

October 28, 2005
by Lane Stephens

Hello from Tallahassee and thank you for taking the time to come and read my first Executive Director's Report. For some time, I've been trying to think of a way to better communicate with our members and others who want to learn more about what we are doing, what we have been working on, and what is going on in Tallahassee or other areas of Florida that affect sportsmen. We thought this might be the answer.

Each time you come to visit our web site, we ask that you check out this page and our upcoming events page. My newest report will be displayed as you are reading it now, and older versions will be provided as a PDF file at the bottom of the page. Let us know what you think about the reports and about our site in general. We'd love to hear from you. You can e-mail your comments to me at lane.asaf@comcast.net.

With November just around the corner, my two boys and I are getting really excited about the upcoming hunting season. Hunting in the northwest region of the state, our general hunting season kicks off on Thanksgiving Day. While we will be home enjoying turkey, ham, and all the fixin's on day one, we will be in the woods bright and early on Friday morning. While we typically hunt deer with dogs in the Apalachicola National Forest with a great group of guys and ladies (including Rusty McKeithen, president of the Florida Dog Hunters and Sportsman's Association), this year we will have the added bonus of still-hunting just ten minutes from my home in Quincy. We were fortunate enough to lease 120 acres of land that adjoins our small family tract. We look forward to developing food plots, building a few ground blinds, and enjoying time on this great spot of earth.

Also in November, on the 13th thru the 16th, I will be traveling with State Representative Baxter Troutman, to the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses 2nd Annual NASC Sportsmen-Legislator Summit. This year the Summit will be held in St. Michael's, Maryland, at the Harbour Inn Marina. This event will bring together legislators and sportsmen's representatives from all across the United States, to learn about issues affecting sportsmen in other states and how these same issues might affect those of us in Florida. In addition to serving as Chair of the Florida Legislators' Sportsmen's Caucus, Rep. Troutman also serves on the Executive Council of NASC and is treasurer of that organization.

Since the 2005 Summit on the Future of Hunting in Florida, ASAF has really been active in building its membership base. I had the opportunity to meet with a representative of the Miami-Dade Chapter of SCI in late August, and in early October I traveled to Jacksonville to meet with the Board of Directors of the North Florida Chapter of SCI. Terry Vane, the president of that chapter, was gracious enough to allow me to stay the night with him and his wife, and I appreciate their hospitality. The North Florida SCI Chapter has joined ASAF (becoming the second SCI chapter, behind the Tampa Bay Chapter), and we are still waiting to hear from the Miami-Dade Chapter. We are also communicating with the other SCI chapters in Florida and look forward to meeting with them soon.

In addition, ASAF is pleased to welcome Tall Timbers Research Station and the United Waterfowlers -Florida, as member organizations. These two organizations bring a lot of experience and talent to our organization. In addition to joining, Tall

Timbers executive Director Lane Green petitioned to become a member of the Board of Directors of ASAF, and the Board unanimously approved him. In addition to serving on our board and being executive director of Tall Timbers, Lane was also recently appointed by Governor Jeb Bush to the State Acquisition & Restoration Council. Learn more about the ARC by visiting <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/oes/ARC/default.htm>.

ASAF has also been busy attending FWCC meetings in St. Pete Beach and Tallahassee, and preparing for the 2006 Legislative Session, which will be here before we know it. During the September FWCC Commission meeting, members of the Board of Directors and I testified on a number of issues affecting our membership. I spoke against a rule proposed by the FWCC staff that would have potentially created conflict between dog hunters and still hunters in Mallory Swamp WMA. FWCC commissioners understood our concerns and asked staff to go back to the drawing board on that one, and work with us to develop a better solution. We also spoke in favor of, or expressed concern with, a number of other proposed rule changes. The commissioners appreciate the concise, professional views that we present on items, and those in attendance can see that our efforts are really paying off for sportsmen in Florida.

We are also preparing for the upcoming legislative session. Several of the items that were developed as action items from the Hunting Summit are being prepared for introduction. A state mentoring license for hunters will be included in the FWCC legislative package, and we will be supporting this measure. It will allow a new hunter to hunt, for up to one year, without attending the hunter's safety course, so long as that hunter is accompanied in the field by an experienced and properly licensed hunter. Prior to receiving a second license, the individual will have to attend the hunter's safety course, if so required by law. Another item we are working on will require the State Acquisition & Restoration Council to file a report with the legislature on a bi-annual basis. The report will include a list of performance measures that will allow interested parties to more easily see the accomplishments or poor performances by state agencies and water management districts in managing publicly owned lands for multi-use. The goal is to have these agencies do a better job of allowing appropriate multi-use on public-owned lands, and to make sure that sportsmen's activities are given the priority that they deserve.

In the next edition of this report, I will include a comprehensive list of bills that have been filed to date that sportsmen may be interested in. I will also report on our trip to the NASC annual meeting, and perhaps by then I will have a deer story or two to tell. Until then, stay safe and we wish you success in the field or on the water!