



Cypress Chapter of the IWLA (CCIWLA)
Approved minutes
March 19, 2025
ZOOM

<https://fgcu-edu.zoom.us/j/94535365484?pwd=xY8E8yDyMnYNbswNrh8cxXRW4DlqcG.1#success>

Call to order: 7:04 PM Attendance is listed at the end of these minutes.

1. Special guest: Adam Gelber (Director of Everglades restoration, DOI) Everglades Restoration project update and Q&A
 - a. The Everglades Restoration working science coordination group meeting was today. Mike Elfenbein invited him to our meeting to give an update. The Director provided an update of the restoration projects to date, focusing on the southern region. He then took time to answer questions from the meeting participants.
 - b. Q&A topics were:
 - i. (T Oates) Conveyance around Tamiami Trail?
 - ii. (M Jones) future management plans for elevation requirement for Osceola camp to mitigate flood control and whether it is that congruent with future management plans for wildlife in the project area? And historical utilization of land by indigenous and Gladesmen.
 - iii. The Director stated that one primary goal is to make a better environment for the health of the Tree Islands.
2. Approve draft agenda- motion by Tom Oates, second by Betty Osceola, draft agenda affirmed.
3. Approve DRAFT minutes of Nov 11, 2024 meeting ([click here to see](#)). Motion by Tom, Brett second, all approved.
4. President's Items (Pete Quasius): Attended, but no report –later on the meeting Pete stated he will remain inactive and hopes that Marshall will officially take on the duties of President at the annual meeting, board and subsequent Officer elections. Pete will contact Mike Chenoweth to ask his interpretation of by-laws about his status as a President not fulfilling the role. Pete says he is appreciative of Marshall and confident he will run the chapter in line with the bylaws as they currently exist.
5. Executive Director Report (Mike Elfenbein): Thanked those in attendance. He had lots to update the membership on since we haven't met since Nov. He's been busy.
 - a. December activities:
 - i. . Attended in an Everglades Restoration Task Force in DC.
 - ii. Hosted social events in DC that went well (Bonefish and Tarpon Trust co-sponsored)
 1. Karina Balman participated and has just joined CCIWLA- she is engaged and interested in taking on an active role in the chapter.

- iii. The Big Cypress 50th Anniversary of the Swamp Heritage festival was December 7th. There were well over 200 who visited the Chapter booths and did cyanotyping with Nora and her FGCU student assistant. Mike was proud.
 - iv. Attended the FWC meetings in Lakeland.
 - v. Led a full immersion field trip to Brahma Island – with members of the tribe and other dignitaries. Deer, snipe and duck were harvested and processed and brought to homes.
- b. January
 - i. python hunts with decision-makers including staff from (former) Senator Rubio's office
 - ii. Several prescribed fires were conducted at Eagle Haven. Dignitaries and the National Geographic photographer attended.
 - iii. Mack's fish camp outing- was nice. The bass cooperated and were caught and released at the location they were supposed to be.
 - iv. Everglades Conference: this was his first time attending.
 - v. With Director Betty Osceola hosted DEP liaison and others to see tree island in Water Management Area (WMA) 3A
- c. February
 - i. More fire was put on the landscape at Eagle Haven Ranch. A total of over 1,000 acres, nearly 1/3 of the property benefitted from the fire.
 - ii. He led 2 field trips per day to see the Ranch and Eagle nests: numerous dignitaries from many agencies, and tribes participated along with the Trust for Public lands, and other NGO's
 - iii. Attended FWC meeting in Tallahassee
 - 1. new fishing and hunting rules were passed- moved forward to limit non-resident hunters to after first 9 days of season
 - 2. CCIWLA co-sponsored an appreciation dinner with 19 other FFWCC and senior staff. It was well-attended and received.
- d. March
 - i. Turkey hunting is ongoing at Eagle Haven. Dignitaries and their staff have been attending. They are experiencing firsthand about the Greater Everglades and gaining an appreciation for it so they can better advocate for it.
 - ii. Participated in the Bergeron Foundation event that raised just over \$100,000 for purchase of mineral rights in the Big Cypress.
- e. Looking forward
 - i. Wilderness designation
 - 1. Will try to work with Safari International to make it illegal to designate the Big Cypress Preserver as wilderness-
 - 2. In May he will advocate all the elected officials to oppose designation- He was told they need to have 40-50 co-sponsors for it to move forward.
 - ii. Mineral rights-
 - 1. Still working hard with the partner organizations.
 - 2. Engaging state legislators to secure match funding
 - iii. Scrub Jays at Eagle Haven Ranch. He is working with the USFWS to identify colonies within the population at Eagle Haven Ranch and consider how to connect them to populations within neighboring conservation lands.

Tom Oates, on behalf of the Board expressed their appreciation and awe to our Executive Director Mike Elfenbein, stating that “this was just the highlights”! Mike says he appreciates the group of friends he calls his board of directors. He appreciates having Nora on the team who keeps him pointed in the right direction.

He spoke with his sponsor- needed to correct Charity Navigator and a check is on the way – a bit less than last year.

Financial Report (Tom Oates):

Tom showed finance statements from three accounts (of 4- the endowment account is still missing). The statements showed 5 months’ worth of expenditures, which really brought down account balance. **To be ready for the audit he needs some receipt for Pete’s expenses amounting to almost \$10,000.**

6. Committee reports:

a. Science and Outreach (Nora):

i. update on membership

1. Nora has been working on getting all our new and renewed members duly registered with IWLA National. To make it official, Tom made a motion that Nora become the Designated Membership Dues Recipient (MDR). Motion was seconded by Brett and passed unanimously.
2. Of the nearly 100 new and renewing members who paid dues through the chapter website and paypal, fewer than 40 of them were registered by Steven Blumrosen in time to be counted for the end of year count that would have earned the chapter another Delegate at National.
3. She is in contact with the Membership staff at National and currently completing the paperwork for new members in 2025.
 - a. 8 family memberships
 - b. 7 individuals
 - c. One new member last week
 - d. We still don’t have access to the endowment account for Mike and Pete so that the dues can be paid.
 - i. President Pete Quasius says he cannot put anyone on account. Steven can write a check and will write it once he is comfortable with the data to write that check.
*(right now he is in Tallahassee doing other business)-
Pete assures the board that there is money in the account to pay for these memberships. Pete says he will make it happen to get Tom on the account. Pete cannot find out how to add –
 1. As an aside, Steven will probably go up for Everglades Day representing the Florida Chapter of the IWLA State matters. Vital that Tom has access to all our funds.

ii. Science and Outreach (Demers/Elfenbein):

1. Pistol Pond update- first day with youth is April 12th

- a. Nora will send an invitation to Marshall to send to a youth who will benefit from the experience.
 - b. Mike will work with Betty, Heather and Diamond to round out the 15-20 attendees we can accommodate.
 2. [Cypress Chapter IWLA Annual Report 2024-](#) is on the website.
 - a. Bob S will send and update for Education and endowment that Nora will add to the 2024 Annual Report
 - iii. [International Big Mamma Day](#) April 19th 2025 at the Miccosukee Indian Village at 500 U.S. 41 Miami, FL 33194 FREE EVENT
 1. Nora will invite visitors to do cyanotyping of pressed plants, and also
 2. assist the Tribe in getting attendees to sign the card for Big Mamma

From the Organizer Betty Osceola has 9 volunteers --6 to help Nora on cyanotype and signing the card

 - Many vendors and NGO's participating
 - Tribe is currently doing their invasive species event that will end that day
 - did an event at FIU and invited another 500 or more to attend.
 - b. Shooting sports (Jesse/Steven):
 - i. Jesse participated in a frog tournament in February. He won the 50/50 at weigh in. He donated it to a worthy cause.
 - c. Education/Endowment (Soter):
 - i. He mentioned that both of his updates are tied back to the Chapter mission statement- especially the future (youth).
 1. Little Free Library (LFL-Tarrah Ferrier) There are now 5 LFL throughout Babcock Ranch. Pete is donating and getting books from RESTORE, especially children's books. Those books related to Cypress Chapter get a sticker and invitation to join membership.
 - ii. Endowment- have not received any applications for scholarships. Working with someone for non-college bound youth.
7. New business:
 - a. Planning for 2025 Chapter events ([see 2025 proposed schedule](#))
 - b. Annual meeting is in June by zoom
 - i. By-laws updates ([see proposed CC IWLA by-laws revisions and justification here](#))
 - ii. Elections for 2025
 1. We need to put Director's on 3-year staggered term- proposed:
 - a. 2025 Osceola
 - b. 2026 Oates
 - c. 2027 Cleckler
 - d. 2025 Jones
 - e. 2026 Fitzgerald
 - f. 2027 Lee
 - g. 2025 Bergeron
 - h. new Directors (up to 9 possible)

2. Officers- Nominations needed- Officers will be elected after the Board of Directors are elected by membership at the Annual meeting.
 - a. President-Marshall is willing to be nominated-
 - b. Vice-President
 - c. Treasurer/Secretary
 - d. Board members nominations
 - i. 2028 Osceola
 - ii. 2028 Jones
 - iii. 2028 Bergeron
 - iv. NEW?
 3. Audit must be completed and provided at meeting prior to Annual meeting (according to current by-laws). We need to have President Quasius provide documentation for his expenses to pass the audit.
 - iii. Charity Navigator site has updated with our new address and other information. Nora will work on adding other information for review and additions by Treasurer Oates.
 8. Member comment:
 - a. Heather Cleckler: Pioneer event in Immokalee Cattle Drive (March). It would be good for the Chapter to have a presence/booth for 2026. There are usually about 3,000 people who go to the event which includes a cattle drive down the street in Immokalee.
 - i. (related) Mike Elfenbein submitted nomination Heather for the [Agricultural-Environmental Leadership Award](#) by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He obtained 3 letters of recommendation from high-ranking individuals. He hopes that Heather will win that award. Mike E will send link to Nora to share with members.
 9. Public comment:
 10. Adjourn at 8:45 PM
- Next meeting (ZOOM) May 14th, 2025.
- ZOOM 6:45 gathering
Call to order at 7:00 PM-

In attendance:

Name	Position	In attendance?
Pete Quasius	President	YES
Mike Elfenbein	Executive Director	YES
Tom Oates	Treasurer and Secretary and Board Member	YES
Marshall Jones	Vice-President and Board Member	YES
Brett Fitzgerald	Projects Chair and Board Member	YES
Jesse Lee	Chair shooting sports and Board Member	YES
Bob Soter	Education Chair	YES
Betty Osceola	Board Member	YES
Heather Cleckler	Board Member	YES
Diamond Bergeron	Board Member	YES
Nora Demers	Director of Science and Outreach and recording secretary	YES
Rob Mayberry	member	YES