



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

# Sierra Club

## Newsletter

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 VOLUME 38 • NUMBER 8 • October 2008

# Preserving Three Sisters Springs

BY JOHN PETERLIN  
 AND DWIGHT ADAMS

Three Sisters Springs in Crystal River constitute the last undeveloped freshwater springs complex in the state of Florida.

Dr. John Peterlin, the immediate past president and current director of the board of the Friends of the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex Inc. is working to preserve the Three Sisters Springs. Dr. Peterlin and "Friends of Chazz" hope to accomplish this by incorporating them into the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge as a low impact, public access, bird and manatee watching park.

The Three Sisters Springs property encompasses 58 acres of prime development land where owners have planned a high-density residential community. The Three Sisters Springs that constitute the headwaters of Crystal River include vital winter habitat for the endangered Florida Manatee. The good news is that the owner/developers of the tract have recently stated a willingness to sell the springs and land for conservation.

The Three Sisters project is a concerted effort by Friends of Chazz to raise funds to purchase the Three Sisters Springs property. They are now working on raising the final

\$300,000 of \$2.7 million needed as matching funds for Crystal River's \$6.3 million Florida Communities Trust grant.

The vision for the project incorporates manatee habitat protection, water quality protection, restoration of natural water filtration and recharge systems, wildlife habitat enrichment, support of the county's ecotourism industry, enhanced law enforcement, public recreation, and environmental education.

Plans for the project includes an environmental education center, interpretive kiosks, land-based manatee viewing platforms, hiking and bicycling trails, and restoration of part of the property back to cypress forest and wetlands to help restore natural water filtration. You can find out more about the project at the web sites: [www.savethreesisters.org](http://www.savethreesisters.org) and [www.friendsofchazz.org](http://www.friendsofchazz.org).

Dr. John Peterlin, speaker for the October 2 program, graduated from Crystal River High School in 1985. He attended Auburn University on a four year NROTC scholarship and served as an officer in the US Navy until 1996. John graduated with honors from the Auburn University College of Veterinary medicine in May of 2002 and joined the staff of Midway Animal Hospital in September of 2002.

His special interests include allergy and



skin disease, small animal medicine and surgery, wildlife and exotic medicine. Dr. Peterlin's hobbies include sailing, biking, wildlife photography, and singing in the church choir.

### GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, Oct. 2, 7:30 p.m.

Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus,  
 \*\* room 1031 \*\*  
 (Just east of the Performing Arts Center. Turn south off Hull Road on to Natural Areas Road.)

### PRESERVING THREE SISTERS SPRINGS

DR. JOHN PETERLIN  
 MIDWAY ANIMAL HOSPITAL



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# Drill, Baby, Drill

BY ROB BRINKMAN

As I write this column our coasts are under threat of more oil drilling, an ineffective and irrelevant response to the energy challenges that face us.

The House of Representatives has already passed legislation allowing oil drilling within as little as 50 miles of either the Atlantic or Pacific coasts if a state passes opt-in legislation.

Fortunately Florida was exempted and the Eastern Gulf is still off limits due to the 2006 Permanent Protection for Florida Act. I have been more involved in this issue recently due to my appointment as Energy Committee Issue Chair for the Sierra Club Florida.

I have been involved in several conference calls with Sierra Club Congressional lobbyists, discussing the fine details of proposals which changed on an hourly

basis. The way our political system addresses these issues has less to do with the merits of the issue and more with the political implications for the re-election campaigns of members of Congress.

In fact the whole "drill, baby drill" mantra is pure political pandering. So now it is up to the Gang of 20 in the US Senate.

With any luck the House and the Senate bills will have irreconcilable differences and no drilling will be authorized before the November elections.

## CHAIR'S



## CORNER

My personal solution to high fuel costs is to drive less often and to drive slower. If the political leaders were serious about reducing our fuel consumption then the national speed limit would be returned to 55 mph. Doing so would not only save money and fuel while reducing

pollution; more importantly, it would save lives!

When was the last time you checked the air pressure in your car tires?



Under inflation of tires not only wastes fuel, it causes tires to wear faster and fail prematurely, potentially causing a loss of vehicle control.

## WE WIN SOME

I want to congratulate the two candidates that SSJ endorsed in the recent primary election.

Mike Byerly won the primary and now must win the in the November general election.

Eileen Roy was re-elected in the non-partisan school board elections carrying off the amazing feat of winning in every precinct in Alachua County. Now that is a mandate!

Both Mike and Eileen ran excellent,

see CORNER, page 5

## 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

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## FOLDING PARTY

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

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# One Region One Book

BY ANNIE PAIS

Florida's Eden, a nonprofit devoted to building a model sustainable environment and economy in 30 North Florida counties, has chosen *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.* for a One Region/One Book project.

The communitywide read of *Mirage* is the first step in the Florida's Eden Water Awareness Campaign, designed to build citizen knowledge and dialogue on the most important natural resource – and most valuable economic asset – in our region.

“Pressure on North Florida's water supply is building from all sides, as Atlanta taps the Apalachicola River to the west and Central Florida looks to pipe the St. Johns to the east,” says Annie Pais, Florida's Eden director. “We can become a model for water conservation, but only if we work together as a region and build civic and political muscle to insist on a more sustainable water future.”

*Mirage* was this year's Gold medal winner for best nonfiction in the Florida Book Awards. *Publisher's Weekly* called it “vital reading for citizens and policymakers as global concerns over water scarcity grow.”

Book clubs, libraries, schools, civic groups, churches and individuals are invited to read *Mirage*, download discussion questions, and meet the author, Cynthia Barnett, at a series of events around the region. Florida's Eden also is sponsoring a water-themed speaker's bureau; a recognition program for business-

es that adopt water-conservation measures; K-12 curricula and other projects.

Marion County is the first area local government to adopt *Mirage* for a countywide read. “Our limited water resources are a subject of great concern for all Floridians, and Marion County citizens in particular,” says Marion County Commissioner Barbara Fitos. “We must be thoughtful, intentional and responsible in our use and care of these resources. Reading *Mirage* together as a community will give us a common ground and vocabulary to move our county conversations forward.”

Other partners include Santa Fe College, which has chosen *Mirage* for a campus-wide read and is highlighting water sustainability this year with projects including a springs art exhibit and river clean-up for students.

The One Region/One Book project kicks off Friday Sept. 19th at 7 p.m. in the Santa Fe College Gallery. Barnett will be signing *Mirage* at the public opening

and reception for *Portray, Preserve, Prosper: The Florida's Eden Heritage Springs Region*.

Other upcoming events include:

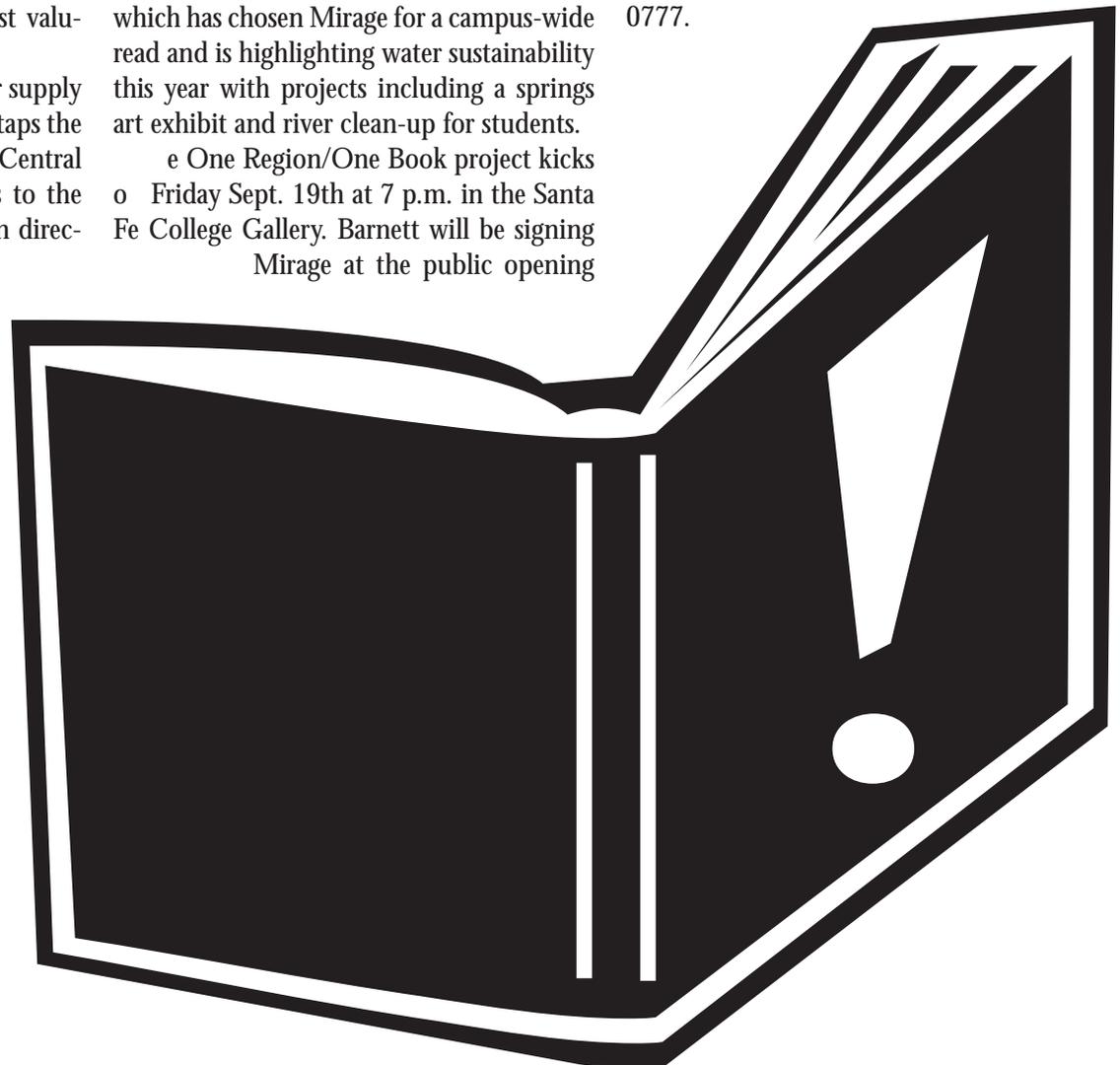
- *Liquid Muse: Paintings of the St. Johns River Region*. Thomas Center reception and gallery talk by Mallory O'Connor and Gary Monroe, Oct. 2nd 5 to 7 p.m.

- *The Art and Science of Water: Framing the Issues and Finding Solutions*. Santa Fe College panels with artists, policy makers, scientists and authors; gallery reception for *Portray, Preserve Prosper* follows from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Oct. 3rd.

- *Where's the Water?* Barnett reading and lecture, Alachua County downtown library, Oct. 7, 7 p.m.

To learn more about the Florida's Eden Water Awareness Campaign, download discussion questions, request a speaker, or find additional events and information, go to [www.floridaseden.org](http://www.floridaseden.org). Want to get involved? Call Annie

Pais at 352-377-0777.



**CORNER, from page 2**

clean, respectful campaigns that should set a standard for candidate conduct in local elections. SSJ is busy working on state and federal endorsements with other Florida Sierra Club groups in the region since most of these districts overlap several groups' territories.

**DAIRIES THREATEN OUR SPRINGS**

Recently I visited Suwannee County to look at some spray fields associated with a large dairy farm to dispose of waste that spread the waste on fields in the area.

It was a Sunday and none of the spray fields were active, however the area is highly Karst and laced with sinkholes.

Near the dairy waste spray field the Suwannee River Water management District owns Falmouth Springs Park which I visited. I was astounded at what I saw; the

water was not clear but a gray color that reminded me of gray water from domestic wastewater.

I could not believe I was looking at a spring in Florida. It was a graphic illustration of what happens when excess nutrients impact an area with an unconfined aquifer.

While the so called pregnant pig amendment to the Florida Constitution has prevented industrial hog farming in this state there is no similar restriction on dairy operations.

**SOLAR ENERGY INCENTIVES**

According to GRU staff, they are preparing recommended options to present to the Gainesville City Commission for a feed in tariff for solar energy. This technique for incentivizing the installation of PV panels provides for a premium payment above the retail cost of electricity for customers who supply renewable energy to the grid.

It has worked spectacularly well in Germany, a country with less solar potential than Florida. Such a feed in tariff would be a powerful tool to permit utilities to meet the 20% renewable portfolio standard called for by Governor Crist.

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Finally as we approach the November general elections I want to urge SSJ members to volunteer to help with the campaigns of candidates endorsed by the Sierra Club.

It takes more than money to win an election and by demonstrating to the candidates that the Sierra Club can help them win then they will be in a position to support our issues. Volunteering is a good way to meet people and enjoy some new experiences.

There are innumerable tasks that any campaign needs help with so jump on in and have some fun while making a difference.

**VOTE NOV. 4 • VOTE NOV. 4 • VOTE NOV. 4 • VOTE NOV. 4**

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 rroy4@bellsouth.net, or Kathy Cantwell at kacmd@aol.com or 352-395-7441.

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## news & notes

### SIERRA CLUB CO-SPONSORS UNITED NATIONS DAY

United Nations Day will be observed on **Thursday, October 23, 2008**, at the Woman's Club. The theme for this year is the United Nations' Seventh Millennium Goal: Ensure Environmental Stability. The outcomes for this goal include: Integrate principles of sustainable development into county policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources; By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water; By 2020, achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

An interesting and informative day is planned, chaired by Dr. Jackson Sasser, president of Santa Fe College. The morning session features a panel discussion with Dr. Wendy Graham, chair of the Water Institute at the University of Florida and Dr. Tony Oliver of the United Nations University and the University of Florida.

The afternoon session features Mona Griener of Washington, DC, an international consultant with field experience in many countries around the world.

As a co-sponsor, the Sierra Club will have a table featuring some of the environmental accomplishments associated with its projects.

The event is free and open to the public. Lunch will be prepared by the Hungry Ram of East Side High School, but must be ordered in advance. Vegetarian

selections are available. Please consider this your personal invitation to attend. Email [BHerbstman@aol.com](mailto:BHerbstman@aol.com) for a Lunch Reservation Form as early as possible. This is a most important topic and we look forward to seeing you at UN Day.

*By Kathy Cantwell*

### U.S. HOUSE VOTES TO GET KIDS OUTSIDE

Washington, D.C.- The U.S. House of Representatives voted last month to expand and improve the opportunities for children and adolescents to learn about and experience the natural world. Hands-on outdoor environmental education offers an opportunity to improve academic performance in our schools and provides a solution for reversing the trends of childhood obesity and "nature deficit disorder" that are afflicting a generation.

"[This] vote signifies a new national commitment to youth and the environment. Right now children are spending their days inside and their evenings and weekends plugged into electronic media," says Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club. "They are missing out on the daily childhood joy of playing outside that their parents' took for granted just twenty years ago."

Research shows that when children spend time outdoors, they are more physically active, engage in more creative forms of play

and are better focused. Environmental education contributes to significant improvements in academic performance and motivation to learn. It also leads to student gains in problem-solving skills, conflict resolution abilities, and self-esteem.

### SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4:** "International Coastal Cleanup Day" Service Outing: Newnans Lake Cleanup and Adopt-A-County-Road Lake Shore Drive Cleanup. Meet at the Gainesville Area Rowing Facility (located where East University Avenue meets the lake) at 8:30 am.

Please join Fritzi Olson and Current Problems volunteers to celebrate "International Coastal Cleanup Day." Opportunities will exist to help cleanup our adopted county road: Lake Shore Drive, and help in the cleanup of Newnans Lake, including adjoining tributary creeks.

A portion of the lake cleanup may involve working from a boat. Please note that you may get wet and dirty during this cleanup, so please wear appropriate clothing and shoes. Work gloves and a sun-shielding hat are highly recommended. Duration of cleanup is 8:30-12:00 pm. Contact Robert Fisher at [rcblast1@yahoo.com](mailto:rcblast1@yahoo.com) or (352) 514-7674 for further information.

Open to the public and please car pool.

### WILDLIFE PHOTO and GIFT SALE



by Lana Adele Baader

### OCTOBER 1-31, BOOK LOVERS CAFÉ

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# ENERGY SAVING TIP OF THE MONTH

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

If you are a Gainesville Regional Utilities customer, you are probably aware of their rebate program for various upgrades of equipment and improvements to your house to reduce energy consumption.

If GRU is not your utility provider, yours may have a similar rebate program that you can investigate. If the equipment in your house is 10-15 years old, now may be the time to upgrade to new higher-efficiency models or to make home efficiency improvements.

It is NOT recommended that you change to a natural gas water heater, for which GRU gives a \$250 rebate (\$350 for tankless NGWH). Natural gas is less polluting than coal and its use would reduce the demand for additional generating capacity. However, natural gas is not an infinite resource; there are better uses for it than heating water, and better ways to heat water.

The really compelling reason to eschew switching to gas now is that next year a much better option will become available.

That is a heat pump water heater (HPWH) that is already sold widely in Japan (called Eco Cute) and in other countries. There are

a few manufactured already in this country but availability of HPWHs is not well known. The US Department of Energy has decided to begin Energy Star labeling of water heaters in January 2009, and General Electric has to begin production of HPWHs that will be over twice as efficient as the best gas water heaters. The heat pump is integral to the water heater, i.e. it is an integrated heat pump water heater. There are also add-on heat pump units that can be added to existing electric water heaters.

The Energy Star ratings will give the energy factor (EF) of the unit that is the ratio of the heating power supplied to the water divided by the power used to operate the unit. For electric or gas water heaters the EF is less than one, meaning that not all of the energy consumed goes into heating the water. The minimum Energy Star rating will be 2.0, which means that the best gas or electric heaters will not have such ratings. The Eco Cute from Japan has an EF of 5.0, while GE's is to be 2.5. Although the GE model is only half as efficient as the Eco Cute, it is still over 2.5 times as efficient as gas or electricity.

A HPWH works the same as a refrigerator that extracts heat from the contents of

the refrigerator, rejecting heat to the coils underneath or behind the refrigerator. The HPWH is like a refrigerator operating in reverse, extracting heat from the air around it and rejecting that heat plus the energy required in running it to heat the water.

A side benefit of HPWH is that the air around the water heater is cooled by the heat extracted to heat the water. Also the air is dehumidified. If your water heater is located in conditioned space the cooling will have to be offset by your heating system in the winter. However, since in Florida, the cooling season is longer than the heating season, this will not be much of a consideration.

Another development that you may want to check out is the offering of optional off-peak electric rates by GRU beginning October 2008. The rate from 10 pm to 6 am (excluding holidays and weekends) will be \$0.10 per kWh lower than the peak rate of \$0.14 per kWh. If you work the night shift, this could save considerably on your electric bill, particularly if you installed a thermal storage air conditioning system.

Feel free to email me if you have questions about these somewhat technical issues. (adams@phys.ufl.edu)

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# OCTOBER 2008 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- OCT 2**—"Liquid Muse: Paintings of the St. Johns River Region", 5-7 p.m., at the Thomas Center. See page 4.
- OCT 2**—SSJ Sierra Club Group general meeting, 7:30 p.m., in the Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus, room 1031 (see page 1 for details).
- OCT 3**—"The Art and Science of Water: Framing the Issues and Finding Solutions", 5:30-7:30 p.m., at Santa Fe College. See page 4.
- OCT 4**—Service Outing to Newnan's Lake, 7:30 a.m. See page 6.
- OCT 7**—"Where's the Water?", 7 p.m. Barnett reading and lecture, Alachua County Library in downtown Gainesville. See page 4.
- OCT 9**—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, 7 p.m., at the Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville campus. Board meeting room.
- OCT 23**—United Nations Day, 9 - 1 p.m., Gainesville Womens Club.
- OCT 24**—Folding Party for the November newsletter, 7:30 p.m., at Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner's house. Call 375-2563 for more information.

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 and Get New Customers

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