



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

Published monthly except June and August from Gainesville, Florida

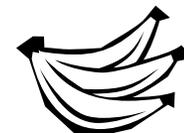
VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 3 • MARCH 2003

Suwannee / St. Johns Sierra Club General Meeting

March 6, 2003

Thursday 7:30 pm

UF Entomology / Nematology Bld.



**Support local agriculture – new “Buy Local”
campaign**

Rose Koenig

**Organic farmer and ‘Buy Local’ program
coordinator**

**Sustainable Agriculture and the Sierra Club:
Issues and Connections**

Anna Peterson

**Chair of Sierra Club Sustainable Consumption
Committee**

Many North Florida markets, restaurants and grocers will soon be displaying the seal of the North Florida Local Food Partnership. This “Buy Local” promotional campaign is the first of its kind in the region and will partner area growers with businesses that buy their products.

Consumers make choices each time they make a purchase. Buying local shows that you support local farmers by keeping your dollars in your community.

Rose Koenig says, “We believe that consumers want to help farmers and businesses in their community but they need to know how to do it”. The North Florida Local Food Partnership (NFLFP) seal will help consumers distinguish among the businesses that make a genuine effort to support local farmers and those who do not.

Keeping farms profitable keeps farms in business. This not only enhances the economy, but preserves the rural green space which benefits all citizens. This is an especially hot issue in Alachua County and other growing counties where determining where the urban corridor should meet the farmgate is on the mind of many local politicians, farmers, business people and homeowners.

The goal is to create an identity and awareness of the diverse agricultural goods produced in the area, and ultimately increases sales off the farm. The NFLFP promotes not only vegetable crops and fruits, but also dairy, poultry and seafood, provided it is grown or landed in the region.

Come hear Rose Koenig speak about this local effort and Anna Peterson will tell us how this fits into national Sierra Club agriculture priorities. For more details on the NFLFP visit their web site at: www.buylocalflorida.org

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Conservation Is What It's All About

BY LINDA POLLINI

As the conservation chair for SSJ, I met with the new Conservation Committee to decide what is important for us to focus on in the upcoming months. We have a wonderful group and each person has stepped forward to take on the responsibility of one or two specific issues. We came up with a list of nine priorities, in no particular order.

Each month we will try to focus on one of the nine conservation priorities and update you on the situation. I am encouraging any members who would like to join us with a particular concern or want to volunteer their expertise to please anyone on the committee know.

The first priority I will write about is the TMDL- (total maximum daily load) Program and resultant lawsuit of which Sierra is one of the plaintiffs. The TMDL program is part of the federal Clean Water Act passed in 1972. Over 30 years ago the state was told it must find those water bodies that were polluted, list them, and then devise a plan that would clean them up. This plan, called the Total Maximum Daily Load Plan, would determine what amount of pollution the water body could handle on a daily basis before it became impaired (polluted). Once that load was determined, the state was to devise a plan to reduce the loads accordingly. The state of Florida has been ignoring the mandate for thirty years! The Earth Justice law group sued to have it enforced and

won the case more than a year ago. The state had to implement the Clean Water Act or risk losing federal funds.

So, a devious plan was formulated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection headed by David Struhs. It came up with a plan to throw out the old list and start the testing all over again. It decided, without any scientific basis, to throw out any data that was more than seven years old or had not been inputted to a certain database. Voila! Instantly waterways were eliminated from the list.

Instead of starting with what we have and then moving forward, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has decided to go back to ground zero and start the process all over again, wasting a lot of data, time, and money, too. The process itself has become the problem.

The state of Florida is the first in the country to come up with this "unique" way of delisting water bodies that are impaired. If it works, many other states that are currently in non-compliance are looking at the "Florida Plan" as one way to get around the Clean Water Act. This threatens the future quality of all of our waterways nationally. Florida Sierra, with the Suwannee-St John Group as the leading entity, has joined in

the Clean Water Networks lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We are suing EPA for accepting this flawed method of delisting impaired waterways by just ignoring data that the states don't want to look at!

Linda Pollini can be reached at thirdeyegrafix@earthlink.net or leave a message at 246-4545.

PRIORITIES FOR 2003

(unranked) and volunteer point persons:

TMDLs and lawsuit—Linda Pollini
 Waco Development (Alachua)—Robert Perez
 Off-Road Vehicles—Kathy Cantwell
 Ichetucknee & Suwannee Rivers—Craig Lowe and
 Kathy Cantwell
 Ocklawaha River—Kristina Jackson
 Membership and Outreach—Pegeen Hanrahan
 Manatees—Annette Long
 County Transportation (Impact fees, roads)—Mike
 Byerly and Rob Brinkman
 Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Rights—
 Dwight Adams and Kathy Cantwell

Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

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

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

Suwannee-St. Johns Group Executive Committee

Chair	Robert Perez	386 462-6372	
VC Chair	Linda Pollini	246-4545	thirdeyegrafix@earthlink.net
VC Programs	Kristina Jackson	372-2464	turtle@moonmag.com
Secretary	Annette Long	490-8930	MLongAKorn@aol.com
Treasurer	Roberta Gastmeyer	336-2404	afn61265@afn.org
Outings Chair	Julie Thaler	331-8834	
Event Coordinator	Matt Hurst	332-6684	mmh1980@hotmail.com
Environmental Ed	David Auth	371-1991	davidauth@hotmail.com
Political Committee	Dwight Adams	378-5129	adams@phys.ufl.edu
Public Relations	Jape Taylor	332-8194	JapeT@nersp.nerdc.ufl.edu
Newsletter Editor	Kathy Cantwell	332-8831	kacmd@aol.com
Government Liaison	Pegeen Hanrahan	377-7960	Mevyleen@aol.com
Webmaster	Louis Clark	373-5377	klouisc@bellsouth.net
Fundraising	Elizabeth Pooley	336-1782	POOLEYE452@aol.com
Member At Large	Marilyn Walker	374-6642	nest@fdt.net
Alt. Flex. Delegate	Rob Brinkman	281-3610	robluna9@yahoo.com
Membership/Newsletter Folding	Scott Camil	375-2563	s.camil@att.net
Newsletter Layout	Colin Whitworth	372-2464	colin@moonmag.com

PHONE TREE

Please contact Kathy Cantwell at 332-8831 by phone or by e-mailing her at 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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Fire Returns to San Felasco Hammock State Preserve

(Editor's note: this is the second part of an article we ran last month about a controlled burn in the San Felasco Hammock.)

BY DAVID AUTH

Happily, it soon became pretty obvious to all of us that this was a good day to burn. The wind was not quite high enough and the relative humidity not quite low enough to make it a quick burn, but no problems occurred. The fire never got up into the tree crowns, starting a "crown fire" that would kill every tree on the land. But the fire did pick up and expand on its own, soon disappearing inside the forest. All six of us stayed near the perimeter, because walking between the expanding lines and eventual ring of fire would be a very bad idea.

The fire quickly became big enough to make its own weather, including a high sustained heat and a convective updraft of wind. It would be damned foolishness to walk into this, especially as the fire approached the center of the 75 acres from opposite directions toward the middle.

I had worried unnecessarily about smoke inhalation. The fire burned almost smokelessly when it first started, then emitted white obscuring smoke for a few minutes as it almost exploded into more and more dead plant matter. Finally, it became almost smokeless again as it slowly died out in the area near us and moved on repeating the combustion. Only a couple of times did our path get really smoky. Wind direction at ground level changed constantly and usually did not match prevailing wind, rarely forcing us to walk through the smoke to move both ourselves and the four vehicles ahead of the fire line.

We called it quits around 5:30 p.m., when the sky was getting dark and the fire even more beautiful, burning safely mostly way inside the perimeter. "Someone will come out around midnight to see everything is still OK," Randy said. The 75 acres contained very few stumps, downed tree trunks, and muck soil in dried ponds, not enough fuel to sustain the fire for long. We were all pleased with our success, especially Randy, who didn't have to explain a multi-car crash on I-75 because of smoke, nor figure out how to pay for

any of those \$500,000 homes. "Controlled burns are the best part of my job," he said. "I have missed them." Before we started, he said, "Controlled burns are 95 percent boredom and 5 percent terror."

Using fire as a habitat management tool is labor intensive and time consuming. But these so-called controlled burns are absolutely essential in many parts of the United States, especially in Florida with its still vast areas of fire-adapted habitats. I don't have room in this article to explain in detail why controlled burns are so important. Researchers have written thousands of pages about "fire ecology" and are still finding new reasons why fire is a good thing. Suffice it to say here that fire keeps many Florida habitats healthy, the ones which must burn occasionally to survive. Just as important, controlled burns keep litter from reaching high concentrations, so fires are cool and easy to extinguish rather than conflagrations or fire storms like at Yellowstone National Park in 1988. No one on earth can stop a fire storm, a huge explosion of flames making its own wind and heat.

The first recorded example of a fire storm was the total destruction of Hamburg, Germany during WW II, by British planes dropping thousands of incendiary bombs and high explosives on the city during four night raids. Almost a hundred thousand civilians died.

Don't forget that lightning and, unfortunately, arson and stupidity as well, make fire inevitable, and Florida has more lightning, criminals, and fools than almost anywhere. Luckily the state also has a few people who know how to do a controlled burn, an assignment which challenges all human abilities. Land managers need constant help with the public relations to sell controlled burns to Floridians, especially people with respiratory problems.

San Felasco hasn't been deliberately burned in six years because of four years of drought and pine beetle infestations. Fire always stresses the trees, making entry by wood eating insects more likely, even if the trunk's

cambium layer isn't killed outright by the heat. In a drought, the desirable trees are already under stress and under attack by insects, so fire is more likely to kill them along with the burn-intolerant species we want to kill. Of course, burns are also harder to control in a drought.

Florida's land managers now have a lot of catching up to do as the state presumably enters an extended wet cycle with the pine beetle infestations on the decline.



Photo by David Auth

Sailing, Backpacking, Canoeing and More

March 8 (Sat.) Tour of Gainesville Wetlands, beginning at 9am. This tour will feature various types of wetlands in the Gainesville area, some pristine, some severely impaired. We will travel by private car to each site. The trip will end at noon and be followed by a potluck picnic lunch. FMI contact Kevin Veach at kveach@gru.net or 352-374-6759.

Want to be an outings leader? **Mar 15-16** Outing Leader Training and Basic First Aid/CPR training at Upper Tampa Bay Park. Saturday - First Aid/CPR training, Sunday - outing leader training. Basic FA/CPR cost \$38, includes book, FA certification for 3 years, CPR 2 years. Outing Leader training cost \$5 for hand-out materials. Contact Rudy Scheffer at 727-726-8375 eve, day 813-631-7257, or e-mail: rudy@adventuresworldwide.com

If you can't attend the training but would like to become a leader, contact Julie Thaler at 352-331-8831

Several Wilderness First Aid Courses are being offered at the University of Florida and are open to the public. FMI call 352-392-x 4283 or visit their website at www.health.ufl.edu/shcc/cpr.htm

OTHER OUTINGS

Mar 1-2 Overnight Backpack Trip in the Prairie Lakes Wildlife Management area. This will be a moderate backpack of only about 11 miles total. Limit 8 participants. Contact leader Rudy Scheffer at 727-726-8375, e-mail rudy@adventuresworldwide.com (Suncoast)

Mar 1-2 Camp Paynes Prairie State Park. Day trip to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. We're going to pitch our tent at Paynes Prairie State Park and on Saturday, meet at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. We'll tour Marjorie's cracker style

home and farm, where she wrote "The Yearling." We'll also hike the nature trail. Afterwards, we'll have lunch in historic Micanopy and look in the antique stores. Leader

Mary-Slater Linn 407-426-6869 (Central Florida).

Mar 2 Ravine Gardens State Gardens. Communing with nature Ravine Gardens at this time of the year should be in full bloom with azaleas and other wildflowers. Take a leisurely stroll with Shirley Roos through these unique Gardens. Please bring lunch, sun tan lotion and insect repellent. Please RSVP to Leader Shirley Roos at (904) 730-7962 (home). (Northeast)

Mar 8 Miami day trip. Take a guided tour of the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, a National Historic Landmark and then board a 2-hour sailing trip on Biscayne Bay aboard an 85-foot, two-masted topsail passenger schooner. Leisure. \$15 (\$10 children under 12) includes the sailing cruise. \$10 adult, \$5 child, Vizcaya admission is extra. The cruise ends at 6 PM. Afterwards, you may choose to stay at Miami's Bayside Marketplace for dinner and browsing on your own. Sunny Hunt 561-967-4770. (Loxahatchee)

Mar 9 Spoil Island Cleanup Kayak/Canoe Outing. We will paddle out from Palm Harbor to the spoil islands to clean up trash. The paddling will be easy, but in open water. Kayaks are available for a nominal (\$5) transportation cost. Leader: Ben Berauer at 727-392-2821, bfberauer@aol.com (Suncoast).

Mar 15-16 Overnight backpack trip to Myakka River State Park, Bee Island Campsite. A moderate hike of about 11



miles total. Limit 6. Leader: Mike Pici at 727-539-0882, revmp777@earthlink.net. (Suncoast)

Mar 15-16 Canoe/Kayak/Camping Trip, Alexander Springs. A 15-mile moderate-strenuous paddle on the Springs and St. John's River Sat. Camping at Alexander Springs State Park Fri. and Sat. nights. Must provide own boats. Mary Parrott, (727)785-1272, mparrott@tampabay.rr.com (Suncoast)

Mar 15-19 beyond, Suwannee River. Canoeing and Springfest This annual run is an 88-mile, 4-day plus paddle on the Suwannee River designed to coincide with the Springfest at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park, March 20 - 23, 2003. We will be setting up a base camp at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park on Saturday, March 15, shuttling to the head-waters of the Suwannee River on Sunday to begin an adventure of a lifetime. We will complete our paddle on Thursday morning, taking out at our base camp in the park and enjoying the Springfest beginning on Thursday, March 20. Arrangements and reservations for the campsite, outfitter, and Springfest will have to be made, so please make your reservation as early as possible and no later than February 17, 2003. The outing is limited to 12 paddlers. Contact Chuck Utter. (Northeast).

Mar 22-23 Overnight Canoe/Kayak Trip, Waccasassa River Preserve, north of Crystal River. Rated easy to moderate. Leader Tom Wekenman 727-938-4093 TWekenman@juno.com (Suncoast)

SIERRA ELECTIONS CALENDAR 2003

- 2/14Calendar ready for March newsletter publication
- 5/8Begin search for members of Nominating Committee
- 6/12Appoint NomCom
- 6/12Publish in July newsletter: names of NomCom, call for nominees by 9/4
- 8/15Publish in September newsletter: members may be nominated by petition; petitions must be received by 9/26.
- 9/4GenMtg: Receipt and announcement of Excom nominees; announcement of voter eligibility requirements.
- 9/11Official NomCom report to Excom; appointment of ElCom
- 9/25Receipt of petition candidates for Excom
- 10/9Ballot ready for Excom approval
- 10/20Mail ballots in November newsletter; deadline for receipt of ballots 12/15
- 11/24Mail ballots in December newsletter; deadline for receipt of ballots 12/15
- 12/15Receipt of ballots by ElCom, count ballots, prepare report to ExCom
- 12/18Report results to ExCom (including newly elected ones); ExCom organizes itself

Note An extra ExCom meeting (in addition to regularly scheduled December 11th meeting) will be held on December 18 to appoint new positions. The Folding Party date will be moved from December 19 to December 28/29 to allow time to get new ExCom members names in newsletter.

Women for Wise Growth and the Suwannee St. Johns Environmental Group will have a political forum for the Gainesville City Commission elections either March 11 or 19. The place is to be determined. Call Bev Thomas at 373-1027 for more information.

JOB POSITION AVAILABLE

Regional Conservation Organizer Needed!

Great News! National Sierra Club is opening an office in Gainesville and will need to hire a full-time person to run the office. This person will work with field staff and chapter/group volunteers to organize support for grassroots campaigns, events, and skills training and generate turnout for campaign visibility events. Send resumes to Frank Jackalone at frank.jackalone@sierraclub.org or Sierra Club, 475 Central Avenue - Suite M-1, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701.



Need a Vacation??

Almost new, secluded, 2-story, 2-bedroom, 2-bath, 2-fireplace **Mountain Home** with spectacular tri-state view from wraparound deck. Hayesville, NC area, near Nantahala Nat'l Forest and white water rafting. \$475/wk Nonsmokers only, please. Call (352) 472-2169.

The Price of War: Economic & Social Impacts on Alachua County



What will the Bush war on Iraq do to the people, economy, and environment of our area?

Panelists: former Rep. Cynthia McKinney; Patricia West; Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn; Prof. G. Zoharah Simmons

March 22nd, 1-4 PM

Thelma Boltin Center ¥ 516 NE 2nd Ave (following Peace March to Downtown Plaza)

PO Box 719, Gvl 32602 ¥ ccawt@yahoo.com ¥ www.civicmediacenter.org/ccawt



Developers' Sprawl Plan: It Will Cost Us All

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

In last month's Newsletter (pg. 6), "progress" in "mediation" of Alachua County's comprehensive plan with developers was reported. Commission Chairman Rodney Long's "mediate rather than litigate" is a good sound bite. However, as we saw in the last mediation session, "mediation" means that developers are writing the plan to suit themselves.

A significant feature of the 2002 plan that could have kept growth more compact, thereby limiting its costs and environmental consequences, was the Urban Services Line (USL). This line was linked to existing sewer and water, with growth required to be connected to the sewer and water lines. In 2006, the USL would have been reevaluated and expanded if needed.

As part of the mediation process, developers have added back about two-thirds of the acreage that would have been removed by this USL. It has become essentially meaningless as a means of limiting sprawl and may as well be taken out of the plan.

We, as interveners, with right by law to participate in the negotiations, were excluded from negotiations on the USL. The greatly expanded USL, even larger than any discussed by the new 3-2 majority was presented as a fait accompli without our involvement at all. We have made a complaint to the DCA

mediator and attorney, which may get some attention.

More sprawl allowed under the developers' plan will add to the public costs and exacerbate the county's growing deficit, already at \$23 million over four years. In addition, there is a backlog of about \$500 million for unmet infrastructure and maintenance.

Massive new taxes to pay the costs of growth are being discussed despite claims by developers that "growth pays for itself." These include a hike in property taxes, five cents more gas tax, and continuation of the seven-cents sales tax. Fortunately, the latter requires a referendum as well as the gas tax unless there is a 4-1 vote of the commission to enact it.

If the commission approves the developers' sprawl plan, voters are quite unlikely to vote themselves new taxes to pay for sprawl so those who profit from it can make a killing.

The Sierra Club, Sustainable Alachua County, and several individuals are intervening in the challenge to the 2002 plan. An account has been set up with The Sierra Club Foundation so that tax-exempt contributions can be made toward the legal expenses. If Rodney Long could be convinced to support the 2002 plan, for which he voted previously, all of this could be avoided. Contacting him is especially important.

MORE SPRAWL ALLOWED UNDER THE DEVELOPERS' PLAN WILL ADD TO THE PUBLIC COSTS AND EXACERBATE THE COUNTY'S GROWING DEFICIT.



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Contribute to legal fund (make tax-exempt check to TSCF, memo SSJG, mail to Suwannee-St. Johns Group, PO Box 13951, Gainesville, FL 32604).
- Phone commissioners at: 374-5210 (Especially Long who is the swing vote; ask to speak to him).
- Email commissioners at: boccc@co.alachua.fl.us (put stop sprawl as subject, they may not read it!).
- Write to commissioners urging keeping 2002 Plan: BoCC, PO Box 2877, Gainesville, FL 32602.
- Write to Gainesville Sun: voice@gvillesun.com.
- Attend hearings (call 374-5249 to get on notification list, or call 378-5129, or 332-8831).
- Copy this and give it 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 for more information or to find out more about how you can help.

Major Religious, Civic and Environmental Leaders Launch National Coalition Opposing Bush War Plan

WIN WITHOUT WAR CHALLENGES BUSH PREEMPTION OF PEACE PROCESS

*Group to mobilize mainstream opposition & sustained protests
If White House continues unilateral war build-up*

WASHINGTON - The Sierra Club and leaders of other influential civic, environmental and faith organizations today announced the creation of a new coalition in support of a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the crisis in Iraq. The new group, Win Without War, represents millions of Americans and seeks to prevent bloodshed and loss of life on all sides by slowing the Bush Administration's apparent rush to war so that U.N. Arms Inspectors have time to carry out their mission. Today's event followed a Win Without War press conference with celebrities held yesterday in Hollywood, CA.

Representatives from the National Council of Churches (NCC), the NAACP, National Organization for Women (NOW), Sierra Club, Working Assets and MoveOn.org lent support from their various organizations to the peace effort.

"By reducing our dependency on oil, the U.S. can increase our national security and reduce the threat of war, as well as clean up our air and curb global warming," said Larry Fahn, Sierra Club Vice President. "Our country has the know-how to cut our dependence on oil by using energy efficiency, modern technology, and renewable power. Because war has dire environmental and social impacts, the Sierra Club urges the U.S. to let the United Nations inspectors do their job so the parties can resolve the Iraq issue peacefully."

"An unprovoked military attack against Iraq would not be a just war," stated Reverend Bob Edgar, NCC General Secretary. "Such a war would violate the UN Charter, cause the deaths of many innocent people, and unleash forces of political extremism and terror."

"The NAACP and millions of African-Americans who are uneasy about the proposed war with Iraq stand with Win Without War today," said Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors. "The war against terrorism and security on the domestic front are

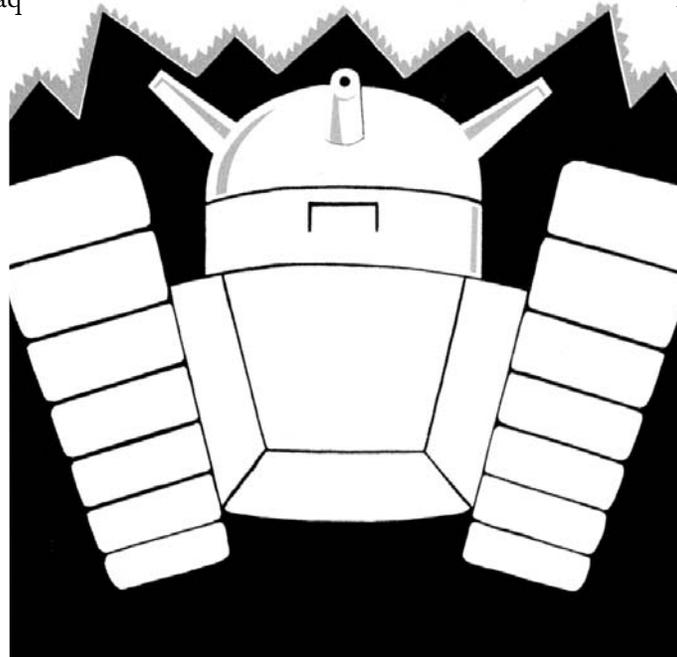
much more pressing issues for President Bush to address."

Win Without War was founded on the conviction that security for Americans and U.S. allies abroad can be achieved through aggressive inspections, sustained monitoring programs and the dismantling of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Win Without War members pledge to broaden opposition to Bush Administration calls for a unilateral invasion of Iraq and vow to intensify the protests that began this week in dozens of cities for as long as necessary.

"George W. Bush's drive for war against Iraq may serve his political ambition but it will not make our country more secure," said Terry O'Neill, NOW Membership Vice President. "Moreover, women would be disproportionately affected by war against Iraq. As has happened during previous wars, funds will be diverted from education, health, welfare and other vitally needed social programs from an already downsized budget. Women will bear the greatest burden of any decrease in domestic spending in order to finance this war."

"We've seen an enormous concern from our members about the President's plans for war with Iraq," said Eli Pariser, International Campaigns Director, MoveOn.org. "Many who have never been politically active now feel compelled to act. Especially worrisome is the Bush Administration's apparent intent to obstruct or undermine the weapons inspections process-which is why our petition calling on the President to "Let the Inspections Work" has been one of our fastest-growing campaigns ever."

"The Bush administration's priorities are seriously reversed," said Melissa Daar, State Political Manager, Working Assets. "Instead of rushing to war, Bush should keep his promise to find bin Laden and let UN inspectors do their job."



MARCH 2003 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

General meeting, March 6 at 7:30 pm, UF Entomology Bldg., UF Campus

March 8 (Sat.) Tour of Gainesville Wetlands, beginning at 9 a.m. FMI contact Kevin Veach at kveach@gru.net or 352-374-6759.

Excomm, March 13 at 7 pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, Library, (address is in old calendar)

Folding Party, March 21, 7:30 p.m. at Scott Camil s. Call 375-2563 for directions.

Saturday, March 22, 2 pm, The Conservation Trust for Florida will hold its annual fundraiser at the Carr Farm in Micanopy. Contact Executive Director Gary Meffe for more information. 352-466-4581 <http://www.conserveflorida.org>

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Membership

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

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SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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