



**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
CITIZEN SUPPORT ORGANIZATION
2026 LEGISLATIVE REPORT
(pursuant to Section 20.058 Florida Statutes)**

Citizen Support Organization (CSO) Name: Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida, Inc

Mailing Address: 9710 East Dewey Robbins Road Howey in the Hills Florida 34737

Telephone Number: 407.967.7932

Website Address (*required if applicable*): <https://aquaticpreservealliance.org> also <https://aquaticpreservealliance.com>.

☒ Check to confirm your Code of Ethics is posted conspicuously on your website.

Statutory Authority:

Section 20.2551, F.S., Citizen support organizations; use of property; audit; public records; partnerships. In summary, the statute specifies the organizational requirements, operational parameters, duties of a CSO to support the Department of Environmental Protection (Department), or individual units of the Department, use of Department property, audit requirements, public records requirements, and authorizes public-private partnerships to enhance lands managed by the Department.

Section 20.058, F.S., Citizen support and direct-support organizations. In summary, the statute specifies the organizational requirements to submit an annual report each year for each designated CSO and to post that information on the Departments website.

YOUR MISSION AND LAST CALENDAR YEAR'S PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

CSO's Mission: (Consistent with your Articles and Bylaws)

The Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida, Inc. (Alliance) mission is to promote and support charitable, educational, and scientific activities that directly and indirectly benefit the Aquatic Preserves of Central Florida. The organization is dedicated to raising awareness and educating the public about the Aquatic Preserves' ecosystems

Describe Last Calendar Year's Results Obtained: Brag! (List or discuss the past calendar year's accomplishments and contributions. Cite specific support from last calendar year's Annual Program Plan.)

- The Alliance Board members met weekly and monthly via telephone, on-line, or in person.
- 2025 Aquatic Preserve Society (APS) monthly meetings were attended by the Alliance President, Deborah Shelley, who also served as the APS Vice President; Alliance VP, Barbara Howell, served as the APS Secretary. The Alliance President and VP also conducted two site visits to the Lyonia Environmental Center in advance of exhibiting the *Living Waters – Florida's Aquatic Preserves* collection, coordinated with Volusia County staff on the exhibit contract, and with the AP Manager for pickup, delivery, and set up of the exhibit in January 2026.
- Participated in Lake County's Eco Expo, an environmental symposium sponsored by the Lake County Conservation Council and the City of Groveland. The event featured speakers and booths with over 25 educational and environmental groups and local government entities. Alliance volunteers staffed their booth beside the Aquatic Preserve's booth.
- Other outreach events included assisting with the Aquatic Preserve and Wekiva Wild & Scenic River System's booths at the two-day Manatee Festival at Blue Spring State Park in Orange City, environmental events in Winter Park at Mead Gardens and at Cassia Community Club, and the *FriendsGiving* celebration for Wild & Scenic River and Aquatic Preserve volunteers at the AP office.
- Friends of the Wekiva River (FOWR) - Alliance President continued to serve as liaison for the Aquatic Preserve and on the Executive Committee for monthly hybrid Board meetings and assist the FOWR Board with review of development

projects that would impact the Wekiva River Protection Area. Alliance VP also attended monthly FOWR Board meetings and accompanied the new AP Manager John Van Bergen to his first in-person FOWR meeting.

- Pavilion at Katie's Landing on the Wekiva River - Alliance President and VP continued to serve on the FOWR Pavilion Committee. With assistance from retired St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) staff and a volunteer registered engineer, the Alliance President completed the permitting applications for SJRWMD and Seminole County for the 24-foot x 44-foot structure. Board members welcomed and coordinated with the new Wekiva Basin State Park Manager on the project. Other related accomplishments included FOWR funding the septic system upgrade and camp host site power and water hookups that enabled year-round park host security and maintenance, and appeased neighbors' security concerns. FOWR also hired an archaeological firm to ensure the onsite midden was not disturbed. Groundbreaking, construction and dedication to the state park was scheduled to be completed by late spring, 2026. A total budget of over \$100,000 was raised. Alliance Board members also participated in event planning for the pavilion dedication ceremony in 2026.
- Alliance Board members and Technical Advisors attended two site inspections (January & July 2025) of DeBary's 170-acre riverfront parcel which lies within the boundary of the St. Johns River reach of the Aquatic Preserve. The City of DeBary is still interested in establishing a Freshwater Research and Education Center on the northern three acres of the site and is making progress with infrastructure development.
- Continued to assist the Turtle Survival Alliance and The North American Freshwater Turtle Research Group in the AP's waters as we have for almost 30 years.
- Annual Bridges clean-up for Rock Springs Run's and the Wekiva River's bridges with volunteers from Wild and Scenic, Seminole State Forest, the Alliance and Flotilla 43 of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.
- Continued to participate in Wekiva Wild and Scenic River Management Committee bi-monthly meetings and Dragonfly Mercury Project research.
- Continued to participate in the Blue Spring Working Group annual meeting.

Describe the CSO's Plans for the Next Three Calendar Years:

* Support Aquatic Preserve volunteer resource management and education/outreach activities;

*Continue to conduct fundraising to support aquatic preserve activities; and as per the adopted AP Management Plan, *"To better serve the needs of basin researchers and the public, a Freshwater Research Center with an education component is envisioned at a direct river access location."* Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve Management Plan, 2014.

Continue to coordinate with the City of DeBary who has offered a 3-acre location for the Freshwater Research and Education Center which is part of their 170-acre Alexander Island Park on the St. Johns River reach of the Aquatic Preserve. When developed, partner with the Aquatic Preserve program on education, research and field trips at the site.

* Participate in inter-agency working groups and support local environmental organizations on projects and issues which affect the Aquatic Preserves and surrounding areas.

* Continue to serve on Friends of the Wekiva River's Pavilion Committee and support efforts to complete a covered pavilion for public use at Katie's Landing on the Wekiva River reach of the Aquatic Preserve.

* Enhance and update our website.

* Expand general membership and seek qualified Board members.

CSO's LAST CALENDAR YEAR STATISTICS:

Total Number of CSO General Membership: 20

Total Number of Board of Directors: 8

Total Volunteer Hours for the Board of Directors: 640

ORCP & CSO RELATIONSHIP:

AP Manager's Comments on the CSO & ORCP Relationship and Support:

The past year represented a significant transitional period for both our ORCP office and the CSO. The loss of the CSO's treasurer,

combined with a period of reduced activity, created challenges that affected continuity, communication, and organizational effectiveness. During the same period, the office experienced substantial staff turnover, including the hiring of a new manager and an additional staff member, requiring the development of new working relationships and operational procedures. These circumstances provide important context for evaluating the year's performance and identifying opportunities for improvement.

The relationship between the office and the CSO remains positive and founded on a shared commitment to conservation, stewardship, and public service. Communication during the year primarily occurred between office staff and CSO leadership, particularly the President and Vice President. Moving forward, the goal is to strengthen communication and collaboration with the entire Board of Directors rather than relying primarily on a limited number of board representatives. Increased participation by office staff at board meetings and more frequent interaction with the full board will help build stronger partnerships and improve organizational effectiveness.

Moving forward to the next fiscal year, we hope the CSO can:

- establish regular communication between office staff and the full Board of Directors.
- Ensure board meetings occur on a consistent schedule and provide opportunities for meaningful discussion of priorities and project planning.
- Improve coordination between the office and the CSO to ensure projects are developed collaboratively and support identified management needs.
- Increase CSO involvement in education and outreach, so the office can allocate more time towards research and monitoring programs.
- Avoid pursuing projects or initiatives that lack office support or do not align with established management goals. One example includes the Katies Landing pavilion project which was primarily facilitated between the Friends of The Wekiva River and Wekiwa Springs State Park. Another example being the establishment of a Freshwater Research Center along the City of DeBary's newly acquired 170-acre parcel. Although our office is interested in both these projects, they do not represent ORCP's top priorities within our office.
- Develop a clearer process for project review, prioritization, funding request, and coordination between the CSO and office staff.

Our office's top priorities that we will need CSO support on for the next fiscal year are:

- Update the Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve Management Plan which is currently due for revision.
- Allocating more time and resources towards the Tomoka Marsh Aquatic Preserve
- Increase research and monitoring programs within both Aquatic Preserves including drone-vegetation monitoring, Pistia and Vallisneria genetic sampling in Wekiva River, manatee population monitoring in the St John's River in partnership with FWC, Oyster Monitoring in Tomoka Marsh, and debris removal in both Aquatic Preserves.

The office recognizes and appreciates the time, dedication, and volunteer effort contributed by CSO board members and supporters during a challenging year. Despite organizational obstacles, the CSO continued to demonstrate a commitment to supporting our shared mission. The office values the partnership and appreciates the willingness of board members to remain engaged during this transitional period.

CSO President's Comments on the CSO & ORCP Relationship and Support:

Provide your perspective on the relationship between the ORCP and CSO. What went well? Are there areas of improvement?

The Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida (Alliance) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection (ORCP) work well together to accomplish mutual goals. Due to unforeseen circumstances, several monthly meetings with the full Alliance Board and AP Manager were not conducted, however, bi-monthly meetings have been initiated and scheduled. The Alliance will continue to work closely with Aquatic Preserve (AP) Manager on numerous projects and activities.

The Pavilion Project is an excellent example of teamwork and partnerships with the Friends of Wekiva, the

AP Manager, the Florida Park Service, and the Alliance. This project will greatly enhance public use and safety at Katie's Landing. The 24 x 44 covered pavilion will be a welcome addition to riverfront Katie's Landing, part of the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park along the Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve.

Two Alliance Board members serve on the Board of the Aquatic Preserve Society (APS). The Alliance President serves as the Vice President of the APS, and as of October 2024, the Alliance VP serves as Secretary. The monthly teleconference meetings with APS are another example of good communication and maintaining rapport between the Alliance, APS and ORCP. Alliance President and VP coordinate exhibits of the 29 piece Clyde Butcher Living Waters exhibit, owned and managed by APS.

SUMMARIZE FINANCIAL ACTIVITY FOR LAST CALENDAR YEAR, DIRECT AP(S) SUPPORT & REVENUES: Program

Services are costs related to providing your organization's programs or services in accordance with your mission. Describe and provide expenses that directly support the AP(s). For established nonprofit organizations, program service expenses generally represent most of the overall expenses of the organization. For the last calendar year provide the total \$ for each that apply.

Building improvement, construction, or renovations	\$
Cultural resources (e.g., historic structure restoration/ renovation).....	\$
Natural resources (e.g., native plants, natural lands restoration)	\$
Maintenance equipment (e.g., mowers, chippers, blowers, chainsaws)	\$
Other facilities and landscape maintenance.....	\$
Vehicles (e.g., trucks/cars, UTVs, golf carts, accessible devices, etc.)	\$
Amenities (e.g., water fountains, benches, picnic tables, recreational equipment, kiosks etc.)	\$
Natural Areas Training Academy training fee	\$175.00
Big ticket visitor center exhibits or interpretation updates	\$
Preserve exhibits, displays, signage	\$
Preserve publications, brochures, maps, etc.	\$
Programing/interpretation support material purchases	\$
Volunteer T-Shirts.....	\$443.00
Total Program Service Expenses.....	\$778.00

Visitor Services Revenue are revenues and the resources generated from fundraising on preserve property.

Preserve gift shops, craft stores, and concession sales.....	\$
Merchandise sales (e.g., plants, firewood, ice, t-shirts, hats, etc.)	\$
Programs and Special Events (e.g., fundraising workshops, seasonal events, concerts, etc.).....	\$
Vending (e.g., drink machines, penny press, laundry, Wi-Fi, etc.)	\$
Rentals (e.g., bikes, canoe, kayak, SUPs, etc.)	\$
In-preserve donation boxes.....	\$
Other visitor services revenue.....	\$
Total Visitor Services Revenue	\$0.00

NET ASSETS **\$10,844.44**

Organizations end of last year's Total Assets minus Total Liabilities. This is not the above's Visitor Service Revenue minus Program Service Expenses.

CSO AUDIT THRESHOLD:

Last Calendar Year's Total Expenses (including grants) **\$254.00**

Are the CSO's annual total expenses \$300,000 including grants? Then Section 215.981(2), Florida Statute requires an independent CPA audit using Government Audit Standards ([U.S. GAO Yellow Book](#)). The audit is **due by September 1** (9 months after the CSO's calendar year ends) to the Florida Auditor General and to the Department.

CONFIRM ATTACHMENTS:

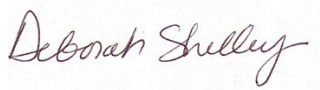
☒ **Code of Ethics**

☒ **The most recent Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-N receipt. All IRS Form 990's must be complete with Part III Program Service and all appropriate Schedules (A, O, and others as appropriate). If filing an IRS extension, attach the IRS 8868 receipt and the most recent complete 990 and schedules.**

2026 CSO Legislative Report Acknowledgment

This information is complete to the best of my knowledge pursuant to Section 20.058 Florida Statutes

Signature:



Print name: Deborah Shelley, CSO President

Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida, Inc.

Date: 31 May 2026

Signature: 

Print name: John Van Bergen, AP Manager

Date: 06/01/2026

The Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida, Inc.

CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

- (1) It is essential to the proper conduct and operation of The Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida, Inc. (herein "CSO") that its board members, officers, and employees be independent and impartial and that their position not be used for private gain. Therefore, the Florida Legislature in Section 112.3251, Florida Statute (Fla. Stat.), requires that the law protect against any conflict of interest and establish standards for the conduct of CSO board members, officers, and employees in situations where conflicts may exist.
- (2) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state that no CSO board member, officer, or employee shall have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or incur any obligation of any nature which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his or her duties for the CSO. To implement this policy and strengthen the faith and confidence of the people in Citizen Support Organizations, there is enacted a code of ethics setting forth standards of conduct required of The Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central Florida, Inc. board members, officers, and employees in the performance of their official duties.

STANDARDS

The following standards of conduct are enumerated in Chapter 112, Fla. Stat., and are required by Section 112.3251, Fla. Stat., to be observed by CSO board members, officers, and employees.

1. Prohibition of Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts

No CSO board member, officer, or employee shall solicit or accept anything of value to the recipient, including a gift, loan, reward, promise of future employment, favor, or service, based upon any understanding that the vote, official action, or judgment of the CSO board member, officer, or employee would be influenced thereby.

2. Prohibition of Accepting Compensation Given to Influence a Vote

No CSO board member, officer, or employee shall accept any compensation, payment, or thing of value when the person knows, or, with reasonable care, should know that it was given to influence a vote or other action in which the CSO board member, officer, or employee was expected to participate in his or her official capacity.

3. Salary and Expenses

No CSO board member or officer shall be prohibited from voting on a matter affecting his or her salary, expenses, or other compensation as a CSO board member or officer, as provided by law.

4. Prohibition of Misuse of Position

A CSO board member, officer, or employee shall not corruptly use or attempt to use one's official position or any property or resource which may be within one's trust, or perform official duties, to secure a special privilege, benefit, or exemption.

5. Prohibition of Misuse of Privileged Information

No CSO board member, officer, or employee shall disclose or use information not available to members of the general public and gained by reason of one's official position for one's own personal gain or benefit or for the personal gain or benefit of any other person or business entity.

6. Employment Restrictions

A person who has been elected to any CSO board or office or who is employed by a CSO may not personally represent another person or entity for compensation before the governing body of the CSO of which he or she was a board member, officer, or employee for a period of two years after he or she vacates that office or employment position.

7. Prohibition of Employees Holding Office

No person may be, at one time, both a CSO employee and a CSO board member at the same time.

8. Requirements to Abstain From Voting

A CSO board member or officer shall not vote in official capacity upon any measure which would affect his or her special private gain or loss, or which he or she knows would affect the special gain or any principal by whom the board member or officer is retained. When abstaining, the CSO board member or officer, prior to the vote being taken, shall make every reasonable effort to disclose the nature of his or her interest as a public record in a memorandum filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting, who shall incorporate the memorandum in the minutes. If it is not possible for the CSO board member or officer to file a memorandum before the vote, the memorandum must be filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting no later than 15 days after the vote.

9. Failure to Observe CSO Code of Ethics

Failure of a CSO board member, officer, or employee to observe the Code of Ethics may result in the removal of that person from their position. Further, failure of the CSO to observe the Code of Ethics may result in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection terminating its Agreement with the CSO.

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

for Tax-Exempt Organization not Required to File Form 990 or 990-EZ

2025

Open to Public Inspection

A For the 2025 Calendar year, or tax year beginning 2025-01-01 and ending 2025-12-31

B Check if available

- ☐ Terminated for Business
- ☒ Gross receipts are normally \$50,000 or less

C Name of Organization: AQUATIC PRESERVE ALLIANCE OF
CENTRAL FLORIDA INC

9710 East Dewey Robbins
Road, Howey in the Hills, FL,
US, 34737

D Employee Identification
Number 47-2140025

E Website:

<https://aquaticpreservealliance.org>

F Name of Principal Officer: Deborah Shelley

9710 East Dewey Robbins
Road, Howey in the Hills, FL,
US, 34737

Privacy Act and Paperwork Reduction Act Notice: We ask for the information on this form to carry out the Internal Revenue laws of the United States. You are required to give us the information. We need it to ensure that you are complying with these laws.

The organization is not required to provide information requested on a form that is subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act unless the form displays a valid OMB control number. Books or records relating to a form or its instructions must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any Internal Revenue law. The rules governing the confidentiality of the Form 990-N is covered in code section 6104.

The time needed to complete and file this form and related schedules will vary depending on the individual circumstances. The estimated average times is 15 minutes.

Note: This image is provided for your records only. Do Not mail this page to the IRS. The IRS will not accept this filing via paper. You must file your Form 990-N (e-Postcard) electronically.