Recreation Element states that “public access to natural resource-based parks will be provided to assist in meeting Crystal River’s recreation demands without diminishing the overall quality of those resources.” (Goal #1). Specific objectives that will be supported by the Three Sisters Springs project include increasing the amount of public fishing pier access (Objective); establishing one mile of nature trails within Crystal River (Objective); establishing a program for the identification, designation, management and protection of environmentally sensitive lands (Objective); and providing for a sufficient quantity and distribution of open space to meet the City’s needs (Objective). By providing open space, protection of the natural resources, nature trails, the Three Sisters Spring project is both consistent with and strongly supportive of the goals set forth in the Recreation Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Coastal Management Element

The Coastal Management Element establishes that the City shall “ensure the protection and enhancement of significant vegetative communities which support wildlife through preserving the diversity and viability of Coastal habitat areas.” (Objective) it further establishes that the City will “increase public access to the Coastal Area’s natural Resources through acquisition of new property, which will be consistent with the public’s needs and the natural resource capacity of the selected area . ” (Objective)The Three Sisters Springs project will preserve the viability of the on-site habitat areas and increase public access to a natural coastal setting, with appropriate management oversight.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural Communities

The Three Sisters Spring property is approximately 57-acres of filled in forested wetlands with a man-made lake (Lake Crystal) in the center of the property. When purchased grasses and recently-planted pine trees currently dominate the site, with beautiful natural springs (i.e. Three Sisters Springs) located in the southern center of the property. In 2011/2012 Service removed the recently planted pine trees. The Three Sisters Springs are surrounded by an edge of cypress and red maple with a variety of shrubs. This area was being threatened by erosion; SWFWMD developed a plan to stabilize the shoreline and executed the project in 2016. The fields are made up of non-native cool season grasses, native herbaceous plants and recently-planted pine trees. The elevation and vegetation of the site have been altered considerably since the 1940s. Based on an examination of historical aerial photos as well as remnant vegetation along the perimeter of the site, it is likely that the majority of the property was originally either mesic or hydric hammock. These forests were removed over time and the

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

elevation of most of the site was increased via fill material generated during the excavation of Lake Crystal borrow pit. Lake Crystal is approximately 8 acres in size and 40 feet deep; sides of the pit are steep and there is virtually no littoral zone when purchased.

At the time of purchase Lake Crystal an artificial lake created by the filling of the property in the 1970s, provides little habitat for fish, birds, and amphibians due to its sharp and steep sides with no littoral zone. Since purchase in 2015 SWFWMD developed a wetland treatment area as agreed, in the process used the excavated fill and developed a littoral area on the east side of Lake Crystal. It is the desire of the City to work with FWC on stocking the lake for a catch and release program.

Manatee Management

The project area is one of the most important properties in Florida for the West Indian manatee. It illustrates more than 250 manatees, representing approximately 5% of the entire Florida manatee population, were observed using this site during the abnormally cold winter in 2009/2010. In 2015 it was estimated that over 800 manatee used the Kings Bay habitat during cold periods. The manatee use five springs on the property, which deliver millions of gallons of 72 degree water each day. As previously mentioned, the protection of manatee was one of the driving goals of the project. Three Sisters Springs is particularly important to mothers with newborn calves.

Three Sisters Springs will remain open to the public during non-manatee season for swimming and paddle boarding entering from the water. Due to the increase in manatee population, in keeping with the intent of maintaining and sustaining quality visitor experience while at the same time providing adequate protected areas for manatee, Service will continue utilizing existing federal rulemaking/processes to manage the remaining refuge area and sanctuaries. In this management agreement access to the springs is controlled by Service. Human activities in the springs would be managed by the City and FWC. Service will use temporary closing of all of the waters within Three Sisters Spring during the coldest winter periods by expanding Idiots Delight to give manatee uninhibited resting place.

Several large boulders were previously placed in the Three Sisters outflow to prevent boats from accessing the Three Sisters Springs. These boulders impeded the movement of manatee in and out of Three Sisters during low tide thus making the springs unavailable to manatee for 20% to 30% of the time. These boulders are now removed to make the Three Sisters available to manatee throughout the whole day and other means are now in place to keep boats from entering the springs.

Magnolia Spring will be closed for public use during the winter months as a manatee sanctuary, as it has been previously. The project acquisition will not change management of Magnolia Spring, but will provide improved wildlife viewing opportunities.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

The shallow water basking area across from Idiot's Delight Spring at the mouth of the Three Sisters outflow will remain a manatee sanctuary.

Restoration

The approximate 50 acre upland area will be restored by planting upland forest with live oaks, red cedar, cabbage palms, wax myrtle, and other species native to the area, including a pine forest. Some areas will remain open to attract a variety of wildlife species. Nest boxes may be provided for bluebirds and bat houses may be installed. As resources are available, a garden with native species may be planted to attract butterflies. Restoration of mesic and /or hydric hammock on the site will require removal of fill material, which can be costly. Replanting of mesic hammock (typical species include swamp chestnut oak, white ash, southern magnolia, laurel oak, and pignut hickory) will be limited primary to areas surrounding the springs and along the canal that flanks the southern and western borders of the property. Live oak/cabbage palm forest plantings do not require removal of fill. A wetland area will be created by SWFWMD south of the lake, which will be planted with native emergent to make it attractive to wading birds.

The Three Sisters Spring area was to remain relatively untouched except for removal or to reposition some of the boulder at the spring run. Unfortunately, the erosion along the banks made it critical to stabilize the shoreline. SWFWMD did so in the main Three Sisters Springs area in 2016. They are now proposing to finish the spring run and around Idiots Delight before 2020. Service, not long after the acquisition, built a boardwalk much closer than outlined in the Management Agreement with 5 viewing platforms. In summer of 2017 this platform was stabilized to meet load requirements. Native vegetation has been planted around the springs to deter foot access from land and/or visitor access from the water.

Some areas will remain open to attract a variety of wildlife species. Nest boxes may be provided for bluebirds and bat houses may be installed. As resources are available, a garden with native species may be planted to attract butterflies.

Water Treatment Wetlands

SWFWMD has completed the wetland areas expressed in the 2010 Management Agreement. City will continue to work with SWFWMD to look at other areas on site to promote ecofriendly water quality treatment of stormwater and potential living shorelines if appropriate. The City expresses the desire to install one viewing platform to illustrate the wetland and the living habitats within in the area.

Exotic Plant Program

The uplands contain some exotic plants including Brazilian pepper (*Schinus Terbinthifolius*); cogon grass (*Imperata Cylindrical*) and air-potato (*Dioscorea Bulbifera*) which are all listed as Category I species on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council list. All exotics will be removed from

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

the property will be monitored to ensure exotic repopulation does not occur. The “Exotic Pest Plant Council’s List of Florida’s most invasive Species” will be used to identify invasive exotic plant species; a copy of that list is provided within the appendix.

Feral Animal Program

Currently, there are no feral animals on the property and since purchase this has not been a problem. The property will be monitored for introduction of exotic/nuisance animals such as feral cats. If any feral animals are found on the site, they will be removed by qualified personnel.

Listed Animal Species

The West Indian manatee, Florida sandhill crane and wood stork have been identified using the site. The development of the site will be done in such a manner to enhance the habitat used by listed species, with a strong emphasis on protecting the manatee habitat.

Archaeological, Cultural, and Historical Resources Protection

There are no known archaeological, cultural, and historical resources on the site. The City will notify the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found indicating an archeological or historic resource at the project site, and will also take appropriate measures to protect such resources. The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archeological or historic resource at the project site, and will also take appropriate measures to protect such resources. The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archeological or historic sites that may be found or identified on the project site will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Division of Historical Resources within the Department of State. The management of the archeological and historic resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes specifically Sections 267.061 2(a) and (b).

Structures and Improvements

Acknowledgement and Boundary Signs

There is a sign at the entrance of the property (not less than 3’ by 4’ in size). The sign acknowledges that the property was acquired using funds from the Florida Communities Trust and the SWFWMD. The sign also acknowledges the managers of the property, Service, and major financial contributors: the Felburn Foundation, SWFWMD, Jane’s Trust, Citrus County, Citrus County Tourist Development Council, the City of Crystal River and Service. The sign also identifies the property was conserved in 2010. The sign is landscaped in native xeric vegetation. In addition, the boundary is posted with approved City signs identifying the site as a City Managed Environmental Park.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Existing Physical Improvements		
Item	Current	Plans/Considerations
Entrance	Operational	Requires addition investment for function and appearance
Interpretive Signage	2 Kiosks Complete	Additional would benefit public
Permanent Restrooms	First Priority	Currently utilizing temporary
Magnolia Platforms	None	Two Proposed (see Attachment 4)
Wetland Platforms	None	One Proposed (see Attachment 4)
Nature Trails	Yes	Needs Improvements/signage assigned funding to make ADA and safety improvements
Temporary Parking Lot	Yes	Plan shows location and is limited
Utilities	Needed	Electric/Water/Sewer required
Vegetative Buffer	In areas	Determine final trail requirements and buffer appropriately
Boardwalk Enhancement	Yes	Consider adding additional platform at a later date
Exotic and invasive plants	Yes	Requires regular monitoring
Education Station	To Be Finalized	Pavilion with small conditioned space, needs further public discussion
Education Parking	To Be Finalized	Location to be Determined, with ADA considerations
Piers and Docks	None	Minimum of 2 ADA accessible
Weather Shelter	Yes	Temporary in place, new one required
Maintenance Shed	None	May be required, plan to use PW location for storage at this time
Roads	Existing	City to review methods to reduce permeable material to reduced dust
Native Plants	None	See general plan
Off-site Visitor Center	Yes	Currently behind City Hall. Would consider plan to relocate when new City Hall is constructed
Littoral Zones	Yes	One located in Lake Crystal, plan to add more to Lake Crystal
Children's Nature Trail	None	Are currently being considered for the future
Shade Areas	None	Consider 2 to 3 small shade

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

		structures, areas \$1,000 - \$2,000
Pavilions	One	Consider 1 to 2 more as the site develops

Platforms

Five platforms were built as part of the boardwalk that will accommodate at least 10 plus people, the platform covers approximately 90% of the Three Sisters Springs shoreline. This entire boardwalk is normally limited to 200 people at any one time.

- A determination to add a sixth platform near the spring run will be completed at later date.
- The proposal includes one elevated platform for birding and wetland observation.
- The proposal includes two elevated platforms for Magnolia Springs.
- A potential for one additional platform at the springs in future years.

Nature Trails

The project will include land-based nature trails that are at least 1 mile in length with minimal disturbance to the ecosystem. These trails will be located off the shoreline by approximately 25 - 50 feet with banks along Three Sisters and 10 feet from Lake Crystal. This will include educational observations areas to promote the natural environment. In appropriate areas some trails will be made ADA compliant.

Kayak/Canoe Launch

The City has established two kayak launches at other City waterfront parks since the 2010 Management Agreement. The secondary access to the site is problematic for security and access control. Need to address with current FCT requirements.

Picnic Pavilions

One picnic pavilion has been constructed; the City would like the option to add one or two more at a future date.

Fishing Docks

A handicapped-accessible fishing dock will be developed on Lake Crystal to provide recreational fishing and bird watching to the general public. The City requests the option to construct a second fishing dock or more to utilize a different section of Lake Crystal. These can also be utilized for bird viewing.

The City will also pursue stocking of the lake in conjunction with FWC. This would lead to a potential catch and release program.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

On-site Restrooms

Three Sisters Springs property number one priority will be to construct adequate ADA compliant restrooms to support the visitor population. There is also a possibility of changing rooms for the manatee swim program depending upon Service position on travel along the run.

Education Station (NEW) An Education Center has been a highly discussed item between the stakeholders on Three Sisters Springs property location or potentially off site with sizes; the plan calls for approximately 1,000 sq. ft. open air. The City sees this item in the long-term off site but an important goal, and seeks relief on this item on site. The City sees the need for further discussion with stakeholders.

To meet the intention of the education requirement on site an Education Station concept is being proposed, it would be a gazebo based building with a soft side, electric and HVAC to operate the occasional classes. This is a tentative plan with limited funding at this time and further public discussion is required. The City staff sees the benefit to have a comfortable place to have discussion on the discoveries and finding on the Three Sisters Property.

The City is committed to conducting a minimum of 12 environmental or historical educational classes will be provided on site per year. We expect that to be much more often. The classes/programs will educate visitors about the springs and their function as a manatee refuge, as well as the role of the springs in protecting water quality in the Crystal River Outstanding Florida Waterway.

The education station when not in use for educational purposes it could be utilized to shelter families and visitors for normal visitation activities.

Off-site Welcome Center

Welcome Center provides a location to be transported to Three Sisters Spring and allow time for education of the site and what can be expected and how to maximize their time on site.

Trolley Transportation

In development of the site it was found that parking could not be based on the growing demand and its impact to the site. The trolley operates 7 days a week during manatee season and weekend in the off season. The trip includes a narrated tape educating trolley riders as they travel to Three Sisters Springs.

A key economic driver of this concept is to give individuals an opportunity to get off the trolley at fixed locations on the route which now includes Hunter Springs Park and the downtown shopping and dining district. Modifications to the route will be developed if determined appropriate.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Volunteer Trailer Pads (Removed)

Roadway and Parking Facilities

The City commits to maintaining a minimum of parking spaces. Requirements will be based on ADA requirements, employees, volunteers and miscellaneous support organizations.

The City commits due to using no more than 5% of impervious surfaces. This means limited paving and use of construction material like sea shells as road bed. The City commits to using permeable materials for road and parking surfaces when possible. All ADA requirements will be made with impermeable materials in order to maximize ease of access.

Entrance

In a shared effort the City and Service, an entrance off of Three Sisters Springs Trail was constructed. This entrance also ties to the extended Cross Town Trail allowing walk on/bike access. There is a desire to make the current entrance more functional and make aesthetic improvements. This is part of the project plans, short and long term.

Landscaping

Landscaping will be placed around the entrance way and the Visitor Center. All plants will be native to Central Florida. Landscaping around the future education pavilion may include the planting of a pollinator garden. These plants will be drought tolerant and require no watering or pesticides or herbicides. The plants will include berry producing shrubs and native herbaceous plants that are attractive to pollinators.

Wetland Buffer

Native forested buffers will be restored along the properties wetlands and water-bodies at least 50 feet wide to protect water quality. The exception will be around the treatment wetlands that will be created for improving King's Bay water quality and provide habitat for cranes, wading birds, waterfowl, water birds, and shorebirds. The impoundments will be surrounded by dikes seeded into cool-season grasses.

Stormwater Facilities

The SWFWMD project to address this item has been completed.

Hazard Mitigation

Appropriate hazard mitigation will be in place around the parking site and fuel storage locations (if any). All structures and facilities will be designed to mitigate impacts by 100-Year floods, hurricanes, and other severe natural events. Any building constructed to FEMA elevation standards.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Interpretive Signs

Several interpretive signs will be installed to educate visitors about the springs and their role as a manatee refuge, water quality issues of the Crystal River Outstanding Florida Waterway, and the native upland and wetland plantings.

Information and Directional Signage

Sign installation in order to assist visitors' location and directions to be installed to assist visitors to and from areas of the property.

Permits

Development work will likely include the construction of structures such as an education center, observation platform(s), a fishing pier, restrooms, trails, parking lot, and signage. Restoration activities will include storm-water facilities and exotic plant removal. Plan sets approximately \$17,000 for permitting.

A number of potential permits and/or orders and authorizations for development and restoration activities have been identified. These can include:

- A City of Crystal River building permit.
- A Citrus County Florida Development Order/Permit
- A Citrus County Florida Development Order issues by the Citrus County Building Division for any activities not specifically exempted by land development code
- A State Programmatic General Permit (SPGP) for minor work located in waters of the United States
- A Noticed General Environmental Resources Permit issued by the Southwest Florida Water Management District in conjunction with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- A Nationwide Permit 27 for stream and wetland restoration activities issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- An authorization to use Sovereign Submerged Lands.

As part of the FCT grant conditions, and to ensure that other permitting requirements are not missed, the following agencies will be contacted prior to initiating any site development activities:

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources
- Southwest Florida Water Management District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Estimated Costs of On-site Physical Improvements to be completed within Three Years

Item	Costs/Comments
Bank Stabilization	New areas being considered SWFWMD
Boardwalk add sixth platform	TBD
Installation of 2 Observation Platforms (Magnolia)	\$100,000
Installation of 1 Observation Platform (Wetlands)	\$50,000
Main Entrance Enhancements	\$50,000
Nature Trail (improvements)	\$50,000
Fishing Docks (2)	\$60,000
Additional Pavilion	\$35,000
Education Station	\$80,000
Restrooms	\$170,000
Parking Improvements	\$50,000
Interpretive Signs (Additional)	\$10,000
Infrastructure Improvements	\$95,000

Management Issues

Coordinated Management

The Three Sisters Springs property will be managed by the City of Crystal River with limited involvement of SWFWMD on projects to improve the site. Service will continue to manage the remainder of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge and all matters related to manatee and manatee habitat. The property will no longer manage as part of the refuge. The remainder of the existing refuge will follow the National Wildlife Refuge.

All parties to the Plan agree that no activity will be conducted or permitted on the property that adversely impacts the volume of flow from the Three Sisters Springs or the quality of the water being discharged therein. It is expressly agreed by all parties that existing public uses of the springs do not adversely impact the integrity of the springs.

Trolley/Pedestrian Access

Entry into the property will require payment of an entrance fee. Vehicle and pedestrian entrance fees will be used by City of Crystal River to operate and maintain property/improvements to the site.

City of Crystal River will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of all facilities on the Three Sisters property. The City has a Public Works site with equipment and personnel to properly maintain the entire site. The City will use a part of the entrance fees to fund needed maintenance and improvement.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Security

The City uses a combination of Park Rangers and enhanced Sheriff services to maintain on site security and law enforcement. Service will be allow 24/7 access for manatee protection activities with includes enforcement and Service personnel. The City will monitor manatee and swimmers while in springs.

Fees, Concessions, and Leases

The City has established entrance fees for various identified groups (see Attachment 5). The City will consider use of a concessionaire to meet additional requirements and for lowering costs.

Management Agreement: The City of Crystal River will hold a management agreement over the entire property and manage the property. The Management agreement will be a thirty year agreement that can be reviewed and modified every 5 years if requested by any party. The City will strive to comply with the terms of the FCT grant and allow SWFWMD to manage their lands in accordance with that agency's policies.

Concessions: The City of Crystal River will operate or bid out the rights to operate concessions in locations appropriate for an Eco Friendly property.

Project Timeline

Creation of wetland by SWFWMD	Complete
Install Magnolia platforms	2019
Install Wetland platform	2019
Creation of Nature Trails (improvements)	2019 -2022
Additional Trails	2019 - 2025
Kayak/Canoe Launch	Canceled, FCT approval
Fishing Pier (2)	2019
Education Center	TBD
Trailer Pads	Cancelled
Parking Facilities (minimal requirement)	May be relocated TBD, based on layout and requirements
Wetland Buffer (SWFWMD)	Complete
Interpretive Signs	On-going, funding available 2019
Entrance Sign w. FCT recognition	Complete
Exotic plant removal	On-going
Landscaping	On-going – 2025
Upland restoration	2012 – 2025
Bike Rack (one installed)	On-going

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Bike trail access from Crosstown Trail	Complete
Amend Zoning Designation	Complete
Plant Survey/monitoring	On-going
Wildlife Survey/monitoring	On-going
Photo monitoring	No
Feral animal removal program	Monitoring
Educational programs	Minimum 12 per year
New Items	
Educational Trail	2020
Catch and Release Program	2021, based on development
Fish Stocking Program	2020
Restrooms	2019
Upgrade Entrance	2019, for function and appearance
Mooring Area (canal)	2022
Trail improvements	2018 – 2025
Concession/contact station	TBD
Shade areas	2019 – 2027
Additional Pavilions and benches	2020 – 2027
Infrastructure	2019 – 2021
Birding/Wetland Platform	2019

Public Uses:

Water Access to Three Sisters Springs

The public currently accesses Three Sisters Spring by water during manatee Season entering the springs while swimming in the water. Manatee tours require an in water guide to minimize disruption of manatee. Service will continue to control access to springs (via controlling size of Idiots Delight and refuge areas outside Three Sisters Springs). Establishing restricted areas within the springs would need to be done in conjunction with State Statutes.

Non-manatee season access by water into the springs by swimming and paddle craft is allowed.

Service will continue protection of manatees' in the Crystal River and Kings Bay. Changes in current regulations will be made as needed with input from the public as provided in the development of federal regulation.

City Staffing Presently Budgeted for 2017-2018

The following personnel are dedicated to oversee the operations for access to the site currently.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

- City Manager 5%
- Finance Director 5%
- 1 Waterfronts Manager 50%
- 1 Administrative Clerk 10%
- 1 site Coordinator 100%
- 1 City Manager 5%
- 1 Finance Director 5%
- 1 Maintenance Worker 100%
- 4 Visitor Experience Specialist 100% (All part time)
- 4 Trolley Drivers 100% (All Part time)
- Outside Consulting services As needed

City Staffing Proposed Budgeted for 2018-2019

The following personnel are dedicated to oversee the operations for access to the site in the alternate plan.

- City Manager 5%
- Finance Director 5%
- 1 Waterfronts Manager 50%
- 1 Administrative Clerk 10%
- 1 site Coordinator 100%
- 1 City Manager 5%
- 1 Finance Director 5%
- 1 Maintenance Worker 100%
- 5 Visitor Experience Specialist 100% (2 Full time and 3 Part time)
- 4 Trolley Drivers 100% (All part time)
- Outside Consulting services As needed

The City will also establish a Renewal & Replacement account from excess profits and fund annually based on the prior year net position. These funds will be set aside for future capital improvements/infrastructure and/or large maintenance needs.

Total projected revenue is \$825,000 for 2018. This projection includes a \$400,000 state appropriation grant for infrastructure improvements and over \$400,000 in admission fees.

The City has also added an on water monitor that tours all of Kings Bay for educational purposes to assist in minimizing any negative impact to the manatee. Recently with cooperation with Citrus County Sheriff's Department the City has purchased a boat for Sheriffs use 5 days a week for on average 2 hours per day to assist in enforcement. The City also has an enhanced services agreement with the Citrus County Sheriff's Department which will be used to enforce the land portion of Three Sisters Springs. The City now has a seven day a week dawn to dusk park ranger group that will make regular inspections on the Three Sisters site.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

The City has approximately \$95,000 for maintenance and upkeep available in the current budget, this includes the Welcome Center and all operations related to Three Sisters. Additional Capital Improvements to develop the site will be obtained through ticket sales, grants, enterprise fund, appropriations and donations.

United States Fish & Wildlife Service Involvement on Three Sisters Springs

The Alternate City Management Contract only shares one interest with the Service which is educational opportunities, in particular an education program for 4th and 5th graders similar to our program on Chassahowitzka NWR. The City has offered to share in any other activity or condition on the property but has been turned down by Service. It has also been made clear via email by Refuge Manager Joyce Palmer that the Service will not be administering refuge areas within the actual springs and will control access through the expansion and contraction of Idiot's Delights sanctuaries under the Kings Bay Rule.



The City will allow full access to any and all paid Service employees on site for any reason related to manatee safety or concerns twenty-four hours a day seven days a week with notice and in emergencies with follow up notice.

The City requests communication between the Service and City continue on a semi-regular basis maintaining and improving manatee habitat.

SWFWMD

The City recognizes SWFWMD has completed its FCT commitments and has assisted in development of additional efforts to stabilize the Three Sisters Springs shoreline. The City has and does work directly with SWFWMD in the water quality efforts for the Kings Bay Watershed. The City will ask SWFWMD to consider viable water quality projects related to Three Sisters in the future.

SWFWMD and FDEP have been excellent partners in numerous projects with the City over the last decade.

Three Sisters Springs Property Alternate Management Plan 2018

Monitoring and Reporting

The City will be responsible for monitoring the land portion of Three Sisters Springs. The following will be monitored and reported:

- Number of visitors
- Breakdown in ticketing categories
- Number of manatee/human disturbance issues
- Temporary spring closures
- Annual review of wading birds use of the birding areas within Three Sisters
- Removal of exotic plants
- Infrastructure needs or concerns

These findings will be compiled in a report and given to FCT, SWFWMD and the Service on an annual basis, with such report to be filed by no later than January 30th of each year. The City plans to establish a limit for water and land visitors for both summer/manatee season months.

Annual Stewardship Report

The City of Crystal River will prepare the Annual Stewardship Report which is due to FCT on January 30th of each year. The report will evaluate the implementation of the Management Plan.

Management Plan Revisions

It is acknowledged that written approval must be requested from FCT before undertaking any site alteration or physical improvement that is not addressed in the approved management plan. Key changes outside the plan must be approved by Florida Community Trust. Application for Three Sisters Springs funding to Florida Community Trust was submitted by the City May 2, 2008. Any changes proposed in either document will require FCT approval.

CRYSTAL RIVER CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Item Summary

Meeting Date: May 8, 2017

Agenda Item Number: 10A

Requested Motion: Motion to notice United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) of the intent to terminate the Three Sister Springs Project Management Plan between the City of Crystal River and USFWS for failure to manage the property in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.

Summary: A motion to notice USFWS of intent to terminate the Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan ("Agreement") requires the City to provide written notice to United States Fish and Wildlife Service allowing not less than three (3) months to correct documented shortfalls. This notice does not include management of the manatee population within the refuge and in Kings Bay.

The management plan, in place since 2010, places the management of the site in the hands of USFWS. Since the execution of the management plan a number of challenges have forced all parties of concern to change their level of commitment to the plan. These changes have led to consideration of noticing USFWS of intent to terminate so the City can implement the remaining Restrictive Covenants and prioritize public access.

History of Public Access, a key component to the "Agreement" and Florida Communities Trust Restrictive Covenants.

2010 – 2014 Property remained closed to the general public with approximately four (4) open houses per year held for the general public.

2014-2015 Manatee Season A local manatee tour operator is given an SUP to transport visitors on and offsite. This operation did not do well with significant negative feedback by visitors, residents and tour operators.

2015-2016 Manatee Season The City was given the opportunity, in partnership, to operate the website, welcome center and transportation on and offsite.

May 9, 2016 David Viker, Chief Southeast Region, Kathleen A. Burchett, Refuge Supervisor Area II and Joyce Palmer, Refuge Manager addressed Council, asserting that Three Sisters Springs is a priority, and efforts would be made to fix the problems of the past and move forward.

2016-2017 Manatee Season (and now year round) The City was given the ability, via a concessionaire agreement, to operate the website, welcome center and transportation on and offsite, as well as handling walk-on visitors.

In the plan the Staffing Requirements lists a total of ten (10) existing full-time persons to staff the project. This included a maintenance fund contribution of \$200,000.00 for the approximate cost of \$745,000.00. Presently, staff is unaware of any single person 100% committed to the operations of Three Sister Springs Property.

Capital Investment Project commitments per the "Agreement" linked to the Florida Communities Trust Restrictive Covenants

The "Agreement" commitment list timeline has now expired. Remaining on the list are the following items:
 Observation Platform One – complete (not constructed in the agreed location, permitted or signed off by a P.E.)
 Observation Platform Two – not complete
 Kayak/Canoe Launch
 Fishing Pier
 Educational Pad
 Volunteer Trailer Pad
 Parking Facilities
 Entrance (remains in an unfinished condition)

USFWS has reported having approximately one (1) million dollars budgeted for improvements for the past three years but because of the community, it has not gone forward with improvements. According to a letter sent by Joyce Palmer, Refuge Manager of Three Sister Springs Refuge dated April 27, 2017, these funds, if spent, would be required to be repaid to USFWS by the City if the agreement ended. These funds can only spent on specific items, which has not been made clear to City Staff.

The City has stepped up to make this property accessible to the public as directed by Florida Communities Trust and in the process has created an entire department to meet many of the needs associated with maintaining public access. During this time USFWS has seen a significant reduction in staffing and funding which has impeded their progress. It must also be made

clear that the internal policies for Refuge Development have not been followed and need to be in place in order for USFWS to manage or improve the site.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – This is intended to ensure that the information regarding environmental impacts of an Agency’s proposal and alternative actions are available to agency decision makers and the public.

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is a fifteen (15) year plan that identifies issues, goals, objectives and strategies for refuge management. The CCP provides refuge managers a blue print of management and it provides neighbors and others a clear picture of USFWS intent to do in terms of managing the habitat, protecting the wildlife and providing a place where people can enjoy wildlife-dependent activities.

Environmental Assessment (EA) is developed to determine significance of impact relate to a proposal involving any agency of the federal government is uncertain, an environmental assessment is prepared to assist in making this determination. The Three Sisters property has a land and water EA. USFWS has a new water EA in draft and land EA in draft.

Fee Simple Package – Required for USFWS to open the site and charge a fee.

This motion does not relate to the City dealing directly with manatees or the rules and related to its protection.

Staff Recommendation: Staff supports removing USFWS from the day-to-day management of the land portion of the property. It is important to continue to allow any and all access by USFWS for the protection of the manatee.

Funding Information:

Project Cost: NA

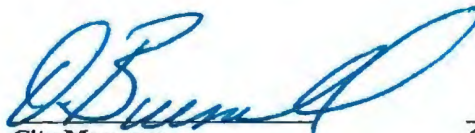
Funding Source:

Amount Available:

Finance Department Approval: _____

Approvals:

Originating Department



City Manager

City Attorney (if applicable)

Attachments:

Council Action:

Approved _____ Denied _____ Deferred _____ Other _____



City of Crystal River

123 Northwest Highway 19
Crystal River, Florida 34428
Telephone: (352) 795-4216
Facsimile: (352) 795-6951

August 21, 2017

Joyce Palmer, Refuge Manager
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge
1502 SE Kings Bay Drive
Crystal River, FL 34429

RE: "Management Agreement for Certain Land located within the City of Crystal River, Citrus County State of Florida", dated 7-27-10
"Three Sisters Springs Project Management Plan"
"Declaration of Restrictive Covenants- Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Project #08-088-FF8"

Dear Ms. Palmer,

This letter is to notify the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that the City of Crystal River is moving forward with the ninety day termination clause of the "Management Agreement for Certain Land Located within the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, State of Florida" (AGREEMENT) in accordance with the terms specified within provision (9) of said agreement.

"9. This Agreement may be terminated by the SERVICE without cause upon submission of written notice to both the CITY and the DISTRICT six (6) months in advance of the effective date of such termination. The Agreement may be terminated by the CITY and/or the DISTRICT only upon a determination by one or both of those parties that the SERVICE has failed to manage the PROPERTY in accordance with the provisions of the PLAN or this Agreement, and then on after the SERVICE has been given a period of not less than three (3) months following written notice to correct documented performance shortfalls."

On May 8, 2017 City Council members voted to notice USFWS of the intent to terminate the agreement for failure to manage the property if documented shortfalls were not corrected within no less than three (3) months, as provided above. Since that time, the CITY and the SERVICE have been working to negotiate a way to move the joint effort forward to a mutually agreed upon path success. During negotiations, it was determined that some of the key requirements specified within the PLAN have not yet been successfully executed.

Since May 8, 2017 City Staff has hoped not to invoke item nine (9) of the agreement to avoid the negativity of such action for all parties. Over this period of time it has become clear that the formal action is required in order to determine the best course of action for the citizens of Crystal River and the State of Florida.

"2. The SERVICE will manage the PROPERTY as an extension of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge in accordance with: 1) the (PLAN); 2) the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as

amended, 16 U.S.C. ss 668dd; 3) other acts of general applicability to National Wildlife Refuge System; 4) Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and 5) Florida law and regulations. "

The SERVICE, to date, has failed to follow certain provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and 602 FW 3 Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process, which exposes the property to potential closure by legal action.

Operations of the site for public use have been limited for the first six (6) years following execution of the AGREEMENT. The location remained closed to the general public for the first four (4) years, excluding approximately four (4) "Refuge Days" events per year. The City worked with the SERVICE to open the site during manatee season utilizing a concessionaire for the 2014-2015 manatee season, as the trustee of the property, Florida Communities Trust (FCT), requires public access. Due to certain shortfalls on the part of the concessionaire a significant amount of negative publicity continued for the duration of that season.

The City continued working with USFWS to ensure operations management was in place to open site for the 2015-2016 manatee season, Due to the inability of USFWS to bid the concession within a reasonable timeframe, it was agreed upon by the City and USFWS that the City would act as concessionaire. The feedback from visitors and community stakeholders that followed indicated a clear improvement of the operations. In an effort to reduce costs and provide a higher quality experience the City then developed its own Visitor Center and transportation system for the 2016-2017 manatee season and is now keeping the property accessible to the public on a year-round basis.

The necessary funding set forth in the plan is substantial in nature and adequate to operate the refuge.

Staffing Requirement of \$166,000 annually for Initial management

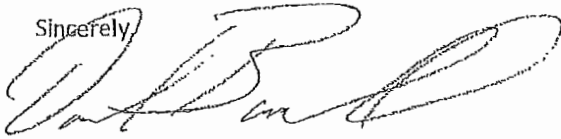
Increased Management with Property Development \$745,000 annually

Presently, members of the Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge are helping to meet some of the operational requirements, serving as boardwalk interpreters and assisting with grounds maintenance, along with local refuge staff members that spend a substantial portion of their time on the property. During the last several years however, existing staff has been reduced further minimizing contributions to the operation of the property. It is evident that the SERVICE is not meeting its obligation to provide services as expressed in the PLAN. In recent discussions, it has been determined that only a portion of the operational requirements will be satisfied and only after the SERVICE develops and implements a fee package for the property.

The PLAN specifies that all projects were to be completed by 2016, yet even now USFWS lacks adequate funding to complete these projects, which include Observation Platforms, Fishing Pier, Educational Center and restoration. The only substantial permanent structures built are a boardwalk, which has not yet been certified for safety, and a pavilion. There are no permits for the majority of the work completed on the site as required in the AGREEMENT and the main entrance has remained in the construction phase for approximately two (2) years, using a temporary building and generator to operate.

The City requests a plan which outlines staffing and funding to meet the specific criteria of the contract. City Council continues to want to seek a mean to meet contractual obligations and the intent of the properties trustee Florida Community Trust and the interest of citizens of Crystal River and the State of Florida.

Sincerely,



David Burnell
City Manager

- C. Jim Farley, Mayor
- Pat Fitzpatrick, Vice Mayor
- Mike Gudis, Council Member
- Robert Holmes, Council Member
- Ken Brown., Council Member
- Lauren Reamy, Deputy Legislative Director, Senator Rubio
- Gary Clark, Chairman of Florida Community Trust
- Ken Frink, SWFWMD
- Kathleen Burchett, USFWS
- David Viker, USFWS



THREE SISTERS SPRINGS PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Project #08-088-FF8

A project of:
The City of Crystal River
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and
The Southwest Florida Water Management District

Management Plan Prepared on 7/12/10, 2010

Executive Summary

The effort to acquire the 57+/- acre Three Sisters Springs property for public ownership has been a multi-agency partnership focused on conserving three second-order magnitude springs and lands that surround them. The project is aimed at protecting these significant natural resource values from environmental degradation that would be caused by the development of proposed residential single-family and multi-family homes, as well as the potential for a bottled water facility. The Three Sisters Springs site is located within the acquisition boundary of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and represents what is arguably the most significant site for West Indian manatee protection in all of Florida.

The Three Sisters Springs property is located immediately south of downtown Crystal River (FL), and originally was a part of a natural wetland ecosystem adjacent to Kings Bay. In the early 1970's the trees in the forested wetland were removed and an eight-acre lake was dredged in the center of the site. The dredged material was used to fill the immediate wetlands area with the intent of creating a site suitable for residential development.

In 2008, a 300+ unit residential development project was planned for the site. However, prior to completion of the site plan and permitting requirements, the property ownership group acknowledged the environmental importance of the site, and agreed to work with a coalition of conservation groups to see if a feasible plan could be developed to acquire the property for conservation purposes, while also continuing to move forward with development plans in the event the conservation acquisition effort failed.

As a cornerstone in this conservation endeavor, the City of Crystal River agreed to serve as the lead agency in what ultimately was a successful application for a Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant. The acquisition effort was further bolstered by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) stepping forward with Florida Forever funding to be used as the match for the FCT grant funding, which resulted in SWFWMD holding a 30% ownership interest in the site. SWFWMD further committed to creating a wetlands area on site to provide stormwater treatment for runoff from adjacent commercial and residential areas.

The Friends of the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Friends) and the National Wildlife Refuge Association took on the leading role in raising \$2.7 million in private funding. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$3.0 million to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for land acquisition, with the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, the Citrus County Tourist Development Council also providing financial support. The \$2.7 million in private financial support came from The Felburn Foundation and several other environmental groups, as well as a multitude of private citizens and various civic clubs. The FWS funding and the Felburn

Foundation funding ultimately went to acquire the Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) and related water value from the site owners.

Since the inclusion of Crystal River/Kings Bay as a priority water body in its Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) program in 1988, SWFWMD has pursued strategies and programs to improve water quality conditions in this unique tidally-influenced first-magnitude spring system. In keeping with those efforts, SWFWMD has committed to pursuing stormwater treatment via the construction of the previously-mentioned treatment wetlands on the Three Sisters Springs site. To further the environmental impact of this site, SWFWMD has also committed to including elements in the wetland design that will attract birds and other wildlife.

The FWS has committed to managing the overall site in cooperation with the City and SWFWMD once the property is acquired. The FWS will manage the property as part of the Crystal River NWR under a management agreement with the City and SWFWMD. SWFWMD will be involved with the site through the completion of construction of the treatment wetland and will then turn the wetland over to FWS for management and maintenance.

Given the prime opportunities for land-based manatee observation that the Three Sisters Springs site offers, FWS has developed plans to install at least one observation platform adjacent to the springs. The environmental experience will be further enhanced through the development of an on-site environmental center that will focus on manatees and the complex Kings Bay ecosystem. The site will also offer public amenities such as the creation of a nature trail, a canoe/kayak launch, youth fishing areas on the lake, and additional bird habitat through creation of the wetland treatment area.

The conservation of the Three Sisters Springs property fulfills the City's long-term goal of creating a waterfront open space with trails and connection to Kings Bay. Additionally, the City is working to further bolster the City's eco-tourism trade and the City will be providing safe pedestrian/biking access from its downtown area to the Three Sisters Springs site. That access will connect the Three Sisters Springs site to the City's other waterfront parks and the various water-based activities that define the City of Crystal River.

With time, the Three Sisters Springs site is expected to become a critical resource for the observation and protection of the manatee, while also playing a key role in the restoration and maintenance of water quality within the Kings Bay/Crystal River springs system. The environmental education center, nature trails, and restored wildlife habitat will further enhance an environmental experience that will be in total keeping with the area's reputation as "Florida's Nature Coast".

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 5
Purpose	Page 6
Project Consistency with City's Comprehensive Plan	Page 6
Natural & Cultural Resources	Page 7
Natural Communities	Page 7
Manatee Management	Page 8
Restoration	Page 9
Water Treatment Wetlands	Page 10
Exotic Plant Program	Page 11
Feral Animal Program	Page 11
Listed Plant Species	Page 11
Listed Animal Species	Page 11
Flora/Fauna	Page 11
Archeological, Cultural & Historical	
Resources Protection	Page 11
Structures & Improvements	Page 11
Acknowledgement Sign	Page 11
Existing Physical Improvements	Page 12
Proposed Physical Improvements	Page 12
Public Uses	Page 17
Management Issues	Page 18
Exhibits	Page 21
Appendices	Page 21

Introduction

The Three Sisters Springs project involves the public acquisition of a 57-acre site that contains three second-order springs that play a critical role in both manatee protection and efforts to restore water quality in the Kings Bay/Crystal River spring system. The site is located in the City of Crystal River, on the west coast of Florida.

The site was originally a part of wetlands ecosystem located adjacent to Kings Bay. In the 1970s, the property was cleared and filled with the intent of creating a building site suitable for residential development. A development plan involving the construction of more than 300 residential units had been approved at the time a multi-agency cooperative effort was initiated to bring the site under public ownership.

In addition to the three second-order springs found on the site itself, there is a second order spring (Magnolia Springs) located along the western perimeter of the property and another second-order spring (Idiot's Delight) located along the southeast portion of the property. The man-made waterway fed by Magnolia Springs is a seasonal sanctuary for manatees, with a second sanctuary located where the run from the Three Sisters Springs feeds into a waterway that flows into Kings Bay. During cold weather, manatees heavily utilize the two warm-water sanctuaries and the Three Sisters Springs themselves.

The successful effort to acquire the site resulted in the property being owned by both the City and the SWFWMD, with FWS owning the water rights and managing the property through an agreement. If the FWS is unable to provide management of the site at any point in the future, the City will either seek another governmental entity to manage the site, manage the site itself, or allow ownership of the site to revert back to FCT. The FCT grant funding for land acquisition was supplemented by funding that came from the City of Crystal River, Citrus County, the Citrus County Tourist Development Council, a number of other conservation non-profits, and a multitude of private citizens and local civic clubs. In addition, FWS and the Felburn Foundation provided funding that went to acquire the Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) and related water business from the owners of the site.

In accordance with the terms of the FCT grant, the City of Crystal River has, in conjunction with FWS and SWFWMD, developed this Management Plan to ensure that the project site will be developed in accordance with the Grant Award Agreement and in a manner consistent with the grant application. As explained further herein, this Management Plan describes the ultimate development of boardwalks, a trail, a kayak launch with a boarding pier, at least one picnic pavilion, a fishing dock, and at least two observation platforms that will allow the public to observe manatees in their natural setting; construction of an environmental education center that will focus on manatee protection and watershed restoration; and the creation of a treatment

wetland on the site that will treat storm-water from adjacent commercial and residential areas prior to such runoff being released into the Kings Bay/Crystal River springs system, thus improving the health of Kings Bay. The project site will be managed for the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources, and for outdoor recreation compatible with those goals.

Purpose

The Three Sisters Springs project was pursued by a broad array of public and private partners for the purposes of:

- Creating superb outdoor-oriented recreational and educational opportunities such as wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, environmental education, and fishing, for both the citizens and visitors to Crystal River, compatible with the all purposes of the project;
- Conserving, protecting and enhancing natural resources;
- Protecting and recovering endangered West Indian Manatees and other fish and wildlife;
- Restoring native habitat and biodiversity;
- Protecting water quality and quantity in Kings Bay, Florida; and
- Protecting the scenic and open space qualities of the Three Sisters Springs property.

Project Consistency with City's Comprehensive Plan

The Three Sisters Springs project supports the City's Comprehensive Plan in a number of ways, as indicated below:

Conservation Element

The Conservation Element states that "the City shall protect and conserve the natural functions of rivers, bays, wetlands, estuarine, and marine habitats, in order to assure the protection of fisheries, native flora and fauna and associated habitat, and especially species designated as endangered, threatened or species of special concern under the Endangered Species Act." [Objective 1.3] There is also language that states that "No net loss of essential upland habitat for endangered or threatened species or species of special concern will be permitted." [Objective 1.6] In addition, there is language that states that "the present quality of surface and groundwater entering Kings Bay and Crystal River will be maintained." [Objective 1.11] The Three Sisters Springs project clearly supports these objectives by protecting manatee habitat and the present quality of water entering Kings Bay, both through protection of the springs themselves and by providing for wetlands treatment of stormwater runoff from adjacent commercial and residential areas.

Recreation Element

The Recreation Element states that “public access to natural resource-based parks will be provided to assist in meeting Crystal River’s recreation demands without diminishing the overall quality of those resources.” [Goal #1] Specific objectives that will be supported by the Three Sisters Springs project include increasing the amount of public fishing pier access [Objective 1.1]; providing facilities for kayak/canoe access [Objective 1.2]; establishing one mile of nature trails within Crystal River [Objective 1.3]; establishing a program for the identification, designation, management and protection of environmentally sensitive lands [Objective 1.4]; and providing for a sufficient quantity and distribution of open space to meet the City’s needs [Objective 3.1]. By providing open space, protection of the natural resources, a kayak/canoe launch, and a nature trail, the Three Sisters Springs project is both consistent with and strongly supportive of the goals set forth in the Recreation Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Coastal Management Element

The Coastal Management Element establishes that the City shall “ensure the protection and enhancement of significant vegetative communities which support wildlife through preserving the diversity and viability of Coastal habitat areas.” [Objective 1.1] it further establishes that the City will “increase public access to the Coastal Area’s natural Resources through acquisition of new property, which will be consistent with the public’s needs and the natural resource capacity of the selected area.” [Objective 5.1] The Three Sisters Springs project will preserve the viability of the on-site habitat areas and increase public access to a natural coastal setting, with appropriate management oversight.

The City of Crystal River will amend the land use and zoning of the property to open space to protect the property in perpetuity and allow for compatible recreation and conserve the property’s unique natural resource features.

The project area is surrounded by intensive housing developments on three sides and commercial development on the fourth. Residents in the immediate area have voiced concerns over privacy and disturbance from the expected large number of visitors to the project area. To address that concern, the project development will minimize conflicts with the neighborhood by placing observation platforms away from houses. Additionally, native vegetation will be promoted along the property boundaries to screen the public from neighbors and protect watercourses.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural Communities

The Three Sisters Springs property is approximately 57 acres of filled in forested wetlands with a man-made lake (Lake Lynda) in the center of the property. Grasses and recently-planted pine trees currently dominate the site, with beautiful natural springs (i.e. Three Sisters Springs) located in the southern center of the property. The Three Sisters Springs are surrounded by an edge of cypress and red maple with a variety of shrubs. The fields are made up of non-native cool season grasses, native herbaceous plants and recently-planted pine trees. The elevation and vegetation of the site have been altered considerably since the 1940s. Based on an examination of historical aerial photos as well as remnant vegetation along the perimeter of the site, it is likely that the majority of the property was originally either mesic or hydric hammock. These forests were removed over time and the elevation of most of the site was increased via fill material generated during the excavation of the Lake Lynda borrow pit. Lake Lynda is approximately 8 acres in size and 40-feet deep; sides of the pit are steep and there is virtually no littoral zone.

A Biological Survey and Wetland Assessment Report was conducted for the Three Sisters Springs Site at the request of Three Sisters Springs Holding, LLC. A copy of their report dated December 14, 2007 can be found in Appendix III. Additional species observed that were not found during this survey include Florida sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis pratensis*) and Southeastern American kestrels (*Falco sparverius paulus*), two state threatened species. A gray fox was observed on site and the likelihood of raccoons, armadillos, and otters using the area is high.

Lake Lynda is an artificial lake created by the filling of the property in the 1970s. Currently, Lake Lynda provides little habitat for fish, birds, and amphibians and poses a hazard to the public because it is deep and has sharp and steep sides with no littoral zone. To the extent that funding is available and sufficient fill is available from the creation of the wetland treatment area, the City will work with SWFWMD to create shallow, littoral habitat along the shoreline of the Lake Lynda borrow pit to enhance the aquatic habitat.

Manatee Management

The project area is one of the most important properties in Florida for West Indian Manatees. To illustrate, more than 250 manatees, representing approximately 5% of the entire Florida manatee population, were observed using this site during the abnormally cold winter of 2009/2010. The manatees use the five springs on the property, which deliver millions of gallons of 72-degree water each day. As previously mentioned, the protection of manatees was one of the driving goals of the project. Three Sisters Springs is particularly important to mothers with newborn calves.

I

The Three Sisters Springs will remain open to the public to be used for swimming and diving. In keeping with the intent of maintaining and sustaining quality visitor experiences while at the same time providing adequate protected areas for manatees, FWS will consider using existing federal rule making/processes to manage the balance of visitors and manatee use. For instance, consideration will be given to temporarily close portions of the springs during the coldest winter months to give mothers with calves opportunity to rest without disturbance. This will also give the general public opportunities to view manatees without swimmers. These partial and temporary closures would allow for a portion of the springs to remain open for traditional water use. Another consideration would be closing the entire springs on the very coldest days of the year to prevent overcrowding by manatees in the existing manatee sanctuaries. These full closures will only happen rarely and last for short periods of time.

Several large boulders were previously placed in the Three Sisters outflow to prevent boats from accessing the Three Sisters Springs. These boulders impede the movement of manatees in and out of Three Sisters during low tide thus making the springs unavailable to manatees for 20% to 30% of the time. These boulders will be removed to make the Three Sisters available to manatees throughout the whole day and other means will be used to keep boats from entering the springs.

Magnolia Springs will be closed for public use during the winter months as a manatee sanctuary, as it has been. The project acquisition will not change management of Magnolia Springs, but will provide improved wildlife viewing opportunities.

The shallow water basking area across from Idiot's Delight Spring and at the mouth of the Three Sisters outflow will remain a manatee sanctuary.

The manatees in all the springs of the project area will be regularly monitored by the FWS. This monitoring includes weekly surveys and daily checks for injured animals. The management will also include refuge environmental interpretation and law enforcement. The Refuge has two refuge officers that will regularly patrol the site for human/manatee conflicts to help ensure the recovery of this endangered species.

Restoration

The 50-acre upland area will be restored by planting upland forests with live oaks, red cedar, cabbage palms, wax myrtle, and other species native to the area, including a pine forest. Some areas will remain open to attract a variety of wildlife species. Nest boxes may be provided for bluebirds and bat houses may be installed. As resources are available, a garden with native species may be planted to attract butterflies. Restoration of mesic and/or hydric hammock on the site will require removal of fill material, which

can be costly. Replanting of mesic hammock (typical species include swamp chestnut oak, white ash, southern magnolia, laurel oak, and pignut hickory) will be limited primarily to areas surrounding the springs and along the canal that flanks the southern and western borders of the property. Live oak/cabbage palm forest plantings do not require removal of fill. A wetland area will be created by SWFWMD south of the lake, which will be planted with native emergents to make it attractive to wading birds.

The Three Sisters Springs area shall remain relatively untouched except for removal or repositioning some of the boulders at the mouth of the spring run to allow manatees to access the springs on low winter tides. Repositioning the boulders would allow for the same amount of spring flow, but would allow manatees to access to the warm spring water when critically needed during the winter months. To minimize disturbance to manatees, a 50- to 100-foot terrestrial buffer will be maintained around the springs except for one or two observation platforms where visitors can view manatees resting at the bottom of a natural spring. Native vegetation will be planted around the springs to prohibit foot access from land or visitor access from the water.

Some areas will remain open to attract a variety of wildlife species. Nest boxes may be provided for bluebirds and bat houses may be installed. As resources are available, a garden with native species may be planted to attract butterflies.

Water Treatment Wetlands

A portion of the property will be devoted to stormwater treatment wetlands to be created on the east side of the property. The runoff from the commercial and residential areas east of the property will flow through the treatment wetland before being discharged into the channel towards Kings Bay. The treatment wetland will improve the quality of stormwater entering Kings Bay. The wetlands will be created, designed and constructed by the SWFWMD, with design input from the FWS to also allow the wetlands to provide wildlife habitat. The wetlands will be designed in such a way as to maximize benefits to wetland wildlife while meeting treatment goals. The wetland treatment area will be integrated into the natural landscape to facilitate use of the site for education and recreation purposes, with shallow slopes. The wetland treatment facilities will be designed in such a manner that the wetland treatment areas will not need to be fenced. The need for a trash trap will be investigated, but may not be necessary since each of the proposed water sources into the wetland treatment area flow through CDS units that remove debris and other solids. Previously, stormwater from these areas was discharged directly into a canal that forms the eastern border of the site.

Exotic Plant Program

The uplands contain some exotic plants including Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrical*), and air-potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) which are all listed as Category I species on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council list. All exotics will be removed from the property within 3 years of acquisition and the property will be monitored to ensure exotic repopulation does not occur. The “Exotic Pest Plant Council’s List of Florida’s Most Invasive Species” will be used to identify invasive exotic plant species; a copy of that list is provided within the appendix.

Feral Animal Program

Currently, there are no feral animals on the property, but the property will be monitored for introduction of exotic/nuisance animals such as feral cats. If any feral animals are found on the site, they will be removed by qualified personnel.

Listed Plant Species

Currently, there are no known listed plant species found on the site.

Listed Animal Species

The West Indian manatee, Florida sandhill crane and wood stork have been identified using the site. The development of the site will be done in such a manner to enhance the habitat used by listed species, with a strong emphasis on protecting the manatee habitat.

Flora/Fauna

A flora/fauna list is provided as a biota summary within the Exhibits portion of this plan.

Archaeological, Cultural, and Historical Resources Protection

There are no known archaeological, cultural, and historical resources on the site. The City will notify the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found that indicates an archeological or historic resource at the project site, and will also take appropriate measures to protect such resources. The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archeological or historic sites that may be found or identified on the project site will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Division of Historical Resources within the Department of State. The management of the archeological and historic resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes specifically Sections 267.061 2(a) and (b).

Structure and Improvements*Acknowledgement and Boundary Signs*

There will be a sign at the entrance of the property (not less than 3’ X 4’ in size). The sign will acknowledge that the property was acquired using funds from the Florida

Communities Trust and the SWFWMD. The sign will also acknowledge the managers of the property (FWS) and major financial contributors (the Felburn Foundation, SWFWMD, Jane's Trust, Citrus County, Citrus County Tourist Development Council, the City of Crystal River, and FWS). The sign will also indentify that the property was conserved in 2010. The sign will be landscaped in native xeric vegetation. In addition, the boundary will be posted with approved federal signs designating the property as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Existing Physical Improvements

Small dock on the Three Sisters Springs, two picnic tables with shades, barbeque pit, storage shed, barbed wire fence and an entrance gate all these structures will be removed.

Proposed Physical Improvements

Observation Platforms:

A platform that will accommodate at least 10 to 20 people will be placed adjacent to the easternmost spring within the Three Sisters Springs, which is an area that provides an open view of the springs. A smaller platform (5-10 visitor capacity) will also be installed near the westernmost spring; this would provide minimal intrusion to the springs and manatees while providing an optimal manatee viewing experience. The structure will be constructed with minimal impact and no vegetation removal if possible in order to preserve the wild setting around the perimeter of the spring.

As resources become available, additional viewing platforms will be considered for the area adjacent to Magnolia Springs and adjacent to the wetland treatment area.

Nature Trail:

The project will include a land-based nature and hiking trail that is at least ¼ mile in length with minimal disturbance of natural resources. The trail will provide visitors with a view of the treatment wetland and connect the kayak launch site, the education center, the fishing pier, the manatee observation platforms, and the picnic pavilion(s).

Bicycle Trail:

The City is designing an extension of its current Crosstown Trail to connect to the property to allow people to visit the property in a carbon-friendly manner. Park visitors will not be able to ride their bicycles through the property, but will be able to access the property via bicycle.

Kayak/Canoe Launch

A kayak/canoe launch will be provided. Visitors will be able to come to the site via water and leave their kayak/canoe at the launch site. There will be no access to the launch from land, meaning that individuals will not be able to drive on to the site and launch a kayak/canoe from the site. There are no plans to include a motorized boat landing facility, and the launch will be designed and located to prevent access by motorized boat craft. The canoe/kayak launch will be restricted to use only by individuals using those types of watercraft.

Picnic Pavilions

At least one picnic pavilion will be provided within the project site. As resources become available, additional picnic pavilions will be considered.

Fishing Pier

A handicapped-accessible fishing dock will be developed on Lake Lynda to provide recreational fishing to the general public. The dock will be placed on the west side of the lake and be connected to the Education Center by an ADA-compliant trail. There will be interpretive panels explaining the species of fish in the lake, and catch-and-release practices will be encouraged.

Education Center

The site will house an education center on the property that will be a minimum of 2,000 square feet. The center will be located away from critical wildlife habitat, wetlands, and water bodies. The center will provide information on the springs and their function as a manatee sanctuary, as well as the role the property plays in protecting the manatees and water quality.

At least 12 environmental or historical education classes or programs will be provided on site per year. The classes/programs will educate visitors about the springs and their function as a manatee refuge, as well as the role of the springs in protecting water quality in the Crystal River Outstanding Florida Waterway.

It is acknowledged that the final design of the education center will require review and approval from FCT.

Parking Facilities

Size: A parking lot of not less than 40 spaces will be constructed adjacent to the environmental education center. An adjacent overflow lot and grass area will be designated for overflow during major events.

Visitor Carrying Capacity: The calculated number of parking spaces is also tied to the maximum number of visitors that the manatee viewing platforms and decks can accommodate during the highest visitation period (December – March). USFWS intends to establish at least two manatee viewing areas (see Observation Decks).

Turnaround Lapse: Vehicle turnaround times (the amount of time spent by a vehicle occupying a parking space) were also considered in the process of calculating the number of parking spaces. Based on observations from other manatee viewing sites, it's apparent that visitors who view manatees tend to spend prolonged periods (15 minutes average) of time watching manatees.

Parking/Entrance Location: The parking lot entrance will most likely come from the northeast corner of the property and parking will most likely be in the southeast corner of the property. The site will be easily accessible from U.S. Highway 19.

Materials: The parking lot and access road will be created using permeable materials that will accommodate drainage requirements. To the degree possible, natural materials will be used to enhance the appearance of the site.

Landscaping

Minor landscaping will be placed around the entrance way and the visitor center. All plants will be native to Central Florida. Landscaping around the education center could include the planting of a pollinator garden. These plants will be drought tolerant and require no watering or pesticides or herbicides. The plants will include berry producing shrubs and native herbaceous plants that are attractive to pollinators.

Wetland Buffer

Native forested buffers will be restored along the properties wetlands and water-bodies at least 50 feet wide to protect water quality. The exception will be around the treatment wetlands that will be created for improving King's Bay water quality and provide habitat for cranes, wading birds, waterfowl, water birds, and shorebirds. The impoundments will be surrounded by dikes seeded into cool-season grasses.

Stormwater Facilities

A treatment wetland, as previously described, will be created on the property to treat water running off of neighboring commercial and residential properties. The wetland will improve King's Bay water quality, and can also be used to treat run-off from the property's parking site. The wetlands will be designed to look as natural as possible, with shallow slopes. The treatment wetlands will be designed to attract birds and other wildlife and will be used to provide additional wildlife viewing opportunities in the project area.

Hazard Mitigation

Appropriate hazard mitigation will be in place around the parking site and fuel storage locations (if any). All structures and facilities will be designed to mitigate impacts by 100-year floods, hurricanes, and other severe natural events.

Interpretive Signs

Several interpretive signs will be installed to educate visitors about the springs and their role as a manatee refuge, water quality issues of the Crystal River Outstanding Florida Waterway, and the native upland and wetland plantings.

Permits

Development work will likely include the construction of structures such as an education center, observation platform(s), a fishing pier, a kayak/canoe launch, a trail(s), a parking lot, and signage. Restoration activities will include storm-water facilities and exotic plant removal.

A number of potential permits and/or orders and authorizations for development and restoration activities have been identified. These can include:

- A City of Crystal River building permit
- A Citrus County Florida Development Order/Permit
- A Citrus County Florida Development Order issued by the Citrus County Building Division for any activities not specifically exempted by the Land Development Code
- A State Programmatic General Permit (SPGP) for minor work located in waters of the United States (including navigable waters)
- A Noticed General Environmental Resources Permit issued by the Southwest Florida Water Management District in conjunction with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- A Nationwide Permit 27 for stream and wetland restoration activities issued by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers.
- An authorization to use Sovereign Submerged Lands

As part of the FCT grant conditions, and to ensure that other permitting requirements are not missed, the following agencies will be contacted prior to initiating any site development activities:

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources
- Southwest Florida Water Management District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Estimated Cost of On-Site Physical Improvements

Creation of Wetland Treatment Area	\$500,000
Installation of First Observation Platform	\$100,000
Installation of Second Observation Platform	\$100,000
Creation of Nature Trail	\$ 50,000
Kayak/Canoe Launch	\$ 40,000
Picnic Pavilion	\$ 25,000
Fishing Pier	\$150,000
Education Center	\$350,000
Parking Facilities	\$ 75,000
Restoration of Wetland Buffer	TBD
Interpretive Signs	\$ 10,000

Projected Timeline

Creation of Wetland Treatment Area	Design	2011
	Construction	2012
Installation of First Observation Platform		2012
Installation of Second Observation Platform		2014
Creation of Nature Trail		2012
Kayak/Canoe Launch		2014
Picnic Pavilion		2014
Fishing Pier		2015
Education Center		2015
Parking Facilities		2012
Restoration Wetland Buffer		2013
Interpretive Signs		2014
Entrance sign with FCT recognition		2012
Exotic plant removal		2012 then annually
Landscaping		2012-2016
Upland restoration		2012-2016
Bike rack		2015
Bike trail access from Crosstown Trail		2015
Amend Future Land Use Designation		2012
Amend Zoning Designation		2013
Plant survey/monitoring		2012 then annually
Wildlife survey/monitoring		2012 then annually
Photo monitoring		2012 then Annuallu
Feral animal removal program		2012 then annually
Educational programs		2012 then annuallu
Annual Stewardship Report		2010 then annually

Public Uses:

Water Access to the Three Sisters Springs

The public currently accesses the Three Sisters Springs by water, entering the springs while in the water or by kayak/canoe, primarily to view manatees. Management activities will include providing compatible, wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities for visitors while optimizing use of the springs for manatees. Compatible uses of the site will likely include existing in-water uses, managed to enhance visitor experiences and minimize manatee disturbance. FWS may enact partial closure of Three Sisters Springs during the coldest winter months and would consider full closure only for extreme cold winter events.

Management actions concerning the protection of manatees in the springs and adjacent areas will be addressed independent of the acquisition and will be made with input from the public as provided for by federal law.

Land Access to the Springs

At present, the public is prohibited from accessing the springs from land and are prohibited from accessing the shoreline and property from the water. Inasmuch as the water bottoms are included in the acquisition, access to the water bottoms from land and water will be managed. Management actions will include preserving shoreline vegetation, controlling erosion, and maintaining water clarity. Consistent with these actions, access to the water from land and vice versa will continue to be restricted. Manatee rescues and regular maintenance activities will be the only exceptions to these restrictions. Land-based uses will include the use of observation platforms to provide visitors with an opportunity to view manatees from shore.

Fishing

Fishing in the springs is not compatible with currently planned visitor activities or with manatee protection, and therefore will not be allowed in the springs. However, there are opportunities for limited fishing in Lake Lynda and a fishing dock is planned. In order to minimize disturbance from angling activity and fishing gear litter, these uses will be controlled and monitored. All fishing activities will be restricted to a designated fishing pier and bank fishing will not be permitted on any other area of the property in order to minimize wildlife disturbance. The fishing pier will be ADA-compliant and would be of sufficient size to accommodate several individuals at one time. The springs will be closed to fishing year-round.

Festivals & Special Events

The project site may be used for festivals and special events that are oriented toward conservation/appreciation of natural resources, wildlife protection, and other environmental themes.

Management Issues

Coordinated Management

The Three Sisters Springs property will be managed by (FWS) and the Southwest Florida Water Management District, with the District's involvement limited to creation of the wetlands treatment area and related replanting efforts. FWS has broad experience in co-managing property with municipal and state governments. The property will be managed as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. The governance of refuges follows the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act, as amended, the Refuge Recreation Act, and other regulatory statutes.

All parties to this Plan agree that no activity will be conducted or permitted on the property that adversely impacts the volume of flow from the Three Sisters Springs or the quality of the water being discharged therein. It is expressly agreed by all parties that existing public uses of the springs do not adversely impact the integrity of the springs

Bicycle/Walking Access

An extension of the City's Crosstown Trail is under design to provide for access to the Three Sisters Springs property. Entry into the property will require payment of an entrance fee. Vehicle and pedestrian entrance fees will be used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to maintain property facilities, including the land-based nature and hiking trail to be provided within the property.

Maintenance

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of all the facilities on the Three Sisters Springs property. The Service has a large modern maintenance facility 10 miles south of Crystal River with all the necessary equipment, personnel, and tools for up-keep of the property. The Fish and Wildlife Service will use revenues from entrance fees and Refuge operations budgets to fund the needed maintenance.

Security

The National Wildlife Refuge Complex staff that manages Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge has two full-time Refuge Officers. These Officers will provide law enforcement and security for the property. Additional Officers can be provided by the Service at special events or particularly busy times.

Entry Fees, Concessions, and Leases

Entry Fees: The Service anticipates establishing a user fee. The fee amount may vary by season (summer vs. winter). Seasonal passes are being considered. The Service will

compare other similar sites and their respective entrance fees to determine consistent user fee amounts.

Management Agreement: The FWS will hold a management agreement over the entire property to manage the property. The management agreement will be multi-year in length and will obligate the FWS to manage the project in such a way as to allow the City to comply with the terms of the FCT grant and allow SWFWMD to manage their lands in accordance with that agency's policies. If the FWS gives up their management agreement for any reason, or fails to adequately perform, the City would be responsible for finding another agency to manage the property, managing the property itself, or being required to allow the ownership of the property to revert back to FCT.

Concessions: The Friends of Chassahowitzka may operate a concession in the education center. FWS will manage all concessionaire activities in accordance with Federal regulations.

It is acknowledged that the City must provide 60 days written notice to FTC on the lease of any interest, the operation of any concession, or other contracts of a similar nature, and that execution of any such document requires review and approval by FTC.

Staffing Requirements

There are 10 existing full-time employees available to staff the project from the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. These staff members include Refuge Managers, Recreational Specialists, Law Enforcement Officers, Biologists, and Maintenance Workers. Cost estimates for initial management of the site are shown in the table below. These costs will be covered under the existing refuge budget, as funding is available. All staffing and management actions for the project are contingent upon availability of funding through the Federal government budget process.

Cost Estimates for Initial Management

Refuge Manager – 10% FTE	\$ 15,000
Asst. Manager – 10% FTE	\$ 10,000
Wildlife Biologist – 10% FTE	\$ 10,000
2 Law Enforcement Officers – 25% FTE each	\$ 57,000
Recreational Specialist – 20% FTE	\$ 15,000
2 Maintenance workers – 20% FTE	\$ 34,000
Maintenance Fund -	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
TOTAL	\$116,000

As funding becomes available, the refuge will seek to add positions to increase management and education at the site, including two entrance gate workers, a Law Enforcement Officer, a Maintenance Worker, a Supervisory Recreational Specialist and two Interpretive Park Rangers. These additional positions and maintenance cost estimates are shown in the table below, but are once again dependent on the availability of funding. Once the property has been developed and is open fully to the public, anticipated user fee collections may reach approximately \$375,000 annually. These fees will be placed in a separate account and will be used for the upkeep and maintenance of the project site.

Cost Estimates for Increased Management with Property Development

2 Fee Booth Collectors – 100% FTE each	\$ 90,000
Law Enforcement Officer – 100% FTE	\$100,000
2 Interpretive Park Rangers - 100% FTE	\$170,000
Supervisory Recreational Specialist– 100% FTE	\$100,000
Maintenance Worker – 100% FTE	\$ 85,000
Maintenance Fund	<u>\$200,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$745,000

Once the property has been developed and is open fully to the public, anticipated user fee collections may reach \$375,000 annually. These fees will be placed in a separate account and will be used for the upkeep and maintenance of the project site. Additional funding necessary for the development and management of the property will be provided through the normal Department of Interior funding cycle as additional funds become available.

Monitoring and Reporting

FWS will be responsible for monitoring the project area. The FWS will monitor the following:

- Number of visitors
- Number of cars, kayaks, and bicycles used to access the project area
- Number of manatee/ human disturbance issues
- Weather and need for temporary manatee closures
- Manatee use of the project area
- Wading bird use of the project
- Removal of exotic plants
- Infrastructure needs

These findings will be compiled in a report and given to the City of Crystal River and FCT on an annual basis, with such report to be filed by no later than January 30th of each year. The City, SWFWMD, and FWS will meet each quarter to discuss issues relating to the management of the project area.

Management Plan Revisions

It is acknowledged that written approval must be requested from FCT before undertaking any site alterations or physical improvements that are not addressed in the approved management plan.

Exhibits

- A. Location Map
- B. Master Site Plan
- C. Public Lands Map
- D. Natural Communities Map
- E. Biota Known or Likely to Occur at Three Sisters Springs (Crystal River, Florida)
- F. Copy of the Exotic Pest Council of Florida's Most Invasive Species List
- G. City Bike Trail Network Map
- H. Copy of Grant Award Agreement or Grant Contract
- I. Interagency Agreement
- J.

Appendices

- I. Executive Summary Site Suitability Study Three Sisters Springs Property, Crystal River, FL. 2004. HSA Engineers and Scientists.
- II. Biological Survey and Wetland Assessment Report for the Three Sisters Springs Site, Citrus County, FL 2007. Biological Research Associates. [

SWFWMD'S INVESTMENT IN THREE SISTERS SPRINGS

Attachment 4

Bank Stabilization Project costs:

Item	Cost	Funding	Notes
Survey and Design Services Engineer of Record and Construction Engineering and Inspection Services	\$68,988.50 \$47,432.87	District/DEP District	
Boulders (1,200 tons)	\$60,000.00	FWCC	LOA w/ USFWS
Envirolok bags, 6,400 initial	\$28,800.00	FWCC	
Geo-bags, 2,200 additional	\$10,000.00	FWCC	
Construction	\$547,850.00	District	Includes contingency
Total	\$763,071.37		

This total does not include \$13,000 for 30% design plans. The cost of the Herrington 2012 report (FWC agreement # 11043 listed cost of \$159,297 which may have included estimated construction costs).

Treatment Wetland Project Costs

Item	Cost	Funding	Notes
Design and Permitting Engineer of Record and Construction Engineering and Inspection Services	\$68,988.50 \$17,397.28	District/DEP District	
Construction	\$474,517.00	District	Includes contingency
Total	\$560,902.78		

The District has also spent about \$10K on the wetland culvert outfall area, wetland plant maintenance, and additional manatee grates.

2025 Map of Property Improvements



its

- Boardwalk: 0.25 mile
- Beyond the Boardwalk: 0.75 mile
- Walk the Wetlands: 0.5 mile loop
- Trail to Lake Pavilion: 0.25 mile
- Lake Crystal Trail: 0.5 mile loop (closed to public)

ditional Trails

- Cypress swamp boardwalk: 0.25 mile
- Educational native flora trail: 0.5 mile
- Additional nature trail: 0.25 mile loop
- Bike path: 0.75 mile

retation

- Saw palmetto, broomsedge, grasses
- Oaks, sweet gum, red maple
- Aquatic plants
- Swamp: oaks, cypress, sweet gum, red maple, loblolly bay, and a cabbage palm understory
- Native plants and butterfly garden

Wide-spread restoration work will be completed to remove invasive vegetation. Additionally, a vegetation barrier needs to be completed around the property boundary. In an area prone to flooding, a cypress swamp can be built with a short elevated boardwalk with educational signage. This project would take some time since the trees will need several years to grow to an adequate size. Furthermore, an educational native plant garden trail will have plant identification and signage.

oads
 The main road is currently made of limestone rock and shell aggregate, which causes very dusty and bumpy conditions. Also, the current materials often erode and create potholes. The road will be improved by constructing a permeable surface that will increase rain filtration.

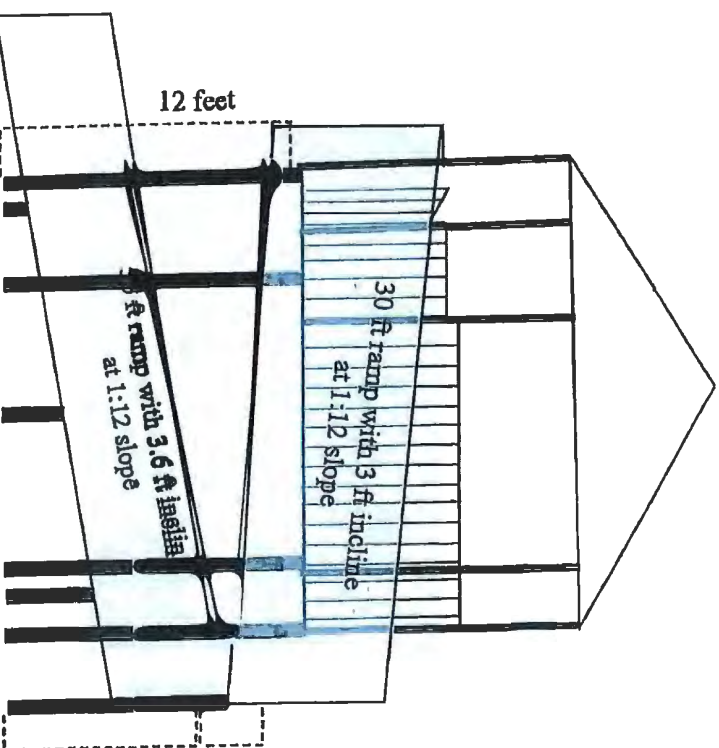
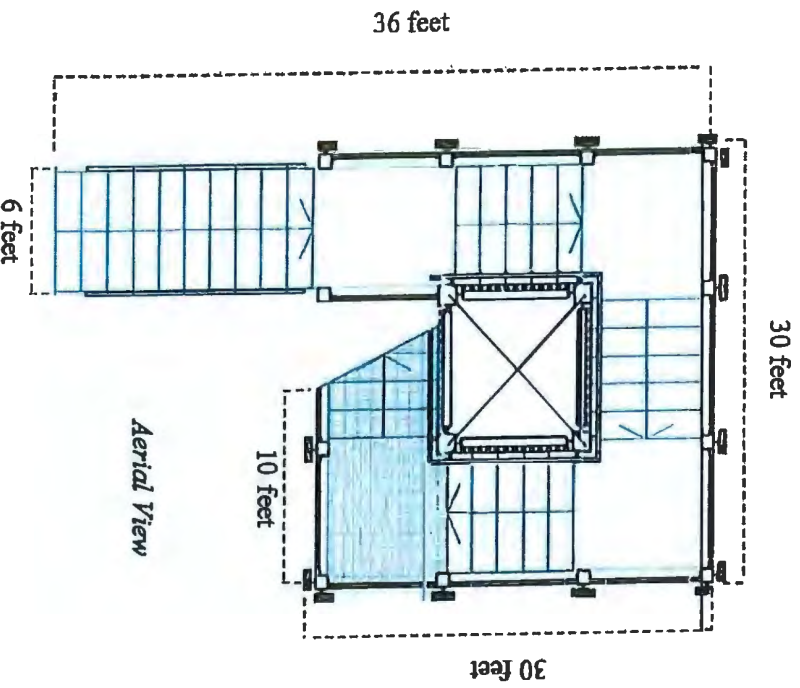
Amenities: (+ = improved upon existing) (* = new)

1. Bat house
 2. Employee entrance gates
 3. Employee parking lot with a 2 car capacity
 4. +Toll booth with drive-through window
 5. +Improved entrance gates: Install permanent gates around the road to limit congestion and prevent break-ins after-hours. Vehicles will be able to use the toll booth to pay admission and receive information, and traffic can move around more easily.
 6. Entrance Sign
 7. Educational display by Lake Crystal
 8. Wetlands sign by construction company
 9. Pavilion by Lake Crystal
 10. "Three Sisters Springs" sign at boardwalk
 11. Educational display at the beginning of the boardwalk
 12. *Bicycle rack at the boardwalk
 13. Tree saplings
 14. "Three Sisters Springs" sign facing the canal
 15. *Elevated observation platform to overlook the spring run ("manatee look")
 16. *Educational display and species guide for native flora trail
 17. *Educational display for "Beyond the Boardwalk Trail" including information about the bluebird nesting boxes and Magnolia Springs/Gator Hole Bluebird nesting boxes
 18. Bluebird nesting boxes
 19. *Weather shelter
 20. *Overlook at Magnolia Springs: octagon-shaped structure
 21. *Overlook at Magnolia Springs: octagon-shaped structure
 22. *Educational sign and trail map at Lake Crystal
 23. *Weather shelter
 24. *Pier
 25. *Pier
 26. *Permanent restroom facilities
 27. *Educational display, trail map and species guide near the wetlands
 28. *Elevated platform overlooking the wetlands for visitors to observe the avian species that utilize this habitat. ADA accessible.
 29. *Wetland ecosystem guide and information about wetland treatment facilities
 30. *Outdoor/open-air educational center that meets LEED sustainability standards
 31. Displays will educate visitors about karst systems, native plants, native ecosystems, how to identify wildlife species, protect our springs, and the history of the property.
 32. +Smoking section
- *Mooring area for boats in the canal outside of Three Sisters Springs to prevent boats from using and dragging anchors through critical manatees.

Appendix A

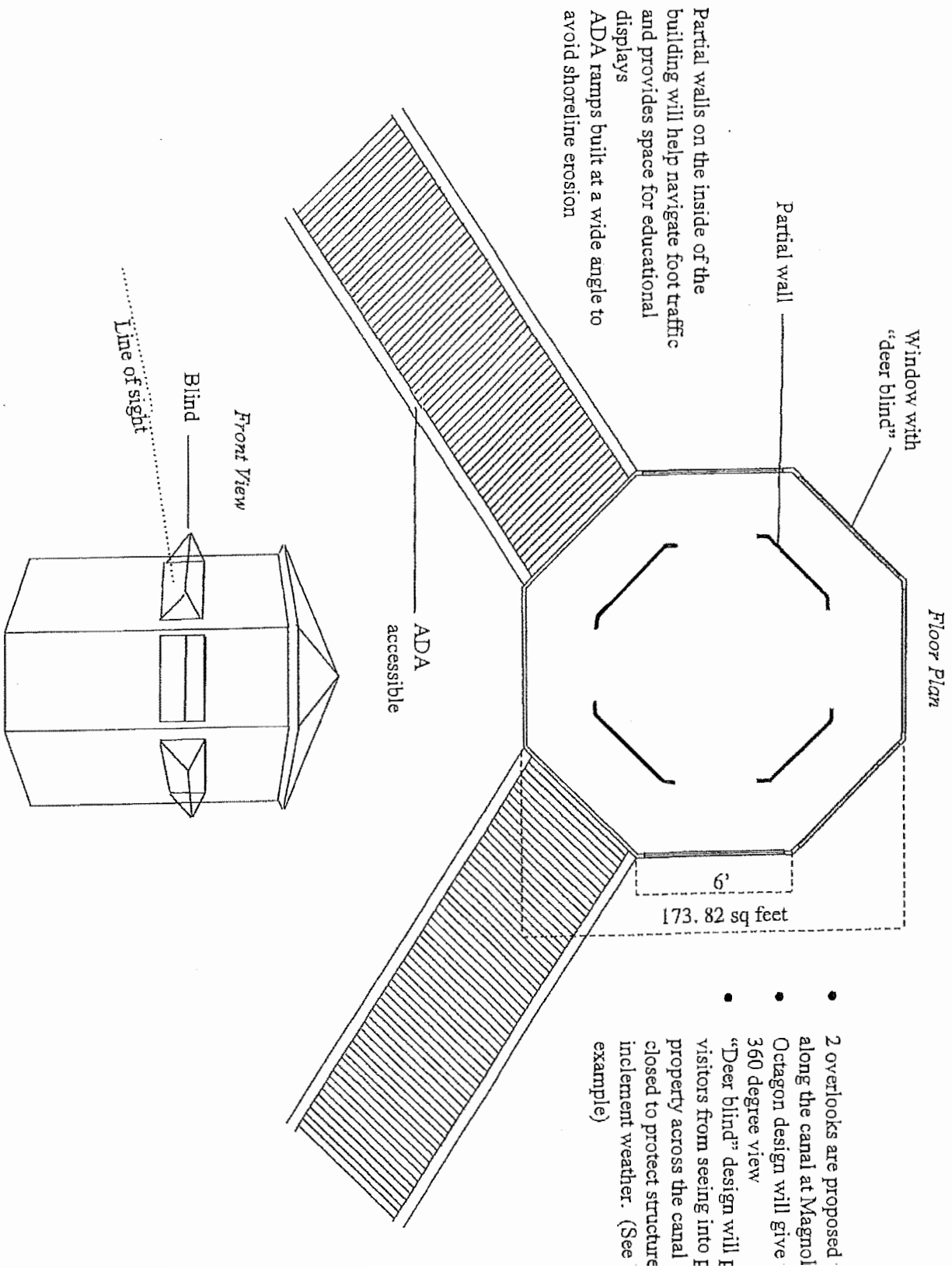
Design for ADA Observation Platform at the Wetlands

- An elevated platform overlooking the wetlands will provide great wildlife viewing.
- The platform will be elevated 10.6 feet above the ground.
- Roof to provide shelter against rain.
- The platform will be ADA accessible, which will included a ramp on 3 sides of the platform with a 1:12 (5 degree) slope.



Appendix B

Design for Overlook at Magnolia Springs



- 2 overlooks are proposed along the canal at Magnolia
- Octagon design will give 360 degree view
- "Deer blind" design will prevent visitors from seeing into property across the canal closed to protect structure inclement weather. (See example)

Three Sisters Season Fee Schedule

Summer Day Pass (April 1 – November 14)

Includes one day pass to refuge and trolley tours every Friday – Sunday.

\$7.50 per person

\$6.50 for Military

Free for Children 5 and under

Winter Day Pass (November 15 – March 31)

Includes one day pass to refuge, trolley tours 7 days a week and walking tours

\$15.00 Adult

\$12.50 Senior (55+)

\$10.00 Military

\$7.50 Kids (ages 6-16)

Free for children 5 and under

Walk-in Entrance Annual Pass

Includes walk-in entry to the refuge only

\$25.00 Individual

\$60.00 for up to 6 people

Trolley and Entrance Annual Pass

Includes trolley services on the days the trolley is running and refuge entry

\$50.00 Individual

\$120.00 for up to 6 people

Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

Operations and Procedures

Item	USFWS	City
Performance Measurements	USFWS proposal states there will be no performance measurements. Public input is required only on capital improvements.	Performance measures will be in place. City operators will receive input from City Council, Community Working Group, and the public. This format allows for accountability to the people of the community.
Decision-making Process	Implementation of the management plan will be overseen by USFWS without City Council approval. A Coordination Committee will meet regularly to provide input, but final decisions are made by Refugee Manager.	The management plan will be implemented by the City. Decisions are made by City Manager who is overseen by Council. City Council will receive regular reports progress. The Waterfronts Manager and Three Sisters staff will oversee projects and progress on site.
Rational Costs	<p>Current</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$135,000 staffing • \$25,000 Maintenance • \$160,000 total/year <p>Proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100,000 staffing • \$75,000 Maintenance • \$175,000 total/year • Does not include ticketing, Welcome Center, Trolley Transportation and gate management and less maintenance funding. 	<p>Current Budget: 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$220,469 staffing • \$100,000 Maintenance • \$20,000 trolley • \$409,124 total/year <p>Proposed Budget: 2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$312,161 staffing • 101,220 Maintenance • 20,000 Trolley • \$617,000 Capital Investment <p>Total \$1,050,381 first year commitment with City taxpayer funding, all ticket fee and grant based.</p>
Funding	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 FT employees that spends 10-25% time on TSS <p>Proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 FT employees that spends up to 10-25% time on TSS • 2 FT employees that spends 100% time on TSS 	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FT permanent 1 FT seasonal, 6 PT permanent 2 PT seasonal employees that spend 100% time on TSS • 2 FT employees that spend 10% time on TSS • 1 Full Time Staff that spends x% of time on TSS <p>Proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City if managing the property would fill

Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

		<p>budgeted position left open this year and make two full time temporary jobs permanent.</p>
Admission Price	<p>Admission price will be higher to reflect the Service request of a \$3.00 - \$5.00 per person on need to meet a desired total dollar value of \$125,000. The fee of \$125,000 is approximately 30% of this year's budget.</p>	<p>Admission price will be lower since operational costs will be lower.</p>
City	<p>Management decisions must align with "Big 6" and Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). CCP has not been finalized.</p>	<p>Management decisions follow the City Comprehensive Plan and City Ordinances. The City may need to create new ordinances to monitor in-water activities if USFWS decides to discontinue regulating the sanctuaries in The Sisters Springs.</p>
Volunteer Group	<p>USFWS has active volunteer group to monitor and report manatee interaction.</p>	<p>City would be required to establish a smaller group to manage monitoring the spring. If the gate system repair the city does have a position that could be used to cover this area if required. City staff is comfortable with development of a volunteer base.</p>
Visitor Services	<p>City will act as concessionaire under USFWS management. Other concessionaires may be considered.</p>	<p>City will operate visitor services and manage the property. Concessionaires may be considered.</p>
<p>Property Improvements (costs listed if included in plan)</p>		
Item	USFWS	City
Payment of Investment	<p>After USFWS plan is approved any investment in assets will need to be reimbursed on a depreciated scale. This was not part of the original agreement.</p>	<p>The City plan does not impose any costs to the taxpayer of Crystal River in its operational or capital plan. Therefore it can if it is in the best interest of the City to transfer management to others in the future there are no direct negative impacts to the City taxpayer.</p>
Expense	<p>Install permanent fee booth, gate, landscaping and fencing. To be completed by 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$100,000 	<p>Make improvements on fee booth, create drive-through window for staff safety, move gate back to alleviate traffic congestion, install new entrance gates and permanent fencing. To be completed by 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$50,000 in 2019 to make functional and reduce labor. • Further facade improvements complete by 2020

Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

Interpretive Signage	Add 8 interpretive signs, 6 panels and improve current kiosk panels. To be completed by 2020. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$20,000 	Add a combination of interpretive sign and trail signage throughout property. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$10,000
Restrooms	Construction expected by 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$250,000 	Construction in 2018/19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$170,000
Hand/Birding Platform and 2 Platforms Magnolia Springs	Construction expected by 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$60,000 	Designs include ADA accessibility, minimal impact to habitat, and blinds on structure overlooking Magnolia Springs to address homeowners' concerns. Construction in 2018/19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$100,000
Nature Trails (1.75 miles (it)	Improve existing trails (resurface boardwalk, paving with natural and pervious surfaces). Construction expected by 2020. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$75,000 	Yes, improve trails as needed and create a bike path, install short boardwalk, an educational native flora trail and additional 0.25 mi trail. ADA requirements are a priority. Construction expected by 2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$50,000
Temporary Parking Lot	Construct accessible parking spaces. Construction expected by 2020.	Determine minimum parking requirements to minimize impacts, and improve permanent ADA parking. Construction expected to vary based on development details and timeline
Setback Buffer	Proposed along Magnolia Trail (approximately 0.15 miles) and along property boundary where needed. Construction expected by 2020. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$35,000 	Possible relocation of trails away from water's edge, plant native and Florida Friendly vegetation as recommend by SWFWMD and Citrus County Native Plant Society to protect and enhance shoreline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost is part of the annual maintenance
Boardwalk	Entrance support railing complete and certified.	TBD, City would like to consider additional platform platforms in the future.
Exotic and Invasive Plant Control	Annual spot treatments as needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$35,000/year 	City has licensed exotic plant control employee who v remove invasive annually. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost is part of annual maintenance

Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

Outdoor Educational Facility	Develop an outdoor educational facility up to 1,000 square feet with 12 parking spaces (including 2 bus spaces). If funding becomes available, construction may occur by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$350,000 	TBD Needs further discussion with Community Workgroup. This plan includes a proposed outdoor/open air educational pavilion that has minimal development in an area up to 1,000 square feet. Timeline not known at this time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: TBD
On-site Education Center	2,000 to 20,000 square feet educational center. Long-term planning, unknown time frame. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$1,000,000 to \$5,500,000 	The City opened the Three Sisters Springs Center in 2019 in downtown Crystal River. Improvements will be made to building to enhance educational opportunities by 2019. No planned off site educational facility of USFW for Manatee and Manatee habitat.
King Lot	Up to 30 parking spaces including accessible spaces.	The City is looking to continue trolley operations, for parking closer to the property entrance. The City's goal is to minimize total parking onsite to reduce impact. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Piers to be constructed 2019 • Cost: \$60,000
Piers on Lake Crystal	1-2 Piers 500 square feet or less. If funding becomes available, construction may occur by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$125,000 	City will add areas with shade and/or cover to provide shelter during inclement weather. To be constructed 2019 to 2027. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$1,000 to 2,000 each
Weather Shelter	Construct a cover over an existing 150 square feet concrete slab to provide shelter during inclement weather. If funding becomes available, construction may occur by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$10,000 	The City is not proposing to construct a shed onsite. The City has a maintenance shop 2 miles away. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: N/A
Maintenance Shed	150 square foot shed. If funding becomes available, construction may occur by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$2,500 	Utilize heavier rock/shell aggregate to continue having pervious surfaces. Permeable paving options will be looked at. Construction 2020 - 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$50,000
Native Plants	Resurface 54,200 square feet of access road to reduce dust. If funding becomes available, construction may occur by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$500,000 to \$600,000 	The City will work with SWFWMD, Citrus County Native Plant Society, and other contractors to restore natural hydric hammock habitat and encourage other native plant growth. Construction will start 2019 – 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$TBD likely grant eligible
Native Plants	Propose restoring 34 acres of native plants including pollinator garden. If desired, could restore 17 acres of wetlands. If funding becomes available, construction may occur by 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration Cost: \$50,000 to \$200,000 • Pollinator garden cost: \$5,000 	

Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

Children's Nature Trail /or Adult Art Trail	Educational trail (replicas of bird nests, animal dens, fish, wildlife, animal tracks and scat). Long-term planning, unknown time frame.	A 0.5 mile loop educational trail with native flora and educational displays. Construction to start in 2020. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost \$50,000 from future Enterprise funding grants if available.
Restrooms	Limited utilities for restrooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: \$115,000 	2019-2020 Utilities services will be installed for complete long-term build out of plan. Build out may include power to gazebos, water fountains, safety lighting/security lighting listed as infrastructure in this plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost \$95,000
Oral Zones	Long-term planning, unknown time frame.	The littoral zones in Lake Linda would be very expensive without contribution of clean fill by others.
Stocking Program	N/A	Start in 2019
Stock and Release	NA	Start in 2020
Mooring Area	NA	2018 -2022 Mooring area outside Three Sister Springs \$15,000 grant awarded to City in 2018 for mooring facilities in Kings Bay
Leases	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start 2019 to 2027
Important Notes		
Item	USFWS	City
Partnership	USFWS plan reduces City control and accountability to meet FCT and site goals but allows a simplified method to end the contractual agreement. The agreement has a new financial requirement to pay USFWS cost of investment made during this time minus depreciation prior to the contract cancellation. City also has no final decision-making authority but is vested concessionaire if desired.	USFWS will be involved as it related to educational opportunities, manatee interactions and manatee health issues. Stakeholder groups will meet regularly to be inclusive in the decision making process. City will also work with the State of Florida to establish manatee sanctuaries in Three Sisters Springs, since USFWS will not continue regulating them.

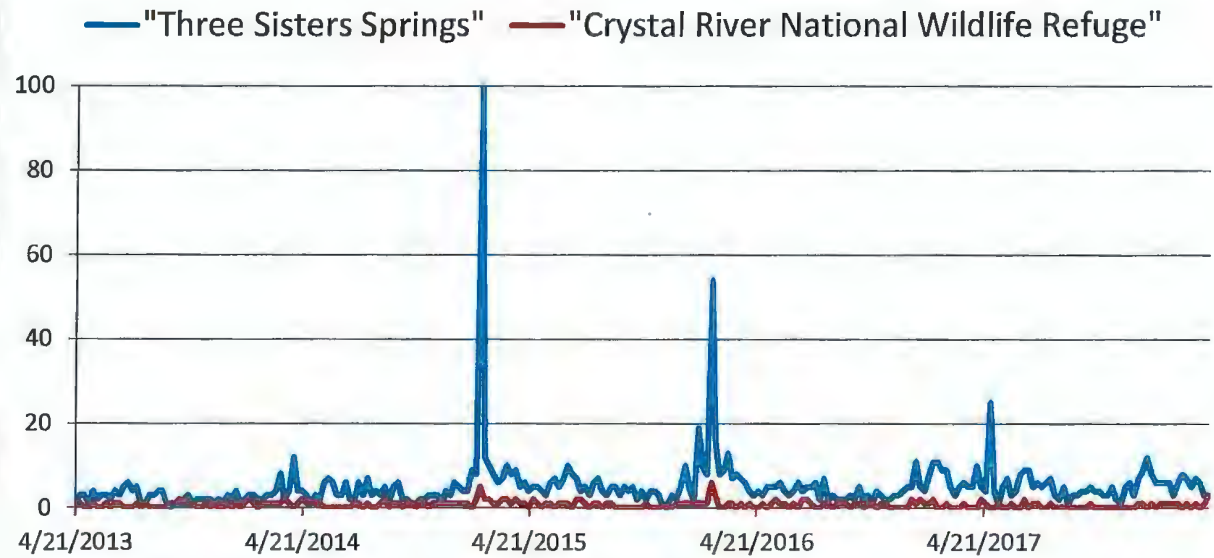
Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

Long-term Commitment	Improvements to property are contingent upon funding from USFWS/ Refuge/Friends group. Contract will last a minimum of 20 years. If City wishes to cancel contract, the City will be liable for costs of capital improvements onsite minus depreciation.	City needs to develop long-term plan and Ordinances to meet long-term standards.
Fiscal Stability	USFWS budget has decreased in recent years due to the last two Presidential administrations. The proposed 2019 Fiscal Year budget shows that the budget will be quite more.	The City's budget for TSS has increase over the last few years and more positions have been added. The 2018 budget reflects a continued growth based on activity levels. City Council consists of 5 elected positions, and will provide policy oversight of Three Sister Springs.
Contractual Requirements	FCT requirements must be met, and this plan must be approved by FCT	FCT requirements must be met, and this plan must be approved by FCT
Monitoring Manatees in Three Sister Springs	Remains the same	Springs would be closed intermittently during cold weather by USFWS. Manatee sanctuaries in the Jobs Three Sisters Springs will be implemented by the City and monitored. Enforcement of manatee violations will be FWC and USFWS on request.
Wildlife Tourism	Remains the same	The property and the property around Three Sisters Springs would no longer be a part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. There have been concerns expressed that this would reduce tourism to the area; however, the Crystal River Refuge will still exist, and search trends show that most people search for "Crystal River" and "Crystal Springs", while few search for the "Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge". The City has increased its social media popularity by 150% in the last year alone. The Three Sisters Springs Center and troll tours have helped increase business to the downtown
Liability	Self-insured	Increased liability for the City, including in-water recreation. Additions to the current Florida League of Cities policy would be required.

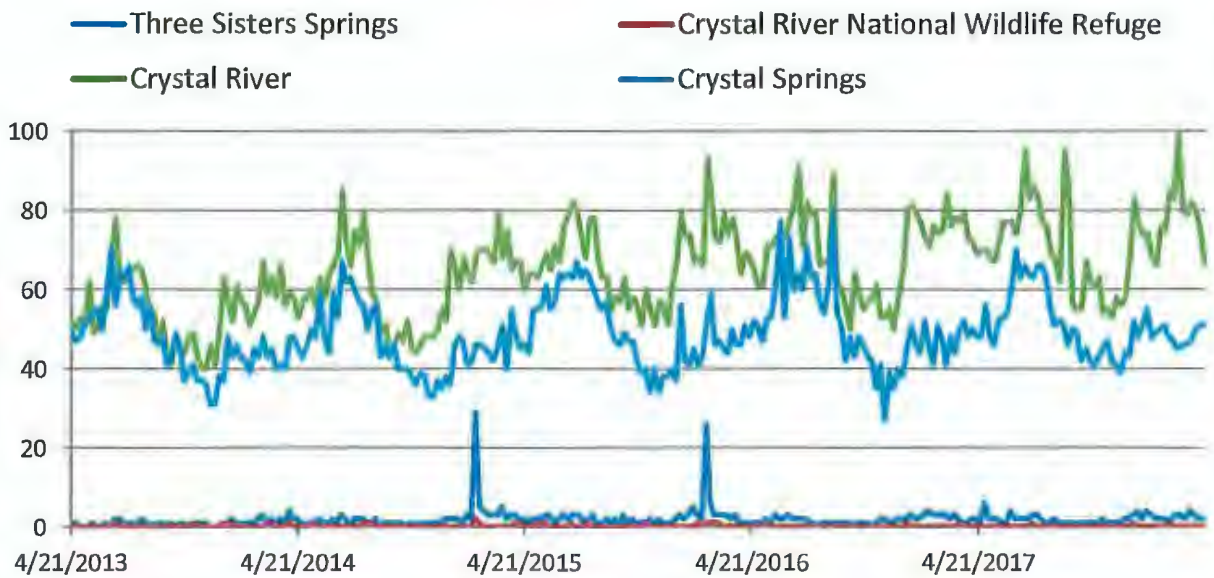
Three Sister Springs Management Plans Comparative Analysis

<p>fiscal Stability</p>	<p>USFWS budget has decreased in recent years due to Presidential administrations. The proposed 2018 Fiscal Year budget shows that the budget will be cut more.</p>	<p>The City's budget for TSS has increased over the last few years and more positions have been added. The 2018 Fiscal Year budget reflects a continued growth and lower ticket cost to special interest. City Council consists of 5 members who provide guidance to City functions. Both plans have a potential negative aspect of political stability.</p>
--------------------------------	---	--

Google Trends: "Three Sisters Springs" vs. "Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge" Over the Past 5 Years



Google Trends: Topic Popularity Over the Past 5 Years



Data was downloaded from Google Trends. The numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term.

Chronology of Three Sisters issues in Chronicle Articles

1. July 2010 – Council votes to buy Three Sisters Springs Property and give immediate management control to USFWS.
2. April 7, 2011- Local Officials brace for government shutdown – Government shutdown would mean the Three Sisters Music festival would be rescheduled (USFWS held Music festivals onsite).
3. April 30, 2011- Three Sister getting Decked out – Public complaints due to lack of access. USFWS stated it would a 2 year wait for access due to not being ready. USFWS saved money on the boardwalk (cost \$80,000) construction by using employees to build the boardwalk. A contractor would have cost \$200,000 per Mr. Lusk.
4. May 29, 2011- Crystal River: Three Sisters Property still a few years away from opening- USFWS again states 2 years until open to public. Again states boardwalk built by USFWS workers at a cost of \$80,000 and that a private contract would have cost \$300,000 (inflates figure from previous article).
5. September 22, 2011 – Three Sisters plans take shape– Funds to develop the property are expected to come from private/public partnerships such as was used to purchase the property. Lusk expected the Friends to play key role in raising funds to develop property.
6. October 25, 2011- Three Sisters the topic at Council meeting — Citizen concerns were raised at a Council meeting and asked Council to hold a workshop addressing the Management Plan for the Refuge. Citizens requested a defined management plan.
7. October 30, 2011-Spivey Slighted – At the peak of the celebration of the boardwalk completed construction there were more than 1,000 people at the springs. Helen Spivey was not invited to the celebration.
8. December 5, 2011- Public input sought on Springs Plan – Stated that in September of 2011 a development plan was presented which outlined proposed development. Luck Took area homeowners on private tour of Springs
9. January 7, 2012- Residents discuss plans for Three Sisters – Residents inquired if USFWS were following permitting guidelines and building standards.
10. February 9, 2012 – Workshop addresses Springs management – Lusk of the USFWS address council and said he felt like he mischaracterized the nature of his meeting with Mayor Farley in which he stated that Farley asked him (Lusk) to limit access to Gator Hole during the upcoming refuge days. Lusk stated that he

would abide by the City's request however he would make it clear that it was the City's request.

11. February 10, 2012- Three Sisters squabbles – Dissenting homeowners further argued that more traffic on the banks of the canals will deteriorate the already fragile ecosystem the FCT sought to restore and USFWS violates the terms of the management plan by seeking to add more manatee viewing areas when it had plenty on an already-constructed boardwalk, which was built out of compliance with the plan.
12. February 12, 2012- Crystal River closes access to Gator Hole – USFWS closed access to “Gator Hole” stating that City Officials requested the closure. Citizens stated that USFWS has not been willing to cooperate and not willing to give. Citizen stated that LUSK put up sign to stir up problems for the Mayor.
13. February 14, 2012- Council reaches accord on springs – Council member Kitchen urged USFWS to “just go with the plan”. Kitchen’s ideas call for leaving the boardwalk up and following the dictates of the plan. Critics called for the boardwalk because USFWS built it contrary to was the management plan states. (The cost was now listed at \$160,000).
14. May 14, 2012 – City to consider ban at Three Sisters – *USFWS asked Council to bar certain activities* at Three Sisters even though there is a provision of the management agreement said USFWS will not engage in and activity, including restriction on public access or commercial or recreational activities, except provided for in the plan.
15. May 17, 2012 – Issues surface at Three Sisters Springs- Citizen states that USFWS’s efforts to deviate for the mandates of the management plan.
16. June 13, 2012 – CR Oks 3 Sisters changes – Proposed changes in the plan include the incorporation of the education cent and parking lot to be located off site “*in the event that USFWS is able to secure sufficient funding to accomplish that*”. Also, citizens upset that USFWS built boardwalk around springs against the dictate of the Plan and USFWS said boardwalk was the best way to accommodate large number of people around the springs for viewing.
17. September 23, 2012 – Signs of Conduct: Three Sisters Springs spells out rules for visitors to site - A provision in the Management Plan said USFWS “*will not engage in any activity, including restrictions on public access or recreational activities, except as provided for in the application management plan without the prior written approval of the City and SWFWMD.*”
18. May 7, 2013 –Three Sisters Access at least a year away – Lusk’s goal to open by winter of 2014, but can’t guarantee it. Houston said he knows Lusk can on work

with resources he is given, “but I hope the regional office folks understand that public access was an important part of the deal when they decided to manage the property”.

19. May 8, 2013- Budget cuts restrict Three Sisters access - Budget cuts restrict Three Sisters access. May no budget released and told lost 8.6% of operating budget. No money to do refuge days.
20. May 12, 2013 – Three Sisters opening set for Summer 2014 – “If funding can be secured USFWS plans to open the property to the public on a limited basis with minimal facilities.
21. June 8, 2013 – Springs can no longer be free-for-all – Visiting Springs not world class experience due to crowding access.
22. June 9, 2013 – More Responsibility – Lusk states that having the lease agreement with the City and SWFWMD makes the whole thing really difficult because of having to get written permission from the City and SWFWMD. Mr. Lusk also called the springs “Federal Land”.
23. September 12, 2013 – Realistic Expectations – USFWS expected to get \$1.2 million to replace refuge headquarters, but was used for upgrades instead and perhaps the remainder of the money would be used for toilets on Three Sisters property. (No toilets have been built as of yet).
24. Oct 2, 2013- Shut Down jolts CR refuge - Shutdown jolts CR refuge 30th anniversary event could be in jeopardy.
25. October 11, 2013 – Refuge Day called off – The annual Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge’s Refuge Day has been canceled because of the continued partial shutdown of the government.
26. November 7, 2013 – Let the State run Three Sisters – Damato stated turning the property into a state park would speed up public use of the area, something the current managers (USFWS) of the property are unable to do because of federal financial issues and priorities.
27. January 1, 2014 – Year of the Springs? – Lusk of USFWS stated that routine access in 2014 was likely. Stated that opening would likely be during the 2015 manatee season. (Initially access was thought to be happening in 2013).
28. January 28, 2018 – Chronicle Opinion– Plan needed for springs management – *USFWS is strapped for cash* and has fallen behind in planning and managing its end of the deal. It will take some with deeper pockets to take control. So it is time to decide who will ultimately take responsibility for managing and protecting this resource.
29. February 4, 2014 – Federal Grant could bring early access to Three Sisters Springs- City applied for and received a Federal Land Access Program grant worth \$384,232.

30. February 12, 2014 – Chronicle Opinion – Grant will start process to open Three Sisters – Local Citizens have begun to lose patience with the USFWS because after 3 years of management public access is still limited to an occasional open house day and USFWS has been unable to make anticipated improvements because Congress slashed funding for any capital improvements at national parks and wildlife refuges.
31. February 18, 2014 – Three Sisters town hall to examine open access question – Refuge manager Burnett stated that access during the next year would be difficult. Citizen stated that patience with USFWS has run and that the four projects list by Burnett in the article would not meet target dates and that the Refuge would not be open for the 2015 manatee season. Citizen stated that USFWS would state that there is something else wrong another reason not to allow public access.
32. February 22, 2014 – USFWS open to limited access to Three Sisters – Officials with USFWS had been reluctant about allowing public access during SWFWMD, Cutler Spur entrance and Lake Lynda shoreline projects.
33. April 4, 2014 – Concerns about Three Sisters Springs – Letter to Editor from Bob Mercer- Point Number 2 discusses lack of staff of USFWS promised for the springs– That since 2010 that staff USFWS had promised has not expanded but in fact been reduced. The recent sequester which exacerbated an already bad situation.
34. August 24, 2014 – Discuss Three Sisters access – 2015 Trial One-Time SUP issues to a single concessionaire to provide public access to the property.
35. October 11, 2014 – Despite all the bad, don't lose sight of the good- The springs is about to open to the public after four years since purchase.
36. October 28, 2014 – CR has date on Three Sisters management release – River Ventures tour group was selected by USFWS to provide land access between November 15 and March 31 with 10 round trips per day into the springs.
37. November 18, 2014 – CR City Council senses urgency – The City Council plans to meet with Andrew Gude of USFWS to revise the Three Sisters Springs Management Plan. City waited for the release of the EA which was delayed because of activist group complaints and other federal departments wanting the springs closed to the public.
38. March 24, 2015 – Crystal River mulls management of springs – Council gave the City Manager the ok to look at alternatives to USFWS to manage Three Sisters Springs. *Council Member Brown stated that this is something we should have done a while ago and that it doesn't make him comfortable that the USFWS which is a part of the most powerful country in world can't manage the springs.*
39. April 14, 2015 – City eyes bigger role in management of Three Sisters Springs – Robert Holmes guest columnist- City puts USFWS on 1 year review period. Robert Holmes plead to remove USFWS from the property management. City management would come in the form of an employee or contracted manager. Public commentary also seemed to support Holmes in removing USFWS.

40. May 7, 2015 – Negotiate until it hurts – City Manager asked Council to finalize negotiations or evict USFWS as property managers. Concerns of USFWS mismanagement of the springs grew after a heavy-hitting tourism season during manatee season. The city took over day to day operations in 2015. USFWS plans to build a 6,000 square foot education center on the property with 60 parking spots.
41. August 15, 2015 – Bonjour and welcome to Three Sisters Springs – USFWS announced it is considering new rules that would greatly reduce public use of the springs during official manatee season.
42. October 24, 2015 – Three Sisters furor reveal depth of dilemma – Chronicle Opinion – The USFWS just can't get it right is the prevailing opinion.
43. November 28, 2015 – Frustration on Three Sisters? – META expressed frustration at delays and timing of the Environmental Assessment of the USFWS. The changes affecting the local businesses and affecting the livelihood of hundreds of staff, captains and guides in the midst of manatee season. META members request that any new restrictions be postponed until the existing measures can be tried and evaluated (December 2014 EA.)
44. December 9, 2015 – Three Sisters poses big challenges – The City takes over managing the land access via trolley.
45. March 9, 2016 – Feds need to step up at Three Sisters - Andy Houston stated that USFWS should come clean whether it intends to follow through with plans or not.
46. May 8, 2016 – Fed, Crystal River to meet today – The Management Plan and agreement will be topic of discussion with USFWS Refuge Chief David Viker, Refuge Supervisor Kathy Burchett and Refuge Manager Joyce Palmer. Topics include USFWS questionable investment into the capital development, commitment to make the development happen, and to what degree is USFWS going to take responsibility.
47. May 9, 2016 – We have some making up to do – David Viker acknowledge the USFWS shortfalls and attributed the deficiencies to a “steady decline” in budgets since 2010 and shrinking number of refuge staff positions. Viker said about 120 positions have been cut in his region and several refuges were merged in this region. Viker stated that consolidation made it harder for the regional managers to hear Crystal River. Viker said his office will prioritize budgetary, staffing and organizational needs for Three Sisters but the service can only go so far. Council noted USFWS failure to invest and managing the crowds.
48. May 15, 2016 – Feds pledge more help; city waits for action – Chronicle Opinion-Editor states it's time for action. David Viker admitted that the federal government let down this community. USFWS has not lived up to the terms of the management agreement. USFWS said the agency would re-organize priorities and make Three Sisters its main focus in the years to come. The agency did such a poor job of living up to its agreement the City had to take over land access to allow for public access. Crystal River has done a better job this last year than the federal government has for the last three years. (Providing access).

49. October 10, 2016 – With frown, City Oks springs agreement – Council, with some opposition, approved an MOU with USFWS governing rules for managing land access for the coming year. Robert Holmes said USFWS is not following through on its own obligations, such as having an acceptable boardwalk and entrance for guests, which are called for in the FCT agreement. The mayor and other council members agreed.
50. October 15, 2016 - Agreement set on rules for Three Sisters – One point of contention is that USFWS has not come through on some of its commitments.
51. January 14, 2017 – How Three Sisters was acquired – Due to concerns USFWS was not acting upon its role to provide proper access for visitors, Crystal River officials decided to take responsibility over managing access into the land.
52. February 12, 2017 – City to review Three Sisters agreement – Several developments were postponed over the years due to opposition. Staff drew up a spreadsheet showing the completed and uncompleted requirements under the agreement.
53. May 7, 2017 – Three Sisters management up for a vote – Palmer stated “USFWS will not invest more money in improvements unless the City and USFWS update the 2010 management plan. Palmer noted USFWS was going to release development recommendations “in the near future”.
54. May 9, 2017 – Three Sisters Springs ultimatum – Council members took offense at Palmer’s letter, “it did not come across as an organization that wanted to work in conjunction with the City” said Ken Brown.
55. November 29, 2017 – Springs at a crossroad – During 2016-2017 manatee season the public had full access to the entire refuge for the first time.
56. January 22, 2018 – How do local federal services fare in a shutdown? - USFWS has several refuges with staff furloughed except Joyce Palmer and 3 law enforcement officers. The property at Three Sisters remained open because access is managed by City staff. There were no volunteers on watch.