



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

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 VOLUME 37 • NUMBER 7 • September 2007

Yankeetown Heroes

SAVING A SLICE OF OLD FLORIDA

BY WHITEY MARKLE

This month, Michael Peters, a self-described “mortgage broker, property owner, and concerned citizen of the state of Florida,” will tell us about his experience fighting to save Yankeetown, a slice of old Florida.

He states that on the night of Feb. 20, 2006, he “watched the biggest sham to ever be pulled on the citizens of the town I wanted to move to, retire in, and die a resident of. I knew it was a sham, and made a vow to expose it.”

Peters said he “uncovered a crooked government, crooked investors, and crooked ‘developers’ (in quotes solely because they only cultivate law suits to date).”

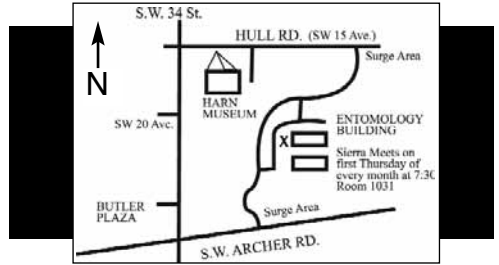
Through the power of the Internet, law enforcement, the Governor’s Office, and the Attorney General’s Office, the townspeople—by way of Governors Emergency Executive Order—were able to take the town back from the corrupt



GENERAL MEETING
 Thursday, Sept. 6, 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.)

SAVING YANKEETOWN

MICHAEL PETERS
 ACTIVIST



government.
 “The battle wages on,” Peters said. “However, our victories have been significant, and will continue.
 “We will win the war to Save Yankeetown, the last residential fishing village remaining relatively untouched by condos, and overdevelopment on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.”

A Bright Light Has Gone

BY KATHY CANTWELL

Long-time political and environmental activist Susan Wright has passed away, at the age of 49, from a brain tumor.

Susan believed firmly in participatory democracy. She frequently commented on issues in the community, especially related to neighborhoods. Whenever she did say something, you knew she had

done her homework. Rather than rhetoric and ranting, she quietly persuaded with facts and figures.
 Among her many accomplishments was spearheading the establishment of John Mahon Park in the city of Gainesville (named after another long-

see WRIGHT, page 5

IN NATURE WE TRUST 2
 COALITION APPEALS TO CRIST FOR ACTION ON BYCATCH 3
 IS SOLID WASTE GOOD FOR OUR ENERGY NEEDS? 4

Earning the Nature Trust

BY ROB BRINKMAN

In my last column, I brought good news of a couple of local decisions that went the right way for the environment. It was my pleasure to congratulate Gov. Crist on his leadership with respect to climate change generally and coal plants specifically.

I hope no one got complacent with the brief outbreak of good news, because it never lasts. I often caution people after a political victory for the environment that all such victories are pyrrhic and that we must remain engaged and vigilant.

Crist brought some sobriety to Sierra Club members when he passed up a chance to appoint some good people to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and instead re-appointed one current member and two terrible new candidates.

In doing so, the governor continued the recent practice of appointing members of the development community to a commission charged with protecting our fish and wildlife.

At a recent renewable energy conference, a University of Oregon professor of law, Mary Woods, advocated for reframing of environmental issues in terms of a "Nature's Trust." Such a trust is a form of ownership in which governments at all lev-

els are accountable for protection of our natural resources, including land water and air for current and future generations.

She cited Supreme Court jurisprudence dating back to the founding of this country including a 1907 decision that said in part: "The state has an interest independent of and behind the titles of its citizens, in all the earth and air within its domain." Woods points out those trustees (our elected representatives and their appointees) have a fiduciary responsibility to not only safeguard the assets, but when feasible to improve the condition of our assets in Nature's Trust.

Currently, government agencies use their discretion to issue permits for developments or facilities that emit pollution and degrade the assets in Nature's Trust. It is not so much that we need better laws and regulations—we need to replace the discretionary frame these laws are implemented under, and implement a trust that obligates government to safeguard and improve the natural resources that belong ultimately to future generations.

Woods also describes what she calls Nature's Mandate; this is a non-negotiable natural law grounded in physics. We can-

not negotiate a maximum cap on carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Natural law, aka physics, sets the cap at 450 parts per million. If this cap is exceeded, Earth's climate will be permanently altered with far reaching non-negotiable effects. Currently the CO2 concentration is more than 380 parts per million, and the rate of CO2 emissions is increasing at more than two percent a year.

The local victories I heralded recently are thanks to concerted and organized citizen action, which counteracted a developer-funded media campaign touting the supposed benefits of more shopping opportunities.

But there are greater dangers lurking that have not been in the press. Alachua County has some of the best environmental protections in the state, at least on paper. A study (KBN-Golder) originally conducted 20 years ago defined what are termed strategic ecosystems, and protections were enacted in the comp plan and land development regulations setting out protections for these critical assets of Nature's Trust.

The SSJ group has fought and litigated to try and preserve these protections, with limited success. Recently, there has emerged a pattern of landowners voluntarily annexing into municipalities to escape the restrictions intended to protect these



CHAIR'S
CORNER

see CORNER, page 3

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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Coalition Seeks Action On Gulf Fisheries

BY RUSS ROY

The Sierra Club teamed up recently with a coalition of conservation groups, charter boat operators and recreational and commercial fishermen to ask Gov. Charlie Crist to end overfishing in the Gulf.

Lead by Kristina Jackson, Sierra Club Organizer for Gulf of Mexico Sustainable Fisheries, the Sierra Club delivered 850 cards and letters to Crist July 18, with messages asking him to use Florida's delegates on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to address bycatch

in all their management decisions, and to follow up with action to reduce bycatch.

Bycatch is the unintended take of a non-targeted fish or of other wildlife. There are now five economically and ecologically important fish that are officially overfished—that is, their populations are below sustainable levels.

Coalition members from a number of organizations have made their thoughts known. "Bycatch is present at some level for almost all gear-types, though some more than others," says Marianne Cufone, of the Gulf Restoration Network. "The Gulf Council needs to include real amounts of bycatch when setting catch limits to ensure that we are fishing sustainably. The Council needs to keep in mind that every fish counts."

"Fishermen, NMFS, conservation groups, academics—we all need to work together to develop better ways to reduce bycatch for long term sustainability" said William Ward, a commercial fisherman and Gulf Fishermen's Association board member. "Lasting, stable resources should be the management priority. Immediate profit can't be the primary focus."

On July 17, coalition members met at the St. Petersburg Pier to address the



Kristina Jackson introduces John Swingle.

media about their concerns. Among those speaking were: John Swingle, Chair of National Sierra Club's Marine Wildlife & Habitat Committee; Joe Murphy, Florida Programs Coordinator for the Gulf Restoration Network; and Russ Roy, a recreational angler representing the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club.

"Overfishing is not just about fish, there is a whole ecosystem that suffers when a top predator like red snapper is down to about three percent of its historic population," Swingle said.

Roy agreed, adding: "Preventable bycatch is a complete waste of the resource. In cases where we know what steps can be taken for bycatch reduction, the Gulf Council must take action before we lose a fishery."

CORNER, from page 2

strategic ecosystems. The largest landowner in Alachua County, Plum Creek Timberlands, annexed more than 1,700 acres north of Gainesville and east of the Deerhaven power plant into Gainesville.

If the comprehensive plan amendment they are seeking is approved, they will be able to build four times more dwelling units on an area that is part of two strategic ecosystems, Buck Bay Flatwoods and Hague Flatwoods. Approximately three quarters of this property is either wetlands or within a 100-year floodplain.

The area also comprises the headwaters for six creeks. Clearly this property is not suited for development, and Nature's Assets must be conserved for future generations.

This is only one example. There are nine municipalities in Alachua County into which developers may annex their property

and shelter it from regulations designed to preserve and protect our remaining natural resources.

As Florida's population has swelled, most of the easily developable lands have been used already. What is left is generally

“As Florida's population has swelled, most of the easily developable lands have been used already.”

more ecologically sensitive. Yet with the climate of tax cutting, local governments that have the responsibility for growth management and environmental protection are being forced to cut their budgets. It is precisely these staff that are being laid off who are needed now, more than ever, to protect Nature's Assets.

I would like to commend the Marion County Commission for its recent advocacy on behalf of the Ocklawaha River. The

Commission objected strenuously to plans to build a water plant on the river to pump as much as 100 million gallons a day to counties south of Marion.

I have been pleasantly surprised by the awakening of some environmental con-

sciousness on the part of the Marion County commissioners. They also recently enacted a spring's protection and a transfer of development rights ordinances.

While these may be less than perfect, it is better to enact some protections rather than deny the need for them. I would welcome some friendly competition between the Marion and Alachua county commissions as to which can act as better trustees of Nature's Assets.

MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE

From the Frying Pan into the Fire

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

While citizens were pre-occupied with stopping a new coal-fired power plant, many did not notice that the City of Gainesville added municipal solid waste to the mix of fuels used to generate our power.

Under the radar recently, this issue was the point of intense debate two decades ago when garbage burners were being pushed around the state.

Hundreds of residents turned out in protest, and I testified as an expert witness in administrative hearings where citizens tried to get government officials to deny permits for such a facility.

Several aspects of using MSW in a waste-to-energy facility need to be examined. For example, MSW is not a renewable fuel, because less energy is produced than is required to manufacture new products from virgin materials (by about a factor of five).

A life-cycle analysis of the energy required to replace materials with virgin ones shows a net energy loss relative to recycling the materials.

Greenhouse gas emissions are lower with source reduction and recycling. An EPA report on emissions said that "source reduction and recycling of paper products, for example, reduce energy consumption, decrease combustion and landfill emissions, and increase forest carbon sequestration."

Materials such as aluminum, steel and glass provide no energy, but producing new

materials from virgin is very energy intensive. Plastics, now about 10 percent of municipal solid waste, are derived mostly from non-renewable natural gas.

The EPA carbon footprint calculator (see "Tip of the Month on Global Warming," page 6) shows a reduction in CO2 emissions of

1,900 pounds a year for a

family of four that

was recycling

the materials that

are picked up at

curbside in Gainesville.

For the Alachua

County, with a population

of 240,000, the

reduction in emissions

would be 244 million

pounds a year.

When we have fried the earth, how will we explain to our grandchildren that we burned plastic water bottles?

Producing new materials from virgin product is far more polluting than recycling. Paper recycling requires 80 percent less water and causes 95 percent less air pollution.

The destruction of the Fenholloway River and the polluted air in Palatka are prices we've paid for virgin production of paper.

Gainesville's interest in MSW as a fuel has been sparked by the "plasma arc gasification" plant being built in St. Lucie County Florida, not scheduled to be operational until 2009.

Information on the technology can be found in Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, and in an article in Nature.

It turns out that this technology is not in use anywhere in the world for municipal solid waste.

According to Wikipedia, "No municipal-waste disposal sized plasma arc facilities have as yet been constructed, and therefore pose a considerable technological and budgetary challenge to even the largest municipalities."

Honolulu considered a plasma arc gasification facility in 2004 but rejected it because of the high costs and lack of either emission or energy advantages over conventional waste-to-energy facilities.

A small gasification facility in Germany was shut down for failure to meet emission standards.

Recycling in both Alachua County and Florida, which has stalled at about 35 percent since the 1988 recycling legislation, would be adversely affected by using MSW as a fuel.

A growing percentage of Florida's population lives in apartments or condos that may not provide a recycling opportunity. Who will be motivated to recycle when you can just throw it in the trash to be burned for energy?

The waste-to-energy facility is likely to require a "put or pay" contract, requiring delivery of a specified amount of waste.

Numerous ways to increase recycling are available, including: mandatory recycling

(who ever heard of a voluntary speed limit?); steep variable

rates for garbage collection;

recycling more materials; using a

"materials recovery facility" to recover

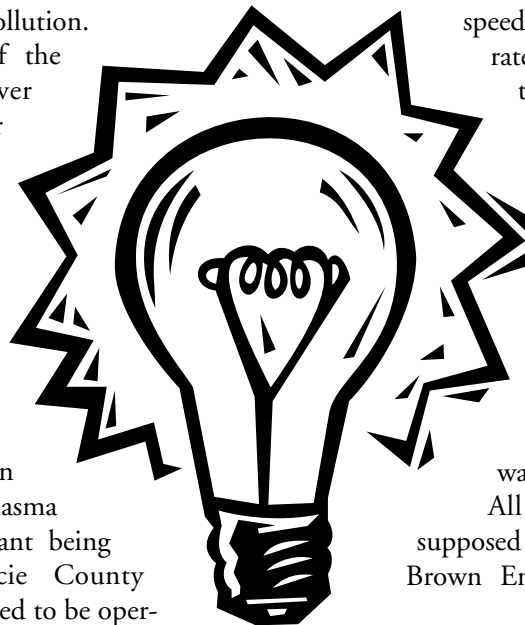
recyclables from mixed

waste; and using biological degradation

(composting or anaerobic digestion) for wet

wastes, such as food.

All these options were supposed to allow the Leveda Brown Environmental Park to



see MSW, next page

Strategic Ecosystems Endangered

BY ROB BRINKMAN

Plum Creek is requesting a land use change on land recently annexed to the City of Gainesville. This 1756-acre property is part of two “strategic ecosystems” in Alachua County—Buck Bay and Hague Flatwoods. By annexing into the city, the company hopes to avoid the more stringent development policies in the Alachua County Comprehensive plan for strategic ecosystems.

Strategic ecosystems are defined as lands identified by the KBN–Golder Study, which was an inventory of the last great wild places in the county still in private hands. That study it was conducted in 1986 and updated in 1996.

By annexing into a city, “viola!” the strategic ecosystem no longer exists, and any development only has to follow the much looser comprehensive plans of smaller cities with little or no environmental

staff. The cities are welcoming these annexations as they see more tax dollars to fill their coffers and more people to support their economy. Many residents don’t even realize what is happening.

This table compares the restrictions that

	ALACHUA COUNTY	GAINESVILLE (if land use change granted)
Number of houses allowed	534	2160
Wetlands impacted	None	Some impacts
Upland habitat preserved	50%	Varies, depends on analysis of habitat done by developers consultant
Amount of commercial allowed	None	100,000 sq ft
Special area plan required	Yes	Not required

would have applied to this property if it had stayed in the county, compared to what Gainesville will allow, if the City Commission grants this land use change.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Contact the Gainesville City Commission, which will be hearing this request sometime in the next month (visit our website at www.gatorsierra.org to find out when). Tell the commissioners that they should deny this request for a land use

change by Plum Creek because:

- This land is too wet and ecologically sensitive for this level of development. It has been determined to be of great ecological value by the KBN-Golder study.

- They should keep the land use agricultural until a special area plan is developed similar to what the county would require before any land use change is allowed.

- To prevent this from happening again, they need to amend their comprehen-

sive plan so that any future requests for annexation of lands that are on the KBN–Golder list be required to have a special area plan before any land use changes.

If you live in a small city in Alachua County, request that your commission take similar action for any lands that are strategic ecosystems that they may annex.

You can reach the city commission by e-mail at citycomm@ci.gainesville.fl.us, or PO Box 490 Station 19, Gainesville, FL 32602-0490 or fax at 352-334-2036.

MSW, from page 4

achieve 90 percent diversion of waste. This has not happened because activists who fought a landfill in Alachua County were happy to see the waste shipped “away” using the park as a transfer station. Elected officials did not rock the boat.

Waste-based industries create many jobs at all levels. An EPA report indicates that these jobs now provide \$100 billion in revenue that, along with the jobs, stays in the community.

In contrast, waste-to-energy provides only a handful of jobs, and money is shipped out of the community to pay off the bonds for the high costs of the facility.

What you can do: Contact Gainesville city commissioners and tell them to exclude MSW as a fuel and to implement measures to increase recycling and other non-disposal technologies to manage the wastes.

Call 334-5015 and ask to speak to the individual commissioners, especially Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan, or ask that they be given

your message. You can email commissioners at citycomm@ci.gainesville.fl.us, write them at PO Box 490 Station 19, Gainesville, FL 32602-0490, or fax them at 352-334-2036.

“When we have
fried the earth,
how will we
explain to our
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we burned plastic
water bottles?”

WRIGHT, from page 1

time Sierra activist who has passed away).

She also led the campaign that successfully passed campaign finance reform in Alachua County. She maintained a unique “Buyer’s Guide” to the local candidates — a website on which she posted and analyzed contributions made to local political candidates. You can still see her guide at <http://treecity.net/buyersguide/>.

Suwannee-St Johns Sierra Club is placing a memorial bench in John Mahon Park in her honor. We are also planning a memorial service in the very near future. Please contact Kathy Cantwell at 352-395-7441 to find out about the service.

If you would like to contribute to the purchase of the bench, please send a donation made out to SSJ Sierra Club, c/o of Roberta Gastmeyer, PO Box 13951, Gainesville, FL 32605, with a notation that it is for the Susan Wright memorial.

news¬es

SSJ SIERRA CLUB EXCOM ELECTIONS

Each November, the Suwannee-St. Johns Group holds elections for Executive Committee (ExCom) members. The ExCom makes decisions concerning the Group's policy and direction, and it represents the Group on a local level.

We have 15 ExCom officers serving staggered 2-year terms. This year we will be electing eight (8) officers. Our by-laws require that we have at least two more candidates than available seats, so we are looking for 10 candidates.

We urge all current Sierra Club members to consider running for these seats. You must be willing to attend monthly Excom meetings for two years (usually the second Thursday of the month, from 7-9 p.m.) and, although not mandatory, we would like you to chair one of our committees (see <http://florida.sierraclub.org/ssj/directory.htm> for a list of current committees).

A Nominating Committee has been formed—Scott Camil (Chair), Russ Roy, and Carol Gordon. If you are interested in serving, please contact Scott at s.camil@att.net or 352-375-2563.

Sierra Club also provides a petition process for getting on the ballot. Any Sierra Club member who wishes to be a candidate for ExCom and has not been nominated by the Nominating Committee may become a candidate by obtaining signatures of 25 Suwannee-St. Johns Group members.

See the calendar on the right for significant dates pertaining to elections.



On July 25 Kathy Cantwell, Public Lands Issue Chair for the SSJ Sierra Club Group, took the Environmental Ambassadors on a trip to the Osceola National Forest to learn about land conservation and the importance of public lands. The Environmental Ambassadors is a program of the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Gainesville and teaches African-American High School students about environmental sciences and careers.

- Sept 6 Nominating Committee report nominees at General Meeting.
- Sept 13 NomCom report to Excom; appointment of Election Comm.
- Sept 21 Deadline for receipt of original petition candidate petitions to NomCom Chair.
- Oct 10 Deadline for receipt of candidate bios to Election Comm. Chair.
- Oct 11 Ballot prepared by Election Committee presented to ExCom for approval.
- Oct 29 Mail ballots in November newsletter; all those who are on the National Sierra Club label list

for the November newsletter are eligible to vote.

- Dec 6 Deadline for receipt of ballots via mail to PO Box or directly to Elections Committee Chair through end of General Meeting.
- Dec 10 Election Comm. meets to count ballots, prepare & email report to ExCom and all candidates.
- Dec 13 Election Comm. report results to current ExCom members and newly elected members; Excom reorganization.

By Roberta Gastmeyer

see NEWS & NOTES , page 7

TIP OF THE MONTH ON GLOBAL WARMING

JOIN THE 10,000 POUNDS CLUB

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

Every person in the US produces—on average—45,000 pounds of global warming greenhouse gases (mostly carbon dioxide from fossil fuels) each

year. It's called your carbon footprint.

You can use the magic of the Internet to calculate your own carbon footprint. Visit www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html and see. Maybe you will already be down to 10,000-15,000 pounds—something to be proud of (just be sure to tell people you are talking about your carbon footprint and not your waistline).

You can change what you enter into the calculator to see you can do to reduce your carbon footprint. Lose a few thousands pounds. Keep a record of your emissions each month; the St. Johns-Suwannee Sierra Club Group will award a prize for the lowest carbon footprint this time next year.

Our global warming fliers are out and are quite attractive and professional looking (thanks to Louis Clarke who did the layout). Some fliers will be at the next group meeting, where you can pick them up to pass out.

NEWS & NOTES, from page 7

FREE SPEECH BATTLE IN PUTNAM COUNTY

Alachua County officials working on a waterways master plan will have four meetings in September at which the public is encouraged to speak. The problem is, as of this writing, the specific dates have not been set.

You can check the county's web page devoted to the plan—www.alachuawaterways.org—to get the final dates. The county has already met with different groups several times this year and is now ready for public input.

According to the county, "Alachua County is developing a countywide Waterways Master Plan to ensure that its natural water resources continue to provide recreation in a safe and sustainable way well into the future. The county has contracted with a team from the University of Florida to help prepare the plan. The UF team—with expertise in natural resource planning and management, recreational boating and waterways management, law, mediation and communication—will meet with the many interest groups that use county waterways, and with local governments and regulatory agencies."

It is vital that your voice be heard if you are concerned about the degradation of our waterways and abuse by users.

By Whitey Markle

Sierra Club Organizes Barr Hammock Tour

BY KAREN GARREN

The Suwannee/St. John's Sierra Club Group congratulates the Alachua County Forever Program on the newest protected property, 2,300-acre Barr Hammock.

This acquisition will provide a wildlife habitat corridor link between Paynes Prairie and Levy Prairie.

The purchase will enable further protection for the aquifer and eventually be accessible by the public for low impact educational visits and research.

Speaking of which, we have been invited for a sneak preview. The group will visit the property

Sept. 23. Access is still limited, so we will meet and shuttle in vans.

We may have biologist Bob Simons to point out natural history and archeological historical details.



The group will be limited to 25 participants, so call to make your reservation now. Call Karen Garren at 371-0008 or Kathy Cantwell at 395-7411

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The Butterfly Experience October 12-14, 2007

Take a break from the hustle and bustle of the world and enjoy a weekend immersing yourself into the creative history of the butterfly.

Visualization, meditation, painting, garden art with the award-winning folk artist Janet Moses, and designing your own butterfly landscape are all part of this workshop.

Begin on Friday at 6 p.m. and end Sunday at 2 p.m., at O'Toole's Herb Farm (www.otoolesherbfarm.com), located in Historic Madison, Florida.



Contact Janet Moses & Company (850) 973-3971 for agenda & telephone registration.
ON-LINE REGISTRATION: www.FloridaEtours.com
More Information See: www.floridasecrets.com

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SEPTEMBER 2007 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPT 6—SSJ Sierra Club Group general meeting, in the Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus (see page 1 for details).

SEPT 13—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, 7 p.m., at the Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville campus. Board meeting room.

SEPT 22—Marion County Springs Festival at Rainbow Springs State Park.

SEPT 28—Folding Party for the March newsletter. At Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner's house. Call 375-2563, after 3 p.m., for more information.

Looking for a way to get involved? Don't have a lot of time? Like to write? Like the environment?



Then the Sierra newsletter committee is for you. We have a need for enthusiastic writers for our newsletter committee.

**Whatever your interest,
we can find a place for you.**

Contact Russ Roy at raroy4@bellsouth.net,
or Kathy Cantwell at kacmd@aol.com or 352-395-7441.

Membership

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

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email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club

Mastercard Visa Exp Date ____/____/____

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

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

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
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F94Q **W3305** -1



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