



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

# Sierra Club

Newsletter

Published monthly except June and August from Gainesville, Florida

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Frank Clouser, overlooking the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

## Brief history of the AT

The Appalachian Trail was America's first great trail. Completed in 1937, the AT is said to be the largest volunteer-run undertaking on the planet. Its management is coordinated by the non-profit Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) formed in 1925. When created, it was the longest footpath in the world but has since been surpassed by the Pacific Crest and the Continental Divide trails in the western U.S.

It all began in 1921 when Benton MacKaye wrote a proposal for the Appalachian Trail that was first published in an architectural journal. MacKaye envisioned a trail along the ridge crests of the Appalachian Mountain chain from New England to the Deep South, connecting farms, work camps, and study camps that

see TRAIL, page 5

## Adventures on the Appalachian Trail

**BY KRISTINA JACKSON**

In the spring and summer of 2003, Frank Clouser and his friend Tom Copeland hiked the Appalachian Trail. Unlike many who start the journey, these guys did the whole 2,172 mile trail. Frank's journal entries were sent back and published in *The Gainesville Sun*. Come see some of Frank's spectacular photos and hear of his trials and tribulations on the

trail.

From Georgia to Maine the Appalachian Trail is no picnic. This is a commitment of about 5 months and lots of blood, sweat and tears. But it does pass through some of the most beautiful mountain areas on the East Coast – the Great Smokey Mountains, Shenandoah Valley and the Poconos. Tough hiking with some great views.

### GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, Jan. 8, 7:30 PM

→ Alachua County Public Library • Meeting room A ←  
Downtown, East University Ave. and SW 4 Street

“MILES TO GO—  
ADVENTURES ON THE  
APPALACHIAN TRAIL”  
FRANK CLOUSER  
UF GRADUATE STUDENT

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# Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including multiple damages and civil penalties).

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- If an issue within the stockholder or security holder is a trustee, include in items 10 and 11 the name of the person or corporation for whom the trustee is acting. Also include the names and addresses of individuals who are stockholders who own at least 1 percent of issue of the total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities of the publishing corporation. In item 11, if none, check the box. One blank sheet if more space is required.
- Be sure to furnish all circulative information called for in item 10. Free circulation must be shown in item 15d, e, and f.
- If the publication had second-class status before or is granted or requests publication, this Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation must be published. It must be printed in any issue in October. If the publication is not published during October, the first issue printed after October.
- In item 10, indicate the date of the issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
- Item 17 must be signed.

Failure to file or furnish a Statement of Ownership may lead to suspension of second-class authorization.

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 National: <http://www.sierraclub.org> • Local: <http://www.gatorsierra.org>

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## PHONE TREE

Please contact Kathy Cantwell at 395-7441 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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# Bush's Energy Bill

**BY MARISA VISEL**

Regional Conservation Organizer for Sierra Club

Developed three years ago in the back-room meetings of the Bush/Cheney Energy Task Force, the Bush administration's energy bill was clearly written for big energy companies, by big energy companies, to benefit big energy companies.

The Bush energy plan does little or nothing to increase the reliability of the electricity grid or reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Instead, this collection of subsidies, tax breaks, and loopholes will cost taxpayers billions of dollars, while threatening our air, drinking water, and public lands.

The Energy Bill is a laundry list of special favors for polluters, and includes the following erroneous provisions:

## Threatens Coastal Areas

- Weakens states' ability to have a say in projects that affect their coasts.
- Creates incentives for expanded offshore oil and gas drilling and rewards coastal states allowing more offshore drilling closer to their shorelines.

## Endangers Public Health

- Exempts all oil and gas construction activities, including roads, pipeline corridors, refineries, etc., from having to obtain a permit controlling polluted stormwater runoff as is required under the Clean Water Act.
- Threatens drinking water sources by exempting the underground injection of chemicals during oil and gas development from Safe Drinking Water Act regulation.

## Costs Consumers and Taxpayers Billions

- Shields companies that make, use, or market MTBE (a gasoline additive known to contaminate drinking water) from federal and state liability lawsuits, letting manufacturers off the hook for cleaning up their own messes and saddling local communities with a \$29 billion cleanup cost. The General

Accounting Office estimates that at least 20,273 MTBE-contaminated sites remain in Florida—the most in the country.

- Dramatically increases air pollution with huge new incentives for burning coal, oil and gas. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill's price tag exceeds \$50 billion over the next decade, adding \$18 billion to the deficit.
- Creates a new, first-ever \$6 billion tax break for operating new nuclear reactors and a new, first-ever \$1.5 billion tax break for burning coal.
- Repeals the Public Utility Holding Company Act, the main law to protect consumers from market manipulation, fraud, and abuse in the electricity sector.



## Fails to Reduce Dependence on Oil

- Fails to take any step whatsoever to require that the nation reduce its dependence on oil or improve the fuel economy of our cars, trucks and SUVs.
- Makes it more difficult for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to undertake oil-saving increases in automobile fuel efficiency standards.

## Threatens Public Lands

- Makes oil and gas drilling the dominant use of our public lands.
- Establishes a new process for the siting of electricity transmission lines on federal lands, including portions of the National Wilderness Preservation System, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and the National Park system.
- Allows the Interior Secretary to designate utility and pipeline corridors across public lands without seeking public input through a land use planning process.
- Thankfully, this destructive bill has hit a snag in the Senate. On November 21st,

Republican leaders found themselves two votes short of the 60 votes needed to end the filibuster and cut off debate on the bill. Both Senator Graham and Senator Nelson voted against this bill.

## At last...a victory!

Unfortunately, we have not seen the last of this dreadful energy legislation. As expected Republican leaders vowed to revisit the bill after Congress reconvenes in January.

America needs a smart energy policy, an energy bill that looks forward, not one mired in a past of dirty fossil fuels. If we make the right energy choices today, we can have cleaner air, less global warming pollution, vibrant public lands and reasonably priced power far into the future.

We deserve a safe, clean, and affordable energy future. We can:

Curb our oil dependence and global warming pollution by making our vehicles go further on a gallon of gas. Raising miles per gallon standards to 40 mpg for cars, SUV's and other light trucks saves consumers at least \$45 billion each year at the gas pump, and saves three million barrels of oil per day by 2013.

We can increase electricity from renewable energy sources to 20 percent by 2020.

We can increase the efficiency of our buildings and appliances. Federal agencies would save \$1 billion annually if they installed energy-efficient technologies, such as compact fluorescent light bulbs and efficient appliances.

Electricity consumers should receive reliable electricity at fair prices. The Public Utility Holding Company Act should be strengthened so consumers are protected from Enron-like trading deals.

By preserving the public participation and review requirements of landmark laws like the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act, we can protect America's special places for generations to come.

Instead of taking responsible steps forward, the Bush energy bill will take us backward, elevating the profits of the polluting corporations over the public good and putting our communities at risk.

# Why Should We Oppose The FTAA?

**BY LINDA POLLINI**

When Miami closes down its business district for five days and spends 8 million dollars on police training, plus full riot gear, gas masks, rubber bullets, tear gas, helicopters, harbor patrol boats, mounted police, tanks, and hum-vees, something serious is happening. This overwhelming "show of force" was unlike any I have ever experienced.

On November 20 many Sierrans met in Miami to express their opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The protest was sponsored by the United Auto Workers and the United Steelworkers Union, AFL-CIO and supported by a variety of other groups including the national Sierra Club. The auto workers held signs that said "Fair Trade not Free Trade." What is this all about? For auto workers it's about their jobs going to the lowest bidder in foreign countries.

For Sierrans, it all about the environment. It is wrong and unfair to compete in a global market place with countries that offer lower priced goods because they're not required to enforce environmental protections.

As written, the FTAA would weaken public safeguards for such risky "service" industries as water supply, sewage disposal, pollution control and more. It would give foreign water companies special powers that domestic companies do not have to demand immunity from our clean water laws.

Under proposed new investor rules, the home countries of foreign companies in the United States would gain new powers to sue taxpayers for cash damages if environmental laws or other safeguards affect their profits.

If any of Florida's water is privatized while the FTAA is in effect, provisions on "market access" would prevent the state from setting limits on the amount of public water sold to water companies based in South America, Canada, or subsidiaries of European water companies.

Instead of services and investor rules now under negotiations, the public needs trade rules that protect the environment,



TOP: Miami police gather.  
 ABOVE: Table with protest signs in Miami. RIGHT: (from the left) Steve Mills (Washington D.C. office), Linda Pollini (SSJ Chair), Dan Seligman (Responsible Trade Program Director), Jon Ullman (Miami Sierra Club)

uphold the authority of federal, state and local governments, and strengthen communities while promoting commerce around the world. New rules shouldn't give greater rights to foreign investors than U.S. citizens have under U.S. law. Additionally, cuts in production subsidies for global agribusiness would reduce the crop surpluses that harm family farmers the world over and allow government to redirect funds toward sustainable agriculture, rural development, and conservation.

FTAA would include all countries in

Latin America, North America, and the Caribbean, except for Cuba. FTAA negotiations, which have been going on for several years without substantive input from civil society organizations, are scheduled to finish in 2005. If the vote comes up in the U.S. Congress under fast track rules, no amendments can be made to the agreement and only an up or down vote will be allowed.

We oppose the current FTAA because it would promote commerce by weakening environmental, health and safety standards.

# MARION COUNTY NEWS

## Seeking Kindred Spirits in Marion County

BY JOHN DUNN

Two and a half years ago the Sierra Club spawned the Smart Growth Coalition of North Central Florida as part of its nationwide anti-sprawl initiative.

Based in Ocala, we remain a vibrant and active group, trying to do our part to limit sprawl and bad growth in our part of the state.

Our main focus so far has been to sponsor numerous forums and workshops on growth issues to alter the debate in Marion County concerning the environment and population growth. We think we're succeeding.

At our last big meeting, two prominent citizens—Brad Rogers, the editor of the *Ocala Star Banner*, and County Commissioner Andy Kesselring—spoke passionately to the audience on the threat to North Florida's water supply, raised by the Council of 100.

What we've been saying for years is no longer viewed as the talk of alarmists. Instead, it is becoming a mainstream concern, as it should be.

### TRAIL, from page 1

would be populated by eastern urbanites needing a break from the tensions of industrialization. His version of the trail would never see fruition.

A second dynamic personality, Myron Avery contributed greatly to the AT effort by recruiting like-minded volunteers and locating most of the route himself. Avery's goal was simply a hiking trail and that is how the AT has turned out. By 1934, 1,937 miles of the trail had been blazed through the efforts of fewer than 100 volunteers.

### Who hikes it?

As of October 2003, 7,354 hike completions had been reported to ATC.

Many of us in Smart Growth are also working almost every weekend gathering petitions for the Florida Hometown Democracy Campaign—that is, the statewide grassroots effort to change the state constitution.

This amendment will enable citizens to vote on any changes developers want to make to the land use elements of comprehensive plans in our state. This would take it out of the hands of local officials who can easily be corrupted.

## OUR MAIN FOCUS SO FAR HAS BEEN TO SPONSOR NUMEROUS FORUMS AND WORKSHOPS ON GROWTH ISSUES TO ALTER THE DEBATE IN MARION COUNTY CONCERNING THE ENVIRONMENT AND POPULATION GROWTH. WE THINK WE'RE SUCCEEDING.

This may be the only powerful tool left to Floridians to save our state from oblivion. The reception we get from the public is very positive on this issue, but we are not

able to reach the number of people we would like to get their signatures on these petitions.

Florida needs your help and we are asking those Sierrans who live in Marion County and want to get active in their local community to call fellow Sierrans John or Susan Dunn at 352-694-4461, or Margy Bielling at 685-2434.

And we also challenge Sierrans in Alachua and other counties to mobilize. Statewide efforts so far have generated about 25,000 signatures. But we need 500,000 to put this issue on the November 2004 ballot!

That means there's an enormous amount work yet to do. Contact campaign manager Barbara Herrin at [Floridahometowndemocracy.com](http://Floridahometowndemocracy.com) for more

information.

*(Editor's note: You may find out more about the Hometown Democracy Initiative by going to [www.floridahometowndemocracy.com](http://www.floridahometowndemocracy.com))*

According to the Appalachian Trail Conference website ([www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org)) 1,750 hikers started the trek in 2003 and 309 completed it. Other statistics claim less than 10% of the people who start will finish the trail in any given year.

In 1948, Earl V. Shaffer became the first to report a thru-hike, walking the entire trail from Georgia to Maine. He hiked again — this time from Maine to Georgia — in 1965. On his third thru-hike, in 1998, 50 years after his first hike, he became the oldest thru-hiker at age 79.

Though located in or near some of the most populated areas of the U.S., the trail can feel remote. Depending on your hiking speed it is usually 4 to 10 days between towns and Clouser says, "On a crowded day I would see three other people."

Of course there are conservation issues involved in protecting the AT and its surrounding land. Currently, more than 80 million people live within the 14 states the AT passes through. Increasing development threatens picturesque vistas, wildlife habitat, water sources, small villages, farms, and valuable historic sites along the Trail that lie outside the corridor. The National Trails System Act of 1968 requires the federal government to purchase for protection a 1,000-foot wide AT corridor. This goal is not yet achieved but four of the 14 states have complete corridor protection.

*For more information and the perspective of a novice hiker, read Bill Bryson's [A Walk in the Woods](#) (1998). Much of the information for this article was garnered from the ATC website.*

# Yes, Sierra Club is heading in the right direction...

**BY JOHN SWINGLE**

Conservation Chair, Florida Chapter

I am a retired Fire Department Battalion Chief and now devote a great deal of my time as a volunteer in Sierra Club. As such, I usually don't respond to letters or articles. I believe everyone has the right to their own opinion and more importantly, the right to express it. However, when I read one with as much misinformation as David Auth's article in last month's Suwannee-St. John newsletter, I felt obligated to respond.

Sierra Club is unique among the major environmental organizations in this country because we have the benefit of both volunteer and professional activists. It is this arrangement that makes us the largest, most effective and most respected environmental organization in the country.

In Florida the main office is in St Petersburg with an office in Miami for Everglades issues and a new office being opened in Gainesville. There has never been an office in Fort Myers as David said. All of the staff but one are grant dependent

for their positions and their salary does not come out of our conservation budget. As a matter of fact, only 15% of Sierra's conservation budget is funded from member dues. The other 85% is raised through restricted gifts from major donors and foundations.

The \$50,000 David refers to in the chapter budget for a lobbyist covers a lot more than that. \$5,000 was used to pay for a second lobbyist during session. \$1,600 was allocated to the 16 local groups. Each was given a hundred dollars to offset any expenses they incurred while lobbying. \$3,800 pays for the small office the chapter rents in Tallahassee and \$1,000 was given to Florida League of Conservation Voters to help them to publish their legislative scorecard each year. Our lobbyist gets \$31,000 as an annual salary out of which she has to pay her own taxes and social security plus an extra 7.5% or \$2,325 social security because she is an independent contractor.

She works all year and as a contract employee, gets no vacation, sick time or benefits. As a contract employee, she is required by Sierra and IRS rules to have other clients.

David's allegation that Sierra is partisan is simply not true. A substantial number of Sierra members are Republican and we have supported candidates from both major parties. After a careful and thorough process, we will endorse the best candidate no matter which party he/she belongs to. The fact that we endorse more Democrats than Republicans speaks more to their respective philosophies and platforms than partisanship on our part.

## A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SIERRA MEMBERS ARE REPUBLICAN, AND WE HAVE SUPPORTED CANDIDATES FROM BOTH MAJOR PARTIES.

I believe we are fortunate to have the dedicated volunteers and professional staff that can work together for our families and our future. I am grateful for every activist and issue chair we have and I'm also grateful for the high caliber and professionalism of each Sierra staff member in Florida.

In answer to David Auth, I say we are not only heading in the right direction, we are leading the way.

## SIERRA CLUB BRAND COFFEE NOW AVAILABLE

Ready for your morning coffee but not the guilt that the supermarket version can produce? Sierra Club has the answer. Now you can support the Club's work, fair wages for farmers and a greener earth, all by imbibing your favorite stimulant.

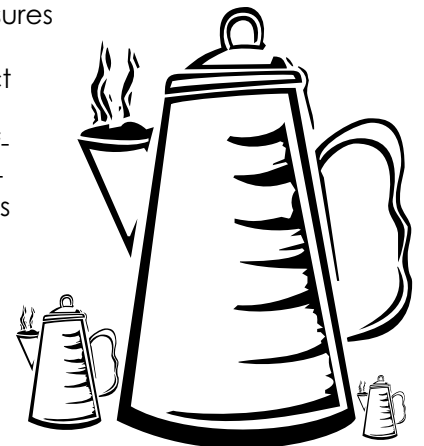
Coffee is the world's second most-traded commodity after petroleum products. Most coffee is grown on large plantations—often where native forests once stood. Sierra Club coffee is shade grown, organically, and fair trade certified.

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Sierra Club coffee is a deep roasted blend of Latin American and Indonesian coffee that bridges the gap between tasting good and doing good. It is roasted, packaged and distributed by Sacred Grounds Organic Coffee Roasters in Arcata, CA. It is attractively packaged with the Club logo on the bag and also makes a fine gift.

To order, contact Roberta Gastmeyer at [afn61265@afn.org](mailto:afn61265@afn.org) or 352-336-2404.

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# Thank You Downtown Festival Volunteers


Thank You to Downtown Festival Volunteers

We had a great time at Gainesville's Downtown Festival last November thanks to the following people who helped gather signatures on petitions, hand out Sierra Club information and sell t-shirts, coffee and notecards: Matthew Hurst, Ted LaCombe, Whitey

Markle, Rob Brinkman, Tom Southern, Diane DePuydt. Special thanks go to Gracie Coffey and Joanne Auth who spent most of the weekend helping out at the event. Committed volunteers are what make the local Sierra successful and just a few hours of your time can make a difference. Please consider joining us at the next event.

# Congratulations to our Seven Elected SSJ EXCOM Members

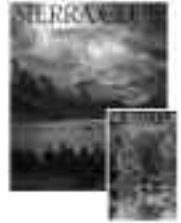
The new & re-elected members of EXCOM were unveiled Dec. 15. They are: Dwight Adams, David Auth, Karen Garren, Roberta Gastmeyer, Linda Pollini, Sherry Steiner and Christopher Thurow. SSJ Sierra group executive committee members serve for two years. This year seven of our 15 seats were voted on. Specific positions will be determined at the EXCOM meeting on Dec. 18.



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## SIERRA CLUB CALENDAR SALE



Each year, our local Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club Group sells these lovely calendars as a fundraiser, and many of us don't know what we would do without them. And, you save money! We sell the calendars at a discount off the cover price you would pay in a retail outlet.

The Wilderness wall calendar (\$11) shows a month at a glance, with a gorgeous nature scene at the top of each page. The Engagement calendar (\$12) has one page per week, each with a breathtaking photo of the natural world.

Calendars are available at all General Meetings. If you live outside of Gainesville or are unable to attend our meetings, call Joanne Auth at 352.371.1991 to discuss other arrangements. If you are a member who has contacts where the calendars may be sold to co-workers/friends, call for information about taking a few to sell. We appreciate the help!



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# JANUARY 2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**January 8, Thursday, 7:30 PM.** General meeting at the Alachua County Public Library Downtown Gainesville, 401 East University Ave. meeting room A. **IMPORTANT: The meeting location has changed from its usual location.**

**January 15, Thursday, 7 PM.** EXCOM meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Church library, 4225 NW 34 Street, Gainesville

**January 30, Friday, 7 PM,** Newsletter folding party at Scott Camil's. FMI s.camil@att.net or 375-2563.

# Look!

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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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