



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

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Sustainable Alachua County

Community education and empowerment to maintain our unique quality of life

BY ANNA PETERSON

Programs Co-Chair

Our January 5 program will be given by Dedee DeLongpre, director of Sustainable Alachua County.

Since 1996, Sustainable Alachua County has been working to provide education and civic participation opportunities that enhance the sustainability and healthy functioning of our environmental, social/cultural, and economic systems.

SAC is a locally-based non-profit open to all county residents. For more information you can view their 12 guiding principles of sustainability on their website: www.sustainac.org - and join us at the January 5th meeting.

Dedee will give an overview of current SAC initiatives, including:

- Discussion Circles, in which small groups meet 8-9 weeks to discuss topics

related to sustainability. In these groups, you can learn more about how you can take personal and inspire collective responsibility for the earth and society. Topics include "Voluntary Simplicity," "Discovering a Sense of Place," "Globalization and its Critics," and "Healthy Children – Healthy Planet," among others.

- Green Map: Gainesville's first Green Map will highlight our town's most sustainable features and will help residents and visitors discover a sense of place. Nominations are currently being accepted!

- Community forums on issues like water, energy, health, agriculture, civic involvement, or the local economy.

- Gainesville Local Business Alliance (GLBA), whose theme is "Think Globally and Buy Locally." This initiative educates our community about the importance of a vibrant local economy in an increasingly unstable global marketplace.

- 100-Mile Challenge: Can you survive living only on food and other resources available within 100 miles of Gainesville? Are you up for the 100-mile Challenge? Could you sustain yourself for a month? A year?

- The Community Land Trust which works to transform ailing neighborhoods into vibrant, mixed income communities, with the aim of ensuring affordable hous-

GENERAL MEETING
Thursday, Jan. 5, 7:30 PM
Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus
(Just east of the Performing Arts Center. Turn south off Hull Road on to Natural Areas Road.)
SUSTAINABLE ALACHUA COUNTY
DEDEE DELONGPRE
SAC DIRECTOR



ing in perpetuity.

Dedee DeLongpre holds a BS in Business Administration from the University of Southern California and an MBA in Sustainable Management from the Presidio School of Management.

With over 13 years experience in non-profit administration, she is currently the executive director of Sustainable Alachua County. She can be contacted at <sustainableac@gmail.com>.

Please come participate in the discussion and learn more about making Alachua County and our region more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.

TAKE THE NATURE CHALLENGE

The David Suzuki Foundation has researched the 10 most effective ways we can help conserve nature and improve our quality of life. The Challenge is to pick at least three steps that you will take this coming year. It's an easy and effective way to make a difference.

Reduce home energy use by 10%: A more energy-efficient home will lower your utility bills and reduce your impact on the environment.

Choose an energy-efficient home and appliances: R-2000 homes use 30 percent less energy than standard

see CHALLENGE, page 7

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Welcome, One and All

BY ROB BRINKMAN

SSJ Group Chair

Though the challenges facing our group have been increasing, the good news is that our membership numbers have been increasing as well. Welcome to all new members out there and to our new Executive Committee members: Whitey Markle, Bill Radunovich, Rudy Rothseiden, Paula Stahmer, and Steve Williams.

Being chosen by the SSJ ExCom as the new Chair is an honor, and I hope to continue the excellent service of the outgoing Chair, Linda Pollini. I would like to thank the several departing members of the ExCom for their excellent work: David Auth, who devoted many years of service to Excom; Roberta Gastmeyer, who has agreed to continue as group treasurer; Linda Pollini, and Bruce and Roxanne Gonseth of Marion County. Kristina Jackson also left ExCom mid-year when she was hired as staff by the Sierra Club, but has fortunately agreed to continue editing our newsletter.

It is my hope that during the next year, we will not only continue to increase our membership but to also reach out, particularly to the younger generation. It can be disconcerting to sit in meetings of environ-

mental activists and see the lack of younger representation. If we do not reduce the average age of our group, we will fade away. We also need to work closely with our fellow environmental activists, such as Women for Wise Growth, Sustainable Alachua County, Save Our Suwannee, and the Putnam County Environmental Council, among others. In the last few years we have tried to broaden our efforts to more of the 14 counties represented by SSJ; we currently have representatives from five different counties on ExCom.

Overview of some current issues

Recently, the Alachua County Commission adopted new Land Development Regulations to implement the latest comprehensive plan. The bad news is the final version was significantly weaker than early drafts; the good news is the process is over; the longer it dragged on, the weaker the ordinances became.

The City of Newberry has approved the expansion of the Florida Rock Cement kiln, more than doubling their capacity. The Ichetucknee cement kiln also wants to double its capacity. The U.S. EPA has refused to regulate mercury emissions and state officials claim that the costs to reduce

mercury emissions from cement kilns would be prohibitive.

There are also plans for another Wal-Mart distribution center in Southern Putnam County, near Lake Crescent. An unusual provision of the Putnam County Comprehensive Plan allows industrial uses in agricultural zones until the end of 2005, yet the first hearing on this application was less than a month ago. The rezoning request goes before the Putnam County Commission on December 20th. This is a clear effort to avoid public protest by rushing approval of this application during the holiday season. Wal-Mart, the world's largest retail corporation, is also seeking state economic development grant money to build access road improvements.

Meanwhile the push to build more coal plants received a significant setback when the St. Lucie County Commission voted unanimously to deny Florida Power the zoning it needed to build the largest coal plant ever in Florida. After a marathon meeting ending at 5:30am, a Florida Power spokesperson threatened that the company would seek approval in adjacent counties, which would then receive the tax benefits while St. Lucie would get the "bad effects" anyway. At least they admitted that there are bad effects!

see WELCOME, page 3

CHAIR'S



CORNER

Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

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

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FOLDING PARTY

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

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Not-so-Superfund

SIERRA CLUB REPORT DETAILS SUPERFUND SITES WHERE HUMAN EXPOSURE IS NOT UNDER CONTROL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As Superfund approached its 25th anniversary on December 11, the Sierra Club released a new report titled, "Superfund's 25th Anniversary: Hundreds of Toxic Waste Sites Continue to Threaten Health and Water Supplies."

The report identifies 149 final and proposed Superfund sites where human exposure to contamination is not under control and 226 sites where migration of groundwater pollution is not under control. These sites continue to threaten human health and water supplies in communities throughout the nation.



"The data in this report make clear that Superfund sites across the U.S. desperately need additional cleanup funding," said Ed Hopkins,

Sierra Club's Environmental Quality program director and report author.

"The longer cleanup is delayed, the greater the risk that toxic contaminants will damage people's health and pollute our water supplies. The EPA's resources are so limited that it cannot even determine if human exposure and migration of groundwater pollution are under control at hundreds of Superfund sites."

The report, based on the Environmental Protection Agency's most

recent performance indicator data for the Superfund program, finds that human exposure to health-threatening chemicals is not under control at 149 Superfund sites.

The states with the most Superfund sites where human exposure is not under control are New Jersey (18), Illinois (12), California (9), New York (9), Pennsylvania (8) and Montana (8). Further, migration of groundwater pollution is not under control at 226 Superfund sites.

The states with the most Superfund sites where migration of groundwater pollution is not under control are California (25), Pennsylvania (21), **Florida (15)**, New Jersey (12), New York (12) and Maryland (9). Almost all of these sites are funded in whole or part by the Superfund trust fund, now empty of polluter-pays funds.

The EPA's publicly-accessible database indicates only whether human exposure and groundwater migration is controlled.

"We believe this information is just the tip of the iceberg," Hopkins said.

"The EPA should make public more

see SUPERFUND, page 5

WELCOME, from page 2

In Tallahassee, voters approved a deceptively worded referendum authorizing the City to participate in an 800 megawatt coal plant in Taylor County. Although both of these proposed plants are outside of SSJ territory, the issues are much the same for the plants proposed within our group's territory.

Meanwhile in Gainesville, the City Commission hired ICF Associates, a large consulting firm with ties to both the utility industry and the coal industry, to review the Gainesville Regional Utilities expansion proposal alongside alternatives plans to meet our future energy needs. They also hired GDS Associates, a small firm with experience in the energy conservation arena, to peer review the ICF report.

Speaking of peer reviews, Alachua County hired Numark Associates to peer review the Environmental Protection Advisory Committee report on the proposed GRU power plant.

The results were positive and supported EPAC's conclusions even pointing out other failings of GRU's proposal. This has thankfully received significant press cover-

age. Interestingly, GRU is declining to respond to both the EPAC report and the Numark peer review.

On December 14th, I will attend a Florida State Energy Forum all day in Tallahassee. Gov. Bush has orchestrated this in an effort to create a comprehensive energy plan for the State.

I am always interested in hearing of any environmental concerns in your area that you believe the Sierra Club should be working on. Please feel free to contact me at 352-318-4934 or e-mail RobBrinkman@cox.net.



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Rally for the Rivers

FEBRUARY EVENT FEATURES FIELD TRIPS, ART SHOW, MUSIC FESTIVAL, AND SMART GROWTH CONFERENCE

BY KAREN AHLERS

President Putnam County Environmental Council

Join us for the second annual Rally for the Rivers event to restore the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers.

The rally is a three-day-event to increase environmental awareness; teach the principals of smart growth and empower activists.

Come interact with candidates running in the 2006 election and demonstrate the economic value of nature-based tourism in a festive and fun atmosphere.

Sponsored by PCEC, most events are free and all are open to the public. Sierrans are encouraged to

help PCEC promote the Rally through personal contacts and email groups.

Last year, the Rally brought 1,500 people from 34 Florida counties, seven states, and six countries. With the help of Sierra and other conservation organizations, PCEC successfully demonstrated that nature-based tourism does pay. PCEC calculated that the two-day event had an overall economic impact of up to \$288,000.

The Florida Wildlife Federation recognized the importance of the 2005 Rally by awarding PCEC Conservation Organization of the Year.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Riverfront Inn in Palatka. Call 386-328-3481 to make your reservations at the event rate of \$60-\$75, good through February 2, 2006. Be sure to mention the PCEC to ensure the conference rate.

Camping and dorm-style accommodations are also available. A complete list is available on the Florida Defenders of the Environment website, www.fladefenders.org. Also, watch the website for field trip listings and sign up soon. The most popular field trips tend to fill up fast.

Schedule of Events

SMART GROWTH WORKSHOP, Friday, Feb. 17, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm. See

RIVERFEST, Saturday, Feb. 18, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm: Join other restoration and conservation advocates at Palatka's Riverfront Park on the St. Johns River for an arts and crafts show with live music, food, storytelling, conservation seminars, St. Johns River cruises, information tables, and a very special raffle.

This may be your chance to speak one-on-one with candidates who are running in 2006 for state and federal offices.

FIELD TRIPS, Saturday and Sunday mornings, Feb. 18-19: Over 50 field trips, mostly free and led by experts, will be offered for adventurers

of all types.

The detailed trip list with instructions for reservations is available on the FDE website, or via email, or regular mail. Contact David Zeigler at davidpzeigler@aol.com for more information.

OCKLAWAHA RIVER WRAP PARTY, Sunday, Feb. 18, 1:00 pm - ???: Join event organizers, volunteers, and fellow Rally participants for a relaxing afternoon on the banks of the Ocklawaha on the southwest side of Rodman Dam for boat rides, music, food, bank fishing, and campfire fun!

Bring something to contribute to the soup pot or a dish for the table and your own drinks, a blanket or chair for comfort, binoculars, cameras, musical instruments...whatever it takes to help you wrap up the weekend and wind down.

For more information, contact Karen Ahlers at PCECriverrally@hotmail.com or call 352-546-3560 or check the FDE website, www.fladefenders.org.



TOP: Wrap party musicians. Center Bill Good, right Dale Crider with unidentified guitarist at left. ABOVE: So many great field trips you may have trouble choosing.

details on page 5.

This free workshop will be held at the Riverfront Inn in Palatka.

Space is limited; pre-registration is required. Call Margy Bielling at 352-685-2434 for more information.

Do Your Part for Community Planning

**ATTEND A FREE WORKSHOP ON GROWTH,
FEB. 17, AT THE RALLY FOR THE RIVERS.**

PUTNAM COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

Many of our most pressing environmental challenges are largely due to the way we have built our neighborhoods, communities, and cities — dispersed, inaccessible, and automobile-oriented; in a word, sprawling.

This and other related issues will be discussed in depth at an all-day workshop on growth management. Speakers include:

- Dom Nozzi, senior planner for the City of Gainesville. Dom will present on transportation issues and their relationship to the environment.

- Harley Means, Florida Geological Survey Geologist. Harley will guide discussion on water quality and supply related to growth. For example, as we grow, we

replace our natural landscape with streets, parking lots, rooftops, and other impervious surfaces.

Prior to development, the stormwater runoff was filtered and captured by natural landscapes. After development, it is trapped above impervious surfaces where it accumulates and runs off into streams, lakes, and estuaries, picking up pollutants along the way.

- Lesley Blackner, an environmental attorney and one of the principles in Florida Hometown Democracy, the constitutional amendment drive to amend the Florida Constitution to allow voters to vote on proposed comprehensive plan amendments.

She will speak on charter governments and legal tools citizens can use to hold elected officials accountable. Public involvement and vigilance are critical components to keeping the light at the end of the tunnel burning.

- Jono Miller, Co-director Environmental Studies Program, New College, will conduct a discussion on public lands, political action committees, and grassroots organizing.

In the past few years, voters have overwhelmingly approved ballot measures to

fund conservation land-buying initiatives. Protection of open space provides fiscal benefits, including increased local property value (and property tax bases), additional tourism dollars, and decreased local tax increases (by reducing the cost of new infrastructure).

Protecting open space also ensures that prime farm and ranch lands are available, prevents flood damage, and provides a less expensive and natural supply of clean drinking water.

There will also be a forum exploring economics of nature-based tourism. As Florida's population increases, and southern and coastal counties become more and more crowded, opportunities to experience the peace and serenity of natural areas also increases.

Nature-based tourism is a natural fit for economic development in rural Florida counties.

PCEC and Smart Growth Coalition of North Central Florida encourage you to take advantage of this free opportunity. Space is limited at the Riverfront Inn in Palatka, and pre-registration is required. Please call Margy Bielling at 352-685-2434 for more information and to reserve your seat.

SUPERFUND, from page 3

qualitative information about the severity of contamination and risks to people's health at these sites. We understand that Senator Barbara Boxer has asked for this information, and we strongly urge the EPA to comply with her request. Giving the public the full picture about these health threats is key to fixing Superfund's funding shortfall."

In 1995, Congress failed to renew the

taxes that funded the trust fund, shifting the burden of financing cleanups to taxpayers and away from polluters.

The Bush administration is the first since the Superfund program began not to support the polluter pays principle. On September 30, 2003, the trust fund went bankrupt of polluter-pays dollars, forcing taxpayers to shoulder the entire cost of the program.

Meanwhile, the EPA's real spending power for the Superfund cleanup program

has fallen by more than one-third over the past decade.

"As we commemorate Superfund's 25th anniversary, Americans must wonder where we will be 25 years from now," Hopkins said.

"Will Superfund sites still be exposing people to dangerous chemicals and polluting our water supplies? Or will the Bush administration and Congress take action to ensure a safer, healthier future for communities."



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The Avatar Project

SUPPORT STATE ACQUISITION OF THIS IMPORTANT LAND FOR CONSERVATION

BY JOHN DUNN

North Central Florida Smart Growth Coalition

Silver Springs is in trouble.

For nearly two decades, scientists from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Geological Survey, The Florida Geological Survey, Florida Governor Bush's Springs Task Force, and an array of other scientists have concluded that Silver Springs is now in a degraded condition, due to nitrates, pesticides, storm water and other pollutants.

Moreover, former senior state biologist and springs expert, Jim Stevenson, has shown that a rise in the pollution level of Florida springs directly parallels population growth.

Thus, the prospect of a huge new residential project being built on land owned by the Avatar development company on one of the most important water recharge areas vital to the health of Silver Springs is alarming.

The recharge areas are made up of karst, or extremely porous limestone, that allows water and pollutants to quickly percolate down to underground water sources for the Springs.

If developed, Avatar's 4,600 acres

would also drastically change the landscape and destroy habitat for species currently protected under state law such as the Florida Black Bear and the gopher tortoise. Much of this property is Sandhill Community, made up of Longleaf Pine and Turkey Oak.

An estimated 90 percent of these trees have disappeared from Florida because of development. In addition, biologists have stated that hundreds of species of plants

“the prospect of a huge new residential project being built on land owned by the Avatar development company on one of the most important water recharge areas vital to the health of Silver Springs is alarming”

and animals live in the Sandhill Community and nowhere else.

The Silver Springs Basin Working Group—a coalition of state agencies, businesses, and private organizations—thinks that state acquisition of the Avatar land is the single most important purchase that could be made to protect the springs. Florida's Department of Environmental Protection put the Avatar properties on its

“A” acquisition list.

The Marion County Board of Commissioners voted to support this acquisition, and also recently passed a springs protection resolution.

The good news: the state wants to buy this land and protect it.

The bad news: Avatar recently went to the water management district to investigate their options for development and groundwater pumping.

What you can do: Write Mr. Josh Nash, Chairman, Avatar Holdings Inc., 201 Alhambra Circle Coral Gables, FL 33134. Using the talking points above, encourage him to continue negotiations

with state officials and implore him to enable the state protect to protect this resource. Please act now. Important decisions will be made by February 2006.

Suwannee St Johns Sierra Group is a member of the NCF Smart Growth Coalition, which was created about 5 years ago in Marion County to educate North Central Floridians on sprawl issues.

SIERRA CLUB CALENDAR SALE

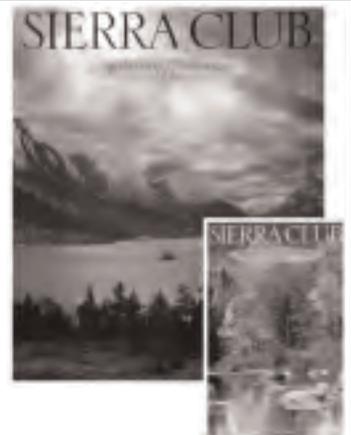
What's colorful, reminds us of the real world we're trying to conserve and protect, and helps us remember what we've done or promised to do in our lives? Sierra Club calendars, of course!

Why should you buy from us? Well, 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.

Beyond your own personal enjoyment of these calendars, don't forget that the holidays can be great, but gift shopping can be a chore. Sierra Club calendars are perfect gifts for your friends and family. They'll enjoy this gift every day of 2005!

Calendars will be available at the General Meetings- Jan. 5 and Feb. 2 . If you live outside of Gainesville or are unable to attend our meetings, call Bill Radunovich at 352-375-2354 to discuss other arrangements.



Still In Court

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAWSUIT ACTIVE FOR OVER 3 YEARS

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

Would you believe that the Alachua County comp plan lawsuit has been going on for three years now?

It was December 2002 that the newly elected Alachua County Commission voted to “negotiate” with developers and rural property owners over their objections to the plan that had just been enacted. Unfortunately, the negotiation gave the challengers of the plan almost everything they wanted.

The Sierra Club challenged the developers’ plan, and after three years, the case is now in the District Court of Appeals.

So, why is the suit not yet resolved? It is the exceedingly tortuous process devised by the Florida legislature for comp plan appeals and the complete failure of the Department of Community Affairs to carry out its duties.

This lawsuit is about stopping sprawl.

Integral to protecting our rural countryside and our quality of life are planning tools like Urban Services Boundaries and protection of Strategic Ecosystems.

If we lose this suit the developers will succeed in getting these standards for smart growth neutered in Alachua County’s Comp Plan and our land will be under a development free-for-all.

Here is a brief recap of what has happened in the lawsuit and where it now stands: Our appeal was heard in an administrative hearing in January 2003, with the Administrative Law Judge deciding against us. Next we submitted our objections to the AL Judge’s Recommended Order to the Department of Community Affairs in an effort to get a different final order.

The upholding of the AL Judge’s order by DCA came as no surprise since it had supported a weak plan from the very beginning. DCA came to Alachua County during the 2002 adoption process to advocate weakening of the plan and supplied the mediator who gave developers what they wanted in the negotiation.

Cleverly, the developers had named DCA along with the County as defendants in their suit (their lead lawyer is a former head of DCA). This meant that in the realignment of parties in the SC challenge of the negotiated settlement, our opponents were DCA, the County, the developers and rural property owners.

Thus, DCA initially approved the reasonable comp plan. Then they:

- Engineered the negotiated sellout to developers,
- Opposed us in the administrative hearing,
- Sat as judge over the AL Judge who heard the case, and
- Now continue as our lead opponent in our appeal to the District Court of Appeals.

As expected, DCA filed objections to the points on which we are appealing. Additionally, they have had the effrontery to file a motion claiming that we did not have standing, of all things.

It has taken time and money for our attorney, Deborah Andrews, to counter this absurd motion. One can only conclude that DCA’s intent is to run up our legal costs to teach us not to go up against them again.

Andrews has done a fantastic job and is working for “attorneys’ minimum wages” (about 1/5 of the usual fees). All the churning by DCA that has required her time and attention has left us currently with \$1500 in legal fees.

Please contribute toward this expense. It is a tax-exempt contribution, through The Sierra Club Foundation (TSCF). Please, make a check to TSCF and in the memo line write SSJG (that’s us!). Mail to SSJG Sierra Club, PO Box 13951, Gainesville, FL 32604.

Contribution: \$500 ————— \$250 ————— \$100 ————— \$50 ————— \$25 ————— \$10 ————— Other \$ —————

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

CHALLENGE, from page 1

homes. Modern appliances save more energy than older ones. New refrigerators, for example, use 40 per cent less energy than models made just 10 years ago.

Replace dangerous pesticides with alternatives: Small children and pets are especially vulnerable to chemical dangers.

Eat meat-free meals one day a week: Producing and processing grains requires far less water and land than does meat.

Buy locally grown and produced food: Buying locally reduces greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants from food

transportation. One study estimates that the average meal travels 2400 km (1500 miles) from the field to your table.

Choose a fuel-efficient vehicle: A typical SUV uses almost twice the fuel—and releases nearly twice the emissions—of a modern station wagon, although both seat the same number of passengers.

Walk, bike, carpool or take transit: Researchers in California found the air we breathe inside our cars can be up to 10 times more polluted than the air outside.

Choose a home close to work or school: A convenient place to live reduces the amount you drive, which means you’ll

lower your emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. You’ll also have more time to spend on things you care about.

Support car-free alternatives: More alternatives to the car mean less pollution, gridlock and urban sprawl.

Learn more and share with family and friends: By working together we can inspire our elected leaders to incorporate environmental conservation into public policy. A healthier environment isn’t possible unless we all get involved.

Take the Nature Challenge - some truly worthy New Year’s resolutions. Go to www.davidsuzuki.org for more info.

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JANUARY 2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 5, Thursday 7:30 p.m. General meeting "Sustainable Alachua County" details on page 1.

Jan. 11, Wednesday - Deadline for February SSJ newsletter submissions.

Jan. 12, Thursday 7 p.m. Executive Committee meeting at Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville campus. Board meeting room.

Jan. 20, Friday 7:30 p.m. Newsletter folding party. Join us at Scott Camil and Sherry Steiners to put some "sweat equity" into the club and, perhaps, to make some new friends. Call 352-375-2563 for directions.

Membership

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

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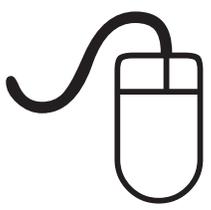
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