

Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge

7.11.2013 Public Workshop: Waterway Management inside Three Sisters Springs

Flipchart Notes from the 8 Breakout Groups

Breakout Group 1

- Protect homeowners rights when considering needs of manatees (Balance)
- Springs washing in from erosion
 - Space of springs smaller (Filling in)
- Open TSS land access to reduce number of visitors by water
- Close TSS to visitors on very cold days
- All dive shops bring only 2 dive shops at a time with no more than 20 people/company
- Galvanized pipe go up right side to keep incoming swimmers to right and feet off bottom
- Still promoting tourism when enough/too many people now
- Charge fee for water access
- Ban flippers
- Need more uniformed officers present on all days opened with a budget to provide that (Volunteers management)
- All visitors need to be with a tour guide for proper education (For everyone visitors and residents)
- No tour boats before 9 am at Three sisters Springs (TSS)
- Additional fee to go into spring run and TSS [No fee outside, use money for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) staff]
- Limit number of people inside the springs (Use FWS statistics)
- Tour guide for every 10 people in water
- All tour guides need to complete an FWS certification course
- Make sure all tour operations has a Special Use Permit (SUP)
- Have permits for residents/City of Crystal River and or Citrus County
- Make access to King Spring larger to take pressure off of TSS
- TSS management plan says protect water quality and quantity (Two downed trees with Lyngbya underneath, people going on land from water)
- Visitors need to go through local operators and reduce out-of-town operators.
- Make TSS (Spring run/springs) no touch
- Rental boats should not be inside TSS without a certified guide
- Fix erosion issue inside TSS (Put rocks back to limit number of manatees)

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- No new rules until existing rules can be enforced (Need funding to enforce them)
- Give out more tickets; less verbal warnings
- Need more signs in multiple languages (Aware that Manatee Manners is in multiple languages)
- Open Gator Hole to swimmers/non motorized vessels to reduce impact in TSS

Breakout Group 2

- Create card system to access spring (Color-coded time limit)
- Safety of swimmers is an issue (Create in and out exit on spring run) (Add buoys as guidelines)
- Swimmers only access by land
- Allow access by reservation “ticket master”
- Build infrastructure to bring in/encourage tourists protection habitat and manatees
- Dock outside for kayaks
- Will opening the prop alleviate some of the pressure
- Create land access for swimmers only on west side (Swimmers go onto land if they enter on land)
- Open land access to alleviate crowding in spring (Observation of manatees on land)
- Mitigate damage in spring and sustain biological (Spring) standards
- 2 class permits for tour operators (1 for Springs-higher priced permit) (2nd for Kings Bay)
- Have a signal at bridge with crowd levels inside spring and have stop light
- Improve signage (Make it visible)
- Encourage visitors to be respectable to neighbors
- Ask for contributions for management, education, resources
- Manatee Watch on TV (A manatee education program on TV for hotels)

Breakout Group 3

- Areas for management
 - Winter only
 - Not in front
- Overview
 - Problem solving options
 - No action
 - Close in winter
 - Limit use

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- No touch in spring
- More enforcement in spring
 - Special use permits
 - Individual users
 - Enforce rules
- Increase education
 - Tourists
 - Residence
 - Pamphlets in marinas and hotels, at Refuge
- Local awareness campaign
- Mandatory education awareness prior to entry (Yearly or seasonally outside commercial industry)
- Exceptions within educational programs
- Certification program
- Prior to limited use, land must be available (Land access)
- Deputize volunteers to increase enforcement
- Allow law enforcement to park boats at private dock for awareness
- Increase friends group to be in FWS office to educate people
- Establish traffic flow in and out of the spring
- Only vessels from certified are allowed into spring (And people)
- Limit hours and numbers of boats people allowed in spring
- Limit vessel to be required to launch from TSS property.
- Require annual pass with identification; present enforcement can happen
- Pay for use to access
- Limit additional restrictions and enforce existing rules/regulations
- Lottery for access
- Increase land access to decrease water overcrowding

Breakout Group 4

- Sheriff volunteers or FWS
- More staff are needed than volunteers
- Take TSS from FWS and give it to private management
- Reservation system
- What is a comfortable number of visitors in TSS?

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- Limit number of SUP trips
- Dig an exit canal from TSS
- Use boardwalk to see manatees instead of water
- TSS planning needs to be more than local (County, region, State-wide)
- Need more areas for manatees so they aren't confined
- Clean up Kings Bay
- Have a gate keeper and TSS
- Develop a website and phone number with the reservation system
- Small fee for tourists, but all County residents FREE
- Use tram to get visitors in and out

Breakout Group 5

- Limit number of boats and people
- “ If you limit people now, do I get to be one of those privileged people” (You need a boat to get there now)
- Go see a manatee somewhere else (Close off TSS)
- Open the boardwalk and shut down the water access in the winter
- Permit every individual to access the area to limit the number of people each day
- “Gatekeeper”
- Ticket for each person
- More education/training for anyone operating any rental vessel
- Educate how to interact with manatees
- Re-establish Bass Brook to allow an exit/entrance
- System of staggering times that you can enter the springs (Maybe by price incentives with tours and by time limits or range on the permits of individuals)
- Have a ticket system with time limits and set times to visit available on a website like fishing/hunting license
- Privatize the ticketing (A business can run the program)
- Set up reservation system to go to springs depending on the number of manatees there (Less people can visit when the number of manatees are up)
- Education for the ticket system has to be wide spread through hotels, the County, State, before someone visits
- Recruit more volunteers to educate people using the springs
- Have two check points like an airport (1 checks your “ticket”, 2 takes it)

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- For volunteers utilize the school system and programs like the Naval program and ROTC that require so many hours of community service
- No wake in Bay year-round

Breakout Group 6

- All users be guided upon educational protocol
- Full time oversight by personnel funded by private or public or government
- Manatee Watch to be stepped up to empower and control system
- Lottery system for commercial tourist boat rentals (Even/Odd system)
- What impact to local economy
- Is it possible under some type of lottery for vendors to say: I've got X number of permits for King Spring and X number of permits for TSS, where do you want to go today?
- Lottery system limited number of permits
- Determine carry capacity for people in TSS
- Determine carry capacity of manatees in TSS
- What about opening part of Magnolia Springs
- Guides should handle no more than 10 visitors in the spring when guiding
- Base numbers of visitors on ratio 1:3 (1 person for every 3 manatees)
- Operators should take visitors to all manatee areas for short periods, not just one area
- 12 kayaks, 30 people, 45 minutes
- Vary number of visitors depending on how many manatees are in area each day
- Improve manatee number estimate at spring level so we anticipate better how many manatees are going to use springs
- All users must pass course to be licensed to use springs in winter

Breakout Group 7

- If water temperature goes to certain level in gulf that's when close area based on water temperature rather than months
- Sometimes during end of winter can be cold snap
- Harder to monitor by temperature when people are scheduling vacations
- Limit number of kayaks to protect
- Stop all activity in water
- Special times (limited) during the year
- Have more patrolling
- More video cameras monitored live by Refuge staff

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- Not having swimmers and kayakers at the same time
- Limit access and limit time (Every third day kayakers allowed for 30 minutes and same for snorkelers or swimmers)
- Good signage in different languages about penalties and fines
- Life guard
- Wrist bands
- Permanent law enforcement (LE) officer during daylight hours during winter months
- More permitting for access
- Open up walk around to take people out of the water
- Create some type of “aquarium” setting for viewers
- Only allow kayaks during winter months and limit amount of people in water
- Make entrance way to Lake Linda
- We need science on how many people can come in without stressing the manatee
- Manatees react differently so it would be hard to put a number on the limit
- What benefit is it to the manatee people interacting?
- People drink and abuse privileged of interacting with manatee
- Publicize how many tickets
- Let people know LE is serious
- Concession with LE officer
- More undercover officers
- Complete video coverage
- Consider lottery system (How does it affect private land owners?)
- Money from concession goes to LE officers
- Special consideration for tax payers and land owners
- Special sticker for locals
- Close it with State (I believe this means same time as Blue Springs State Park closure)
- Token system of band (Take one, give one)

Breakout Group 8

- Tour operators have a guide in the water
- Video in dive shops in other languages
- Limiting time per visit
- Require adult supervision for all

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- Access data base reservation time system
- Lottery system for time slots
- Close access during critical cold periods
- Need greater control over boat, kayaks, and canoe access
- Need control over locals access and behavior as well as visitors
- Need more consistency and education to captains and guides
- Number of permits is not number of captains
- Need stronger enforcement
- No touch zones or sanctuary areas
- Mandatory meetings (regular) with all tour operators and rental operators
- Include all licensed guide and operators not just owners
- A certification for guides
- No touch at all policy
- Condensed visitation period
- Need more official signage
- Some mechanism to put some of the tour revenue back into conservation Refuge management
- Tighter control over SUP photographers
- Mandatory education would facilitate zero tolerance for harassment
- Allow citations
- Require proper equipment for all who access (Mask/ snorkel)
- Parking management in canal (Designated spots)