



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

# Sierra Club

Newsletter

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## Global Warming Gets Local

BY PAULA STAHLER

A good way to start the new year would be to gird ourselves for local action in the fight against global warming.

At the Jan. 4 general meeting of the SSJ Sierra Club chapter, Dian Deevey, a local scientist and member of the Alachua County Environmental Protection Advisory Committee, will discuss Gainesville's energy future, and what we should and can be doing about it.

A graduate of Stanford, Deevey has been engaged in scientific research about air pollution since the 1960s. She is the lead author of the EPAC Report issued last year that comprehensively critiqued GRU's proposal for more coal-fired power.

This study considered technological and regulatory risks currently faced by utility planners and strategies for meeting them with special emphasis on demand-side management and renewable resources. Health effects were also a major focus of the work. The study was peer-reviewed, and received high marks from professional utility experts.

For the last 33 months, she has been researching integrated resource planning by electric utilities, with special emphasis on

renewable resources, and energy efficiency, and the evaluation of demand side management programs.

Deevey has spent 25 years researching the biogeochemistry of the atmosphere, a discipline focused on the role of biological processes in the cycling trace gases and particles between the atmosphere and the land and water surfaces of the earth. Biogeochemistry requires a systems approach and a broad knowledge of many different disciplines—atmospheric chemistry, soil microbiology, and the ecology of marine and fresh-water ecosystems, to name only a few.

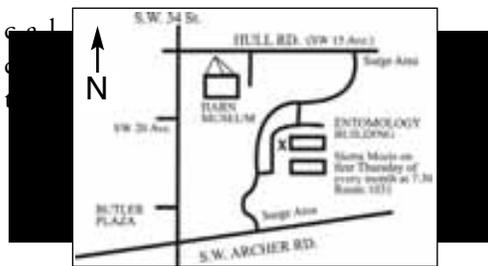
All are relevant to understanding the way biological systems impact the atmosphere. These disciplines also bear importantly on global climate change and the fate of pollutants emitted from electric power generators and vehicles.

Deevey's experience includes the following: principle investigator on NASA grants on statistical methodology for large-scale biological experiments (5 years); principle investigator on NSF-supported research on biologi-

**GENERAL MEETING**  
 Thursday, Jan. 4, 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.)

**GLOBAL WARMING AND UTILITY POLICY**

**DIAN DEEVEY**  
 BIOGEOCHEMISTRY SCIENTIST



utions to the atmospheric sulfur cycle (3 grants, 7 years of work); EPA consultant designing and interpreting field experiments on the chemistry of sea-salt particles and biogenic sulfuric acid aerosols (8 years); and Assistant Editor, Atmospheric Environment (9 years).

Her publications in peer-reviewed journals including Icarus, Journal of the American Air Pollution Control Association, Atmospheric Environment, and papers at scientific conferences, including the following topics: biogenic sulfur emissions to the atmosphere; biological cycling of atmospheric trace constituents; chemistry of sea-salt particles; stable sulfur isotope tracing of biogenic sulfuric acid and sulfur dioxide; epidemiology of lung cancer; biological signatures in planetary atmospheres.



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# New Year, New Efforts

**BY ROB BRINKMAN**

Chapter Chair

The SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee welcomed two new members last month, as well as re-electing several members.

Betsy Hurst and Knox Bagwell were elected to the ExCom for two-year terms. Hurst recently unsuccessfully ran for Alachua County Commission and has long been a local environmental activist along with several other members of the Hurst family. Her son Matthew previously served on the ExCom, before going to law school.

Bagwell is a local blueberry/blackberry farmer and has served on the board of the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, where he has learned the value of persistence in environmental activism. Sometimes environmental activists prevail by simply going the extra mile—motivated by deeply held conservation values.

At our December meeting, we elected officers and divided up the tasks among ExCom members and other volunteers. Because our secretary for the last four years has retired from ExCom, several members agreed to rotate turns for keeping meeting minutes. Hurst will assist Steve Williams with legislative liaison duties, focusing on local elected officials in the

Gainesville/Alachua County area, because Williams lives in Fort White. Bagwell will be an understudy to current Outings Chair Karen Garren; he has already begun the trainings to become an Outings leader.

To increase the number of articles on environmental issues in the SSJ Sierra Club region, ExCom has formed a newsletter committee and we are looking for a person to learn the ropes of newsletter editor. Colin Whitworth will continue as editor for now, and mentoring others will provide for a smooth transition.

If you are concerned about an environmental issue, please consider submitting an article for publication in our newsletter. If you ever want to refer back to an article you saw in this newsletter, the last year of issues is archived on our website at [www.gatorsierra.org](http://www.gatorsierra.org).

If there was one distinguishing aspect of the last year from an environmental perspective, I would say it was the increased awareness of the global warming and energy issues. Finally, it seems the issue has attracted widespread mainstream media attention and with it the hope that significant steps will be undertaken to address this issue before it is too late.

The current scientific consensus seems to be that if real progress is not made in

reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years, it will no longer be possible to avoid a cascading series of events leading to a vastly different climate than humans have ever known.

You may have noticed that articles in this newsletter and our general meeting programs have frequently dealt with energy and or global warming themes. Smart Energy Solutions is the current number one priority of the Sierra Club nationally.

It seems some still aren't getting with the program, like Progress Energy, which has announced the selection of a site in Levy County (part of the SSJ Sierra Club chapter's territory) for one or possibly two nuclear power plants. The Sierra Club opposes nuclear power plants because, according to the Sierra Club National Energy Policy, they are

“not safe, affordable, or clean with currently available technology and practice. Mining uranium risks workers' health and creates toxic residues. All current plant designs are complex, prone to accidents and have severe security vulnerabilities. Nuclear waste transportation, storage and disposal problems remain unsolved. The industry is heavily subsidized by public payments, incentives and liability shielding everywhere it operates.”

see CORNER, page 5

## CHAIR'S



## CORNER

### Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

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

### Suwannee-St. Johns Group Chairs & Executive Committee

Chair	Rob Brinkman	337-1757	<a href="mailto:robbrinkman@cox.net">robbrinkman@cox.net</a>
Conservation Co-Chair	Paula Stahmer	373-3958	<a href="mailto:paulastahmer@aol.com">paulastahmer@aol.com</a>
Education Chair	Jay Peacock	337-0646	<a href="mailto:peacobj@shands.ufl.edu">peacobj@shands.ufl.edu</a>
Public Lands Issues	Kathy Cantwell	395-7441	<a href="mailto:kacmd@aol.com">kacmd@aol.com</a>
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### FOLDING PARTY

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

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## GAINESVILLE'S ENERGY FUTURE

# Still Losing Steam?

BY PAULA STAHRMER

Conservation Committee Chair

While the national discourse on Global Warming may be anesthetizing people who are too weary from their day's labor to contemplate ways of preventing environmental disaster, the Gainesville City Commission voted Dec. 4 to continue subsidizing emissions of carbon dioxide—in another city, no less.

More precisely, the City Commission voted to continue selling power from Gainesville Regional Utilities at wholesale rates to the City of Alachua, under terms that commit GRU to such sales through the end of 2008.

GRU often claims that it is making money on wholesale sales, but recent studies have shown that GRU may not be making any money on these contracts. In fact, the likelihood is that GRU may be losing money and Gainesville ratepayers are subsidizing these sales.

GRU's claim is based on a false assumption: that the cost of the fuel used to produce the electricity that GRU sells to Seminole Electric Cooperative and Alachua is the same as that used to produce power for retail customers. In fact, producing power for these wholesale customers is more expensive than for retail customers because it requires GRU to operate very expensive natural gas-fired units that otherwise would not be needed.

In FY 2006, these two customers used capacity equivalent to a generator of about 44 MW. If these two wholesale contracts

continue, GRU may need new generation by 2012 to provide a projected 55 MW just to meet its obligations on those wholesale contracts. Conversely, termination of these two wholesale agreements would make that generation capacity available for use to serve the growing customer base in Gainesville.

As many Sierrans know, the SSJ Sierra Club chapter joined with other concerned civic groups and citizens last spring to oppose GRU plans for the construction of a huge, coal-fired power plant. At that time, we were armed by the two-year, 170-page study authored by two local scientists, Dian Deevey, a member of the Alachua County Environmental Protection Advisory Committee, and David Harlos. That study was peer-reviewed, received accolades for its comprehensive analysis, and provided the critique that enabled us to slay (for the time being) a project that would have bankrupted the city with an energy plan from the Stone Age (figuratively speaking).



This time around, Deevey analyzed GRU records for January through October 17, 2006—hour-by-hour data for each generator, for all 24 hours, for every day during that time frame, week by week, month by month, a total of over 19,000 records. The study identified which expensive generators produced the electricity GRU exported to the two wholesale customers, and the cost of the fuel used. The results indicate we are losing money. GRU often claims these contracts

are very profitable and provide millions of dollars to pay down debt. As recently as two months ago, GRU was claiming that it made profits of \$2.5 million on its sales to Alachua alone. Once Ms. Deevey analyzed the data and began sharing her findings with GRU, GRU abandoned its claims. Instead, GRU offered an alternative analysis that yielded \$605,000 to the utility. However, even this figure is questionable, as it does not include the cost of transmission or debt service.

Ms. Deevey could not complete her analyses for the whole of FY 06 because GRU routinely destroys hourly data at the end of every year. One must wonder how it can perform cost analysis of any initiative. Despite the foregoing, GRU still claims that it did make over \$1 million on sales to Alachua last year. Alas, all the records by which one could confirm the claim have been destroyed, pursuant to established policy.

## THE SO-CALLED GRU MANAGER SEARCH

Pursuant to protests by the Sierra Club, Women for Wise Growth, the Climate Posse, and other local groups, the city has been promising ever more "transparency" in all matters touching upon GRU and future energy plans, most especially the selection of a new manager for GRU. That must be why someone in the city is busily screening and eliminating promising candidates before they are even presented to the City Commission.

We know of one applicant, a proven leader in conservation and utility planning, a former advisor to the Clinton administration and recognized as one of the outstanding leaders in energy policy, who has been

see ENERGY, next page



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**ENERGY, from previous page**

told that the City Commission rejected him as a lesser-qualified candidate.

Furthermore, the commissioners have been informed that their own questions to the candidates will similarly be pre-screened and the preferred wording of a question will be determined by some unidentified person. Each commissioner

will be permitted only one question per candidate during the public interview.

This process eliminates any reason for confidence that the city or GRU have any intention of searching for a good candidate. Indeed, we are told that three of the five candidates are current GRU management employees. GRU can expect to hear people complaining of a sham.

**CORNER, from page 2**

SSJ is already networking with others who are opposed to a nuclear power plant in Levy County.

There is already speculation that the Florida Public Service Commission will allow a rate increase for Progress customers to begin paying for the plant before it is even finished. Meanwhile, hearings will be held in Palatka Jan. 9-12, on the site permit to add another coal plant to the two coal plants Seminole Electric Co-operative already operates there.

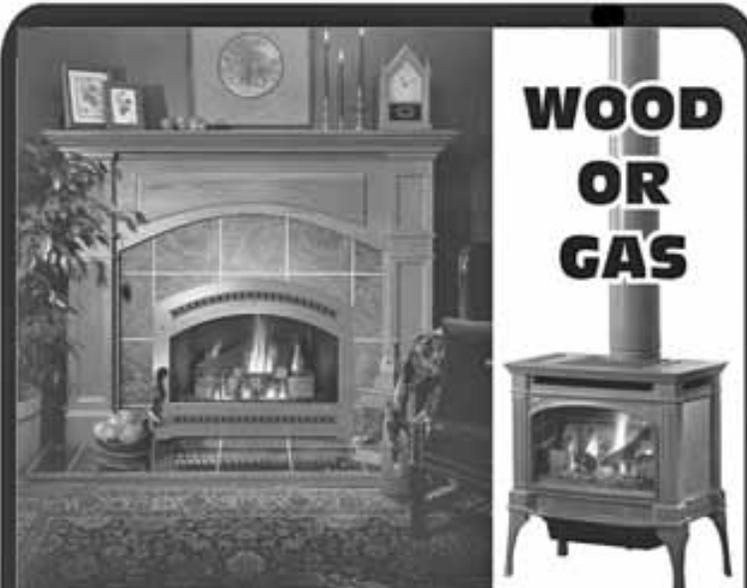
Fundamentally a cultural shift is needed to transform our society into a clean, efficient, renewable energy based economy. Clean Energy is the only viable long term solution to our energy needs. Fusion power is not decades away, it is available right now in form of the abundant solar energy that is the source of almost all energy on earth. All we need is to build the infrastructure to harvest it.

But energy and global warming issues are not the only environmental threat to our area. Our water quality and quantity are both under extreme stress. Rainfall has been significantly below normal this year and consumption is always increasing with

more development. The lack of water quantity is contributing to water quality problems; creating less water and more pollution literally concentrates our water quality problems.

Even before this, the springs of North Florida were being degraded by increasing pollution levels, primarily nitrates. There are many nitrate sources—stormwater, agriculture, septic tanks and sewage treatment plants. These sources are multiplying, and our springs are paying the price. They are no longer as clear as they were once. Many native underwater plants are being coated with algae fed by the high nitrate levels. This is a potential threat to human health as well as to the ecology of our water bodies.

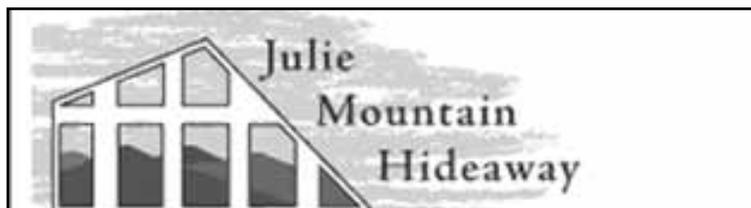
At the January ExCom meeting we will set our conservation priorities for the next year. In addition to the national conservation priority of smart energy solutions and stopping the coal rush, I believe locally we must also focus on protecting our water quality in our area. As always we must also remain vigilant to defend our water from export to those areas of the state that have already exceeded their own water supply capacity.



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## ALACHUA COUNTY COMMISSION

# Retreat Focuses On Road Costs, Global Warming

**BY ROB BRINKMAN**

Chapter Chair

At a retreat last month, Alachua County commissioners discussed their goals, visions and priorities for the county, focusing on three main areas—county-funded health care, transportation and road connectivity, and energy and global warming.

In this article, I won't discuss the health care issue and instead will focus on the other two.

## ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

On the transportation front, the shocking news was that the cost to build one mile of a one-lane road is now \$5 million dollars, about half of which is used to buy the right-of-way. If you want the road to go both directions, the cost is double.

Commissioner Mike Byerly suggested that developers should be asked to contribute the right-of-way for roads needed to serve new developments. He also opposed building new roads into undeveloped areas, because it invites sprawl.

Commissioners also discussed the new proportionate share law. If traffic concurrency constrains a project, a proposed development can contribute its proportionate share of the road projects required to meet concurrency, as long as those projects are listed in the county's capital improvements plan. The concurrency law requires that basic infrastructure already exist or at least be funded before developments can be permitted.

County Manager Randy Reid said that because of the new proportionate share law, some counties are reluctant to list roads in their capital improvements plans. The reason—after a developer makes a proportionate share contribution, the development can continue even without meeting concurrency requirements.

As time passes, the escalating costs of meeting concurrency could mean that the government would have to make up any

difference in the proportionate share amount contributed by a development and what the infrastructure improvements actually cost to construct. Thus it is necessary to accurately forecast how much it will cost to build roads years in advance.

Impact fees in Alachua County are currently generating about \$6-to-\$9 million a year in revenue, while one mill of property taxes (\$1 for every \$1,000 in taxable value) raises approximately \$11 million county-wide. A one cent local option sales tax would raise about \$48 million dollars a year.

Commissioner Lee Pinkoson voiced support for a stakeholders group to discuss funding options for road building. However, in further discussions since the retreat, the County Commission seems to be leaning towards focus group research to determine voter support for various funding options

## ENERGY AND GLOBAL WARMING

While energy and global warming received the least discussion time, at least this subject has become a significant concern for the County Commission, thanks to Commissioner Byerly.

The County Commission had previously passed a resolution directing staff to assess what the county has done and what it could do to reduce energy usage and how best to educate the public on energy and global warming issues. That was done after a presentation on the realities of global warming by Dr. Stephen Mulkey, a tropical botany professor at UF.

Commissioner Byerly is now urging the County Commission to appoint a green building/energy conservation committee of members that would include members of the public as well as people with professional experience and expertise in this field. The intent is to focus on what can be done throughout the county, not just within county government.

Alachua County Facilities Manager Charlie Jackson gave a brief version of an extensive presentation he had prepared on global warming, green building, and energy and water conservation. The presentation portrays energy and water conservation as not merely cost-saving efforts but urgently needed action to help avert a climate change disaster. Not only is water a vital

resource likely to become even more important in the future because of global warming, the extraction, processing, and treatment of water after use is responsible for the consumption of large amounts of electrical energy.

The water and wastewater divisions of GRU are the largest single user of electricity generated by GRU. By the way, the School Board of Alachua County is the second largest GRU electrical customer.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Jackson gave each commissioner a copy of *Plan B 2.0*, a book by Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute. The premise is that business as usual was Plan A, which has brought us to the crisis of unsustainable resource consumption and pollution that the world is in today.

This book, an updated version of Brown's 2003 book, *Plan B*, lists four reasons a new economic plan is needed:

- First, Plan A will not work for China or India, because there are simply not enough natural resources to support the current way of doing things even if present population levels are stabilized. China now leads the US in consumption of four out of the five basic commodities—grains, meat, coal and steel.

- The US only leads in oil consumption, thanks to our prolific driving habits. The looming threat of peak oil therefore is the second reason Plan A is doomed to fail.

- The third reason is that the eradication of poverty will not be possible unless there are adequate natural resources for a sustainable economic system that provides for everyone. As Robert Kennedy, Jr., says, the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment. A sustainable economy, must address poverty.

- The final reason for the updated version of this book is recent technological advances that will help make possible the economic and environmental changes needed to create a healthy sustainable future.

I encourage Sierra Club members interested in working to transform our society towards a sustainable model to read this book. It is available for free download on the Earth Policy Institute website, [www.earth-policy.org](http://www.earth-policy.org). Unfortunately, there is no single link to download the

# Sierra Club Hosts Climate Exchange Conference

**BY NATIONAL SIERRA CLUB STAFF**

On Dec. 14, the Sierra Club convened a panel of heavyweights from the political, public policy, business, and scientific communities for a day-long forum in San Francisco, "Helping America Take the Lead: A Climate Exchange."

A roundtable brainstorming session at Club headquarters, moderated by Club Executive Director Carl Pope, was followed by presentation of the panel's rec-

ommendations at the Commonwealth Club of California, the nation's oldest and largest public affairs forum. Presiding at the afternoon session was former Vice President Al Gore, pictured to the right with Pope and Stanford University climatologist Stephen Schneider. Rounding out the panel were Paul Anderson, Chairman and CEO of Duke Energy; Vinod Khosla, co-founder of Sun Microsystems; Bettina Poirier, global warming policy advisor to California Senator Barbara Boxer; and Dan Reicher, president of New Energy Capital and former Energy Department official in the Clinton administration.



ommendations: the urgency of setting a "carbon price" on greenhouse gas emissions, and the importance of government kick-starting the process by sending a clear sig-

nal to capital markets that carbon dioxide emissions will be bad for the bottom line. Senator Boxer joined the panel for the afternoon session. "Global warming is coming together as a consensus issue in a bipartisan way," she said. "I'm beginning to see Republican senators come to me on global warming who've never done so before."

During a break in the morning brainstorming session, Anderson said, "Until there are penalties for emitting carbons, business won't move. A clear signal from government, such as a carbon tax, would make clear that emitting carbon is a liability, not an asset."

Reicher added: "We need to put a price on carbon. Everything else is secondary."

“We need to put a price on carbon. Everything else is secondary.”  
—Dan Reicher

## RETREAT, from page 6

entire book, so each chapter must be downloaded and saved to your computer individually. Most chapters are well below 100 KB, and none are over 150 KB, so download even on a dial-up connection seems feasible. I would be happy to mail a copy in pdf format on CD to anyone upon request.

This book is packed full of important information, it is one of those books an entire community should read as a prelude to discussions about how to work towards a sustainable future.

Look for a review of this book in a future newsletter when I am finished reading it.

## NEWS & NOTES, from page 3

The coming year, 2007, is an "off year" for political activities at state and national levels. However, many cities, including Gainesville, will elect some commissioners in these off years.

If you are interested in being involved on the SSJ Sierra Club Political Committee to help decide which candidates to endorse in Gainesville or, especially, in other cities in the chapter's 13-county area, please contact me by email at [adams@phys.ufl.edu](mailto:adams@phys.ufl.edu), by phone at 352-378-5129, or by snail mail at 2507 NW 24 Terrace, Gainesville, 32605.

*By Dwight Adams*

## ALASKA, from page 3

In Juneau, he met with his state representatives and energy regulators to discuss the power plant proposal, and then back in Seward, he and fellow members of the Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance formed a coalition to fight the plant.

"Just opposing it wasn't enough," says Maddox. "We had to do our homework and offer viable alternatives like hydro, tidal, and wind power." They gathered more than 600 signatures on a petition (in a town of 3,000) and generated more than 100 formal public comments in favor of alternatives to coal.

But the coalition went further, researching the devel-

oper's "model" coal plant in Montana and finding it shut down, with a long history of broken promises to the community and the EPA. They also contacted Montana environmental groups, which Maddox says were "remarkably helpful." The environmental groups there even wrote to Alaskan leaders urging them not to make the same mistake Montana did.

In September, the council voted down the project.

Maddox credits Chapter Chair Dr. Paul Forman and staff organizers Maryellen Oman, Katherine Fuselier, and Betsy Goll for playing key roles in the campaign. He adds, "Never hesitate to call another organization for advice."

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## JANUARY 2007 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**JAN. 4**—SSJ Sierra Club Group general meeting, in the Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus (see page 1 for details).

**JAN. 11**—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, 7 p.m., at the Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville campus. Board meeting room.

**JAN. 19**—Folding Party for the February newsletter. At Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner's house. Call 375-2563, after 3 p.m., for more information.

**JAN. 30**—SSJ Sierra Club group Outings Committee meeting, 7:30-8:30 p.m, location TBA. Contact Karen Garren at ILUVFLA@bellsouth.net for more.

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