

**SEMINOLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: KATIE'S LANDING MANAGEMENT PLAN BRIEFING

DEPARTMENT: Planning and Development **DIVISION:** Community Resources

AUTHORIZED BY: Don Fisher **CONTACT:** Jim Duby **EXT.** 7345

Agenda Date 3/25/03 Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Work Session <input type="checkbox"/> Briefing X Public Hearing – 1:30 <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing – 7:00 <input type="checkbox"/>
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MOTION/RECOMMENDATION:

Requesting Board comments regarding draft management plan for Katie's Landing as drafted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Division of Recreation and Parks (DEP).

(District: 5 : McLain)

BACKGROUND:

Katie's Wekiva River Landing has for many years been a popular destination for residents and visitors of Central Florida to view one of the State's premier Outstanding Florida Waters and a designated Scenic River. The State of Florida with cooperation from Seminole County acquired the property in December 2001. As part of the partnership, the State and County entered into a Memorandum of Agreement for the joint development of a management plan to preserve the unique recreational and educational values of Katie's.

The management plan being presented today is a result of that collaborative effort as well as community meetings held on August 28, 2002 and February 12, 2003 and two Advisory Group meetings on August 28, 2002 and February 13, 2003. Proposed facilities include dock, picnic shelters, interpretative kiosks, concession building, restroom, parking 50-70 spaces and an improved access. These are to support the proposed non-motorized uses of picnicking, canoeing and kayaking, (includes canoes with small motors for mobility-impaired persons).

Further, as part of the agreement, the Department of Environmental Protection and Seminole County adopted a joint planning process for the development of a management plan for Katie's which is to be maintained by the Department of Environmental Protection's State Park Service. Included within the agreement is this briefing before the Board to receive comments regarding the draft management plan. Comments made by the Board will be included within the Plan and presented to the State Board of Trustees, the agency with final approval.

Reviewed by: Co Atty: _____ DFS: _____ Other: _____ DCM: _____ CM: _____ File No. <u>bpdc01</u>
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Katie's' Landing
Amendment to the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park
Unit Management Plan
Amendment Eight to Lease No. 2950

INTRODUCTION

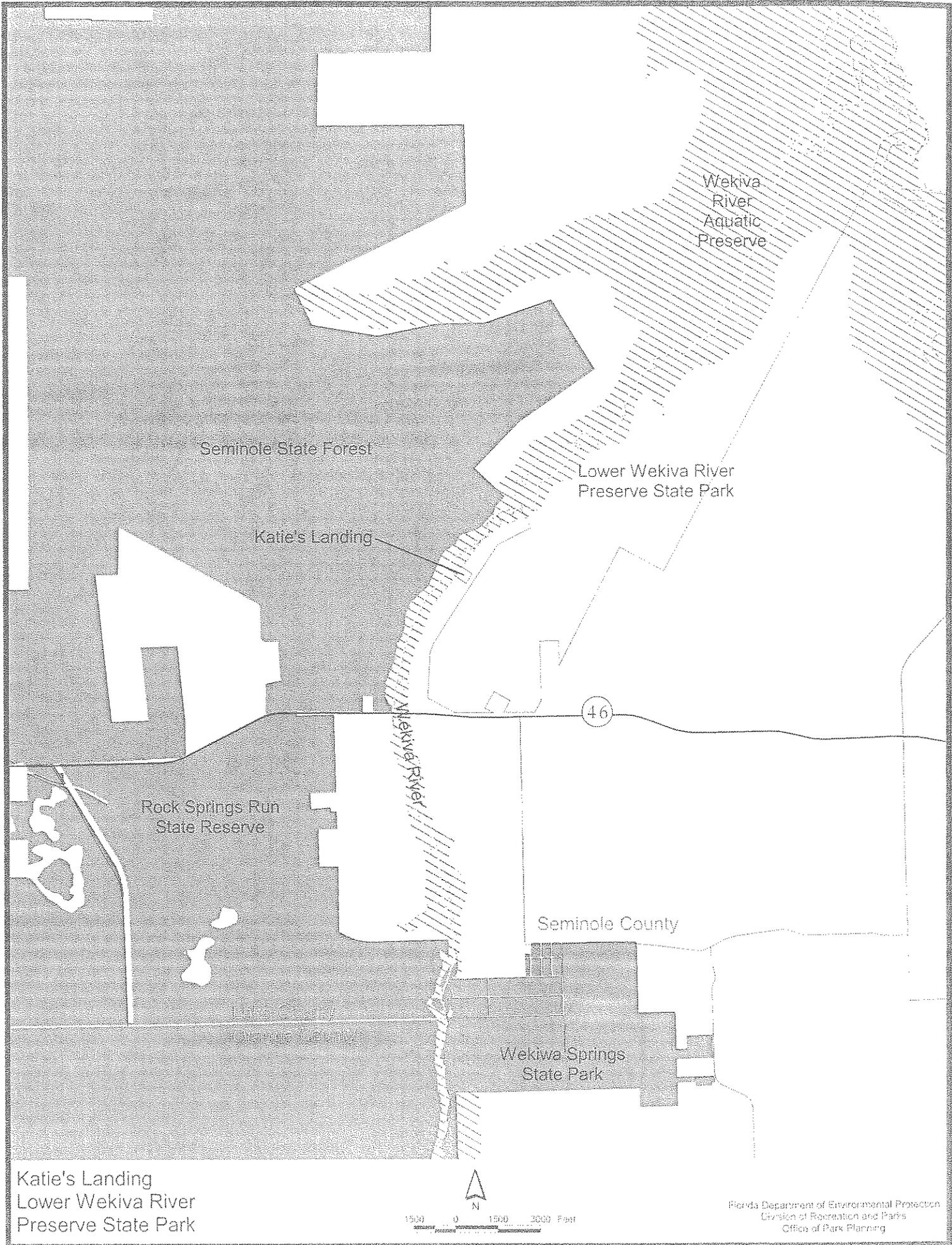
Katie's Landing is located in western Seminole County (see Vicinity Map). Access to the property is from Wekiva Park Drive, off State Road 46. The parcel is bounded on the north and south with residential land use, while to the east Wekiva Park Drive separates this parcel from the body of the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park and the western boundary is the Wekiva River. The U.S. Department of the Interior has designated the Wekiva River as a National Wild and Scenic River and the National Park Service is presently drafting its management plan. The vicinity map also reflects significant land and water resources existing near the parcel.

For this plan, acreage has been calculated based on the composition of natural communities, in addition to ruderal and developed areas. The tract contains approximately 6.19 acres.

The property was acquired on December 18, 2001 by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with the participation of Seminole County to provide a significant recreational opportunity for the public benefit for access to the Wekiva River. It has been added to the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park by lease amendment # 8. Under terms of an agreement between the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) and the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), a management plan is to be developed and approved by both bodies. It will then be incorporated into the management plan for the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park. The designated single use of the property is public outdoor recreation and conservation and there are no legislative or executive directives that constrain the use of this property nor is it in an Area of Critical State Concern.

Goals and Objectives

1. Continue natural systems management, whereby natural ecological conditions and process are restored and maintained to the extent feasible.
 - A. Continue efforts to remove invasive, exotic plant species.
 - B. Restore the bulkhead area to a more natural shoreline.
 - C. Enhance buffer plantings using native plant species.
2. Provide high quality management and protection of cultural resources.
 - A. Periodically monitor archaeological site and protect it from accelerated erosion and/or vandalism.
 - B. Ensure that all ground disturbance activities are coordinated through the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.
 - C. Pursue funding to conduct further archaeological research on the midden.
3. Provide quality resource based outdoor recreational and interpretive programs and facilities.
 - A. Develop facilities for canoe/ kayak launching, picnicking, and nature observation.
 - B. Interpret natural and cultural resources through static displays, brochures and programs.
4. Ensure that both state and local interests are pursued through continued close partnership with Seminole County and the DEP.



Wekiva
River
Aquatic
Preserve

Seminole State Forest

Lower Wekiva River
Preserve State Park

Katie's Landing

46

Wekiva River

Rock Springs Run
State Reserve

Seminole County

Wekiwa Springs
State Park

Katie's Landing
Lower Wekiva River
Preserve State Park



Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Office of Park Planning

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NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources

Topography

According to the Sanford Southwest USGS Quadrangle map, the highest elevation is approximately 25' NGVD along the southeast boundary (adjacent to Wekiva Park Drive). The parcel slopes down towards the northwest to an elevation of approximately 5' NGVD at the edge of the Wekiva River.

Minor anthropomorphic changes to the topography have been made to the parcel. A Native American shell midden exists and is described under the section of Cultural Resources. Additionally, the construction and removal of buildings, septic tanks, and underground utilities have resulted in minor changes in the topography of the tract.

Soils

The floodplain area adjacent to the Wekiva River has been mapped as Immokalee fine sand and the higher portion has been mapped as Pomello fine sand according to the Soil Survey of Seminole County, Florida (1966, U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service). Immokalee fine sands are poorly drained, deep sandy soils that are typically acidic. Pomello fine sands are moderately well drained, extremely acidic, and occur on gently sloping ridges.

Minerals

With the possible exception of sand for fill material, no known minerals of commercial value occur within the Katie's Landing Tract.

Hydrology

Katie's Landing slopes down towards the northwest and the Wekiva River. However, due to the naturally porous sands, sheet flow from rainfall is minimal. A vegetated ditch extends from Wekiva Park Drive into the Wekiva River along the southwest boundary of the Tract. This ditch drains rainwater that runs off Wekiva Park Drive. Currently, Seminole County is making drainage improvements to Wekiva Park Drive in preparation for road paving. These improvements are expected to minimize sediments eroding into the Wekiva River from the road.

No other hydrologic features occur on Katie's Landing.

Natural Communities

The natural community type can most accurately be described as ruderal. The prior land uses have severely impacted the natural plant community. Only the existing large oak trees and a few cypress trees are indicative of historic conditions. Exotic plants have become established and are currently being eradicated. A majority of the parcel is currently unvegetated due to past land uses and recent demolition activities. A revegetation plan is being developed in order to minimize future erosion.

Prior to European settlement, several natural communities occurred. Indian shell mounds typically develop a unique plant community different from the immediate surroundings. This is primarily due to the high pH resulting from the calcium leaching from the aquatic shells. None of the historic natural plant community currently occurs on the shell mound. The highest portions of the site, along Wekiva River Road, historically contained saw palmetto, longleaf pine trees and scattered oak trees. The remainder of the parcel was

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hardwood hammock, primarily oak trees. The tree canopy provided almost complete closure, with a thick, shrubby mid-story. Several cypress trees remain on and near the water's edge.

A local resident (John Yaeckle) settled on the property in 1950, prior to the recent land disturbances. Park staff will conduct a taped interview with Mr. Yaeckle to record his recollections of the parcel and the Wekiva River. From the information to be gathered, a more complete cultural and historical picture of the area may be possible.

Designated Species

No known designated plant or animal species are known to occur at Katie's Landing.

Special Natural Features

No significant natural features occur at Katie's Landing.

Cultural Features

The main archaeological feature of the site is the shell mound/ midden, located on a slight rise above the banks of the Wekiva River. The site was recorded in 1994 during a cultural resources survey (Ellis et al 1994: 133-134). Artifacts recovered during testing of the site indicate it was utilized from the Orange Period (ca. 2000-1650 B.C.) through the St. Johns II Period (A.D. 1513-1565).

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Management Measures for Natural Resources

Although Katie's Landing currently contains minimal natural resources, management techniques will be important in protecting and enhancing the Wekiva River and the associated wildlife. A priority project will be the re-establishment of native groundcover vegetation. This will minimize erosion from entering the Wekiva River. The landscape plan will be done in concert with the facilities planning. All proposed roads and footpaths will be designed and constructed with erosion reduction/elimination in mind.

Due to the development on each side of Katie's Landing, it is unlikely that any restoration project will significantly improve terrestrial wildlife populations. However, significant improvements can be made to the shoreline. Currently, a concrete bulkhead exists on approximately one-third of the shoreline. Future plans include removing the concrete bulkhead and re-contouring the shoreline to more closely simulate a natural shore. Once the earthwork is completed, native aquatic vegetation will be planted. These improvements are expected to improve the aquatic ecosystem.

Another important aspect of Katie's Landing is the shell midden. Conceptual plans include capping the midden with clean fill material (or a similar stabilization technique) in order to prevent the midden from eroding further.

LAND USE COMPONENT

Assessment of Use

Past Uses

The Timucuans used the streams and uplands of the Wekiva River for hunting and gathering food. A significant midden still exists on the northwest corner of the site and is designated as a protected zone as delineated on the Conceptual Plan.

Katie's Landing was operated as a fish camp from the late 1940's until the time of joint

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purchase by the state and Seminole County on December 18, 2001. It had trailer hookup sites, a residence, a boat launch, a recreation hall and small supplies store. A concrete bulkhead was built on the northern half of the river edge and a small dock extends from that.

The structures and much of the infrastructure was removed from April to August 2002. The bulkhead, a dock, and a narrow concrete boat ramp still exist but are in extremely poor condition.

Recreational Uses

At present, the parcel is open to day use for visitors, canoe, and kayak launching.

Existing Facilities

Recreation Facilities

Unimproved road to waterfront
Informational sign

Support Facilities

No support facilities exist

Potential Uses and Proposed Facilities

This site, surrounded by residential land use, is recommended as a day use site only. Protection of the water resources of the Wekiva River is a priority and when possible, impervious surfaces should be near the entrance to the property, beyond the 550 ft. Riparian Habitat Protection Zone setback, as delineated in the St. Johns Water Management District's *Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) Applicant's Handbook*. All runoff from these surfaces should be caught in retention basins.

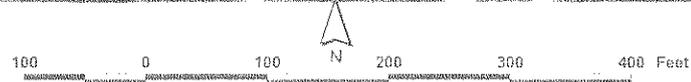
The Wekiva River is a draw for canoe and kayak users and this is expected to increase with the increase in population in the surrounding area. Katie's Landing is located mid-way between Wekiwa Springs and Blue Springs State Parks. Proposed recreational uses for the site are picnicking and canoe and kayak launching. In the course of developing this management plan, primitive campsites were considered. Due to the limited size of the property, its importance as a day use access point to the river and the close proximity of private residences, camping was determined not feasible. The recreational carrying capacity of the site is estimated to be 150 persons at a time, 300 persons daily.

The preferred location for the concession is near the main entrance above the 550 ft. Habitat Protection Zone. This location, near the parking, would provide easy and visible access for picnickers and visitors arriving from Wekiva Park Drive. The rental canoes and kayaks will be stored close to the water. Restroom facilities should be located in the same area as the concession building.

The unimproved road along the southwest boundary should be improved for private vehicular access to the canoe ramp. With the exception of the law enforcement and official agency activities on the river and canoes with small motors for mobility-impaired persons, this ramp is for launching non-motorized boats only. As a replacement for the existing dock, a dock should be constructed for temporary tie-up of motorized and non-motorized boats approaching the site from the river. Car and some RV parking for 50-70 vehicles will be located near the entrance, beyond the 550 ft. Habitat Protection Zone setback. This will allow an area in the center of the site to be used for picnicking.



KATIE'S LANDING



CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

Prepared By:
 Florida Department of Environmental Protection
 Division of Recreation and Parks
 Office of Park Planning

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Interpretation on the significance of the Wild and Scenic River classification and the historical use by Native Americans should be accomplished through interpretive signs, brochures and park programs. The interpretive programs should feature the education of visitors on the sensitivity of riparian habitats that encourage a low impact use of the river.

Recreation Facilities

Remove and relocate boat ramp
Remove and relocate small boat dock
Large concession building
Large picnic shelters (2)
Scattered picnic tables
Interpretative kiosks (3)

Support Facilities

Restroom
Improved road and drop-offs for picnic area and launch area
Parking for 50-70 vehicles

Plan Development

This plan is drafted by Division of Recreation and Parks, Office of Park Planning and the Seminole County Comprehensive Planning Division. An initial public workshop was held on August 28, 2002. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit comments from the public before the development of this management plan. A second public workshop will be scheduled to present the draft management plan to the public and solicit comments prior to final review and approval by the Department of Environmental Protection and Seminole County BOCC.

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DEP Advisory Group Staff Report

The Advisory Group appointed to review the proposed land management plan for Katie's Landing met at Wekiwa Springs State Park on February 13, 2003. Nancy Prine represented Fred Hardin. David Millard did not attend. All other appointed Advisory Group members were present. Attending staff were Larry Fooks, John Fillyaw, Gregg Walker, Lew Scruggs, and Carol Perfit. Russ and Katie Moncrief attended as public participants and former property owners.

Ms. Perfit began the meeting by explaining the purpose of the advisory group and reviewing the meeting agenda. She also provided a brief overview of the Division's planning process. She then asked each member of the advisory group to express his or her comments on the plan.

Summary Of Advisory Group Comments

Nancy Prine is excited about Katie's Landing being open to the public because the strongest advocate is one who has had an experience on the river. Her comments on the plan concerned the removal of the seawall and potential erosion problems; she would like the staff to consider a connection for access to the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park across Wekiva Park Drive primarily for birdwatchers; and she is concerned about protecting the midden. **John Fillyaw** said he would look at the trail system within the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park for possible trail connections but he would have to consider parking and traffic issues. Multiple entrances are more difficult to control and there is a parking area and pedestrian-only entrance to the Lower Wekiva River Preserve on SR 46 close to Wekiva Park Drive. On the seawall removal, he explained that DEP engineers and the Army Corps of Engineers will engineer it and they will also be looking at erosion control measures to protect the neighbors' property and the midden. The limits of the midden are being determined by an archaeological survey now and the plans are to cap the area with clean fill or similar stabilization technique.

Darrell Leidigh expressed his concern for a viable concession business. He felt that the trail access suggested by Ms. Prine would provide an additional public attraction and a food concession would be a plus for trail users; a restroom is an important element in the design as well. He is not certain the seawall should be removed due to erosion problems. **John Fillyaw** explained that the seawall is in disrepair and could be dangerous if left in place. Mr. Fillyaw agreed on the importance of the restroom explaining that the state cannot open a public facility without a restroom.

Tom Cooper asked what the state plans were for drilling a well as he has offered the use of his well on a contractual basis. He is also concerned about the location of the restroom, as he does not want it to affect his well water. Staff responded that the state will be drilling a well and that they won't place a septic system near his well and will use the best version of systems available. His second concern is that the tasks required of the concessionaire will be overwhelming and he/she will not be able to pay attention to the protection and cleanup of the area. **John Fillyaw** discussed the concessionaire who is the winning bidder for the Wekiwa parks and his established success in two other state parks. Mr. Fillyaw's vision for this concession is mainly to provide canoe take out for trips originating at Wekiwa Springs. He feels that working with the Seminole County Tourist Bureau this type of business can become a big success. The plans are to start slowly and

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DEP Advisory Group Staff Report

see what works. Tom questioned the composition of the buffer area. **Lew Scruggs** replied that it would be a mix of native plants, with varying heights, evergreen and deciduous providing a good visual block. Lew also spoke to the concerns on the concession business; the park manager would still be in charge of what happens in the concession and it is often a tool for parks to provide staffing on site. Concession is a term for any rental business and does not necessarily include food.

Daryl McLain noted that this is a great day for him as he has been working with the Moncriefs for years to get to this point and he has full faith in the state park system to run the operation well. He is pleased to see that provisions are in place for handicapped access to the boat launch and he questioned whether there would be swimming allowed. **John Fillyaw** responded that there would not be a designated swimming area.

Jim Duby expressed his support for a canoe/kayak rental concession for residents who do not own canoes.

Deborah Shelley had a few concerns and suggestions. She inquired on the paving material and suggested that it be a demonstration of pervious paving methods. **John Fillyaw** said the material has not been selected. She suggested that all concerned parties along the Wekiva Park Drive should work together to get water and sewer lines installed. The river is used for household supply so spray control of exotic aquatic plants such as cattail is not possible. **Tom Cooper** agreed that the cattails are a problem and will continue to be unless treated. She sees a conflict if an honor station is installed at one entrance to Lower Wekiva River Preserve SP and not at an entrance created across from Katie's Landing. **John Fillyaw** explained that the existing honor box at Lower Wekiva River Preserve is not yet in use.

Summary of Public and Staff Comments

Katie Moncrief stated her support for public access and canoe trips.

Russ Moncrief agreed that there should not be a swimming access as there have been three drownings in the past. He expressed his support for the development of canoe tours, saying that people from all over the world have enjoyed the Wekiva River. He also feels it is very important to encourage river users to keep the river clean. In the past he furnished boaters with nets to pick up trash and a financial reward for what was collected. He wanted to know of a central number to call to report river blockage. The Wekiwa Springs ranger station was offered. Russ is thrilled that the state and the county own the property.

Larry Fooks said that park staff would be the best neighbors they can and he is looking forward to the development of the Katie's Landing. **Lew Scruggs** explained that if money is available, the facilities could be built by next spring.

The meeting was then adjourned.

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DEP Advisory Group Staff Report

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposed management plan for Katie's Landing as presented with the following recommendations.

Concession

- Staff do not recommend changing the concession provision but do recommend emphasizing the canoe and kayak rental aspect of it. Food concession, if necessary, will be a secondary concern. They feel that a concessionaire providing services for all three state parks will be able to staff and manage this site adequately and will provide a much needed presence at a time when the present park staff is over extended.

Connection to Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park

- John Fillyaw will investigate the potential trail connections and create an entrance if feasible.

Buffer Areas

- Staff recommends including fencing in addition to a vegetative buffer on the boundaries adjacent to neighbors.