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CauseWays

The Newsletter for the Sierra Club Miami Group

August 2007

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"To enjoy and protect the natural places in South Florida, to teach others to understand and respect the fragile environment in which we live, and to practice and promote the responsible use of South Florida's ecosystems and resources."

Court Decision Blocks Controversial Mining Permits and Says Federal Agencies Ignored Health and Environmental Impacts

Anyone who has ever flown into Miami International Airport has seen from the air an immense system of square and rectangle quarry pits on the outskirts of town. These pits cause considerable adverse ecological effects and provide minimal, if any, ecological values. The Army Corps euphemistically calls this the "Lake Belt Plan."

A federal district court in Miami blocked a set of permits for these massive mining pits, located near Everglades National Park and which surround Miami-Dade County's largest freshwater well field, on Friday July 13. In a 177-page opinion, Judge William M. Hoeveler immediately set aside the permits for the mining sites closest to the well field, citing federal regulators' continuing violations of law and "ongoing disregard" of "critical information," such as the likely link between mining and the recent detection of cancer-causing benzene in the production wells.

Sierra Club and The Natural Resources Defense Council filed the suit to stop the project nearly five years ago, warning that deep-pit limestone mining on more than 5,000 acres would endanger the Miami-Dade County water supply and threaten the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan's multi-billion dollar program to restore thousands of acres of wetlands that have suffered from a century of pollution, water diversion and habitat loss.

The mines have the potential to poison the drinking water of millions of Miami-Dade residents by introducing cancer-causing chemicals and dangerous bacteria into our water supply.

The Army Corps of Engineers failed to protect us.

Fortunately, the judge decided to right this wrong and ensure that public health and the environment are protected.

The federal court had already determined that in March 2006 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service violated federal law, including the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act, by ignoring the threat the project posed to the environment when they approved it in April 2002. Although the Army Corps is currently redoing the necessary environmental studies, it has allowed the mining to continue. Judge Hoeveler stated that "[i]n three decades of federal judicial service, this Court has never seen a federal agency respond so indifferently to clear evidence of significant environmental risks related to the agency's proposed action."

The Army Corps issued a dozen permits to what were originally nine (now six) mining companies in 2002, green-lighting a key portion of a long-term plan that would eventually mine a total of more than 22,000 acres in the eastern Everglades. Although the federal court on Friday set aside all of the permits, it delayed the effect of this order for mines far away from the well field mines until the Corps finishes its environmental studies, which is estimated to be one to two years away. The federal court did this to ameliorate any economic impacts.

As it had in its March 2006 opinion, the federal court repeatedly chastised

Save the Dates!

August 13th—7:30 PM

Sierra Club Miami Group

General Meeting

the Coconut Grove Sailing Club
2990 S. Bayshore Dr, Coconut Grove

Guest Speaker: Capt. Dan Kipnis

One of the first of 1,000 disciples Al Gore has trained to help spread the gospel of global warming with the aim of converting skeptics speaks on the impact of global warming on Florida Waters. This fishing-focused version of Gore's presentation includes more about reefs, corals and Florida waters, along with plenty of pictures of trophy catches and underwater video of sea life at various locations.

August 21st —7:00 PM

Sierra & Beer

Titanic Brewery, 5813 Ponce De Leon Blvd, Coral Gables

the Army Corps, including for its "apparently unyielding determination to approve mining, regardless of the demonstrated risks of adverse impacts," "self-generating justification" for Everglades wetlands destruction, and a "disregard" for public participation. Federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Fish & Wildlife Service itself had previously objected to the project because the mining pits would have destroyed thousands of acres of rare habitat and force more water to seep out of the Everglades. The agencies' objections were withdrawn by the Bush administration.

In recent years, scientists have determined that the current half-mile buffer zone around 15 wells near the planned site might be dangerously inadequate. In 2005 and 2006,

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The Climate Summit—Hosted by FL Gov. Charlie Crist



Jonathan Ullman, Carl Pope, Margarita Borda, along with other Sierrans



California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger



Gov. Charlie Crist and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger

The Climate Summit

I have never experienced such a diverse array of people ranging from environmentalists--represented by Sierrans Carl Pope, executive president; Stephen Mahoney, Miami Group Excom; Margarita Borda, Excom; Jonathan Ullman, National Field Representative; Kristina Trotta, National; and Florida Chapter representatives--to entrepreneurs, politicians, business executives and energy executives. All were converging on the common issue of climate change.

The catalyst was the leadership of the host, Republican Governor Charlie Crist. The summit featured displays by many different groups ranging from Toyota hybrids to the National Wildlife Federation.

Highlights of the summit were the luncheon addresses given by Robert Kennedy and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The former made a strong environmental statement regarding the importance of addressing

climate change. While he stated it is not a partisan topic, he did not fail to pull punches regarding the Federal environmental record and inaction on the issue. The second luncheon address was by Arnold Schwarzenegger, who emphasized the teaming of Florida with California in developing a wave, along with the New England states, in developing legislation to reduce emissions to combat climate change. He said we need to say "Hasta la vista to carbon dioxide emissions".

One theme that emerged was that combating climate change should be regarded as an opportunity for developing energy efficiency and innovation and improve US standing in the international community on the issue. The culmination of the summit included the two governors addressing a press conference and the signing of emission reduction legislation.

Stephen Mahoney—Miami Group Excom

Mining Continued from Page 1

the County detected benzene at levels above the applicable limit at several of the wells and in the surrounding groundwater.

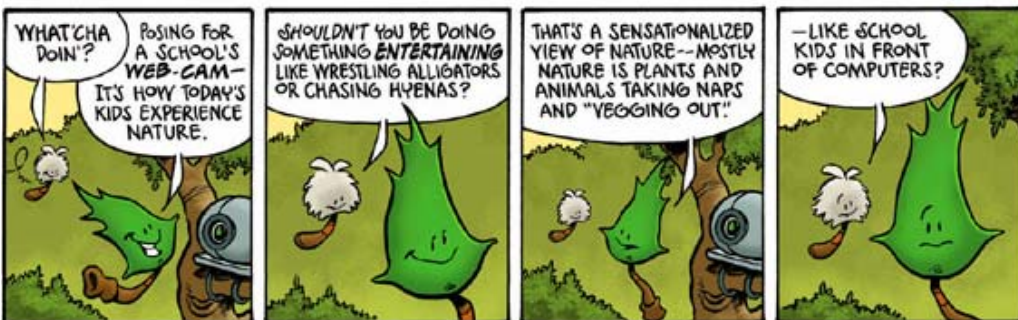
The benzene levels appear to have since abated, and petroleum-based blasting materials used by the mining companies have been considered the most likely source.

We have warned that the mining projects could allow potentially lethal parasites, including cryptosporidium, to enter our drinking water. In 1993, water-borne cryptosporidium caused 400,000 people in Milwaukee to experience intestinal illness. More than 4,000 were hospitalized, and at least 50 deaths were attributed to the disease. Because of this and other contamination incidents, the EPA has strengthened drinking water regulations to protect against disease-causing organisms.

We are represented by the Washington, D.C. law firm of Meyer, Glitzenstein & Crystal, and the Miami law firm of Burlington, Weil, Schwiep, Kaplan & Blonsky P.A, and give them a big thank you. We must also honor Judge Hoeveler for digging deep--no pun intended--to understand the complexities of this case. A 176-page order with over 300 footnotes is an enormous effort.

Barbara Lange & Brad Sewell (NRDC)

RUSTLE THE LEAF BY PONCE & WRIGHT



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General Meeting Speakers:

August—Captain Dan Kipnis—How Global Warming is affecting Florida's Waters

September: Edward O Keith, Ph.D.—History of Conservation.

October—Jonathan E Taylor—Everglades National Park

The Exotic Vegetation Management Program Everglades National Park and Dry Tortugas National Park

Dr. Edward O. Keith, Ph.D.—September's General Meeting Speaker—Don't miss this one on Septmeber10th.

History of Conservation.

This lecture traces the development of the concept of natural resource conservation in the United States, starting with the colonization of the North American continent by European settlers, and ending up with the modern conservation movement. The lecture explores how literature, art, and popular sentiment reflected changing attitudes about nature, from an early exploitative utilitarian approach, through a romantic idealization of nature, to the modern ecological synthesis. Key events in the history of the United States, including the Civil War, the California gold rush, the extermination of the bison, and the landing on the Moon are examined with respect to their influence on the development of conservation ethics in the United States.

www.southeastfloridareefs.net

Sierra Club & Beer

August's Sierra Club & Beer takes place on the 21st at 7:00 PM. Sierra Club & Beer happens the third Tuesday of every month at Titanic Brewery (5813 Ponce De Leon Blvd Coral Gables). Each month's gathering features a different environmental topic with plenty of opportunity for socializing and interaction. Plus, you'll get a FREE BEER just for showing up! All are welcome, but only 21 and over will be served alcohol. Contact Ken Smith at (305) 801-6876 for more information. Also, find us listed under "Miami" at www.greendrinks.org.

EarthSave Monthly Potluck Dinner

Please join *EarthSave* for dinner and a speaker the last Saturday of each month at *The Riviera Presbyterian Church* on 5275 Sunset Drive at 6:30 PM. The cost is \$5 for non Earth Save members, and free for Earth-Save Members. Please bring a vegan dish that feeds 6 - 8 and your own dinner ware. Vegan means no animal products. We would like to thank EarthSave's Jeffrey Tucker for bringing us yummy food to our general meetings!

Become a smart water consumer. Install low-flow showerheads and faucets and you'll use half the water without decreasing performance. Then turn your hot water heater down to 120°F and see hot-water costs go down by as much as 50 percent.

Get On The Miami Sierra Club Email Lists!

To receive the Miami Sierra email newsletter, please contact Mike Robinson at miamisierra@gmail.com.

To join our *Yahoo!* Group go to: www.groups.yahoo.com/group/MiamiSierra or email anakanpa@yahoo.com.

Inner City Outings

The **Miami Inner City Outings (ICO)** program provides youth from the inner city and underserved communities in South Florida the opportunity to interact and fall in love with the natural environment. ICO works with a number of agencies in the area including Urgent Inc – Rites of Passage, The 100 Black Men of South Florida, Oakland Grove Neighborhood Association and Family of Humanity. Kids camp, kayak, snorkel and do service projects such as river clean-ups, exotic plant removal and seedling harvests. Volunteers are welcome. Visit the ICO website at www.icomiami.org or contact Mark Walters at mark@icomiami.org.

Recycle your cell phone:

www.rustletheleaf.com/phones.html

Or Donate them to your local battered woman's shelter.



Dr. Barry N. Burak, F.A.C.C.
Chiropractic Physician

8000 S.W. 67th Avenue
Miami, FL 33143

Office: (305) 666-8883

Fax: (305) 666-8888

Cellular: (305) 389-9513

E-mail: ahc1bnb@aol.com

Website: www.affiliatedhealthcare.com
Evening and Weekend Hours available



ELLEN SIEGEL, CFP®, CLU, ChFC, CSA
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Ellen Siegel
President

Ellen R. Siegel & Associates

7344 SW 48th Street, Suite 301 • Miami, FL 33155

Phone (305) 665-2130 • Fax (305) 665-3504

www.siegelplanners.com • ellen@siegelplanners.com

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Allene D. Nicholson, Esq.
President / Certified Circuit Mediator
ANicholson@FloridaMediation.com



Administrative Office:
44 W. Flagler St. #1900
Miami, FL 33130
305.579.9990

Broward Office:
110 S.E. 6th St. #170
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301
954.522.9991

Palm Beach Office:
515 N. Flagler Dr., #300-P
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
561.659.9886

Outings—Sign Up Now

August 19—Canoeing 101. Learn the basics of handling a canoe in a safe manner. Fundamental paddling (bow and stern) and elementary rescue techniques taught in a one day short course. Lunch is included. Moderate. Limit 16. Cost \$20 member, \$25 non-members. Leader: Jim Gross, 305 665 2401, e-mail: JMGross3013@aol.com. Asst: TBA ©

September 1, 2, 3 – The Clyde Butcher Festival, Everglades City. Explore this funky city, Smallwood's Store, the historic Everglades Rod and Gun Lodge, tour the area near the 10,000 Islands on the National Park's fleet, or fish, canoe, kayak, or slumber. It's all up to you. Leisure, Limit 16. We'll share the rooms and their cost, approx. \$25 to \$50 a night. Barbara Curtis, 954-946-7359, legalbarb@aol.com.

October 6, 7, 8 – Discover beautiful Oleta River State Park. Paddle down the river towards the bay plus enjoy a leisure trail walk at nearby Greynolds Park. Enjoy camaraderie 'round the campfire and spend cool nights in the air-conditioned group cabins. Moderate. Limit 8. Cost: \$100 members, \$130 non-members. Leader: Alan Nowell, 305-253-4250, e-mail: mrhitnmiss@aol.com. Asst: Kaatje Bernabei, 305-223-6551, e-mail: kaatjebnabei@bellsouth.net.

October 13, 8 AM – Leisurely Urban Bicycling in the Lantana Area. Explore local parks, open spaces, and neighborhoods with fellow Sierrans. Leisure. Limit 20. FREE. Ron Haines, 561-964-1995, RonaldHaines@bellsouth.net.

October 27 & 28—Jonathan Dickenson State Park Camping. Join us for car camping, hiking and canoeing and BBQ. Leisure. Limit 10. Cost: \$25 members, \$30 non-members. Leader: Ed Zaret, 305-586-3564. Asst: TBA.

In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5630.

Ways to Curb Global Warming

Drive Smart! A well-tuned car with properly inflated tires burns less gasoline—cutting pollution and saving you money at the pump. If you have two cars, drive the one with better gas mileage whenever possible. Better yet, skip the drive and take public transit, walk, or bicycle when you can. **Support clean, renewable energy.** Renewable energy solutions, such as wind and solar power, can reduce our reliance on coal-burning power plants, the largest source of global warming pollution in the United States. Call your local utility and sign up for renewable energy. **Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.** Especially those that burn the longest each day. Compact fluorescents produce the same amount of light as normal bulbs, but use about a quarter of the electricity and last ten times as long. Each switch you make helps clean the air today, curb global warming, and save you money on your electricity bill. **Saving energy at home is good for the environment and for your wallet.** Start with caulking and weather-stripping on doorways and windows. Then adjust your thermostat and start saving. For each degree you lower your thermostat in the winter, you can cut your energy bills by 3 percent. Finally, ask your utility company to do a free energy audit of your home to show you how to save even more money. **Buy energy-efficient electronics and appliances.** Replacing an old refrigerator or an air conditioner with an energy-efficient model will save you money on your electricity bill and cut global warming pollution. Look for the Energy Star label on new appliances or visit their website at www.energystar.gov. **Plant a Tree, protect a forest.** Protecting forests is a big step on the road to curbing global warming. Trees "breathe in" carbon dioxide, but slash-and-burn farming practices, intensive livestock production, and logging have destroyed 90 percent of the native forests in the United States. You can take action in your own backyard — planting shade trees around your house will absorb CO2, and slash your summer air-conditioning bills. **Reduce! Reuse! Recycle!** Producing new paper, glass, and metal products from recycled materials saves 70 to 90 percent of the energy and pollution, including CO2, that would result if the product came from virgin materials. Recycling a stack of newspapers only 4 feet high will save a good-sized tree. Please...buy recycled!

Join the Sierra Club

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership Categories—Circle One

	<i>Individual</i>
Joint	
<i>Introductory</i>	\$25
<i>Regular</i>	\$39
	\$47
<i>Supporting</i>	\$75
	\$100
<i>Contributing</i>	\$150
	\$175
<i>Life</i>	\$1,000
	\$1,250

Sierra Club Miami Group
P.O. Box 43-0741
S. Miami, FL 33243-0741
Sierra Club Infoline: 305-667-7311

Chair/Newsletter Co-Editor:
 Debbie Matthews.....treehuggerdeb@yahoo.com
VChair/Membership: Ken Smith...305-758-3121
Secretary: Stephen Mahoney
Treasurer: Margarita Borda
Conservation: Mark Oncavage.... 305-251-5273
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ICO: Mark Walters.....mark@icomiami.org
Outings Chair: Jim Gross-JMGross3013@aol.com
Outings Sec: George Fedorko.....305-254-1716
Ads: Georgia Guerra.....georgiapg@msn.com

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