



SIERRA
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Calusa Digest



VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 4

SERVING SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

APRIL, 2000

Index

Fisheating Update	1
Outings News	2
Outings	2
Urban Growth Myths	2
Membership Meeting	3
Believe it or Not	3
Executive Committee	3
Dry Tortugas Preserve	4
Bad News from Tallahassee	4
Ban on Pesticides in California	4
Reclaimed Phosphate Land Meeting	5
Bush's Push	5
Earth Day	6

FISHEATING UPDATE

Remember the old saying...It ain't over 'til it's over. That has been the "fisheating" tale for more than ten years. Now Save Our Creeks has received a letter with a quit claim deed along with instructions to sign over the SOC right of way to the state. That would effectively stop all camping in the corridor since the Fish and Wildlife allows no overnight parking on the Main street right of way or at the campground. How about that for our hard fought for and won (we thought) public access. Meanwhile we are attending seemingly endless Glades county commission meetings to watch Lykes attorney accompanied by Eva Armstrong, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) head of land acquisition, go through plat after plat of dedicated rights of way asking that all be vacated (There are over 2,000 acres of right of way in the conservation easement lands). There have been numbers of ordinary folks (lacking high priced lawyers) who own lots scattered through out those lands in attendance. It is noticeable that there are fewer of those plain folk at each meeting. Dragging things out over long periods is a time-honored way that developers use to reduce public opposition during environmental permitting challenges and it seems to be working in Glades county commission hearings as well.

The commission is struggling with the tradition of giving the mega corporate power, Lykes, (the corporation that owns over 60% of Glades county) whatever it wishes versus requiring appropriate concessions for ordinary citizens and protecting the rich historical heritage of the county represented by the homestead of the Gaskins family whose patriarch made the mistake of depending on a handshake deal made with the late Charles Lykes, Sr. Glades County needs lands for schools, fire stations, libraries, parks and other public areas. It would not seem unreasonable for Lykes and or the state of Florida to try to make some equitable arrangement that would accommodate the needs of private land owners caught in this untenable situation and the public needs of one of the poorest counties in the state. To make the situation even harder to stomach it appears that (apparently) some "favored" owners of hunting lodges are being accommodated even so far as to infringement on the creek corridor. Maybe that is "business as usual" but surely it isn't ethical or (as my mom used to say) That's just not nice! It might be noted, as well, that in the settlement giving Lykes about 87% of fee simple value for conservation

(continued on p. 6)

Executive Board Meeting

First Monday of each month

NEXT MEETING
MONDAY APRIL 3, 2000
7:00 P.M.

EVERYONE WELCOME!
CALL ELLEN PETERSON
992-5455
FOR DIRECTIONS

OUTINGS NEWS

Our Calusa outings program continues to grow. The bike and hike at Golden Gate Estates South, led by Charles Holmes, was a good workout not to be missed.

The Hickey's Creek hike wound through some beautiful landscapes, and we spotted four scrub jays. We eventually made it to the creek, and then returned to the trailhead. The presence of a naturalist, native plant expert and birder made the hike most enjoyable for the rest of us.

The Sanibel hike, again led by Charles Holmes, took us to the heart of the island and some little known territory.

Although I couldn't experience it firsthand, I understand that the food and camaraderie on the women's only campout at Collier-Seminole State Park was excellent.

If you haven't enjoyed one of our outings recently, come out, meet some fellow members, and enjoy the outdoors with us!

OUTINGS

Apr 1 (Sat) CREW Marsh Trail System Hike. 10:30 am. Hike is about 5 miles. Meet at parking lot at entrance to property. From I-75, take exit 19 and travel east for approximately 18 miles. Entrance is on right. From state road 82, travel east to C.R. 850 (Corkscrew Rd) and turn right. Entrance is about 1.5 miles on left. Bring a snack and water, and be prepared for mosquitoes. This

is beautiful property on the headwaters of the Corkscrew Swamp. Call Lynn Livingston (941) 269-6645 for details.

Apr 7-10 Fisheating Creek Kayak/Canoe Camp. We'll meet Friday at the Fisheating Creek Campground off US 27 just north of SR 29 at 3pm. We'll camp by boat on the Fisheating Creek for three nights. Trip will be planned so that those who can't stay Sunday night can return to put-in spon on Sunday. Advance reservations are required and all camping gear must be brought by each person. One canoe may be available for those who don't have their own. For details and reservation, call Lynn at 269-6645.

Apr 15 (Sat) Caloosahatchee Regional Park Hike. 10:30 am. Come experience the beauty of this brand new park. We'll hike about 4 easy miles on well maintained trails, including views of the Caloosahatchee river. Meet at the main parking lot for the **South** park. Take exit 26 (highway 78) off I-75 and go east. The park entrance is about 7 miles past highway 31, on the south side. From the east, take highway 78 or 80 to Alva and go about 4 miles farther west. Entrance is on the left. There is a \$3 county parking fee. Call Lynn Livingston at 269-6645.

Apr 26 (Wed) Monthly Membership Meeting. 7 pm at FGCU. Refreshments will be served during our social hour. An environmental program will follow at 7:30 pm. Come meet your fellow members, officers and enjoy the program. The meeting is in bldg. 3, room 102. Please park in Lot #2. FGCU is just east of exit 19 off I-75. Turn left at the sign to FGCU just past

the outlet mall. Go down the road a mile or so and turn right at the light toward FGCU. Turn left at the stop and lot 2 is the first parking lot on the right.

Apr 29 (Sat) Beginning Kayak Lesson - A Women Only Group class. This class is located at Captiva Kayak Co. on Captiva Island. The cost for this class is \$25.00, which includes a bag lunch and a two hour lesson. Come join the fun and learn how to Kayak! Call Kris Decker, outings leader for details and to reserve a spot at 941-275-7831.

May 5-7 (Fri-Sun) Myakka State Park Alligator Mating Season Weekend. We will arrive the evening of the 5th for this special Mother & Daughter outing. Join us for car camping, hiking & camaraderie. Be prepared for some excitement with the gators! Call Julia Habel (941) 432-0111 or Kris Decker (941) 275-7831 for particulars.

URBAN GROWTH MYTHS

(See Myths 1-4 in the February issue of Calusa Digest)

Myth 5: If we try to limit growth, housing prices will shoot up. Sounds logical, but it isn't so. A 1992 study of 14 California cities, half with strong growth controls, half with none, showed no difference in average housing prices. Some of the cities with strong growth controls had the most affordable housing, because they had active low-cost housing programs. Fodor says the important factor in housing affordability is not so much house cost as income level, so development that provides mainly low-paying retail jobs makes housing unaffordable.

(continued on page 5)

CALUSA GROUP MEMBERSHIP MEETING

April 26, 2000

The April general membership meeting will be held at FGCU on April 26 at 7:00 p.m. Since January, when the Calusa Group started having general membership meetings, they have been well attended, with some very interesting topics, which are very pertinent to our own southwest Florida environment.

This month's program will feature **John Kesida**, Lee County Environmental Educator, who will speak on Lee County Parks and Greenways. John is a fantastic speaker and motivator, so be sure to come and hear this program.

In addition, refreshments will be served as usual, and this is a great time to meet your fellow Sierra Club members. We have had over a 20% growth in membership in the Calusa Group over the past year. This is encouraging and indicates a lot of you care about the environment.

There will be an outings table where you can meet the group outings leaders, and get more information on upcoming events.

The meeting is in bldg. 3, room 102. Please park in Lot #2. FGCU is just east of exit 19 off I-75. Turn left at the sign to FGCU just past the outlet mall. Go down the road a mile or so and turn right at the light toward FGCU. Turn left at the stop and lot 2 is the first parking lot on the right. See you there.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Bonita Springs developers and prominent business men set up as sponsors of a local YMCA searching for appropriate land approached the county about a parcel located in the "density reduction groundwater recharge" area. They were told that the parcel was NOT zoned for and could not be used for commercial, non profit building. They, after receiving this information, then purchased the land and announced by way of a press conference the great establishment of the new YMCA on the land. SHADES OF THE UNIVERSITY.. It appears that the Bonita Utilities the site (and one of the sponsors) of the widely heralded new YMCA arrival announcement have found a way to circumvent the Lee County Comprehensive Plan. We know if the commission could not face up

to the water intensive use of golf courses in our ground water storage areas they will hardly be able to withstand the onslaught of the child and youth oriented Christian Association sponsors.

Shame on the community leaders involved in this blatant use of such a fine organization to again "bust" our county's feeble attempts to protect our water supply and especially shame on the town council candidate who is a leader on the Bonita Utility water board.

The Calusa Group and EPEC demonstrated against this use of the land and pointed out that, though the YMCA is a wonderful project, it does not belong in the ground water recharge area.

This is nothing more than "a foot in the door" effort to open this area for further development.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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<http://www.sierraclub.org/chapters/fl/calusa/index.htm>

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Support Now Critical for Proposed Dry Tortugas Ecological Reserve

PUBLIC HEARINGS IN SOUTHERN FLORIDA DURING APRIL, MAY, AND JUNE

*The Sierra Club fully supports a Dry Tortugas Ecological Reserve.
The benefits to the environment are expected to be tremendous.*

But getting the reserve designated is going to take a fight.

Approval of the ecological reserve is going to be a complex process. The proposed Tortugas North reserve, encompassing approximately 125 square nautical miles, overlies portions of the Dry Tortugas National Park, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, state of Florida waters, and federal waters. The proposed Tortugas South reserve, which at 60 square miles is about half the size of the northern portion, lies entirely within federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. And every one of those 4 agencies needs to give its okay for the reserve to become a full reality.

The southern part of the reserve includes a very important spawning site known as Riley's Hump, where many fish aggregate in large numbers to reproduce. Protecting this spawning site year-round is critical to rebuilding many depleted reef fish species. But that won't happen unless we overcome the opposition of the fishers that would rather target and take those spawning fish than allow them to reproduce and replenish our overfished stocks.

The Gulf of Mexico Council is currently preparing an amendment to its Reef Fish Fisheries Management Plan to address the proposed boundaries. The boundary alternatives are also being placed into a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for the proposed reserve, to be released for public comment by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in Spring 2000. The DSEIS will describe the purpose of the ecological reserve, the affected environment, the natural resources at stake, the boundary alternatives, and the potential impacts of each alternative on the environment and human activities.

Public hearings are being scheduled in April, May and June in the following Florida cities - Miami, Marathon, Key West, St. Petersburg, and Naples, as well as in Washington D.C. Written comment will also be considered in the final agency decisions regarding the reserve's designation. Public comment, written or given at a hearing, will have a heavy influence on whether the proposed reserve becomes a reality.

We need YOUR help in support of a Dry Tortugas Ecological Reserve

To get involved, obtain a Campaign Action Kit, get meeting dates and times, join the List Serve, or be notified of pre-hearing events, contact

Florida CoralCom / Coral Reefs and Habitats Committee
Sierra Club Florida Chapter
P.O. Box 490438 / Miami, FL 33149
(305) 285-1906 / e-mail: coralman@earthlink.net

BAD NEWS FROM TALLAHASSEE

Presently there is a bill being presented that will deprive citizens of their access to many of Florida's lakes, rivers, and streams. It will give land owners along the banks the ownership of what we know as State Submerged Lands. They will then be able to close access to many areas where we now boat, fish, canoe and swim. This bill reappears in some form every year.

There's yet another that will effectively deprive us of our right to use the Administrative hearing challenge procedure as well as environmental lawsuits. It will make the loser in any suit pay all of the legal costs of the winner. Call and write your legislators Burt Saunders, Carole Green, Lisa Carlton, Joe Spratt, and Luis Rojas, and ask that they not let these kinds of bills pass in either the house and senate.

CALIFORNIA TOWN BANS PESTICIDES ON CITY PROPERTIES

Anyone want to try writing an ordinance like this for Lee county?

By a unanimous vote, the Arcata City Council passed an ordinance to eliminate use of pesticides on all properties owned or managed by the city. The ordinance is unique among California cities in that it creates an outright ban on all pesticide use, rather than a phased reduction. For the past 15 years, Arcata, a town of 16,000 on the Northern California coast, has had an informal ban on pesticides, but this policy was made official in February of this year.

IS THERE WILDLIFE VALUE IN RECLAIMED PHOSPHATE LAND?

EverGreen's guest speaker is Henry Mushinsky, biologist and professor at USF in Tampa. He and his students have conducted a series of tests over the past several years to determine how wildlife fares on reclaimed land - after phosphate mining. The first of his studies has been printed and is the comprehensive: "Habitat Factors Influencing the Distribution of Small Vertebrates on Unmined and Phosphate-mined Uplands in Central Florida."

Dr. Mushinsky is a member of the Gopher Tortoise Council and a facilitator of the Frog Listening Network.

April 6th, a Thursday, 7pm at Edison Community College, Punta Gorda campus on Airport Road; in the Theatre.

From I-75, South of Punta Gorda: Exit 27 Tucker's Grade which is less than a half mile from 41 (Tamiami Trail). Turn right on Tamiami and go north 5.5 miles. Airport Road is 1/2 mile after the light at Aqui Esta. Turn right on Airport Rd and go 1.7 miles (pass 2 stop streets). The campus is on the left.

This program is brought to you by EverGreen (an environmental organization out of Charlotte County now in its tenth year; EverGreen publishes The Pine Cone.) with the following co-sponsors:

Sierra Club, Calusa Group, Shell Creek Lodge, People For Trees, Florida Native Plants, HAIRLINES, Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida, Mamma Nunzia's Ristorante, A&A Master Automotive, Serenoa Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Lemon Bay Conservancy, Sun Herald Newspapers, Creative Business, Peace River Audubon, The Green Garden Organic Growers, Sarasota Herald Tribune

For further information contact: Louise Raterman, P.O. Box 3859, Port Charlotte, FL 33949, (941) 629-8833, lraterman@hotmail.com

BUSH'S PUSH

If you were not able to attend the recent public hearing held in Ft. Myers by the Department of Community Affairs head Steven Seibert please watch your paper for information on efforts to weaken Florida's growth management laws. Of course there were many more advocates for strengthening those laws and retaining the Regional Planning Councils but the Governor's plan to return growth management to the local level seems to be advancing. This push to rewrite our landmark law is biased says Tom Pelham who was the secretary of DCA under our Former Republican Governor Bob Martinez. He agrees with The PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY who state that "We believe this an absolute agenda that is anti growth management and pro-development." Peer will make more information available on these plans to rewrite the growth management laws. If you are interested and on the web the address is <http://www.peer.org>.

The complex survey circulated by Siebert has had over 3000 responses mostly (admitted by Siebert) from developers and growth management groups rather than from ordinary citizens.

(continued from page 2)

URBAN GROWTH MYTHS

Myth 6: Environmental protection hurts the economy. According to a Bank of America study the economies of states with high environmental standards grew consistently faster than those with weak regulations. The Institute of Southern Studies ranked all states according to 20 indicators of economic prosperity (gold) and environmental health (green) and found that they rise and fall together. Vermont ranked 3rd on the gold scale and first on the green, while Louisiana ranked 50th on both.

Myth 7: Growth is inevitable. There are constitutional limits to the ability of any community to put walls around itself. But dozens of municipalities have capped their population size or rate of growth by legal regulations based on real environmental limits and the real costs of growth to the community.

Myth 8: If you don't like growth, you're a NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) or an ANTI (against everything) or a gangplank-puller (right after you get aboard). These accusations are meant more to shut people up than to examine their real motives. Says Fodor, "A NIMBY is more likely to be someone who cares enough about the future of his or her community to get out and protect it."

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(continued from p. 1)
easements that allow the placement of 20 ecotourism lodges (or farmsteads) of 20 acres each which can be sold if Lykes so desires (to any hotel chain or whoever) and also allows the placement of 30 foot wide roads to those lodges with electric lines along side to furnish needed power And to add insult to injury Web Plowing (a method of dragging a long blade about 6 inches to a foot under ground behind a big, big tractor. This kills everything but grass) is allowed in pristine areas never before touched by man. How's that for conservation easement?

And, guess what. Lykes was charged by the agreement with constructing the fence around the Creek Corridor (the area surrounding the creek proper that was bought, fee simple (not a

conservation easement). They have cleared a swath that from the air looks to be as wide as U.S. 27. The swath cuts right through cypress domes that seem obviously to be a part of state submerged lands. This to build a fence? It looks like it is being done to make the corridor accessible from many points rather than just the four listed in the settlement...; Shouldn't somebody write to the governor? We need a little oversight of this whole deal wouldn't you say?

And if you write don't forget to thank the Nature Conservancy who announced in their latest newsletter that the State of Florida and the Nature Conservancy cooperated to save Fisheating Creek. Might also ask the Conservancy how much they were paid for brokering the deal. Address of the Governor is simply The Capitol, Tallahassee 32399 001, email jeb@gov.com

Earth Day, April 22

Come to the Nature Center
for

The MARS* Festival

10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

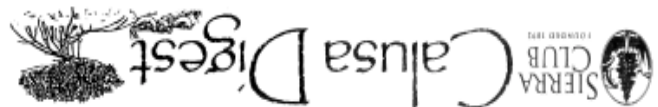
Booths, Speakers, Seminars,
Exhibits, Evening Programs.

See the
"Hybrid Car"

Calusa Group
will have a booth.
Look for us there.

*Manatee Art River Spring Festival

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