



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

Published monthly except June and August from Gainesville, Florida
 VOLUME 40 • NUMBER 9 • November 2010

Natural Burial as an Environmental Choice

BY MELANIE MARTIN

Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery is a natural burial ground that opened near Gainesville, Florida to promote land conservation as a final resting place.

“People now have a choice for a simple burial that is truly in harmony with nature, while contributing to land preservation,” said Freddie Johnson, our speaker and president of the non-profit Conservation Burial, Inc. “This choice will not be for everyone, but we all should have the option to incorporate environmental, spiritual, and economic offerings in our final wishes.”

Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery is located on 78 acres of rolling land in eastern Alachua County, adjacent to Prairie Creek Preserve and sandwiched between Paynes Prairie State Preserve and Lochloosa Wildlife Management Area. The land is linked by trails to the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Rail Trail.

“Natural” (or “green”) burial is a safe and legal practice that uses biodegradable containers and avoids embalming fluids and concrete vaults. “Conservation burial” goes a step further to commit burial fees to the acquisition, restoration, and long-term management of conservation land. The conservation cemetery becomes a beautiful place to visit and a sacred legacy for future generations.

Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery will be the first Florida “conservation burial ground” to be recognized by the Green Burial Council, an independent national certification organization. While the conservation cemetery is a relatively new concept in the United States, green burial practices have been popular in other countries – especially Great Britain – for many years.

The cemetery is operated in collaboration between Alachua Conservation Trust, Inc., a local non-profit land trust, and Conservation Burial Inc., a non-profit cemetery association, both recognized as charities by the Internal Revenue Service.

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, Nov. 4, 7:30 p.m.

Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus,
 ** room 3118 **
 (Just east of the Performing Arts Center. Turn south off Hull Road on to Natural Areas Road.)

NATURAL BURIAL ALTERNATIVE

FREDDIE JOHNSON
 PRESIDENT CONSERVATION BURIAL, INC.



Alachua Conservation Trust’s mission is to protect the natural, historical, scenic, and recreational resources of north central Florida. Conservation Burial, Inc.’s mission is to promote natural burial practices in cemeteries that conserve land and reunite people with the environment. For more information, visit www.conservationburial-inc.org.

ANNUAL FALL CLEANUP OF LAKE SHORE DRIVE

BY ROBERT FISHER

It could not have been a more perfect day for a cleanup.

The sun was out and not a cloud in the sky. What more could one ask for? How

about people to help out? There was Knox, myself and a loyal friend, who is not a Sierra Club member. SSJ Group members and the Lake Shore Drive residents decided to stay home.

All was not lost, as we were ready to

start, the re-enforcements arrived: the inmates from the Alachua County Jail. A big thanks to Fritzi Olson for organizing the Fall Cleanup of Newnans Lake and providing the re-enforcements. The inmates targeted the road, while the few volunteers who did show up were able to focus on the

see CLEANUP, page 4

DUDE, WHERE'S MY NEWSLETTER?	3
THE SILENCE OF THE BISON	6
BALLOTING FOR EXCOM MEMBERS	7-8

Water and Noise

BY BRACK BARKER

Recently I paddled the Wakulla River during a workshop, learning to work with handicapped people. What I observed of the water was not a pretty sight.

It reminded me of the condition of King's Bay in Crystal River, a large body of water devoid of vegetation. Large sections of the Wakulla bottom were covered with Lyngbya algae, a species that explodes in growth when too much nutrients are in a river or water system. A bare bottom devoid of eel grass and other beneficial vegetation, and the sparse grass was being smothered by the algae.

Wakulla County has special rules about septic systems within the Wakulla watershed that includes Leon County. But based on what I saw, it may be too little, too late. It's a wonder the manatee that visit have enough food to overwinter in these warmer waters.

Attempts by disgruntled legislators, and

growth industry types are now trying to weaken SB 550 that deals in part with the issue of failed septic tank systems. Maybe those meddlers need to take a ride on the Wakulla River, or go see King's Bay to be reminded that people are going to have to pay for clean water eventually. Might as well be now when the costs are not as exorbitant.

Noise? We have plenty of that on most bodies of water with people using machinery that exceeds the boundaries of good common sense.

CHAIR'S



CORNER

Why does so much noise have to be a part of ones nature experience. You'd think that quiet would be the rule, not the rare instance that is normal most anywhere else.

How does causing noise enhance the user's experience other than to show off that they can make such a racket? Not to mention the nighttime airboat abuse

of common folk just trying to get some rest and enjoy the quiet of the night.

I hope that all of you voted on November 2 for abatement of this assault on our senses. This local effort is not discriminatory against people, but relief from their inanimate noise machines.

Sierra Club 2011 Calendars



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

Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club Newsletter (UPS 317-370) is published 10 months a year, **except June and August**, by the Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club, 1024 NW 13th Ave, Gainesville, 32601. Non-member subscription rate is \$5.00. Periodicals Postage Paid is paid at the Gainesville, FL 32608 post office. **Postmaster: Send change of addresses to SSJ SC Newsletter, P.O. Box 13951, Gainesville, FL 32604, or to ssjsierranl@bellsouth.net. Send both your old and new addresses and a Sierra address label, which contains your membership number. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SUWANNEE-ST. JOHNS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB TO: P.O. BOX 13951, GAINESVILLE, FL 32604.**

Dude, Where's My Newsletter?

BY ROBERTA GASTMEYER

This is a notice if you are still interested in staying on our mailing or email list.

Last year, the Suwannee St. Johns (SSJ) Group Sierra Club decided we needed to reduce the number of paper copies we print and mail each month for a couple of reasons: (1) to reduce our use of all the energy and resources that go into the paper, printing, and mailing of our newsletter; (2) publication of the newsletter is the single largest item in our budget and every issue con-

sumes hours of volunteer time. We believe that the money and time would be better spent directly working to improve the environment and spreading our environmental message in the community.

If you have not notified us of your newsletter delivery preference, please do so now!

Email or mail us a note with your complete name and address including zip code, a contact phone number or email address, and whether you prefer a paper or email newsletter.

You may change your preference at any time, but if this issue is the first one you

have received in several months (or ever), it will be the last one you receive until next November if we do not hear from you now!

Email to: ssjsierranl@bellsouth.net

(That is an "L" at the end of [ssjsierranl](mailto:ssjsierranl@bellsouth.net), not a number one!).

OR

Mail to: SSJ Newsletter / Roberta Gastmeyer, 4118 NW 69th St, Gainesville FL 32606.

This is the first newsletter you have received in awhile; it may be because you have not let us know that.

book of the month

The Restless Sea: Exploring the World Beneath the Waves

By Robert Kunzig
W.W. Norton Company, 1999

Kunzig will take you down into the deep giving you new images of the physical and biological makeup of the oceans.

Imagine an ocean without water, and you set out to walk to Europe. You would climb down perhaps a mile from the continental shelf to an ocean floor that is mostly flat until you reach the Mid-Atlantic Riff. It would be like walking from Omaha to Denver and seeing the majestic Rocky

Mountains.

Learn of the mysterious biology of the deep ocean. Picture six men trying to capture a 5-foot 25-gallon jellyfish slithering on the deck of a ship. How far down does life exist under pressures 1100 times that of sea level? The ocean is biologically alive all the way down to the deepest trench at 6.5 miles where you find worms and a few fish. Higher up, jellyfish are the most common animal. A jelly maneuvering its body to track down food isn't remarkable until you realize that it has no brain.

Phytoplankton are living plants that suck up surface water CO₂ and emit oxygen. Read of the ocean experiments to seed phytoplankton growth with dilute iron to reduce atmospheric CO₂.

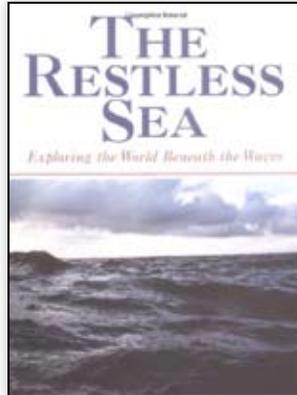
The oceans are finite. Cod and haddock have virtually disappeared from overfishing the banks of the North Atlantic. Read of the magnificent ocean currents. If you tracked a molecule of water as it left the Florida coast headed north in the Gulfstream, you would find that it returned one day after traveling several global pathways.

You would have to be patient, since it would take about 1,000 years. These are a few examples.

There is water everywhere in the universe, but why is Earth the only planet in our solar system to have an ocean.

This book is about science of the oceans, specifically about water, and it will change your reverence for that dynamic mystery we all stare at.

By Chuck Hawkins



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Park Service Got Us Buffaloed

BY WHITEY MARKLE

Buffalo, Cracker Horses, and Scrub Cattle will be drastically reduced and/or eventually eliminated from Paynes Prairie State Park according to recent reports in the Florida Alligator and Gainesville Sun.

From this point of view, it looks like budget-cutting. Paynes Prairie Park Manager David Jowers said in an internal memo sent

up the line in September that the Bison and Horses could possibly be eliminated since they both would be reduced to an all female population. (His memo did leave the possibility of re-introducing a diverse bull some time in the future).

In Jowers memo to Don Forgione, State Parks chief, elimination of the herds was described as necessary because of "security and liability". (Those of us who know about animal liability law are aware that wild and indigenous animals (such as Bison) are not included in liability laws as are "livestock"

animals).

It is sad that the Park people have made this decision. The Buffalo, Spanish Horses, and Cracker Cattle are all part of our heritage and are living replicas of Alachua's history. According to Park Service representatives in Tallahassee, there will be a "public" meeting about this issue. It will be advertised in the Florida Administrative Weekly (who gets that?).

At press time (10/20) no date had been set for this public input meeting. We think it is time for the Friends of Paynes Prairie and the public to put their collective foot down. For more information, call Paynes Prairie State Park at 466-3397.

ICO OUTINGS UPDATE

BY MARYVONNE DEVENSKY

Our first outing for this school year was on Wednesday October 20, at Ring Park, in the center of Gainesville. Eleven students left Lake Forest Elementary school, and hiked in that beautiful park where the trail takes you along Hogtown Creek. Five volunteers from the ICO program went with them: Ruth Steiner, Knox Bagwell, Roberta Gastmeyer, Stephanie Lee, a teacher at Lake Forest, and myself.

The kids were geared for an adventure to find plants, such as Saw Palmetto, Air potato plant, Beautyberry, Redbud tree along the trail woodpeckers, and Carolina wrens.

They were given pictures at the trailhead, and some did identify these items, but... some students just had a wonderful time running up and down the trail. The sun shone through the trees, the water was clear down in the creek, and we looked for minnows. We found various types of autumn leaves and a large feather (an eagle's feather according to Mark, a 3rd grader). We stopped and observed an anole going down a branch, a woodpecker chipping at a tree, and a golden silk orb weaver spider commonly called a banana spider... We met a friend of Kathy Cantwell, and she wants to be an ICO volunteer... We had snacks... Most of all, we had fun.

Thanks to all volunteers, and to the Community Outreach Ministries who provided

a van and driver to transport us...

OTHER ICO NEWS... VOTE AND SUPPORT ICO... READ

We met last week to plan our outings for the year, so if you want to participate, contact us... more kids from other schools are waiting for you to lead them in the woods.

UF students will participate soon in our outing, and we urge you to support this program and vote for a \$5,000 grant from the Pepsi Refresh Grant program. Go to www.gator1.ufl.edu/refresh right now and VOTE for the UF supporting Environmental Education/ICO program.

Thanks ...

CLEANUP, from page 1

shoreline and associated wetlands along the western edge of Newnans Lake. As usual, there was no shortage of garbage.

Why is this important? Newnans Lake flows into the Alachua sinkhole, an access point for the Florida aquifer, the water supply for Gainesville and other surrounding communities. Some of the garbage was beverage and food containers, which leach out plasticizers and chemical additives into the environment. These compounds were christened "endocrine disruptors" by a small group of scientists in 1991 after reviewing evidence that chemical exposure caused developmental defects in wildlife populations. Subsequent work in laboratory animal mod-

els established that exposure to "endocrine disrupting chemicals" during development and infancy was linked to reproductive defects in males, hyperactivity and impaired learning, increased body weight, and insulin resistance (a prelude to type 2 diabetes, and prostate and breast hyperplasia and cancer). The best studied of the EDCs is polybisphenol A (PBA), which mimics the activity of estrogen. Other well known EDCs, include phthalates, used in the production of polyvinyl chloride, and the environmental pollutant, dioxin. In all cases, the EDCs disrupt or mimic hormones, even at low concentrations.

Where do we stand? In 2007, the chemical industry, represented by the American Chemistry Council, challenged the meth-

odology used to determine the health effects of BPA exposure. Numerous studies demonstrating a linkage between toxic BPA and reproductive disorders and cancer were viewed as flawed. BPA was viewed as safe and is still extensively used by the chemical industry. In 2010, research funding became available to re-evaluate the health risks associated with BPA.

Who is affected? The 2009 CDC report on human exposure to environmental chemicals indicated that the majority of individuals tested had detectable levels of EDCs.

What can a person do? Participate in the Spring Cleanup of Lake Shore Drive and Newnans Lake. Seek alternatives to plastics (see lifewithoutplastics.com)

The Silence of the Bison

BY RILEY PECK

Recently *The Gainesville Sun* & *The Independent Florida Alligator* reported that “the number of bison, wild cracker horses, and scrub cattle roaming Payne’s Prairie State Preserve will be greatly reduced next year under a state proposed plan.” But Payne’s Prairie officials did not intend to let this information out, so in deciding to write this article I drove to the prairie to gather information.

Upon arrival I received anything but straight answers. When I asked Park rangers why this decision was made, I received no response. When asked where the animals were being relocated, I received no response. I was curious to know why no one would speak with me. I later found out from an undisclosed source that there was a gag order for all park employees and volunteers to not speak to anyone about this issue.

Why the secrecy if the plan is cut and dry? A Sept. 17 memo released by David Jowers, Park Manager of Payne’s Prairie, said, “In consultation with Park biologists and Division staff, a determination was made that to be responsible neighbors and managers we must update our management plan for all livestock (bison, cattle, and horses). The updated plan includes: relocating some members of the herd, reducing the current number of bison and horses to a non-reproducing herd (all female) appropriate for the size of the prairie basin, to stop inbreeding, and manage the animals where appropriate veterinary care can be accommodated.”

Mr. Jowers gave other reasons such as the bison were “reintroduced with the intent that the grazing animals would help manage the park’s ecosystem, but it’s not working as well as hoped ... and a need to reduce the likelihood of escape onto surrounding roads and properties thus limiting incidents and liability to fence repair.” Donald Forgione, the director of the Florida Park Service, said “officials want to put the remaining herds

in an area more visible to park visitors. Of course the intention is not to install a ‘petting zoo’ near the visitor center but to confine the animals to an area large enough that they would ‘appear to be roaming the prairie,’ instead of actually roaming the prairie.” The sheer fact that no one is speaking about this, gives the impression that there is more to the story.

Jessica Sims, Information Director of the FPS/DEP, told me that “a public meeting will take place to discuss options and solicit public input and comments.” The meeting is to be announced in the “Florida Administrative Weekly.” Is that a non-public announcement of a public meeting? As of now, this meeting has not been set. The Park Service should make the public meeting general knowledge via the local media.

We all contribute to our parks and have the right to voice our concerns as well as potential alternatives. I was told that no final decisions have been made, and currently no animals are being removed from the park. We will follow this up in a later Newsletter, however we wanted to alert you so that you may get involved to save these animals and their cultural and historical ties to our beautiful and unique Payne’s Prairie.

Gainesville to Get Its Own BP

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

The proposed expansion of Butler Plaza (Butler Plaza North) being considered by Gainesville City Commission is completely out of character with the City. The massive auto-dependent shopping complex surrounded by a sea of parking is larger than the existing BP and the Oaks Mall combined.

The “needs” calculation for this colossus ignored all other commercial space in Gainesville, and was based on a customer-base within 40 miles that includes much of Ocala.

Statewide, the Department of Community Affairs shows approved but unconstructed commercial space of over 1 billion sq.

ft. In fact, Butler Plaza itself has significant vacant space of close to 10% and there is a large amount of vacant commercial space throughout the City and County.

The expanded Butler Plaza will seal the fate of downtown and east Gainesville. The City may as well allow BP to name the main street leading into it from Archer Rd. “Main Street” and the center of the development “Towne Centre” since these will become the reality if BPN is approved.

The multiple-laned 62nd Blvd. from the Oaks Mall through the new BP, becoming its “Main Street” where it emerges at Archer Rd., will cost \$100 million.

Cliff Stearns’ “earmark” covers only a fraction of this, with the remainder coming at the expense of other pressing transportation needs.

This road connecting one congested shopping area to another cannot relieve the

traffic congestion on Archer Road and SW 34th Street.

Stacy Mitchell gives a full exposition of why big box businesses and chain stores like those that will be in BP are so detrimental to a community in her book “Big-Box Swindle.”

Local businesses simply cannot survive against tactics of chains and big boxes and eventually must go out of business.

Whatever happened to the “student village” with lots of student housing and shops to serve them that was envisioned by the charrette held about 10 years ago? This had widespread community input including from Dan Burden of Walkable Communities fame.

The City should urge Butler Plaza North planners to consider incorporating much of these ideas into the development.

What you can do: Contact Commissioners at CityComm@cityofgainesville.org and let them know what you think of BPN plans.

2010 Sierra Club ExCom Nominees

Brack Barker

brack154@msn.com

I've been a member of the SSJ Excom since 2008, having served as Social, Conservation, and now Chair of the Group. My interest in remaining on the Excom is to bring all of our 15 counties within the group closer to the table. I would like to see more input as to what is important to Group members and their areas. I attend governmental meetings in Gilchrist, Levy, and Marion counties to keep involved with the environmental issues there. Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Scott Camil

s.camil@att.net

A Vietnam Veteran who has been an activist for Peace and Justice for 40 years. Worked to protect a women's right to choose, Campaign Finance Reform, Citizens Police Review Board, The Clean Air Ordinance, Charter Amendment 1, Alachua County Forever, Home Town Democracy (Amendment 4), and Initiative Ordinance 1 (Airboat noise curfew). As a strong advocate for the environment, I've helped elect pro-environmental candidates. As a member of ExCom for the last 8 years, I served as folding party coordinator, on the nominating, newsletter, events, and political committees. I am the Coordinator of Gainesville Veterans for Peace.

Jack Donovan

jfdonovan@bellsouth.net

Raised on Emerson and Thoreau in Concord, Massachusetts. Appointed to Concord's first (conservationist) Town Comp Plan Committee. Sierra Club member for years, mainly as consumer of articles/reports. Outgoing Gainesville City Commissioner: important in stopping coal power plant, stopping investment in new Progress Energy nuclear plant, emphasis on energy conservation and alternatives,

and raising concern about water supply depletion, water conservation, Koppers/Beazer irresponsibility, and water pharmaceuticals contamination. Troubled by "last child in the woods" phenomenon. Furious at Alachua County Commission sprawl policies. Awards: SC Susan Wright, WWG Doris Bardon, Planned Parenthood Margaret Sanger.

Larry Marsh

ldmarsh@cox.net

My wife, Kathy, and I have been members of Sierra Club for almost 20 years. Before moving here in 2004, both of us served in leadership positions with the Volusia-Flagler Sierra Group. I served as the ExComm Chair of that Group for almost two years. I am very interested in conservation issues at the local, state, and national levels. Please elect me to serve as a member of your ExComm.

Linda Pollini

thirdeyegrafix@bellsouth.net

ExComm member 2000-2005, serving as Chair, State Committee Rep, Conservation Committee, Political Committee. Was involved in many issues along the way: movement to stop the Florida Rock Cement Plants, Kopper's Plant, and Clean Air Initiative. Represented SSJ and wrote many statements that were presented to the Alachua City and County Commission. Traveled to Tallahassee on behalf of SSJ and spoke against governor's decision to approve the Ichetucknee Cement Plant Construction. I now live in Putnam County and am interested in establishing the wildlife corridor and the Putnam Land Conservancy establishment of an Environmental Center here.

Chris Smiley

chris.smiley@gmx.com

A UF graduate. My work has been in public education reform and public in-

terest areas. I was a recent candidate for the county school board. I am the creator and writer for a UF science and philosophy journal. I have been an advocate for a countywide recycling program and this is my main reason for joining SSJ and running for a position here. I need more support and resources to get a recycling program planned and implemented by the school district, and I will use the connections this organization has to get cooperation from key people in the county.

Dan Vazquez

a.daniel.vazquez@gmail.com

Trial lawyer specializing in personal injury, environmental law, toxic torts, and environmental contamination. Growing up in Satellite Beach, Florida, I learned the importance of protecting our valuable natural resources. I helped my father and others create Samsons Island Nature Park and pass the Brevard County Parks ballot-initiative. I have lived in Gainesville for the past eight years. My academic specialty in law school included extensive work on environmental justice activism, electronic-waste recycling initiatives, as well as research on the gulf oil pollution crisis.

Mike Wright

mike@sugarfoot.org

I've been a resident of Alachua County and Gainesville for nearly 50 years, and I've seen how things can change for the better and how they can change for the worse. I've only been on the Executive Committee and served as a Webmaster for a short time. I think there is lots more to do to make the local website more relevant and more current, and I'd like to continue in that capacity. Maybe in some small way that will help things change for the better.

 **BALLOT NEXT PAGE** 

SUWANNEE ST. JOHNS GROUP SIERRA CLUB ELECTION FOR 2011-2012 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Each year, the Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club 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 a total of 15 ExCom officers serving staggered 2-year terms. This year we will be electing 7 officers. We do not elect members for particular positions, only as members at-large. Then the new executive committee appoints its members to the various positions (eg Chair, Conservation Chair, Secretary, etc).

Voting Instructions: Indicate your choices by checking the line in front of the names of the candidates. Each member may cast one ballot, voting for no more than seven (7) persons. Joint memberships (as indicated by a "J" after the 3305 on the top line of your address label on the back of this page) are entitled to 2 votes. The second column on the ballot is provided for this. Do not vote twice if you do not have a joint membership.

Mailing Instructions: Remove this page from the newsletter and fold the ballot so that your membership label appears on the outside. Place the ballot in an envelope and mail to: Sierra Club Election Committee, C/O Roberta Gastmeyer, 4118 NW 69th St, Gainesville FL 32606.

Ballots must be received by December 4th, 2010. Please be sure to mail your ballot in time to allow delivery by that date. If you have any questions about this procedure, contact Roberta Gastmeyer at 352-336-2404 or rgastmeyer@bellsouth.net.

To protect your confidentiality, after confirming your membership, election committee members will remove the label portion before opening the rest of the ballot

Ballots will be counted on December 7th at 5:00pm at Roberta Gastmeyer's house at 4118 NW 69th St, Gainesville. This meeting is open to all Sierra Club members. You may call Roberta at 336-2404 for directions.

Use this column for single memberships or the 1st voter
in joint membership households.

Vote for up to, but no more than, 7 candidates

<input type="checkbox"/> Brack Barker	<input type="checkbox"/> Larry Marsh
<input type="checkbox"/> Scott Camil	<input type="checkbox"/> Linda Pollini
<input type="checkbox"/> Jack Donovan	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris Smiley
<input type="checkbox"/> Mike Wright	<input type="checkbox"/> A. Daniel Vasquez

Use this column only for 2nd voter
in joint membership households.

Vote for up to, but no more than, 7 candidates

<input type="checkbox"/> Brack Barker	<input type="checkbox"/> Larry Marsh
<input type="checkbox"/> Scott Camil	<input type="checkbox"/> Linda Pollini
<input type="checkbox"/> Jack Donovan	<input type="checkbox"/> Chris Smiley
<input type="checkbox"/> Mike Wright	<input type="checkbox"/> A. Daniel Vasquez

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NOVEMBER 2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOV 4—SSJ Sierra Club Group general meeting, 7:30 pm, in the Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus, room 3118. See page 1 for details.

NOV 6/7— The Downtown Festival and Art Show, 10 pm – 5 pm, Sierra Club Tabling. Just west of Hippodrome.

NOV 11—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, 7 pm, at the Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville Campus Board meeting room.

NOV 26—Friday, Folding party for the October Newsletter, 7 pm, at the home of Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner. Call 375-2563 for info.

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