

Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges

Community Foundation of the Lowcountry Yearly Status Report 2016

Visitor Accessibility & Programs at Pinckney Island NWR

Grant Number: 11283

Date Authorized: March 18, 2016



Vibrant salt marshes are part of the landscape at Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge [*US Fish and Wildlife Service*](#)

February 24, 2017



Table of Contents

References	2
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Grant Overview	3
3. 2016 Goals & Achievement	3
4. Yearly Statistics.....	4
5. Financials	5
Attachment 1 - Executive Committee	6

References

1. **Community Foundation of the Lowcountry Grant to the Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges**, Grant Number 11283, March 18, 2016.
2. **Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Handbook - Volume II - Programs & Accessibility Handbook.** See [Handbook](#)

Abbreviations

Community Foundation Friends	Community Foundation of the Lowcountry Friends of the Savannah Coastal National Wildlife Refuges
Pinckney Island NWR	Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)
Refuge Complex	Pinckney Island NWR is one of the refuges comprising the Savannah NWR Coastal Refuges Complex

1. Introduction

This 2016 Status Report provides status and statistics for the Pinckney Island NWR programs initiated due to the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry grant (Ref. 1) to the Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges. This report is a requirement in the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry grant.

2. Grant Overview

The mission of the Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges is to support the Savannah NWR. The Community Foundation of the Lowcountry grant provided funds for equipment to support educational and outdoor activities at Pinckney Island NWR for the residents/visitors of Hilton Head and Greater Bluffton. Activities and support include:

- Education & outdoor programs (e.g. birding, nature walks, bike tours, etc.).
- Access to distant areas of Pinckney Island NWR for the elderly, very young and mobility impaired people visiting the refuge and taking part in the events/programs.
- Additional support for the public who underestimate the distance of the longer trails or are not prepared for the heat, require transportation back to the parking lot, water, or medical attention.

Grant dollars funded the purchase of the equipment to implement these programs. Volunteers, refuge personnel and funding from the Friends support the programs, equipment maintenance and any other way to make the project a success.

3. 2016 Goals & Achievement

The grant was awarded in early 2016. A brief summary 2016 goals and achievements follow.

- **Goal: Organize Program Volunteers.** Our project organization was formed and now has over 50 volunteers.
- **Goal: Form Management Group.** A project management group was organized, called the Executive Committee. The organization is diagramed in Attachment 1.
- **Goal: Purchase Equipment as per Grant.** Equipment purchased using grant funds include a 15-seat electric shuttle, 15 bikes, 15 binoculars, tables, chairs, refuge signage, and more. Refer to Reference 1. The major remaining equipment needed to be purchased is the bike trailer.

- **Goal: Inauguration Day.** Our Inauguration Day celebration was held on Nov. 29, 2017 with talks by management of the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, Savannah NWR refuge managers, Friends President Rick Shields and Project Leaders Twila Gray and John Petraglia. The talks were followed by a shuttle tour for the Community Foundation attendees and a nature walk for other guests.
See [Dec 1 Island Packet Article](#) See [Inaugural Day Photos](#)
- **Goal: Start Public Tours.** Public Tours started on Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2016 with weekly tours on every Tuesday (except for Dec. 20 which was cancelled due to rain). See [current Tour Schedule](#)
- **Goal: Full Shuttle Tours.** All of our shuttle tours in December and January have been fully booked. We expect the same in February and the rest of the year. We have received great reviews from the public. We are planning to increase our shuttle tours in early 2017 and add walking and biking tours in the middle of the year.
- **Goal: Accessibility.** We continue to target accessibility challenged people and organizations. Our tours have more than 1/2 of the passengers* with some level of accessibility challenges. There will also be programs especially targeted for the accessibility challenged. We have also been in contact with a number of organizations that have requested dedicated shuttle tours (two to three a year) for their accessibility challenged members. We will continue to reach out to these groups.

* Based on observations by docents, visitor assistants, and others.

4. Yearly Statistics

The goals for yearly attendance were not reached since programs were only partially initiated in Nov. 2016 and public scheduled tours started in December 2016. The statistics gathered for 2016 are in Table 1. (Note that we have had full shuttle tours for January and have almost full registrations for the tour posted for February and March.)

Local ZIP Codes: Hilton Head and Greater Bluffton: 29926, 29928, 29938, 29910, 29909, 29927, 29926

Table 1 – Tour Participants by Local and Other ZIP Codes

Date	Tour Type	Participants	Local ZIP Codes	Other ZIP Codes
January 2016				
11/22	Shuttle Tour & Walking Tour	40	30	10
11/29	Shuttle Tour	10	10	0
December 2016				
12/13	Shuttle	7	3	7
12/20	Shuttle	9	5	4
12/27	Shuttle	6	5	1
Totals		72	53	22

5. Financials

Basic grant related financials are provided below.

- **Remaining Grant Funds**

As of the end of 2016 the following grant equipment remain to be invoiced,

Bike Transport Trailer	\$2,500
Misc. Supplies	\$ 500+

- **Income vs Expenditures**

The goal of the grant programs is to provide free quality nature tours to the public and especially those with accessibility challenges. The cost of satisfying this primary goal is modest and to date indications are that we will be able to cover the expenses from donations.

Expenses – Our expenses are liability insurance, equipment maintenance and replacement of supplies (e.g. brochures, pens, folders, etc.). We estimate this is approximately \$3,000 to \$3,500 per year. Note there are no salaries, no fees, no rental equipment, etc. Other services (e.g. such as website, accounting, etc.) are provided by the Friends.

The Savannah NWR provides the following (at no cost) for our programs: storage for equipment (shed, pole barn), electricity, ice, volunteer vests, volunteer car stickers, gate access and access to bathrooms for emergencies.

Income – Income is by donations. We encourage donations from all refuge visitors especially those taking the tour in the following ways:

- Verbal requests during, before and after tours
- Donation boxes on the Visitor Assistant table and attached to the shuttle
- Donation box at the trail head (called the Iron Ranger)
- Sale of products (to be initiated in about 2 months)

The donations per tour in the donation boxes have been in the vicinity of \$50 and \$80. The Iron Ranger collects up to \$200 month and we expect donations to increase due to our tours.

The product sales include very limited items from the Friends store, The Gator Hole, at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center. The products include nature pamphlets, guide books, shirts and other items. The profit will go directly to supporting our grant related programs.

Bottom Line – Aside from major unexpected expenses, we will exceed our estimated expenses of \$3,000 to \$3,500.

Risk Assessment - The Friends have no outstanding loans, debts, or litigations. Our only partner is the Savannah Refuge Complex and they are providing no funding for the project. The only risk, which is highly unlikely, is that the refuge system is no longer funded or the refuge will no longer allow visitors.

Pinckney Island NWR Programs & Accessibilities Organization Chart

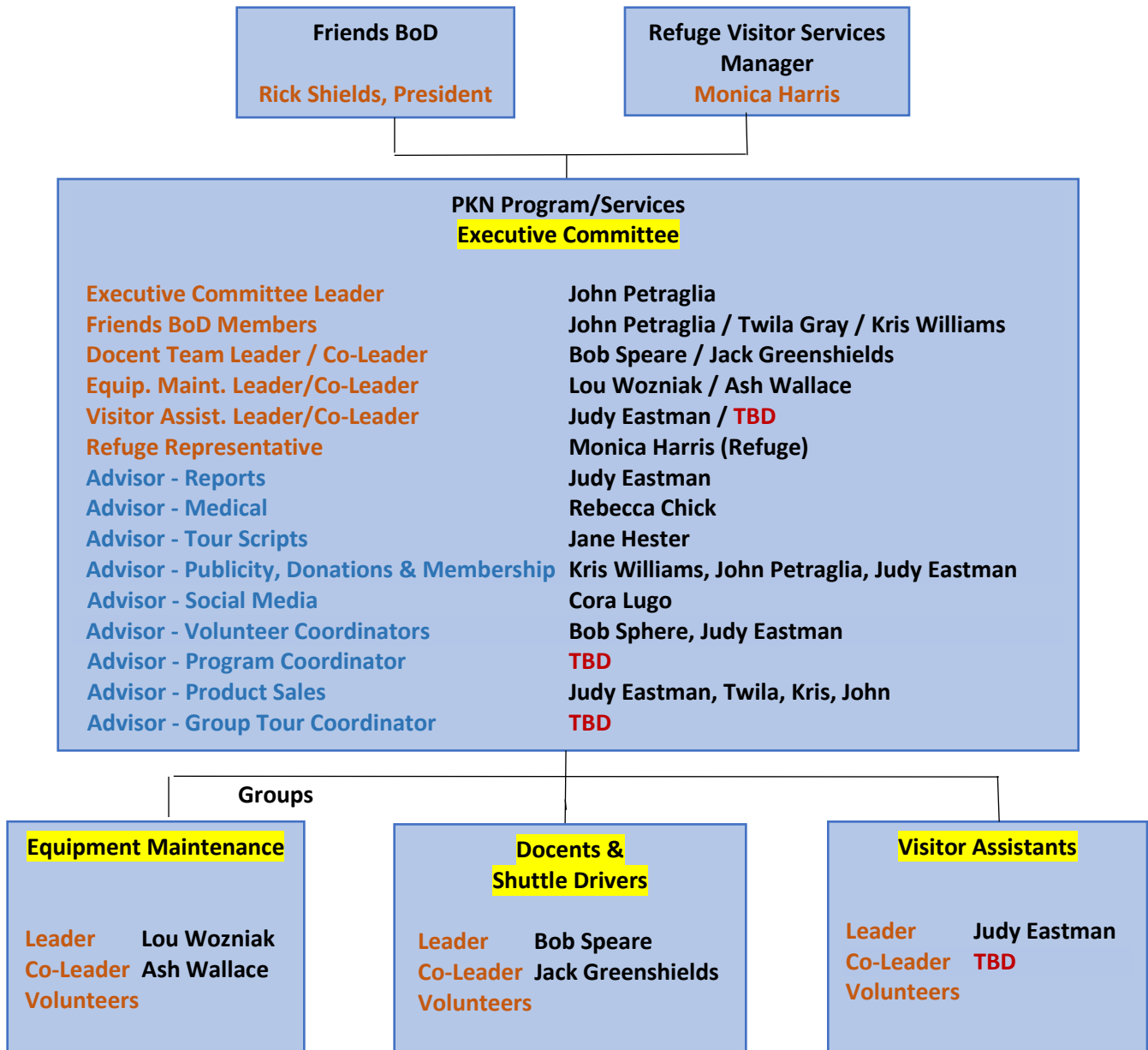


Figure 1 – Pinckney Island NWR Programs & Accessibility Organization