WATERFRONT ADVISORY BOARD
AGENDA
City Hall Council Chamber
Tuesday, May 1, 2018 5:30 PM

Joan Luebbe, Chair
Michael Engiles
Phillis Rosetti-Mercer
Lora Klein

Rocky Rich, Jr., Vice-Chair
Jim Baumstark
Lynn Marcum

Mayor Jim Farley, Liaison

1. Call to Order –
2. Swear-In and Welcome -
3. Roll Call –
   Present –
   Absent –
4. Pledge of Allegiance –
5. Adoption of Agenda –
6. Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve minutes from the April 6, 2018 Waterfronts Advisory Board meeting –
7. Presentations –
8. Citizen Input – (three (3) minutes) –
9. Unfinished Business –
   a. Riverwalk Presentation – Board
   b. Jurisdiction on bay survey response to question about why survey was/is required - Lisa
   c. Brochure review -
10. New Business –
    a. Board members suggested Projects 2020-2021 to present to SWFWMD i.e. living shorelines and storm water treatment areas - Board
    b. Scallop Brochure distribution location list - Board
    c. Shoreline Tree Inventory - Board
    d. Projects for 2020-2021 w/SWFWMd living shorelines/stormwater - Board
    e. Bylaws concerning membership number of county seats on the city board -Rich
    f. Bluesheets for Waterfronts Board - Lisa
    g. Update on HWY 19 site clean-up turbidity spill into Hunter Springs Basin – Lisa/Chronicle

11. Citizen Input – (three (3) minutes) –
12. Board Member Reports/Comments –
   Jim Baumstark-
   Mike Engiles-
Lora Klein -
Joan Luebbe-
Lynn Marcum-
Rocky Rich, Jr. -
Phillis Rosetti-Mercer-

13. City Council Liaison Comments – Mayor Farley –
14. Staff Comments –
15. Announcement of Next Meeting – June 4, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.
16. Adjournment –
CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER

OATH OF OFFICE
(Art. II, § 5(b), Fla. Const.)

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF CITRUS
CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER

I, Lora Klein, do solemnly swear or affirm that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States, the State of Florida, the Charter and laws of the City of Crystal River; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State and Charter of the City of Crystal River and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties Waterfronts Advisory Board of the City of Crystal River, on which I am now about to enter, so help me God.

Lora Klein
Waterfronts Advisory Board
City of Crystal River

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of May, 2018.

Signature of Notary Public
WATERFRONT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
City Hall Council Chamber
Tuesday, April 3, 2018 5:30 PM

Joan Luebbe, Chair
Michael Engiles
Phillis Rosetti-Mercer
Lora Klein

Rocky Rich, Jr., Vice-Chair
Jim Baumstark
Lynn Marcum

Mayor Jim Farley, Liaison

1. Call to Order – Vice-Chair Rich called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. Roll Call –
   Present – Phillis Rosetti, Mike Ingles, Rocky Rich, Lynn Marcum, and Jim Baumstark
   Absent – Joan Luebbe.
3. Pledge of Allegiance –
4. Adoption of Agenda – Board member Baumstark motioned to adopt the agenda; Board member Engiles seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.
5. Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve minutes from the March 6, 2018 Waterfronts Advisory Board meeting – Board member Rosetti-Mercer moved to approve the Minutes of the March 6, 2018 meeting minutes; Board member Marcum seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.
6. Presentations – Mayor Farley requested to present some information to the board. Mayor Farley relayed a request from Council Member Holmes who asked if the Board would do a survey of trees on the water line.
7. Citizen Input – (three (3) minutes) – None.
8. Unfinished Business – None.
9. New Business –
   a. Report on what City Manager Burnell would like to do with answers to question- The Board discussed the report that Chair Luebbe drafted to present to Council at a point in the future.
   b. Update Combine water jurisdiction on the water- The Board discussed combining the jurisdiction via MOU thus relieving the need for a survey. The board proposed that staff to follow-up and place on next agenda. Report back to board.
   c. Update on mooring fields – Roger Smith, City Water Patrol personnel, presented information related to the mooring fields.
   d. Scallop brochure/Boater brochure distribution – Board member Rosetti-Mercer suggested something other than the manatee be depicted on the brochure during the summer months, mark channels, and making the map larger. Add disclaimer not meant for navigation purposes. Shrink text. Consensus to print summer brochure only to allow for the board to reformate the brochure for the winter months. It was noted that the TDC needed more brochures.
   e. Items for next agenda –
      i. Jurisdiction on bay survey response to question about why survey was/is required.
ii. Board members suggested Projects 2020-2021 to present to SWFWMD i.e. living shorelines and storm water treatment areas.

iii. Scallop Brochure distribution – location list

iv. Tree Inventory

v. Riverwalk Presentation

vi. Projects for 2020-2021 w/SWFWMD living shorelines/stormwater

vii. Brochure review

viii. Bylaws concerning membership number of county seats on the city board

ix. Bluesheets for waterfronts board.

x. Update on HWY 19 site clean-up turbidity spill into Hunter Springs Basin

10. Citizen Input – (three (3) minutes) – Roberts Pitts of Crystal River thanked city staff, city workers, spectrum communications, Duke Energy, Withlacoochee Electric, and many other neighbors of this community. Mr. Pitts stated that while traveling the Riverwalk he noticed pedestrian pedestals at each cross walk to which Mr. Pitts suggested adding public comment boxes along the Riverwalk, and donation boxes (electric and solar power) for future improvements along the waterway.

11. Board Member Reports/Comments –

Jim Baumstark - Board member Baumstark commented on the USFWS and City draft management Plans. Board member Baumstark requested an update on the status of the plans. It was noted that City Council was set to make a decision on the issue at the April 23, 2018 City Council meeting.

Mike Engiles- None.

Joan Luebbe- None.

Lynn Marcum- Board member Marcum provided an updated on One Rake at a Time is scheduled May 10th is next clean up. Board member Marcum gave an update on her culvert issue.

Rocky Rich, Jr. – None.

Phillis Rosetti-Mercer- Board member Rosetti-Mercer made a statement about turbidity from Hwy. 19 clean-up site.

12. City Council Liaison Comments – Mayor Farley – Mayor suggested that staff consider Waterfronts Board getting “bluesheets” for agenda items. Mayor Farley stated that it would be up to the City Manager.

13. Staff Comments –

14. Announcement of Next Meeting – May 1, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

15. Adjournment – Board member Marcum motioned to adjourn; Board member Rosetti-Mercer seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.
RIVERWALK
Suggestions for Crystal River City Council
From the Crystal River Waterfronts Advisory Board
Integrating Riverwalk into the City of Crystal River’s Activities

Signage
1. Informational boards along Riverwalk for a walking history tour or interesting facts about the area.
2. Wildlife informational boards, birds, reptiles and fish. Signs on how to protect all of our natural resources.
3. Signage about the water shed, spring ecology and definitely a poster on how long it takes debris in water to break down (by type). That information should also be on trash cans.
4. Advertise Riverwalk on the trolley.
5. Place signage all over downtown and the City directing people to Riverwalk.
6. Signage about what is allowed, e.g., bicycles, roller blades, electric wheelchairs, Segways, alcohol (?), pets. No golf carts. This is a sidewalk
7. Commercial directional signs, e.g., where are what shops?
8. Hours of operation. Riverwalk will be difficult to close because we do not close sidewalks. However, businesses will have hours of operation
10. Manatee education signs stressing passive observation.
11. If not already done, develop a logo that will become recognizable as Riverwalk. Use that logo on all signage.

Suggested Activities
1. Musicians along the waterfront.
2. Food vendors (cart style) ice cream and coffee when seasonally appropriate.
3. Special lighting year round to carry Riverwalk theme.
4. Themed nights
5. First Friday, or third Saturday (or both) – something regular so people can plan to visit our community monthly or twice per month for adventures on Riverwalk, e.g., picnic in the park, blow up slides for kids, family evenings, monthly featured artists and musicians, and or other activities, paid for by the Riverwalk businesses, not the City.
7. Christmas decorations, pictures with Santa and/or Easter Bunny on Riverwalk.
8. Viewing area for a redesigned Christmas Boat Parade with new route.
9. Incorporate Riverwalk into Christmas Parade, raft race, and other parades (MLK, St. Patrick’s Day) during the year.
10. Local school or church choirs performing at holidays, and/or family picnic nights. Parents and grandparents will come to hear their kids sing.

Miscellaneous
1. Develop a living shoreline where possible – partner on this with SWFWMD?
2. Include information about Riverwalk on all boating brochures.
3. Develop a brochure to be distributed to all hotels and dive/kayak businesses.
4. Change the City’s logo to include a representation of Riverwalk.
5. Ask businesses along Riverwalk to include the fact that they are on Riverwalk in their advertising.
6. Work with the Chronicle to develop a weekly column writing about one person or group’s experience or highlighting Riverwalk businesses.
7. Develop a Riverwalk festival, e.g., Opening of Manatee Season and Scallop Season.
8. Allow vendors to set up on walkway or land beside walkway for festivals.
9. Support sponsored or donated benches and pooch stations, etc.
10. Will commercial activities be allowed? For example, a business that wants to “sponsor” an event or a weekend on Riverwalk.
Safety First
- All boats and paddle craft are required to have a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket (PFD) for each person and a sound producing device on board (i.e. a whistle).
- Inflatable PFDs are prohibited for personal water crafts (i.e. jet ski).
- Children under 6 must wear a life jacket.
- Snorkelers/divers must clearly display a diver down flag when in the water.
- Boat operators born on or after Jan 1, 1988 must have a Florida Boating Safety Education ID for a 10+ HP motorboat.
- Boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs is dangerous and illegal.
- Bow riding or extending into the water while underway is illegal in city limits.
- Vessels are required to display navigation lights sunset to sunrise and during periods of reduced visibility (fog, rain, haze, etc).

Rules on the Water
- Share the waterways: paddle crafts do not always have the right-of-way. It is a good rule of thumb to keep to the right and/or the shallower areas of waterways to avoid motorized vessels.
- Motorized vessels do not have brakes and must stay in deeper water; therefore, they need more room to navigate channels.
- Be mindful of swimmers and diver down flags. All vessels must make reasonable effort to maintain a distance of at least 100 feet from any diver down flag for inland waters.

Be Seagrass Safe
Avoid
Trim
Push
Help us protect our seagrass! Please be conscious of surroundings while anchoring. Pole anchors are recommended.

Manatee Viewing Guidelines
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service encourages passive observation; don’t initiate contact with manatees. Calmly observe from a distance at the surface of the water. The following activities are prohibited (50 CFR 17.108):
- Chasing or pursuing a manatee
- Disturbing/touching a resting manatee
- Diving from the surface onto a resting or feeding manatee
- Cornering or surrounding a manatee
- Riding, holding, grabbing, pinching, poking, prodding, or stabbing a manatee with anything – including hands and feet
- Standing on a manatee
- Separating a mother and calf, or any group of manatees
- Giving manatee(s) anything to eat or drink
- Actively initiating contact with belted or tagged manatee(s)
- Interfering with rescue/research efforts

Call FWC to report injured manatee: #1-888-404-3922

Protect the Wildlife
- Observe wildlife at a distance.
- Minimize noise for a better experience.
- Plastics, fishing line and trash are harmful to wildlife. Please recycle/dispose of items responsibly.
- Only use designated moorings or tie-ups where available (do not tie to vegetation or man-made objects).
- Re-board vessels without coming over to reduce erosion.

Scalloping
Please do not toss scallop shells in Kings Bay where they create hazards. You can dispose of them responsibly in the Gulf of Mexico where there are marine organisms that recycle them!
Speed Zones in Kings Bay

- 2.5 MPH within this channel.
- Slow Speed/Minimum Wake Zone (5-7 MPH). Fully off plane, settled in the water.
- Idle Speed/No Wake Zone (2-3 MPH). Minimum speed at which you can maintain steerage and headway with no wake.
- Idle Speed (Sept 1 - April 30)/Slow Speed Remainder of Year
- 25 MPH Day/Slow Speed Night/No Anchorage (June 1 - Aug 15). Slow Speed Remainder of Year
- Idle Speed/No Wake (2-3 MPH). Eel grass restoration is in process, please be mindful of impact on vegetation. Pole anchoring is recommended.
- Idle Speed/No Wake (2-3 MPH). No Alcohol permitted. Eel grass restoration is in process, please be mindful of impact on vegetation. Pole anchoring is recommended.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Refuge Headquarters: 915 N Suncoast Blvd.
- Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. For more information please call: 352-565-2088
- Crystal River City Hall & Three Sisters Springs Center: 123 NW US Highway 19
- City of Crystal River Waterfront Parks with Kayak Launches (parking fees apply)
  1. Kings Bay Park 268 NW 3rd Street
  2. Hunter Springs Park 104 NE 1st Avenue
- Kings Bay Springs System
- Kayak Launch (launch fee may apply)
  3. Crystal River Kayak 1422 SE US Hwy 19
- Boat Ramps (* not on map) (fees may apply)
  4. 3rd Ave Ramp 540 NW 3rd Avenue
  5. Pete's Pier 1 SW 1st Place
  6. Adventure Center 9801 W Ft Island Trail
  7. Captain Mike's 1610 SE Paradise Pr Rd
  8. Crystal River Water Sports 2380 N Suncoast Blvd (*)
  9. Ft Island Trail Park 12073 W Ft Island Trail (*)

Welcome Center (not on map) open M-F 8AM - 5PM. 915 N Suncoast Blvd., Crystal River, 34428
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f. Studying the impact septic tanks have on the waters of Kings Bay and the surrounding waters and making legislative recommendations regarding the same to the City Council; and
g. Any other tasks or studies assigned to the Waterfronts Advisory Board by the City Council.

Article III
Members

1. All seven (7) members of the Board and two (2) alternate members shall be appointed by the City Council by a majority vote.

2. The Board will include at least one person from the categories, when possible:
   a. Dive/Tourism industry;
   b. Environmental Specialist;
   c. An attorney not employed by the City of Crystal River;
   d. Financial services industry (i.e. Banker, CPA, etc.);
   e. Restaurateur/Merchant/Hotel operator;
   f. Engineer, architect, builder or other construction professional;
   g. Operation of commercial fishing or related business.

3. There may be two (2) non-resident (County) members appointed to the Board in addition the regular members.

4. All voting Board members shall take the “Oath of Office” at the meeting immediately following their appointment.

Article IV
Officers

1. At the first regular meeting in the month of June each year (Organization Meeting) the Board shall elect, from its members, a chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson. The Vice Chairperson shall act as the Chairperson of the Board during the absence or disability of the Chairperson.

2. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Board. The Chairperson shall have the authority to appoint committees and generally perform the other duties as may be prescribed in these bylaws. The Chairperson shall have the privilege of discussion all matters before the Board, make motions and shall vote therein.

3. The Chairperson shall make reports of the Board business to the City Council on a regular basis.
Sec. 20-32. - Appointment.

The waterfronts advisory board shall consist of twelve (12) members appointed by the city council including three (3) non-voting liaisons to act as advisors to the waterfronts advisory board. The three (3) liaisons shall be a member of the community redevelopment agency (CRA), a member of the planning commission and a member of city council. There shall be two (2) at large members who must reside within the city who shall always serve four-year terms. The board shall consist of at least nine (9) members being residents of the city and two (2) members being residents of Citrus County. The board will include at least one (1) person from the following categories, when possible:

1. Dive/tourism industry;
2. Environmental specialist;
3. An attorney not employed by the city;
4. Financial services industry (i.e., banker, CPA, etc.);
5. Restaurateur/merchant/hotel operator;
6. Engineer, architect, builder or other construction professional;
7. Operation of a commercial fishing or related business.

The appointment of members to the waterfronts advisory board shall be made in such a manner that whenever possible, the terms of office of the members in categories (1) through (4) shall take place during alternating appointment cycles with members in categories (5) through (7).

(Ord. No. 06-0-10, §2, 5-8-2006; Ord. No. 06-0-23, §1, 8-14-2006; Ord. No. 10-0-01, §3, 1-25-2010)
ORDINANCE 18-O-10

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER CODE OF ORDINANCES, CHAPTER 20 - ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, SECTION 20-32 APPOINTMENT, CHANGING THE TOTAL APPOINTED MEMBERS FROM TWELVE (12) TO NINE (9); PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Crystal Code of Ordinances, specifically Chapter 20, Advisory Boards and Commissions, stipulates the number of appointed members for the Waterfront Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, the Waterfront Board recently amended the Bylaws by changing the number of appointed members from twelve (12) to nine (9); and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Crystal River, Florida recognizes the need to update and revise the By-laws from time to time; and

WHEREAS, the City of Crystal River has complied with all requirements and procedures of Florida law in processing and advertising this Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Crystal River, Florida, has determined that adoption of this Ordinance is in the best interests of the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Crystal River.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA THAT THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to amend Chapter 20, Section 20-32 for the reasons set forth in the above "WHEREAS" clauses, which are incorporated herein, in haec verba.

SECTION 2. AUTHORITY.

The City of Crystal River City Council is authorized to amend the Crystal River Code of Ordinances pursuant to Article III of the City Charter of the City of Crystal River and Part II, Code of Ordinances,
Chapter 1, General Provisions, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Crystal River, and as otherwise authorized by applicable Florida Statutes.

The City Council of the City of Crystal River, Florida, hereby adopts and incorporates into this Ordinance the proposed amendment to:

CHAPTER 20 - ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Section 20-32 – Appointment

The waterfronts advisory board shall consist of nine (9) members appointed by the city council including five (5) members being residents of the city and two (2) members being residents of Citrus County plus two (2) alternate members. The board will include at least one (1) person from the following categories, when possible:

1. Dive/tourism industry;
2. Environmental specialist;
3. An attorney not employed by the city;
4. Financial services industry (i.e., banker, CPA, etc.);
5. Restaurateur/merchant/hotel operator;
6. Engineer, architect, builder or other construction professional;
7. Operation of a commercial fishing or related business.

The appointment of members to the waterfronts advisory board shall be made in such a manner that whenever possible, the terms of office of the members in categories (1) through (4) shall take place during alternating appointment cycles with members in categories (5) through (7).

SECTION 3. REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES.

All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

SECTION 4. SEVERABILITY.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase or provision of this Ordinance is held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not be construed as to render unconstitutional or invalid the remaining provision of the Ordinance.
SECTION 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.
This Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon passage.

ATTEST: CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER

MIA FINK, CITY CLERK JIM FARLEY, MAYOR

PASSED on First Reading

NOTICE Published on

PASSED on Second & Final Reading

Approved as to form for the
Reliance of the City of Crystal River
only:

VOTE OF COUNCIL:
Brown
Gudis:
Holmes:
Farley
Fitzpatrick

George G. Angeliadis, City Attorney
DEP: No harmful levels of pollutants found in dirty water pumped from C.R. dig site

The department will conduct more tests to verify its initial soil-sample results

Buster Thompson  Apr 13, 2018 Updated Apr 24, 2018

Inspectors with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection have determined no threatening levels of pollutants were discharged from a dig site near Kings Bay in Crystal River. Above, kayakers paddle Hunters Cove where in March discolored water was seen pouring into the cove. The DEP will be conducting additional testing to verify the initial findings.

Matthew Beck

Sediment-laced water pumped by a private contractor from a dig site into a nearby wetland in Crystal River was free of harmful pollutants and its impacts to the area were minimal.

That was the Florida Department of Environment Protection's, or DEP's, conclusion after testing various samples in and around Universal Solutions, Inc.'s excavation site at U.S. 19 and the Crosstown Trail, according to a DEP spokeswoman and emails Thursday between DEP and city officials.

However, DEP inspectors still found high concentrations of certain contaminants at a few locations and will return to determine if those were a result of Universal's dewatering, emails show.
"We are expecting to have these results back...next week," DEP employee Austin Hofmeister said in a Thursday email to the city.

The DEP on Tuesday removed Universal from the job after inspectors found evidence the Tampa-based company had pumped out turbid floodwaters from its excavation and into an adjacent wetland in late March, impacting 21 square feet.

Florida environment officials recently removed a private contractor from this decontamination project along U.S. 19 in Crystal River for pumping out sediment-laced floodwaters into a nearby wetland.

Matthew Beck

The dirty water also made its way into a nearby canal that flows toward Hunters Cove, where citizens on March 28 saw plumes of murky water that led back to Universal's site, prompting DEP to stop operations and investigate.

The company's crews were hired by DEP to dig up and remove underground petroleum left over from a former gas station. Universal is hiring an independent inspector to contest DEP conclusions it was not following prescribed dewatering plans and water discharge permit requirements.

DEP reported said in a report Universal was pumping water clean of petroleum even though the discharged floodwaters did not pass through a sediment filter before being put through an air stripper, a device that removes certain pollutants through evaporation.

DEP inspectors on April 5 tested numerous sediment and soil samples around Universal's site and along the canal that runs south toward the cove, according to a report attached to Hofmeister's email.

Testers reported no threatening levels of contaminants, except for three areas: at the southeast corner of U.S. 19 and Crosstown Trail, near the affected wetland and further down the canal at the southeast corner of Northeast Fourth Street and the Crosstown Trail.

http://www.chronicleonline.com/news/local/dep-no-harmful-levels-of-pollutants-found-in-dirty-water/article_60f0e1e54-3f41-11e8-9ce7-2b778c99f2ab.html
DEP spokeswoman Lauren Engel said Friday these contaminants (Total Recoverable Petroleum Hydrocarbons, Benzo (a) anthracene, and Benzo (a) pyrene) are common in urban, commercial and industrial areas.

Hofmeister said in his email these elevated levels of pollutants could be the result of other sources and not necessarily from Universal's site, due to the closeness of U.S. 19 and other businesses.

"DEP will conduct further analysis of the...concentrations to try and determine if...levels are background levels or related to the site dewatering activities," Hofmeister wrote.

Crystal River City Manager Dave Burnell said Friday he's not too concerned over what DEP found.

"There's no doubt in my mind that DEP wants to make sure there's no public-safety issue," he said. "But that doesn't mean we don't want it cleaned up."

Engel said DEP geologists are still scheduling their trip to the site to determine if Universal's digging ruptured an aquifer, or encased springs underground.

"They don't believe they got into the aquifer, but they want to make sure," said Burnell, who's been updated by DEP.

Universal was selected for this work as part of DEP's Petroleum Restoration Program, which paid $245,792 to have Universal dig out a leaking petrol tank and fill in the hole.

DEP will select another contractor to finish Universal's work.

In addition to Universal's former work site in Crystal River, DEP is also investigating Universal's performance at its other jobs under contract with the department.

Contact Chronicle reporter Buster Thompson at 352-564-2916 or bthompson@chronicleonline.com.

BUSTER THOMPSON
Reporter

DEP: No signs of breached aquifer at decontamination project in Crystal River

Buster Thompson  Apr 24, 2018 Updated Apr 24, 2018

Florida environment officials recently removed a private contractor from this decontamination project along U.S. 19 in Crystal River for pumping out sediment-laced floodwaters into a nearby wetland.

Matthew Beck

The aquifer beneath a halted project in Crystal River where a private contractor unlawfully pumped water into a nearby wetland was not breached.

Geologists with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reached that conclusion after surveying the dig site last week with ground-penetrating radar, DEP spokeswoman Dee Ann Miller said Tuesday. The site is at the corner of U.S. 19 and the Crosstown Trail.

DEP is still working to finish filling the excavation site, the scene of its $245,792 decontamination project. DEP contracted with Universal Solutions Inc. to remove a leaking underground petroleum tank.

DEP put a pause on Universal's work on March 28 after Universal crews pumped sediment-aced water out into roughly 21 square feet of wetlands.

At first, a Universal engineer believed a pierced aquifer contributed to the overflow, according to an email chain from late March.

"There was no breach of a subsurface conduit at the site," Miller said. "DEP will be working closely with the city of Crystal River to complete site restoration work as soon as possible."

City residents could see plumes of turbid water entering Hunters Cove from a drainage canal leading back to the affected wetland just behind Universal's site.

DEP removed the Tampa-based company from the job and tested water samples and soils at affected areas, finding the expelled water was clean of harmful pollutants and its impact was minimal.

Contact Chronicle reporter Buster Thompson at 352-564-2916 or bthompson@chronicleonline.com.

BUSTER THOMPSON
Reporter