



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

# Sierra Club

Newsletter

Published monthly except June and August from Gainesville, Florida

VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 2 • FEBRUARY 2003

## Sierra Club Legislative Issues Night

THURSDAY, February 6, 7:30 pm

UF Entomology Building

Be prepared for the 2003 Legislative Session!

Learn about proposed bills for and against the environment BEFORE the session starts in March!



### SPEAKERS:

Florida Sierra Staff Lobbyist

**Susie Caplowe**

"2003 Legislative priorities and predictions"

Clean Water Network SE Coordinator

**Linda Young**

"The new Florida Water Coalition—a group lobbying effort"

Entomolgy Building is on the UF campus, on Hull Road off SW 34th Street, just east of the Center for the Performing Arts in Gainesville

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## Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

National: <http://www.sierraclub.org>

Local: <http://www.gatorsierra.org>

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### PHONE TREE

Please contact Kathy Cantwell at 332-8831 by phone or by e-mailing her at [Kacmd@aol.com](mailto:Kacmd@aol.com) if you would like to assist with the Sierra Club phone tree.

### FOLDING PARTY

Interested in hosting a newsletter folding party?  
Contact Scott Camil at 375-2563

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## OUTINGS

### ATTENTION Outings Leaders and Potential Outings Leaders:

There will be a meeting to plan our outings for the coming year on Saturday, February 15, at 10 a.m.

The meeting will take place at Kathy Cantwell and Julie Thaler's lake cottage.

There will be a potluck lunch after the meeting, followed by a canoe and kayak paddle on a beautiful wet prairie.



For more information please call Julie Thaler at 352-331-8834.

## Hello, Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club Members!

My name is Robert Perez. It is an honor to be your new Chairperson.

I would like to begin this year with a moment of reflection. I ask every person in our group to think back on the long and honored traditions of hands on, grass roots environmental activism that Sierra Club represents.

Reflect on the dedication and energy required by our founding and long-term members to bring the Suwannee-St. Johns Group to the level of effectiveness it now represents.

Imagine the teamwork necessary to create the impact responsible for so many solid accomplishments and goals being reached.

In an effort to meet head on and with enough force to overcome the daunting challenges that we face from new Local, State, and Federal legislators, I strongly encourage every member of our group to work together.



The current regressive majority will use any and all means to halt our environmental protection efforts and aggressively legislate against any protective laws that presently stand in their way.

We must attain a new level of cooperation and consensus by tempering many of our personal perspectives with the singularity of the Sierra Club's rich traditions.

We will mount a collective effort in the face of a common foe.

**Robert Perez**  
Chair

### **WANT TO GET INVOLVED? BECOME A LEGISLATIVE LIAISON**

If you are able to spend one or two hours per week while the legislature is in session and want to get involved in helping save the environment, come to this meeting.

**Wednesday, Feb. 12 at 7 pm**

**1701 SW 117 St., Gainesville, FL**

**Call Pegeen Hanrahan (352-377-7960)  
or Kathy Cantwell (352-332-8831) FMI**

# **A DISCUSSION OF THE CITIZEN-INITIATED WETLAND PROTECTION BALLOT INITIATIVE**

**Sponsored by the SSJ Sierra Club**

## **Tuesday, February 18**

**6:00 - 8:45 pm**

**Alachua County Library, Downtown Branch, Meeting Room A  
Light Refreshments Provided.**

### **PART I**

**Creekshed and Basin Planning in  
Gainesville/Alachua County**

**A Report with Recommendations by the  
University of Florida Conservation Clinic  
and Center for Wetlands**

The students and faculty will present detailed basin by basin maps and data on creeks and wetlands as well as their conclusions and recommendations for planning.

### **PART II**

**The Proposed Wetland Protection Ballot  
Initiative: A Panacea or Problematic?**  
A panel discussion on how we can best protect  
Gainesville's wetland resources.

**BE AN INFORMED VOTER!!!!**



Ocklawaha River



Rodman Reservoir

# Ocklawaha River Restoration Now A U.S. Forest Service Challenge

BY KRISTINA JACKSON

In a major development in the process to restore the Ocklawaha River, July 2002, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) turned responsibility for portions of Rodman Dam (also known as Kirkpatrick Dam) over to the U.S. Forest Service.

The Forest Service has consistently supported removing Rodman Dam since the 1970s. Over a third of the dam is in Ocala National Forest and about a square mile of the forest is submerged beneath the reservoir waters. In 2001, the Forest Service completed an Environmental Impact Statement with plans to restore the Ocklawaha by June 2006. The EIS concluded that maintaining Rodman Dam and Reservoir violates Forest Service land management policy.

The two agencies originally entered into an agreement on managing this shared land in 1991 when the federal government turned over the land to the state from the defunct Cross Florida Barge Canal (CFBC) project. Forest Service land on which the dam sits was not part of the land transferred to the state. Instead the Forest Service and DEP agreed, and signed a permit stating, that the dam could occupy the Ocala National Forest land until the state restored the flow of the Ocklawaha River by removing the dam.

Now, faced with special interest opposition in the state legislature, the DEP decided it could not meet the deadline for restoration in 2006. They emphasized that the agency and Gov. Jeb Bush continue to support restoration.

The CFBC was a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project.



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When the project was de-authorized, a multi-agency and citizen committee decided the land should be managed by the state as a "greenbelt" for conservation and recreation. This linear state park is now the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway named after the conservationist whose tireless efforts resulted in the halting of the CFBC.

Unlike many environmental issues where competing economic and environmental concerns must be considered, Rodman Dam costs the state \$300,000 to \$500,000 each year to maintain and provides minimal economic benefits. Ocklawaha River restoration will involve breaching enough of the dam to allow for a free-flowing river and will cost an estimated \$14 million. The project will pay for itself in less than 30 years — in one generation we can have a free-flowing Ocklawaha.

The Sierra Club is an active, original member of the Alliance to Restore the Ocklawaha River — a coalition of over 50 civic, sport and conservation groups. The Alliance hopes that the federal government will succeed where the state failed, but this project still requires multi-agency cooperation and, ultimately, Congressional support for funding.

Citizens have fought for over 30 years to protect and restore the Ocklawaha River. After all this effort, special interests now want to keep Rodman for boat fishing at the expense of manatees, fish and wildlife habitat, springs and numerous other natural resources — not to mention the never-ending cost to taxpayers of maintaining Rodman Reservoir. We must take advantage of the forward momentum the Forest Service has on the project.

Write to your U.S. Representative and encourage them to support funding to restore the Ocklawaha River. (You can find your Representative in your new phone book or online at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)) Then copy your letter and send it to Representative John Mica. The reservoir is in his district and he is being lobbied hard by the reservoir supporters: *The Honorable John L. Mica (R), 2445 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515-0907. Phone: (202) 225-4035.*

Remove Rodman Dam - it's about dam time!

*Kristina Jackson has worked with Florida Defenders of the Environment for four years on their Ocklawaha River Restoration Project. She recently joined SSJ Sierra executive committee and serves as 2003 program chair.*



**FACED WITH SPECIAL INTEREST OPPOSITION  
IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE, THE DEP DECIDED  
IT COULD NOT MEET THE DEADLINE FOR  
RESTORATION IN 2006.**



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# Alachua County's Sprawl Plan

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

What we used to call the Comprehensive Plan no longer deserves that title—it is now the Sprawl Plan. Led by Cynthia Chestnut and Lee Pinkoson, the Alachua County commission has voted to give developers what they want (Byerly and Wheat dissenting). Turns out the 20% of the Plan that Chestnut wants to change is the very heart of the Plan—she wants to gut it, apparently to pay off her sprawl developer campaign contributors. The new 2003 Plan will be worse than the 1991 Plan unless we can mass a Herculean effort to stop it. The Sierra Club, Sustainable Alachua County, and individuals are intervening through the courts (see below on contributing tax-exempt to our legal costs through The Sierra Club Foundation [TSCF]). However, a “political” solution that preserves the 2002 plan would be much preferable to a legal battle (see below).

Here is what Chestnut and Pinkoson, with Long's help, want to do for developers:

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT**—eliminate re-quired clustering of 5-acre lots that would have preserved open space and increased land values. Make clustering optional, allowing as much as 50% “density bonus,” i.e., a whopping 3 dwelling units (DU)/10 ac in rural agriculture. Neither urban nor rural, this chews up land at an alarming rate and your taxes will subsidize the 40% higher costs of services.

**URBAN CLUSTER (UC)**—A 20-year urban growth line established in 1991 plan. Although the data shows an excess of about 5,000

acres over projected needs for 2020 using “urban density” of only 1.6 DU/ac as in the 1991 sprawl plan, Chestnut directed Staff to expand the UC (and the USL) by 0.5 mile along already traffic clogged Archer Road where her campaign contributors plan a huge development. Developers may just as well have occupied her seat behind the dais.

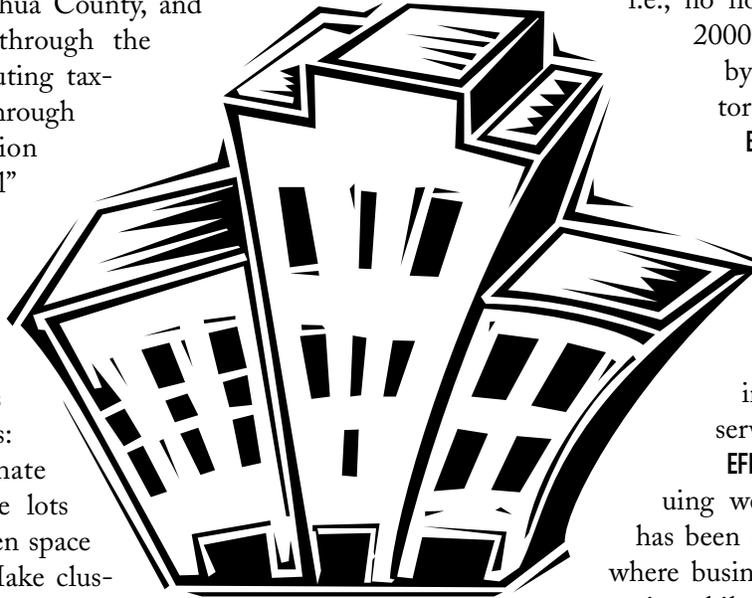
**URBAN SERVICES LINE (USL)**—A 5-year growth phasing line. Chestnut directed that this line, arbitrarily defined by GRU sewer and water lines installed at developer requests, be expanded by 0.25 mile in Southwest, with “no enclaves,” i.e., no holes. This provision added about 2000 acres and brought in property eyed by another of her campaign contributors.

**BETWEEN UC AND USL**—Weaken policies designed to limit sprawl for any development outside the USL. The already “porous line” would then do nothing to phase growth outward from the urban center, resulting in increased congestion and costs of services and infrastructure.

**EFFECT ON EAST GAINESVILLE**—The continuing westward movement of Gainesville has been at the expense of East Gainesville where businesses have fled, schools are under capacity while they are over capacity in the West.

On the East poverty is a way of life while the West prospers.

**DIMINISH OUR NATURAL AREAS**—The developers want to greatly diminish buffers for wetlands, allow destruction of wetlands of quarter acre or less, severely limit endangered species and habitats to be protected, and pave over the county with you paying for it through increased gas and property taxes!



## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Write to commissioners and urge keeping 2002 Plan: BoCC, PO Box 2877, Gville, FL 32602,
- Email commissioners at: boccc@co.alachua.fl.us (put ‘stop sprawl’ in the subject line),
- Write to The Gainesville Sun: voice@gvillesun.com,
- Phone commissioners at: 374-5210 (especially Long who is the swing vote; ask to speak to him),
- Attend hearings (call 374-5249 to get on notification list, or call 378-5129, or 332-8831)
- Contribute to Sierra Club legal fund (make tax-exempt check to TSCF, memo SSJG, mail to Suwannee-St. Johns Group, PO Box 13951, Gainesville, FL 32604),
- Copy this and give to friends, neighbors, and co-workers, urging them to become involved or LEARN TO ENJOY SOUTH FLORIDA TYPE SPRAWL,
- Call 378-5129 or 332-8831 to find out more about how you can help.



## Fire Returns to San Felasco Hammock State Preserve

BY DAVID AUTH

On December 27, 2002 at around 1:30 p.m., after six years absence, a controlled burn started slightly south of the northwest corner of San Felasco State Preserve. Randy Brown, fire boss and preserve manager, dipped his lighted “drip torch” canister of gasoline and diesel fuel toward the ground and started his “test fire.” The primarily yellow flames crept slowly away from him low to the ground, leaving a wider and wider semicircle of black ash and burned tree trunks behind. The fire quickly went out on the fire break as desired, usually advancing only a few inches onto the disked soil.

As Janet Yesh said to me, “Randy is one of the best burn bosses in the Division of Recreation and Parks.” All conditions for a successful burn appeared to be met. The wind was low, at most 8 miles an hour across open fields nearby and approaching zero inside the 75 acres of second growth forest to be burned. The wind blew from the northwest, taking the smoke away from I-75. Both a dirt road and a stretch of GRU electric power line encircled the entire prescribed burn area. This perimeter had just been disked with a tractor a few minutes ago, to further reduce the chance of fire creeping across the fire break and getting out of control. It had rained heavily a few days before, leaving the ground damp just below the surface of the dead ground litter. It was wintertime, with most of the amphibians, reptiles, and mammals in their burrows out of danger and not interested in doing their thing above ground anyway. The birds, not nesting yet, flew out of danger. The plants weren’t growing much or at all. Randy Brown had his burn permit from the Florida Division of Forestry, and he had alerted the police, in case owners of expensive homes very near the burn area called frantically to ask for help.

A small crew of six people had assembled at 11:30 a.m., including three who had controlled burn experience. I was one of the three inexperienced volunteers, helping for the first time

in my 57 years with this very important land management activity. Randy assigned me weatherman duties, keeping a running account of wind speed, relative humidity, etc., to document them during the burn and keep alert to change. Jim and Kate Burke from upstate New York spend their winters camping and helping out in San Felasco. They rode the two all-terrain vehicles. Jim circled the edge of the burn and would put out fire if needed with foam (water and soap) from a tank strapped to the back of his ATV. His wife carried a strange looking hand rake to stop any fire from advancing too far across the fire break, like Jim, and drove the fire truck and Randy’s pick-up truck ahead of the fire, keeping these two essential vehicles near the two men advancing the fire line around the perimeter. I was called on once in a while to move a truck as well. Each of us had a CB radio and kept it on to communicate instantaneously or call for help if anyone got trapped by the fire, overcome by smoke, or anything else.

After his test fire, Randy continued his “black line,” which eventually would completely encompass the 75 acres. The drops of lighted gasoline and diesel fuel falling from his hand-held drip torch onto the ground almost instantly formed a line of fire as he walked along the fire break for 50 to 150 feet at a time. The fire usually took off into the woods or pasture rather than dying out. Randy’s burn partner and fellow ranger, Paul Macknight, wearing bright red coveralls rather than Randy’s bright yellow, followed along behind Randy starting fire about fifty to a hundred feet inside the forest. Paul was the inside man, intensifying the fire by setting second and third lines or spotting areas not burning properly. Rather than leaving his drip torch continually in the down position as he walked, so the fuel constantly dribbled out the nozzle, he occasionally tilted it for a sec-

**A MAJOR CHANGE OF WIND SPEED OR DIRECTION OR A SUDDEN MOVEMENT OF THE FIRE INTO THE TREE CANOPY COULD TRAP HIM BEFORE HE COULD RUN OUT OF DANGER. FIRE CAN OUTRUN A HUMAN.**

ond, so the lighted fuel dropped on a single spot on the ground. He first lit a wick near the end of his nozzle, which acted as a pilot light to ignite the fuel as it fell from the nozzle opening. Occasionally, Paul would wave his drip torch from side to side holding its handle, starting spot fires in a wide path in front of him as he walked. Paul’s job was more dangerous than Randy’s, since Paul worked parallel to an already started line of fire moving toward him inside the forest. A major change of wind speed or direction or a sudden movement of the fire into the tree canopy could trap him before he could run out of danger. Fire can outrun a human. Paul also had to inhale more smoke. After waiting a bit to see how the fire burned and how Paul was doing inside, Randy started another line of fire along the fire break. It would take nearly four hours to fire up completely around the perimeter back to our starting point.

(to be continued next month)

# FEBRUARY 2003 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 6: 7:30 pm, Thursday, General Meeting, at the Entomology building on UF campus Rm. 1031-1033

February 13: 7:00 pm, Thursday, EXCOM Meeting, 7:00 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Church, in the library.

February 15: Saturday at 10 am, Outings Leader Meeting and potluck at Kathy and Julie's lake house, see page 2

February 18: Tues. at 6 pm, panel discussion on Gainesville wetlands resolution at Downtown Library, meeting room A

February 21: Friday, Newsletter Folding Party, 7:30 pm at David and Joanne Auth's house, 425 NE 7 Street, Gainesville tel. 352-371-1991

February 27-March 1: Environmental Law Conference at UF Law School

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