



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

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Master Naturalists

BY KATHY CANTWELL

The Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) is an adult education program developed by the University of Florida and provided by registered FMNP Instructors from partner organizations. FMNP training is for persons interested in learning more about Florida's environment and conservation issues.

The FMNP is appropriate for persons at all levels of knowledge and will benefit Florida citizens and seasonal residents, teachers seeking educational contact hours, and others wishing to increase their knowledge for use in educational programs as volunteers, employees, and ecotourism guides. Additional information for prospective students is available on the FMNP web site: www.MasterNaturalist.org.

The FMNP includes courses in three subject areas—Freshwater Wetlands, Coastal Systems, and Upland Habitats. Each FMNP subject area is taught separately as an independent course.

Each FMNP course consists of 40 educational contact hours, including classroom learning, field trips, and practical experience in interpretation. Cost per course is \$200.

Students receive detailed course manuals and, upon completion, University of

Florida certificates, patches, and pins denoting their area of expertise (e.g., Wetlands Naturalist). Master Naturalist graduates are registered in the University of Florida database of Florida Master Naturalists. The FMNP does not provide University credit toward a degree-seeking program.



Come hear more about this exciting course and how you may apply at our next Sierra program on May 6.

GENERAL MEETING
Thursday, May 6, 7:30 PM
 Nematology/Entomology Building on the UF campus
 (Just east of the Performing Arts Center. Turn right off
 Hull Road on to Natural Areas Road.)

**HOW AND WHY
 YOU SHOULD
 BECOME A MASTER
 NATURALIST**

LORRAINE S. WILLIAM
 ALACHUA COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM COORDINATOR



FMNP Testimonials

FROM FMNP WEB SITE

Graduates of the FMNP have contributed in large and small ways to environmental awareness in Florida. The ripple effect that has spread from FMNP Instructors to FMNP graduates, and from there to school groups, family and friends, neighbors and communities is helping many reconnect with nature.

Many graduates say they found jobs through or because of their FMNP experience. Others say that the classes enlightened them and provided them with tools to greater enjoy Florida natural areas.

MASTER NATURALISTS SAY:

“The FMNP experience opened my eyes to how much I love and enjoy nature - and that I wanted to learn more.”

“I got a new job because of the FMNP final project. It was great to meet others interested in nature.”

“After FMNP I began volunteering with a local environmental organization and D.E.P. After 4 months I was hired by DEP for environmental education.”

“FMNP has broadened my knowledge and expanded my thinking, which I passed on to my fellow rangers and park visitors; I have teamed up with a FMNP instructor to offer river field trips for future FMNP classes.”

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The Changing Scene Of Alachua County and Gainesville Environmental Politics

BY DAVID AUTH

Robert Hutchinson said at a recent Sustainable Alachua County board meeting that county politics reached an historic turning point during the 2002 Democratic Party primary for his and Dave Newport's commission seats. When the population of any Florida county reaches around 250,000, the development interests can easily spend \$100,000 or more on elections they are fearful of losing. The stakes are so great that this expense is insignificant. Developers from then on successfully buy elections, and it's "Orlando, here we come," faster and faster. Thus, it will be a big blow to people who love a relatively natural outdoors that Penny Wheat declared she is not running for a fifth term on the Alachua County Commission.

Wheat was the only excellent candidate left who consistently won while spending \$25,000 or less, the most she has ever spent for any of her four campaigns. She didn't

have to spend \$100,000, because the majority of those who vote trust her and because she works hard while in office to protect her base: citizens who value healthy ecosystems because they want healthy people.

Jim Notestein started political activism in Alachua County in 1984, two years before Commissioner Wheat was first elected in 1986. *The Gainesville Sun* even endorsed Wheat the first time she ran (before John Fitzwater appeared on its scene). Notestein and Wheat approved an 11-point resolution one night when the opposition commissioners were out of town. At the next meeting, the majority was back and voted the resolution down. Wheat said this week that 10 of those eleven points have since been institutionalized.

CHAIR'S



CORNER

For a very short time many years later (1998-2002), environmentalists enjoyed what may be a Pyrrhic victory, consistent 4 to 1 votes in favor of keeping the remnants of natural Florida here in Alachua County. The environmental catastrophes since 2002 have been numerous—money interests overturned a strong county comprehensive plan (Sierra is legally challenging this arrogance), more and more developments approved east and west of I-75, Wal-Mart trying to stonewall the locals to pollute the headwaters of Hogtown Creek and almost getting away with it on the first try, Gainesville legally destroying the last of its natural wetlands this week in the names of infill and mitigation. And the thousands of new residents keep coming, knowing Alachua County is heaven on Earth compared to what they left behind.

**MOST UNFORTUNATELY, FLORIDA DOES NOT
HAVE STRONG LAWS TO PROTECT CITIZENS
WHO INVEST THEIR LIVES IN ONE PLACE
AND DON'T WANT THAT PLACE TRASHED.**

Unfortunately, these people almost never have any historical perspective about how healthy North Central Florida ecosystems

see SCENE, page 5

Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

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

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E-MAIL TREE

Please contact Kristina Jackson at 372-2464 by phone or by e-mailing kristinajackson@cox.net if you would like to assist with the Sierra Club e-mail tree.

FOLDING PARTY

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

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Come One, Come All

BY KAREN GARREN

We are so lucky, here in North Central Florida, to have access to some deceptively beautiful and challenging outdoor opportunities. The woods, the swamps, the springs and the coasts are each unique and contain hidden treasures.

Have you been as fortunate as I have to be able to experience the Real Florida? Do you feel that you can never become saturated with learning the intricacies of diversity? Have you had the background and suitable mentors to know danger and delicacy? There are always new experiences over the hill and around the bend but you have to know where to look.

Not everyone is so fortunate. Many residents are from other regions, new to the area, and can't appreciate North Central Florida's natural resources until shown. Can you help? Would you enjoy revisiting some of your favorite hikes, paddles, beaches and introducing new-comers to their pleasures? With Sierra Club's Outing Leader Training you can learn how to plan, conduct reconnaissance, research issues, and lead with utmost safety small groups on trips of your choice. With 5-10 interested participants, Regional Coordinator Rudy Scheffer will conduct a training workshop for the Suwannee/St. John's group in mid-June. Non-Sierrans are welcome.

Would you like to visit new areas yourself? You can improve your own confidence in spending time on outdoors activities.

You with your family and friends can experience Florida wonders safely and comfortably. Come on, you know this is something you've always wanted to do for yourself and others, come be a Leader and show others the way to fun! Please contact Karen Garren at 352-371-0008 or IluvFla@GRU.net for more information.



COMING UP:

Outings Committee meeting, Wednesday, May 12, at 7:30 p.m., at Karen Garren's house. We will be discussing the Outings Leader's training workshop and setting up potential outings for next autumn and winter. If you have

any ideas, come join us. What do you think of this one: South Florida Everglades Restoration Project? Please call 352-371-0008 for more information.

Leon Sinks, the weekend of May 15. We can camp at beautiful Waculla Springs for 2-3 nights. Bring your watercraft for canoeing the Wassissa/Aucilla rivers, where the one goes underground a canal was built by slaves at great cost of human life to connect one the other. Be prepared for some spectacular examples of karst topography on the 3-5 mile sinks trail hike. For the adventurous, other possibilities include: Marianna Caverns, McClay Gardens, Apalachicola, Ochlockney, and St. Mark's Wildlife Refuge.

In June, we can camp 2-3 nights at Rainbow Springs State Park, another good place for hiking and canoeing.

Remember, all these outings are educational and open to the public. See you outdoors!

OUTING REVIEW:

Cumberland Island National Seashore

The tide was out as the Cumberland Queen ferryboat pulled up to the pier. After a few cautionary comments, park personnel turned visitors loose. Our small group of eight hiked the river trail through coastal hammock woods, marveling at magnificent oaks and stately palms. The trail opened to a breathtaking vista of the Dungeness ruins framed in the wrought-iron gate arch. Tall chimneys rose above vine-clad walls, stairways rambled to empty halls. A big, red, wild stallion was feeling frisky, charging the

others, rearing and kicking, letting all in the vicinity know who was king.

We tried to deduce some of the tumbled structures. This was the green house but was that a pump house for the fountain? We visited the old cemetery then walked down the beach for a mile to the Sea Camp dune crossing. The tide had turned and shelling was moderately good. Back at the office/museum we watched a video on the natural history of the island while waiting for the ferry back to St. Mary's.

High points: dolphins (porpoise) surfacing rhythmically along the river, kids on the ferry tossing chips to sea gulls and squealing as they'd take one from their fingers!

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To Burn or Not to Burn

BY ROB BRINKMAN

In my article last January, I reported on Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) plans for a coal fired power plant. I have been following the issue closely as a member of the Environmental Protection Advisory Committee (EPAC) to the Alachua County Commission (BOCC). The Commission has asked EPAC, along with the county's Environmental Protection Department (EPD), to evaluate GRU's proposal and make recommendations. The BOCC has also allotted funds to hire an outside expert consultant.

While there are many issues, perhaps the most basic is the question of the need for a new generating plant of the proposed scale—220 megawatts (MW) net output. GRU currently has about 40 percent reserve capacity; in fact, a year ago GRU was the only utility in the state to be rated by the Public Service Commission (PSC) as "far exceeding reserve capacity." Last April, GRU filed documents with the PSC that called for the construction of a 75MW gas turbine to be installed by the year 2010, which would supply adequate capacity through at least 2015. However, GRU now insists that more capacity is needed. GRU also sells power to outside customers like the City of Alachua and Clay Electric Co-op and also recently bought 1,100 more customers. Clearly there are other options to building a large coal-fired plant.

While GRU has some conservation programs, it does not and is not required by state law to invest in conservation efforts, as

heavily as Investor Owned Utilities (IOUs).

Conservation should be a much higher priority for GRU. They scheduled three workshops before the City Commission: the first two were on the need for additional capacity and the need for renewable energy, respectively; the workshop on con-

servation was the last priority and will occur after this article goes to press. In the previous workshops GRU has made it clear that they consider this coal fired power plant the only viable solution. Other utilities, such as Austin Energy in Texas, provide free programmable thermostats to customers that not only help customers reduce their energy usage by 10-20 percent year round but also allow the utility to cycle the compressor off for no more than ten minutes every half hour during times of peak demand. This strategy is known as demand side management; in other words, the utility manages peak demand by turning off some of its customer loads for short durations on a rotating basis. This reduces the need for reserve capacity during peak demand periods. Other utilities have given away free compact fluorescent bulbs to their customers to conserve energy; these bulbs put out the same light as a conventional 60-watt bulb while using only 15 watts. Such energy conservation techniques reduce pollution and reduce resource consumption and still meet our energy needs.

Which brings me to the reasons that GRU should not build another coal fired power plant; mercury, sulfur and particulates.

Even at very low levels of exposure to mercury, especially before birth, children are vulnerable to a range of adverse impacts, including neuro-cognitive deficits and, later, cardiovascular toxicity. For adults, eating mercury tainted fish cancels out the cardiovascular benefits of eating fish. Mercury is a contaminant in coal and,

while there are expensive control technologies, none remove all the mercury. When coal is burned, mercury will be emitted.

Sulphur occurs in varying levels in coal, and, while there are reduction methods, they have their own costs. GRU wants to build a Circulating Fluidized Bed plant that can burn a mix of fuels such as petroleum coke or pet coke (a waste product of oil refining), and high sulphur coal that, of course, is the cheaper variety. However, the process to remove all this sulfur uses substantial quantities of lime rock and will result in increased CO2 emissions. There will also be considerable quantities of by-product which may be land filled on site.

Particulates occur in a range of sizes but are the most harmful because they are less than 2.5 microns in diameter, can penetrate deeper into our lungs, and are known as PM 2.5. GRU has stated that overall emissions for both the 220MW CFB and the existing coal plant, Deerhaven 2 (DH2) will be less than is currently being emitted. This applies to only nitrous oxides, a smog contributor, and sulfur dioxide. Even though they plan to install retrofit controls on DH2, particulate emissions will increase over current levels.

None of the three reasons listed above would apply to a Gas Turbine. In fact, GRU has recently stated in a report that one option would be to upgrade Deerhaven 1 (DH), a natural gas powered steam turbine, by converting it to a combined cycle (CC) plant, as was recently done at the Kelly generating station in downtown Gainesville. Combined cycle plants use a gas turbine engine to turn a generator and then generate steam from the hot exhaust gases of the turbine and use this steam to power a turbine to generate additional power. This is also the technology used at the generating plant owned by Progress Energy (an IOU) on the UF campus. This CC technology is clean and efficient. GRU is concerned about the volatility of natural gas prices in the future and, in any case, it currently is somewhat more expensive than coal. However, sometimes you get what you pay for and, overall, the cheapest source of electricity may not be the best for our community.

GRU has proposed to add about 30

SCENE, from page 2

once were and how far they have deteriorated under the onslaught of humanity. Have you seen a chicken turtle cross the road lately?

Personally, I am leaning toward consolidated government for Alachua County, as our last hope that the population can still be leveled off here before it reaches 400,000 or more.

Thankfully, we now have Pegeen Hanrahan as Mayor, but she can't do it all. Every motion still takes a second and four votes on the Gainesville City Commission. Nor can Mike Byerly save us at the county level, if he gets re-elected. It all comes down to money and who has it, because too many people forget that you can't eat, drink, or breathe money. More and more, that money is in the hands of a few rich developers determined to get richer. Some disguise themselves as "farmers" to avoid taxes using the lucrative agricultural exemption, until the time is ripe for build-out.

The University of Florida administration obviously wants the area to become more and more urbanized, even to the extent of destroying its Natural Areas Teaching Laboratory to help Clark Butler get richer. Most of the nearly 50,000 students don't have a long-term stake in the county and, thus, don't vote in local elections. So, incredibly, they take themselves out of the equation.

Most unfortunately, Florida does not have strong laws to protect citizens who invest their lives in one place and don't want that place trashed. The Growth Management Act of 1985 has been systematically dismantled by the Florida Legislature, because it ran counter to development interests. So now some environmentalists, including officially the Florida Chapter of Sierra Club, think passing the Hometown Democracy referendum, rather than fixing the GMA, is the way to go.

Gainesville has its own regional utility, GRU, which keeps property taxes lower

and services higher than otherwise possible based on the city's high poverty level and its high percentage of non-taxed government land and buildings.

What does the county have, when its tax base is constantly whittled away through Gainesville, Alachua, Newberry and High Springs' annexations? It competes financially by electing a development-owned commission majority, which pumps the declining tax base back up by rubber-stamping more and more sprawl development. That is how the county "competes" for public money with its cities to keep its duplicated services in place. Consolidation eliminates this internal government competition for public dollars.

Consolidation will greatly reduce inefficiencies resulting from duplication of services, especially for public safety, which is the biggest expense and is rising exponen-

tion size causing an expected paradigm shift (I don't really know what ex-County Commissioner Hutchinson thinks about consolidation).

And what about the public lands? The very large historic corporate forestry interests concentrated in North Florida have already decided to move to South America to grow paper pulp and are selling their huge holdings to build homes rather than planting trees, or, much more positively for us, consolidating and turning to longer cutting rotations to grow construction lumber. Unfortunately, with more people complaining about fires getting out of control and smoke in the air, comes the corporate decision to use herbicides rather than controlled burning for site preparation, destroying upland plant biodiversity, followed by nearly immediate invertebrate and vertebrate extinction. It is an open

THERE ARE FEW THINGS MORE DEMEANING AND UNDEMOCRATIC THAN TO GIVE PUBLIC TESTIMONY TO ELECTED POLITICIANS WHO HAVE ALREADY MADE UP THEIR MINDS TO VOTE AGAINST THE PUBLIC MAJORITY BEFORE THEY EVER ENTER THE MEETING ROOM.

tially because denser population, coupled with long-term poverty and a huge North Florida prison population, breeds crime.

If we can elect and select the right people to govern and lead us and always fill the meeting room with active informed citizens (the Big If), consolidation makes land use decisions easier to finalize and reduces the power of the developers and their seemingly unstoppable financial resources.

The historic checks and balances of county and city governments, and the extra representation they bring, would be gone, but keeping these low density perks means our area will become more and more urbanized. It is now a required trade-off, the direct result of reaching what Robert Hutchinson correctly sees as a fixed popu-

question whether enough already degraded land can be bought to add to the degraded public holdings to stop the biodiversity collapse, to save our Earth Services, Inc. We must manage private lands properly.

There are few things more demeaning and undemocratic than to give public testimony to elected politicians who have already made up their minds to vote against the public majority before they ever enter the meeting room. Since it is nearly impossible to get the wrong people to vote correctly through public pressure, we must elect the right people, who always fight for the public good. Being free to find those citizens and elect them is the reason why so many people have died over the centuries to keep the United States of America.

FMNP, from page 1

"After the FMNP, I conducted part of a workshop to nursing students on the Benefits of Natural Areas to Health Professionals."

"The FMNP helped me to obtain a \$16,000 grant."

"I'm now considering taking formal coursework in biological sciences. The FMNP helped re-affirm my commitment to community service."

"I use FMNP information in my ele-

mentary science classes—kids "oohhh, ahhh, and wow " over it."

"The (FMNP) course broadened and enhanced my knowledge base . . . I have become more assertive and confident . . . and more effective at fostering stewardship in others."

Let The Water Flow

TRANSFORM TAMAMI TRAIL INTO THE EVERGLADES SKYWAY.

BY JONATHAN ULLMAN

Everglades Field Representative

Tamiami Trail, the 70-mile, two-lane road that links the east and west coasts of south Florida from Miami to Naples, cuts through the heart of the Everglades, interrupting the "natural" flow of water, affecting America's most threatened wetlands wilderness.

To protect and enhance the "natural" flow of water to the Everglades, the Tamiami Trail, built in 1928, must be transformed into a modern "skyway," an environmentally sound elevated roadway. The restricted flow of water through 19 sets of "tiny" holes is severely damaging the habitats of many plants and animals throughout the Everglades system. However, a skyway would allow unrestricted flow and restoration of Shark River Slough, the central artery of the Everglades. Visitors to Louisiana and its majestic bayous can view these treasures on elevated highways while imposing minimal impact on water flow and wildlife movement.

Congress approved a \$7.8 billion plan to restore and preserve the Everglades, for Floridians and the nation. The Tamiami

Skyway would provide one of the greatest benefits for water and wildlife in the entire Everglades restoration plan.

Right now the Army Corps of Engineers is looking at options for the future of Tamiami Trail, but they are restricted by an underfunded budget line for this project. The cost to build the 11-mile Skyway, according to the Corps' analysis, is \$150 million. A half-mile bridge will be built under the Modified Water deliveries project, which can then be expanded into the full Skyway in CERP if the funds are available.

In 2001, the Science Coordination Team of the South Florida Restoration Task Force recommended in a consensus letter to Colonel May that the entire 11-mile section should be raised. Only by building the Skyway, they said, can full restoration be achieved.

Send your comments to:

U.S. Senator Bob Graham, email: bob_graham@graham.senate.gov,

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, email: senator@billnelson.senate.gov

Sample note to policy makers (feel free to compose your own):

I would like the 11-mile elevated

est practices.

While this process may be better than open on-site burning, it is controversial. A better source of gas may be the organic portion of Alachua County's municipal solid waste stream. Mixed with sludge from GRU's wastewater treatment plants, this could be broken down by anaerobic bacteria to produce methane gas. GRU currently produces electricity from a methane gas-powered turbine at the County's southwest landfill.

In March, the executive committee of the Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club voted to oppose GRU's plans to build another coal power plant. Obviously there are many other strategies, the first of which should be conservation. Renewable energy sources such as solar continue to decline in costs; it is time to meet our energy needs in a sus-

SIERRA CLUB POLITICAL TRAINING

Saturday and Sunday, May 22 and 23.

At Rollins College in Winter Park.

Florida Chapter Sierra Club is conducting political training for Sierra Club members only. The meetings will be a all day Saturday and Sunday morning. You must pre-register, the agenda and other information will be provided to registrants.

We'll order out lunch, or attendees can brown bag it. Restaurant arrangements will be made for dinner. Registrants will be provided a list of reasonably priced motels.

Attendees should familiarize themselves in advance with our Sierra Club Political Compliance Guidelines.

For more information contact Karen Orr, Florida Chapter Political Committee Vice Chair, via email thibeau48@bellsouth.net

Tamiami Skyway funded and constructed within the next five years because full restoration, according to top state and federal scientists working on the Everglades, cannot occur without it. The Skyway is one of the most important, ecologically beneficial projects of the Everglades plan, but it was inexplicably underfunded in the 2000 Water Resources Development Act. The Skyway symbolizes restoration. Please do what it takes to build it now."

BURN, from page 4

MW of wood biomass capacity by utilizing chipped wood leftover from tree harvesting operations. Currently this wood, which is regarded as in the way of the next crop of trees, is burned on site in large piles. Recently, on my way to work in northern Alachua County, I observed such an open burn and snapped a picture. The best way to use chipped wood would be in a wood gasifier where, under heat and pressure, the wood is combusted to release methane gas. This would allow for the return of the ash to the soil and for the sequestration of CO₂; the gas could then be fed to a CC plant. GRU estimates there is enough of this wood to generate 30 MW of power, which will not use all of the resource, and therefore will not unduly alter current for-

tainable fashion. While I would encourage readers to communicate this message to Gainesville City Commissioners at CityComm@ci.gainesville.fl.us, there is another way to show your support for renewable energy.

GRU has a renewable energy program called grugreen. For an additional two cents per kilowatt hour, you can walk the talk and help GRU invest in renewable energy. Go to http://www.gru.com/OurEnvironment/GreenEnergy/gruGreen_intro.jsp or call (352) 334-3434 to sign up.

If GRU is to do the right thing, they must be able to demonstrate that their customers are willing to pay a little more for renewable energy. As I said, we will get what we pay for, and the fact is, it is not necessary to burn coal.

national sierra club news

SIERRA MAGAZINE STORY REVEALS U.S. MINING COMPANY'S SUPPORT OF TERRORISTS LINKED TO AL-QAEDA

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Sierra Club has announced that an exposé will appear in the May/June issue of *Sierra*, the official magazine of the Sierra Club, revealing how a Denver-based mining company secretly paid off Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists under the auspices of “international security.”

The story also shows how the Bush administration’s Homeland Security and Justice Departments turned a blind eye when first informed that Denver-based Echo Bay Mining Co. paid millions of dollars to the international terrorist group Abu Sayaff and other terror groups in the Philippines in exchange for protection of its gold-mining operations.

However, shortly before the *Sierra* magazine investigation was reported on tonight’s edition of ABC’s World News Tonight, the Justice Department reversed course and announced that it would open an investigation into Echo Bay’s operations. Tipped off by the *Sierra* story, U.S. Reps. Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., and Mark Udall, D-Co., also issued letters calling for a congressional investigation into Echo Bay and the general practice of U.S. corporate support for international terrorism.

The *Sierra* magazine investigation, titled “The Cost of Doing Business,” is the result of a two-month investigation by Marilyn Berlin Snell, a writer/editor at *Sierra*. Allan Laird, a project manager for an Echo Bay

project located on the southern Philippine island of Mindano, brought the story to the Sierra Club because of its well-known opposition to mining operations.

While working for Echo Bay, Laird discovered a money trail that led straight from the mining operation to the most violent terrorist organizations in the Philippines - two of which had direct links to Osama bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda. Laird unsuccessfully urged Echo Bay executives to release information to U.S. government agencies concerning the company’s knowledge of terror groups operating in the Philippines and their extortion of money from Echo Bay and other companies. Laird subsequently contacted the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, which both declined to act on the information. At that point, Laird approached the Sierra Club’s International Programs Director Stephen Mills, who shared the story with *Sierra* for further investigation.

“I came to the Sierra Club because I felt that they had principles and would listen, and that they would take action,” Laird said.

In the Philippines, Echo Bay’s mining operation sat in the middle of territory controlled by the New People’s Army, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) - all known terrorist organizations. The radical Islamic group Abu Sayaff was also active in the area, as was the Lost Command, a splinter group of the MILF and MNLF. The MILKF had direct links with Al Qaeda.

Internal company documents obtained by Laird show that Echo Bay was aware of

terrorist entities in their project area from the outset. But the Philippines 1995 Mining Act made investment in the country so attractive that these red flags were ignored. The Mining Act “streamlined” the environmental permitting process, allowed for 100 percent foreign ownership, gave tax holidays, allowed easy repatriation of all profits, and guaranteed against expropriation by the Philippine state. Mining corporations from around the world came to the Philippines after the Act’s passage to take advantage of the extractive opportunities; it is estimated that corporate mining claims staked out 40 percent of the nation’s land area. Some of these corporations even helped write the Act.

The Sierra Club is calling for immediate congressional investigations to determine whether this was an isolated incident confined to the operations of one company, or a standard practice for extractive industries. There are many other U.S. multinationals involved in natural resource extraction operations in politically unstable countries around the world.

“Americans have the right to know whether this was an isolated incident confined to the operations of one company, or if this is standard practice for extractive industries,” Mills said. “Attorney General (John) Ashcroft should return to the 9-11 Commission to explain his failure to pursue this dangerous financial relationship with Al-Qaeda and other known terrorist groups.

“It makes you wonder if multinational polluters are exempt from the Patriot Act just because they are Bush campaign contributors.”

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 Sierra Club
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MAY 2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 29 - May 2, Farm & Forest Festival at Morningside Nature Center, 3540 East University Avenue. Contact Gary Paul at 334-2170.

May 6, 7:30 p.m., General meeting at the entomology/nematology building on UF campus, room 1031-1033.

May 13, 7 p.m., Executive Committee meeting at Santa Fe Comm. College, Downtown Campus.

June 10, 7 p.m., Executive Committee meeting at Santa Fe Comm. College, Downtown Campus.

June 18, 7:30 p.m. Folding party for July newsletter at Cynthia Karle's house, call 375-4881 for directions.

**JUNE SUMMER BREAK:
 NO SSJ NEWSLETTER
 NO SSJ GENERAL PROGRAM**

To advertise
 in the newsletter,
 contact
Kristina Jackson
 at 372-2464.

Membership

Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

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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.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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