

ROTONDA WEST ASSOCIATION, INC
WILDLIFE AD HOC SUB-COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
July 10, 2018

Meeting called to order at 11:00 A.M

Members present: Patti Cowin, Chair, Cari Hale, Joan Gotthardt, Lynda Chamowitz, Jim Peterfeso, Belinda Olsen, and Don Olsen.

Absent: Jan Meades, Mike Kipp, Tammy Kipp, and Steve Froggatt,

Patti called the meeting to order and the group approved the minutes from the last meeting.

The Wildlife FaceBook page is up and there are now 48 members. It was decided that in addition to approving members that postings would also need to be approved since there had been a posting that was not appropriate for the Wildlife page.

The marking of additional gopher tortoise burrows has stopped. There was discussion that brought Belinda and Don up to speed regarding the status of the project. Several members voiced concern regarding the lack of support for the committee by the Activities committee and the BOD. Patti informed the group that during the teleconference with the RWA Attorney it was determined that since no challenges had been made regarding the RWA mowing the undeveloped lots and since volunteers for the RWA aid the mowers in accomplishing their task it was therefore ok for us to continue marking the burrows as a means of keeping the mowers safe and protecting the RWA from potential fines/imprisonment that can be levied with the destruction of gopher tortoise burrows.

Several members expressed concern as to the point of the existence of the wildlife subcommittee if there is no support of its mission.

There had been 2 calls made to the RWA within a week because of gopher tortoise burrows being mowed over. One of the burrows was very large and established and had been mowed including the large yellow sign. The residents who reported this incident also called the FWC. The other instance involved a burrow that was obvious, but not marked, and the apron with eggs was destroyed.

Our relationships with Kelly O'Connor (Gopher Tortoise Biologist Southwest Region, FWC) and Bill Byle (Charlotte County) have been instrumental in avoiding fines up to this point. It is our hope that we can continue to institute programs such as the marking of gopher tortoise burrows to avoid adversarial relationships in the future.

Members were informed about an online course offered by FWC E-learning at:
<http://MyFWC.com/GopherTortoise/Permitting>. Cari and Patti are investigating the link.

The committee voted unanimously to start using driveway markers as a more cost effective, method of marking burrows so that they can be seen and therefore avoided by the RWA mowing crews. The markers are also less obtrusive and therefore not readily obvious to the casual observer.

Brochures have been received from Kelly O'Connor and include: A Guide to Living with Gopher Tortoises, A Landowner's Guide; Managing Habitat for Gopher Tortoises, Before You Build; What Every Landowner Should Know About Gopher Tortoises Before Breaking Ground, Get the Facts About Gopher Tortoises: Best Management Practices, Get the Facts About Gopher Tortoises: Laws, Policies and Guidelines. Several suggestions were made as to how we could best use the brochures/information. Some suggestions were: inclusion in new home owner packets, provide to builders, realtors, and management companies.

The committee agreed to move our meetings to the third Tuesday of the month at 0900. The next meeting will be August 21

If it is decided to continue marking burrows with a sign, a cheaper option has been identified and can be obtained via a Rotonda West resident for \$3.36 per, including legs. A price break could be negotiated if we order 200 signs at one time. A logo was approved if signs are to continue. A logo was also approved for T-shirts in the event the committee moves forward.

Cari has been working with Bill Byle of Charlotte County, and Kelly O'Connor of FWC. She was informed that signage in no way alerts predators to gopher tortoise burrows. Mr. Byle further stated that when he conducted a survey in Broadmoor Park he identified approximately 40 gopher tortoise burrows.

Under old business Patti requested that members think about potential speakers for educational presentations. She is going to contact Eva Furner about a Wildflower presentation and asked Jim to follow up on the speaker he suggested.

Under new business Patti informed the members about a FWC Gopher Tortoise App that is available. The app allows users to post pictures of Gopher Tortoises and submit them to the FWC to help identify where tortoises occur. The photo will be uploaded to the FWC database along with any notes you add. She encouraged members to install the app on their cellphones and see if this could assist the Wildlife Sub-Committee in its efforts. Cari suggested that the group develop tri-folds to provide information on the various wildlife found in RW. She plans to start with one on Gopher Tortoises. Patti encouraged other members to pick a species and gather information for future tri-folds. Tri-folds developed will be placed in the Office and Community Center. It was suggested that they also be placed in new-homeowner packets.

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

The next meeting will be August 21st.

Respectfully Submitted:

Cari Hale