



Spring 2016

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SIERRA CLUB

The Pelican

Sierra Club

Florida

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SIERRA CLUB

Sierra Fights Frack Attack

Club joins Florida counties, cities and citizens to stand ground in political battle

Hundreds of Sierra Club members and activists from around the state descended on Tallahassee on January 20 to participate in the largest anti-fracking rally in the state's history. With the theme Reclaiming Florida's Future, citizens converged outside the Capitol with signs and demands to ban the harmful practice of fracking and support clean energy alternatives.

The actions, phone calls and e-mails of our many members and supporters were acknowledged when Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Tom Lee put the brakes on Senate bill SB318 which would regulate the environmentally devastating drilling practice and preempt local ordinances.

Before a vote was called in his committee, Lee demanded an accounting by FDEP on the science behind the fracking process, which involves the injection of mass quantities of water along with unknown chemicals and sand under immense pressure to fracture underground rock formations —



Protestors gathered at the State Capitol on January 20 to urge legislators to oppose bills that would allow fracking and support Obama's Clean Power Plan./Photos by Beverly Griffiths



Jasmina Forcan from Clearwater joined ralliers.

fragile limestone, in Florida's case — to release oil and gas. The practice has potentially harmful effects on human health and the environment, particularly water supplies where chemicals used in the process have contaminated wells and drinking water supplies.

More than 65 Florida counties and cities have passed ordinances banning or opposing fracking, and the number is growing.

As this newsletter went to print, the outcome of this bill was uncertain. But it has certainly been one of the most important environmental bills of the 2016 session. Sierra would like to thank our many partners who played such a vital role in coordinating the effort to halt this legislation, including the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Physicians for Social Responsibility,

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From the CHAIR

By Mark Walters



Editor's Note: Sierra Club Florida has a new chair — Mark Walters from Miami Group. Here is the first of his From the Chair columns.

It is an honor for me to be serving as the new chapter chair of Sierra Club Florida. I am part of a team of talented and dedicated volunteers and staff who are here to provide support for all of our volunteers as they engage Floridians to explore, enjoy and protect our natural places here in the Sunshine State.

I have been a Sierra Club volunteer the past 18 years working with youth in the Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) and local outdoors programs around Miami. I also serve nationally on the Sierra Club Outdoors Leadership Team, the Activity Program Safety Team and Diversity Steering Committee.

It is quite a significant undertaking to serve as the chapter chair, considering all of the challenges we are facing and the outright assault on our natural habitats and wildlife that our representatives in Tallahassee seem hell-bent on perpetuating.

I see lots of battles ahead. But I am following in the footsteps of outgoing chair Debbie Matthews, in working to strengthen the chapter so we are better positioned to take on all of those chal-

lenges from Everglades restoration and protection to our transition to clean energy, even as the U.S. Supreme Court seems to be siding with the forces that want to impede these necessary changes.

We need to continue our fight to ensure that the will of Florida's voters is respected by allocating Amendment 1 funding as we desired — for land conservation — so that wildlife and habitat are protected. We need to protect Florida black bears, halt the down-listing of the West Indian manatee, and protect our state parks from the practices of cattle grazing, mining, drilling and hunting. We must oppose these practices and engage all Floridians to meet these challenges head on.

Our strength is the thousands of Florida Sierra Club volunteers and supporters who are energized and engaged to protect our natural environment. And as Sierrans, we have millions more like-minded activists across the country engaged in similar fights.

As chapter chair I will do all I can to help position Sierra Club Florida to win all of those battles ahead. I encourage you to join me and become active in the year ahead.

Help Sierra Fight the Good Fight

Sierra Club members should be watching their mail during March when the Florida Chapter's annual fundraising appeal letter will arrive. Please consider donating to this once-a-year solicitation. The funds collected will help the Florida chapter and our 16 groups in the fight to protect, conserve and restore our state's special places and wildlife. **Every dollar you give to the Florida Chapter in March will be spent right here in Florida.**

With your donations, we promise to fight these threats:

- Florida black bear hunting and down-listing protections for West Indian manatees.
- Fracking and drilling for oil and gas as well as drilling off of Florida's coast.
- Unfettered suburban sprawl due to diminished regu-

lation and less planning coordination.

Your money will help us as we continue to be watchdogs for Florida's fragile environment through hiring legislative advocates in Tallahassee and continuing legal efforts to challenge harmful permitting and legislation that weaken environmental protections and much more.

Please fill out the contribution form in the appeal letter or send your contribution checks made out to **Sierra Club Florida Chapter** and mail to Sierra Club, 1990 Central Ave., St. Petersburg, FL 33712. To pay with a credit card, please call Chapter Treasurer Tom Larson at (904) 247-1876.

Contributions to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our advocacy and lobbying efforts.

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Marcia Biggs, Editor

The Pelican is published by Sierra Club Florida and mailed to Sierra Club Florida members. Annual membership dues include \$1 for the Pelican newsletter. Address all inquiries to Sierra Club Florida, 1990 Central Avenue, St. Petersburg, Florida 33712 or e-mail marcia.biggs@florida.sierraclub.org

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Sabal Trail Pipeline Threatens Central Florida

Sierra Club Florida and the Suwannee-St. Johns (SSJ) Sierra Club group are fighting the proposed route of the Sabal Trail pipeline that would wind from Alabama through southwest Georgia to Central Florida, bringing 1 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas to just south of Orlando in Osceola County. From there it would also transport gas to Florida Power & Light's Riviera Beach and Port Everglades plants, crossing 13 counties and 255 miles in Florida.

The pipeline route would not only threaten the sensitive karst rock and Floridan aquifer that lie beneath the ground, but would also travel through the fragile Green Swamp and within a half-mile of two springs and numerous sinkholes.

Last October, the Environmental Protection Agency asked the pipeline's builder, Spectra Energy, to reroute the project to avoid more than 1,000 acres of wetlands and conservation areas. But just two months later, the EPA reversed its decision. Another blow came in February, when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved a permit for the project.

SSJ Chair Maryvonne Devensky has been working diligently with Johanna de Graffenreid of Gulf Restoration Net-



Proposed route of pipeline in Florida

work to halt the Florida project. “Karst is like Swiss cheese,” says Devensky. “It doesn’t take an expert to know building a pipeline through it is dangerous.”

Sierra members attended the Suwannee County Board of Commissioners meeting, along with concerned residents, farmers, business people and members of Gulf Restoration Network and WWALS Watershed Coalition. They spoke of threats to the Suwannee River and various springs in the area; fragility of the karst geological system; impacts on natural areas, water resources, and road systems; and disrespect for private property rights. Not a single person spoke in favor of the pipeline.

Soon after, a public meeting attracted dozens of community members participated.

“An expert on karst geology showed

us maps of sinkholes adjacent to the proposed pipeline route,” said Devensky. “He then took a moment and pointed out the errors included in Sabal Trail’s permit. On a hike following the wooden pipeline markers we saw, first-hand, the active sinkholes found directly next to this highly pressurized fracked gas pipeline route.”

There are multiple state and local permits still outstanding, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers’ permits, she says, and the EPA could still intervene, among other methods of opposition. Sierra Florida plans to take action and continue outreach along the route, ensuring that landowners are aware of the hazards this pipeline poses to their property, safety and drinking water.

In February, a hike with the Suwannee County BOCC and concerned residents took place at Suwannee River State Park at the location where the Sabal Trail pipeline is supposed to go under the river. “We must ensure that our elected officials know the truth about Sabal Trail,” says Devensky.

Anyone wishing to help with the pipeline campaign can contact maryvonne.deven@gmail.com. Signatures are needed on Gulf Restoration Network's petition to Congress opposing Sabal Trail at healthygulf.org

Alachua County Activists Take on Major Developer

If you fight sprawl in Florida, this story is about you.

A riveting documentary series of podcasts (audio recordings) tells the real-life story of how citizen activists in rural Florida engage in a David and Goliath fight to save the character and quality of their community against development.

Alachua County in North Central Florida is home to Plum Creek, about 65,000 acres of completely undeveloped land on the eastern side of the county. Plum Creek’s owner, the powerful Plum Creek Timber Company, aims to change the county's comprehensive plan to win re-zoning approval

from county commission.

We ran out of space in this issue of the Pelican, so look for the recap of the two-year saga in the Summer issue. In the meantime, you can listen to the podcasts to follow the many twists and turns in this plot by going to <http://ssjsierra.org/conservation/plumpudding/>

Will Plum Creek’s proposed change to the county’s growth plan pass through county commission or get voted down?

Follow along as citizens, lawyers, community leaders and public officials challenge the developer in his bid to beat the toughest environmental regulations in Florida.

Suncoast Group is 'Ready for 100'

The Suncoast Group of Sierra Florida has been awarded one of five Forward Fund Grants by the Sierra Club Foundation. The grant will go toward Sierra Club's Ready for 100 campaign which aims to recruit mayors from 100 cities to pledge a goal of 100% clean energy by the year 2050.

The mayor of the city of St. Petersburg, Rick Kriseman, has signed a Declaration of Local Leadership for

100% Clean Energy Communities. The Suncoast group will work with St. Petersburg to develop a blueprint of strategies for reaching the

city's clean energy goals and helping the city to achieve STAR Community status. STAR (Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating) is a nationally-recognized community sustainability rating system.

As part of the Ready for 100 campaign, Suncoast Sierra Club will work with the city, business leaders, property owners, universities and other local organizations to make commitments and execute implementation steps toward 100% renewable energy (RE).

Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club, plans to help kick off the campaign on March 22 at the Sierra Club regional office, a Net Zero building located near downtown St. Petersburg.



Suncoast Sierra Group leaders, led by chair Lisa Hinton (holding Sierra Club sign) get Ready for 100 at the Club's Net Zero office near downtown St. Petersburg.

/Photo by Marcia Biggs

Fracking

ReThink Energy Florida, Floridians Against Fracking and so many others.

We are grateful for our

many members and volunteer leaders who take action regularly through phone banking, tabling events, meeting with local and state boards and officials, organizing rallies and

bus trips to Tallahassee, and so much more. Many Sierra members who attended the January 20 rally took time to visit with more than 90 representatives, senators and aides

to educate them on the environmental issues.

We expect Florida's leaders to protect and conserve our state's land, water and air, and preserve natural habitat.

Pathway to 100% Renewable Energy by 2015

1. Phase out fossil fuels: Lignite (2035), coal (2045), oil/gas (2050)
2. Phase out nuclear power (2050)
3. Reduce energy demand 15%
4. Massively increase use of renewable energy
5. Electrify transport and heating demand
6. Leverage storage, smart grids, energy imports/exports and DSM for 24/7 renewable grid

Brune noted that St. Petersburg's commitment is especially important in light of the city's geographic location on the Gulf Coast of Florida: "It's no secret that coastal cities are some of the most vulnerable to climate change," said Brune. "It's not only smart that St. Petersburg is looking to become a 100% renewable city, it's a matter of survival."

The Suncoast executive committee, chaired by Lisa Hinton, will coordinate with national Sierra Club staff to work on the campaign. The other cities receiving Forward Fund grants are Cleveland; Pueblo, Colo; Arlington/Alexandria; and Boise.

Volusia-Flagler Group Revitalized, Back in Action

By Linda Carlton

The Volusia-Flagler Group is proud to report that we are in the process of reorganizing and now have regular bi-monthly open meetings featuring guest speakers and local topics of interest.

Community awareness of our group has been greatly increased due to our involvement in Earth Day in Ormond Beach, Daytona Beach's Manatee Festival, Ponce Preserves the Planet at Ponce Inlet, and our partnerships with local organizations.

We will be working with the Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach and the H2O Project to address the needs of local waterways, particularly St. Johns River, Volusia Blue Spring and Indian River Lagoon, which has been suffering from algal blooms, die-offs of dolphins, manatees and pelicans. Our key focus in 2016 will be the input of nutrients in our local water bodies.

One of our recent accomplishments was to succeed in eliminating dog hunting in the Deep Creek Preserve. Along with the Audubon Society and Native



Sierra members on Daytona Beach

Plant Society, we went before the Volusia County Council on two separate occasions to bring to light the damage to the environment by allowing dogs to run deer in our preserve. An article from our group which was published in the Daytona Beach News Journal helped our County officials realize that we "treehuggers" make up a huge part of their constituency and shortly after the article was published they refused to reissue the dog hunting club's permit.

Due to the tireless efforts of Barbara Herrin, the Volusia-Flagler Sierra Club alone has legal standing in the fight

against Farmton in southern Volusia County. We are challenging the permitting to establish this proposed community of 23,000 homes in a wetland mitigation bank and aquifer recharge zone. In addition to all the environmental damage this community threatens, evidence points to the fact that at least one Florida panther resides in this area.

We live in an amazing area with springs, beaches, forests, and wildlife, all of which are fragile and require our action to preserve. Please join us to find like minds, learn about the local area, and help us preserve the beauty of our special part of Florida. Check our Meetup page to get updates on our outings.

Our meetings are held on the third Tuesday bimonthly (March 15 and May 17) at 7 pm in University of Central Florida Building 150 on the Daytona Beach State College Campus. Please follow us on Facebook and Meetup.com (Volusia-Flagler Sierra Club) for all our upcoming events. Hope to see fellow Sierrans that live in our area soon!

Last June, more than 250 concerned citizens from across the state came together for Florida Sierra Club's Big Sugar Summit. Mark your calendars for June 4, 2016, because we are doing it again with Big Sugar Summit 2. This follow-up to the highly successful first Summit will be held once again at Embassy Suites in West Palm Beach. Attendees can expect to hear from some of the state's leading experts in Everglades restoration, agriculture, land and water conservation, fertilizer pollution, and more. Be sure to subscribe to www.sierraclubfloridanews.org to find updates on tickets, lodging and speakers.

Don't miss it!

BIG SUGAR SUMMIT #2

JUNE 4, 2016

EMBASSY SUITES, WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

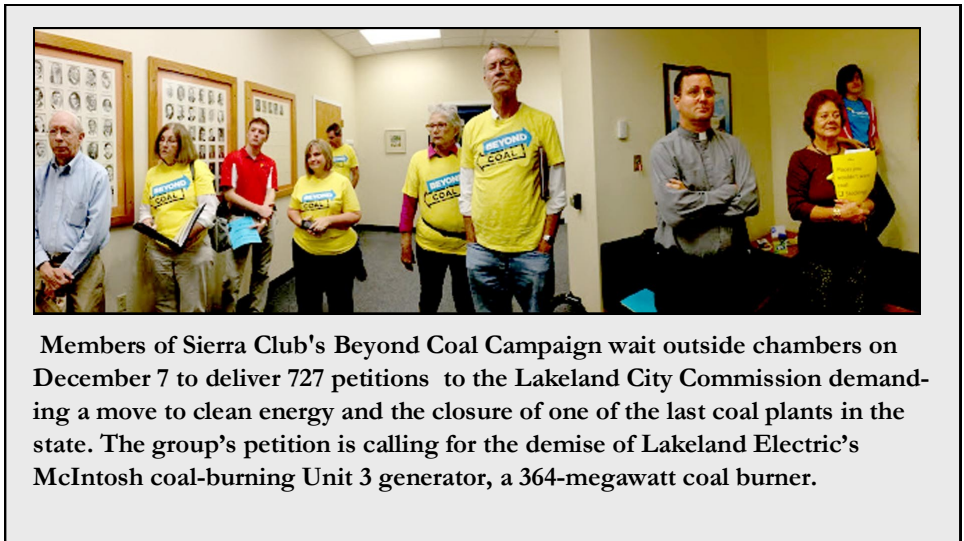
CONTACT CRIS.COSTELLO@SIERRACLUB.ORG FOR INFO

Around the State ...

The **Tri-County Working Group** of the Suwannee-St. Johns group is moving at full steam showing presentations of **Water Works: Stand Up and Act Now** at libraries, churches and meetings across North Central Florida. The presentation covers the value and economics of water in the Tri-County region (Citrus, Levy and Marion counties) and how human impacts have taken a toll. Viewers are encouraged to take action to protect and conserve water resources and water quality. Upcoming programs will be held in Dunellon on March 15, Beverly Hills on March 19, Ocala on March 24 and March 26, and in Ocklawaha on April 2 and April 6. Citizens in Marion, Citrus and Levy counties are invited to learn more about the Tri-County Group, which meets monthly. Contact Gary Green [\(352\) 817- 8077](tel:352-817-8077) or garryegreen@centurylink.net for more information.

The newly formed Sierra Club **Adventure Coast Committee** in Hernando County (Suncoast Group) meets to discuss local environmental issues on the first Thursday of each month at the Northwood Building, 5331 Commercial Way, in Spring Hill. For more information, call (352) 277-3330 or e-mail sierraadventurecoastcc@gmail.com

The **Broward Sierra Club** and more than a dozen businesses and environmental organizations joined Miami Waterkeepers and the Center for Biological Diversity in demanding that the Army Corps of Engineers reevaluate its Port Everglades expansion plan in light of the impacts to Miami's reef during recent port construction. The groups detailed the Corps' multiple failures to protect coral reef resources during the Port of Miami Deep Dredge Project when hun-



dreds of acres of corals were damaged. Since receiving this document the Corps was forced to postpone the dredging of Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale.

Loxahatchee Group held a fundraiser for Briger Forest in north Palm Beach County. Over \$1,500 was raised to work in collaboration with other organizations to protect one of the last remaining natural areas in southeastern Florida. Briger Forest is a unique pine and scrub habitat that is home to wood storks, bald eagles, and gopher tortoises. **Another good deed:** The Loxy group received permission from the City of Lantana and the Florida Department of Agriculture to rescue over 200 endangered plants from the future site of the new Lantana athletic sports complex. The rescued plants were given to Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management and the City of Boynton Beach for distribution in natural areas and parks.

Sierra Club Florida is reactivating our **Manatee Coalition** in light of a recent announcement that the U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service has proposed downlisting the West Indian manatee from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Before any reclassification proceeds in Florida, there is need for a credible plan for further reducing mortality and preserving/enhancing warm-water habitat availability and establishing an updated Recovery Plan with successive goals. If you are interested in joining our Manatee Coalition, please contact Florida Chapter Conservation Chair Tom Larson at Tom.Larson@florida.sierraclub.org; or call (904) 247-1876.

Calusa Group notched a victory when the Cape Coral City Commission recently passed a fracking ban and seismic airgun blasting resolution. Kudos to **John and Ruth Scott**, who joined Oceana's Erin Handy, in convincing city officials these bans were the right thing to do. The recently reorganized Calusa Group encourages residents of Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties to check out the group's upcoming activities on Meetup.com or at <http://www.sierraclub.org/florida/calusa>

2015 Sierra Florida Chapter Awards

Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 Florida Chapter Sierra Club Awards. They are as follows:

Julianne Mammana, Northeast Florida Group - Whooping Crane Award Julianne was honored for her work as newsletter editor for the group.

Jessica Newman, Suwannee St. Johns Group - Whooping Crane Award Jessica was honored for her work as newsletter editor for the group.

Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, Suwannee St. Johns Group - Whooping Crane Award Merrilee was recognized for her dedication to public education and environmental activism in North Central Florida on issues ranging from ground and surface water to fracking, Amendment 1, and others. She is co-founder of Our Santa Fe River, Inc.

Tracy Joinson, Loxahatchee Group - Whooping Crane Award Tracy was recognized for her efforts promoting the Sierra Club to students at Palm Beach State College where she works, for her volunteer tabling and her work on the group newsletter and social media outlets.

Corky Crowley, Tampa Bay Group - Whooping Crane Award After 19 years of laying out the Tampa Bay Group's newsletter, Corky Crowley has become a virtually indispensable institution.

Pamela Jo Hatley, Tampa Bay Group - Red Howell Legal Services Award Attorney Pamela Jo has been an outstanding advocate and fearless voice in defense of justice and due process for environmental issues in Hillsborough County. Appointed in 2012 to the Economic Prosperity Stakeholder Commission, she was the only vote that stood up against their



report and recommendations that led to the erosion of wetland protection, undermined community plans and reduced citizen oversight of development plans in Hillsborough County. Pamela Jo also took on a case resisting the development of a small parcel set aside as preserved wetlands and continues to fight this exceptional case pro bono.

Bill Armstrong, Northeast Group - Otter Award For several years, Bill has been one of the rocks of the Northeast outings program. He is an accomplished and experienced outings leader and volunteer. He helped organize and execute a successful National Outings training program and is taking over the leadership of the group outings program.

Mike Raff, Tampa Bay Group - Otter Award Since 2007, Mike led 276 outings in the Tampa Bay region at over 62 different locations. His outings included hiking, canoeing, kayaking and biking. He was always ready to share the outdoors with those who attended his outings. One thing he almost always did on outings was to stop and read a poem. Mike died suddenly on August 22, just after completing a hike.

Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner, Suwannee St. Johns Group - Manatee Award Since joining Sierra Club in 2002, Scott and Sherry have been an integral part of SSJ excom and func-

tions. They are active in organizing programs, events and outreach, and Scott has been the SSJ Political Chair for many years. Scott and Sherry have now taken the lead on fighting the proposed Plum Creek development in Alachua County. They are the dynamic duo of SSJ.

Dr. Rick Garrity, Tampa Bay - Osprey Award In 2015, Dr. Rick Garrity retired from service as Director of the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission (EPC). For 15 years, Dr. Garrity tirelessly protected the wetlands, watersheds, air and water of Hillsborough County in spite of fierce political opposition, especially from the development community. His legacy includes an impressive roster of sites untouched by development as well as regulations that will protect the environment for years to come.

Dave Couret, Central Florida Group - Pine Tree Award Dave was honored for his dedication to the group's tabling efforts and his positive attitude. Dave has been instrumental in helping Sierra Club and the local CWA (Communication Workers of America) Union forge a blue-green relationship.

Dave Varrieur, Tampa Bay Group - Sand Dollar Award As head of the "Stash Your Cans" program, Dave has helped raise more than \$100,000 for the Tampa Bay Group over the last 24 years! The volunteer program works to recycle bottles, cans and plastics at stadium games for the Tampa Sports Authority.

Jim Desmartin, Central Florida Group - Pine Tree Award Jim was recognized for his service as treasurer of the Orlando ICO (Inspiring Connections Outdoors - formerly Inner City Outings) group for over 5 years.

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'Save Our Parks' Draws Hundreds Across State

Sierra members and supporters gathered at 11 state parks across Florida on February 13 to protest proposed threats to turn Florida state parks into profit centers. Florida Sierra's *Have a Heart, Save Our Parks* Day of Action was a response to proposals by Florida Department of Environmental Protection to open state parks to such activities as cattle grazing, hunting and logging to help make them self-sufficient.

A few weeks earlier on January 23, more than 300 people from various organizations including Sierra Club marched in downtown Gainesville to protest the same measures that could impair the environment of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park.

Sierra Club believes such activities go against the primary purpose of state parks: To preserve Florida's natural environment, resources and wildlife, in addition to providing space for passive recreation such as hiking and bird-watching.

Most events hosted speakers and encouraged attendees to



Sierra Florida Chapter Director Frank Jackalone speaks to a crowd at Hillsborough River State Park in Tampa./Photo by Gary Gibbons

contact their legislators to tell them to oppose HB 1075/SB 1290.