



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

Published monthly except June and August from Gainesville, Florida
 VOLUME 43 • NUMBER 9 • NOVEMBER 2013

Spring Flow Declines and a North Florida Water Balance

A Presentation by Dr. Bob Knight

BY SSJ SIERRA CLUB

The Suwannee River Water Management District is actively involved in setting regulatory minimum flows for the Ichetucknee and Santa Fe rivers in North Florida.

While this protection is better late than never, the District's recommended minimum flows are substantially below historic flows and may become an obstacle for reducing groundwater pumping rates needed to achieve restoration of the rivers and their feeder springs. A North Florida water balance has been prepared that better illustrates the effects of excessive regional groundwater extraction on these rivers and springs. Significant harm due to reduced flows was apparent more than 20 years ago and recovery should include a goal of no more than a five percent flow reduction due to pumping for these Outstanding Florida Waters.

Robert L. Knight, Ph.D. is a consulting environmental scientist. He is the founder and president of Wetland Solutions, Inc., and specializes in projects related to treatment wetlands, wetland and aquatic ecology, surface water quality, and environmental studies.

Dr. Knight's professional experience includes all aspects of environmental study, includ-

ing design and implementation of field studies, data analysis and interpretation, project management, quality assurance and review, environmental systems overview analysis and computer modeling, and impact analysis, prediction, and assessment. He is experienced in a wide range of applied research problems in aquatic, wetland, and terrestrial environments and has completed environmental assessments nationwide.

Dr. Knight has extensive experience in the study and analysis of the water quality of natural lakes, streams, wetlands, and estuaries. He has designed and implemented numerous water quality monitoring programs and has assessed the impacts associated with urban development and construction activities on water quality. He has provided recommendations concerning nutrient control and eutrophication abatement for lakes and canals throughout the United States. His lake management expertise also includes identification and control of excessive aquatic plant growths through chemical and biological means. He has conducted field verification studies of the algal assay procedure, studied the effects of power plant entrainment on phytoplankton, and provided taxonomy and enumeration of phytoplankton and periphyton from rivers and streams. His professional experience includes extensive work on the effects of toxic metals and discharges on streams and wetlands.

GENERAL MEETING

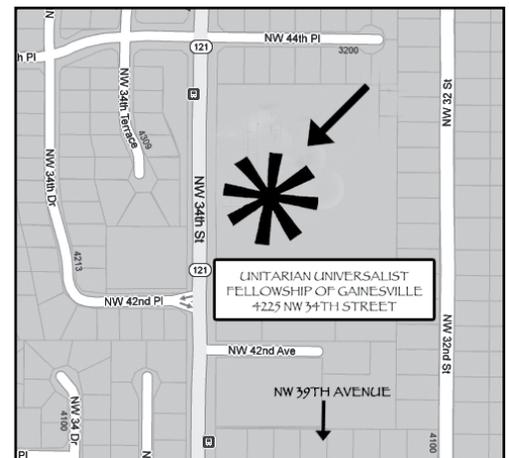
Thursday, November 7, 7:30p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville
 4225 NW 34th Street, Gainesville

SPRING FLOW DECLINES AND A NORTH FLORIDA WATER BALANCE

DR. BOB KNIGHT

Environmental Scientist and Activist
 FREE, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!



Kelly Park Rock Springs in Apopka, Fla. Photo by Julie Fletcher, courtesy of Visit Florida.

CHAIR'S CORNER	2
NEWS FROM THE CONSERVATION CHAIR	3
GAINESVILLE COHOUSING	4

Chair's Corner: An Inspirational Protest

BY DAVE WILSON

While many Sierrans in North Florida are discouraged by the steady stream of defeats we have suffered during the past few years, it is time to mention a noteworthy victory, where informed and energized citizens made a difference.

In April 2012, Integrated Waste Management Systems (IWMS) approached the Baker County Board of Commissioners with an offer to build a medical waste incineration facility in their community. The directors assured the community that the facility would be safe. They added the tease that they would create 59 new jobs. The expectation was that this project was a done deal.

Unfortunately for IWMS, two Baker County residents, Allison Broughton and Mark Lyons, coordinated a revolt against the project by first educating and then energizing local residents against the project. When the issue was brought before the commission, they not only filled the room with concerned citizens, but also lined up more

than a dozen individuals to articulate their concerns. Allison began by pointing out that while the effluent from the stack was smokeless and odorless, it would contain dioxins and other toxic wastes. She also challenged the company with the question, "Who will hold the company accountable when malfunctions occur?" A second speaker stated that he had worked in such a plant and that the waste products are nasty and the filters go bad. Other citizens pointed out that Baker County has been a dumping ground for toxic chemicals since World War II. Others pointed out that while an inch can be measured, "state of the art" cannot, "safer" is not "safe," the jobs are not for the residents of Baker County, and "What if EPA standards go up?" The good news is that this project was stopped cold. The bad news is that IWMS simply moved their efforts to Suwannee County, where once again the expectation was that the Board of Commissioners would easily approve the project.

Fortunately, Allison and Mark have taken on a moral obligation to warn others. This time they organized a protest in Live Oak on Sunday Octo. 13. Since Allison invited Sierra to join them, several members of SSJ attended. When we arrived, we found

Millennium Park packed with 200-300 energized people who were clearly unified in their commitment to stop this project. (Suwannee County's population equals 43,565 residents!) Allison enumerated numerous glaring problems in a presentation IWMS had made at a recent Town Hall Meeting. Her objections included: the ash would be toxic (e.g. dioxins and mercury), radioactive materials might be present in some containers, no bond would be posted in case of an accident, and the containers would arrive sealed an unlabeled from as far as 1,000 miles away.

In his remarks, Mark mentioned that "state of the art" is just a phrase that provides no guarantees. The Titanic and the Fukushima nuclear plants were state of the art but still ended in disaster. He added: "We will follow you."

While the crowd already knew that three commissioners had flipped on their votes, they still cheered wildly when Commissioner Jason Bashaw stood up to announce that he would make the vote 4-1 against the project.

I find this successful protest inspirational. Allison has written letters to most of the

See *CHAIR'S CORNER*, p. 3

Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

National: www.sierraclub.org

Local: <http://ssjsierra.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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PLEASE ADDRESS ALL GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SUWANNEE-ST. JOHNS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB TO: P.O. BOX 13951, GAINESVILLE, FL 32604.

News from the Conservation Chair

BY WHITEY MARKLE

THE SSJ EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOM) ELECTION

We have consistently had difficulty in getting enough people to run each year for the SSJ Executive Committee (EXCOM). A territory that is as big as Massachusetts requires EXCOM members to be dedicated to a lot of travel and communication. Members in the remote areas that can travel so much are very hard to find. Additionally, the Sierra Club is an organization that functions on its rules. Newly-elected members are often overwhelmed by the barrage of terminology and limitations inherent in the Clubs guidelines. These circumstances have caused our EXCOM to move to reduce our size from 15 members to 11. All other Florida Groups have 7 members on the Executive Committees. I have searched high and low to find the history of our EXCOM's size, but I am yet to discover the answer(s). Some members have asked, "Why reduce the EXCOM when you have such a great responsibility?" And judging by the enormity of the Group, one would tend to agree with that question. However, what we have encountered is a situation in which we practically beg for new EXCOM members, and we end up with ineffective leadership and participation on the EXCOM. I would personally recommend that members vote "yes" on the EXCOM reduction initiative that is attached to the election ballot. My feeling is that if we do reduce the EXCOM, we will actually see better leadership from the fewer EXCOM members that will evolve. The Florida Sierra Club Chapter has recommended that we have EXCOM meetings with Skype conferencing. We think the Skype method, although convenient and inexpensive, will not effectively accomplish the business that needs to be conducted in our monthly EXCOM meetings.

I, and some other EXCOM members, have asked the Chapter to divide the SSJ Group into at least two groups, only to be told to hold Skype EXCOM meetings and to form "task forces or teams" in the remote areas. We did form a Marion County Task Force this last year, and we have been received with lukewarm response. Many ideas came out of the discussions, but very little leadership or volunteerism. We are now planning to set up a task force in Citrus and Levy counties.

OCKLAWAHA RESTORATION/BREACHING RODMAN DAM

Bad news: It's been 45 years since the Old Ocklawaha was dammed by Rodman Dam to provide water for the Cross Florida Barge Canal (that never was completed). Good news: The legal actions that affect the breaching of the Rodman Dam and the Restoration of the Ocklawaha River may be coming to a conclusion very soon. The Putnam County Environmental Council, joined by the Florida Defenders of the Environment, the St. Johns Riverkeeper, The Audubons of Florida, and The Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute of Florida, have filed an Amicus brief challenging the St. Johns River Water Management District's (SJRWMD) plan to designate the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers as Alternative Water Supply (AWS) sources. The brief asserts that SJRWMD's plan for seven AWS projects along these two historic rivers are misrepresentations of the AWS law. (These are special, historic rivers that have already been allowed to be degraded.)

SSJ member Karen Ahlers has been selected to be the Ocklawaha Coordinator for the Florida Defenders of the Environment. We know she will provide the great leadership she has provided over her many years defending the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers.

CHAIR'S CORNER, cont. from p. 2

county commissioners in North Florida warning them of possible future IWMS efforts.

For those of us who live in Alachua County, we should pay attention. Plum Creek's Envision Alachua project is to Alachua County what the IWMS project would have been to Baker or Suwannee Counties. The Envision project will have a massive impact on the quantity and quality of the water in the Lochloosa Watershed. While the Envision folks talk about jobs, state of the art technologies, hiring experts at UF, environmental conservation, and best practices, the reality is that they are going to have to ditch, drain, and fill wetlands before they build 10,000 homes containing 30,000 residents. With a hoped for goal of 50 gallons of water per person per day, the project will still use 1.5 million gallons a day. Fortunately, the 2011 update of the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan does not allow such practices. Unfortu-

nately, the folks at Envision are gearing up to ask for substantive changes to the Comp Plan in the very near future. Since the level of concern on the part of the public is almost nonexistent and the Envision PR machine is generating a happy story, the County commissioners have no reason not to approve the requests. However, Lochloosa Creek flows through the middle of the Envision properties and is the main tributary of Lake Lochloosa. Lake Lochloosa was declared an Outstanding Florida Water in 1987. In 2005 the EPA declared Lake Lochloosa impaired. From the mid 1980s through 2013, the water quality of Lake Lochloosa has deteriorated significantly with Trophic State Index (TSI) readings frequently above 80. (The target is 60.) If you care about Lake Lochloosa, Silver Springs, or the Ocklawaha River, follow the example of our friends in Baker County and get informed, get energized, and get yourself to the next County Commission meeting.

Gainesville Cohousing

Not Your Father's Commune

BY BURT KEMPNER

Cohousing—a type of intentional community made up of private homes supplemented by shared facilities—has been rising in popularity throughout the U.S. With its emphasis on sustainability and green design, it was only natural and inevitable that the concept make its way to Gainesville. It's been tried here before, but now it appears as though cohousing is an idea whose time has come.

Gainesville Cohousing is in the process of purchasing 4.75 wooded acres within walking distance of the Thornebrook Shopping Center. Plans call for the construction of 24 individually owned homes, as well as a communal pool and a common house for socializing, shared meals and celebrations. The physical design of the community will enhance opportunities for interaction and cooperation among neighbors; car parking will be restricted to a designated area, encouraging the use of foot paths.

According to Gainesville Cohousing spokesman Brooks Nelson, the community will have immense appeal to environmen-

tally-minded owners: "Our goal is to offer efficient appliances, passive and active solar, geothermal heat pumps, insulation, airflow via cupolas, water conservation, rain collection, cisterns, grey water re-use, composting toilets, low footprint, gardening, native landscaping and xeriscaping."

Gainesville Cohousing is intended to be intergenerational in nature, inviting families of all ages to live in the community. The community will be planned, owned and managed by the residents—who also share activities which may include cooking, dining, child care, gardening, and governance of the community. Common facilities may include a kitchen, dining room, laundry, child care areas, offices, Internet access, guest rooms, and recreational features. Besides sustainability, a key design element will be affordability. House will range in size from 800-1700 square feet.

Future resident Chuck Broward sums up the Gainesville Cohousing philosophy succinctly: "We strive to balance our needs for privacy and companionship, sharing our skills and resources while respecting each others' property."

For more information on Gainesville Cohousing, visit the group's website: www.gainesvillecohousing.org, or contact Brooks Nelson at bhn1700@yahoo.org.



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Springs Eternal Project

John Moran and Lesley Gamble will present a program on their Springs Eternal Project for SSJ Sierra Club on Jan. 9. The Springs Eternal Project is an evolving series of creative partnerships initiated by Gamble and Moran in collaboration with a diverse community of springs scientists, researchers, artists and advocates. It is a celebration of the springs we were given, a meditation on the springs we could lose, and an invitation to the people of Florida to fall in love with our springs all over again.

More info at springseternalproject.org.



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TO ADVERTISE, CONTACT ROBERTA GASTMEYER, 352-336-2404

Green Generation Environmental Youth Summit, Nov. 16

BY NKWANDA JAH

Cultural Arts Coalition, in partnership with other local organizations, will host the 4th Annual Environmental Youth Summit on Saturday, November 16, from 9:30am until 2pm. The Summit will be held at GRU's Eastside Operations Center, 4747 N Main St., Building 7. The Summit will bring together student groups from around the Gainesville area to discuss the importance of caring for the environment and learn about environmental service projects they can do to benefit their communities. The summit is open to all high school and college-aged groups and individuals interested in environmentally-oriented volunteer opportunities.

We are also seeking organizations to set up Environmental Education Exhibits and offer volunteer opportunities or ideas for Community Service projects.

If you are part of an organization that is looking for a community service activity and want to do something good for the environment, please call or email Nkwanda Jah (352-372-0216 or njah@gmail.com) to reserve space at the Summit. You can also find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GGEnvYouthSummit.



Members of the SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee hold their awards for service. Roberta Gastmeyer (left) won the Pine Tree Award. Dwight Adams (middle) won the National Special Service Award. Maryvonne Devensky (right) won the Otter Award. Photo by Dave Wilson.

2014 Sierra Club Calendars



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Alapaha Dead River Sierra Club Outing, Nov. 23

BY TOM MORRIS

The Alapaha River begins in Georgia about 50 miles north of Jennings, Florida. In Georgia the river flows on top of many feet of clay, but when it crosses into Florida it enters an area of exposed cavernous limestone. Here the river flows underground at a number of sinkholes. The most spectacular of these sinking points is known to the locals as the Alapaha Dead River. During dry weather the entire flow of the Alapaha rushes into a deep canyon-like ravine and disappears into the earth a half-mile later into a cave at the base of a limestone headwall.

Tom Morris will lead an outing to the Dead River on Saturday, November 23. The hike will be moderately strenuous and no more than about four miles in length. We will hike through really nice hardwood forest and explore some of the most breathtaking geology in Florida.

More details later, but set aside the whole day for this outing. There is a possibility that some of us may camp Friday night at another geologic site about thirty minutes south of the Dead River.

2014-2015 Sierra Club Nominees for the Suwannee-St. Johns Group Executive Committee

Jonathan Brainard

jonbrainard@gmail.com

I am a retired teacher from Orange County. I have belonged to Sierra Club and other environmental groups for many years. When I retired, I moved to Dunnellon. Now that I have more time to devote to active participation in Sierra Club, I would be pleased to represent the Marion/Citrus County at the Executive Committee, attending the monthly meeting in Gainesville and Whitey Markle's meeting in Ocala.

Maryvonne Devensky

maryvonne.deven@gmail.com

I joined the Sierra Club to go on outings in 1997, when I lived in Palm Beach County. There I became a member of the Loxahatchee Excom group in 1999. In the last 10 years, I have been Outing Leader, Education chair, and Group chair. After moving to Gainesville in 2007, I helped start the Gainesville Inner City Outing program because I think being outside, exploring and enjoying nature should be part of every child's life. I want to continue serving on the SSJ Excom.

Frank Lineberger

metricmind@gmail.com

I am an avid environmentalist who has been active in the Sierra Club for one year. I serve on the Political Committee and the Newsletter Folding Committee. I worked on the campaigns of Byerly, Hutch and Chestnut. Believing that transportation is the preemptive way to fulfill many of Sierra Club's goals and preserve our wonderful habitat, I have been a promoter of policies, campaigns, and debates that further formative results. I have also been a member of Veterans for Peace for over a year. Serving on ExCom has been a challenging delight I hopes to continue in 2014.

Whitey Markle

whmarkle@gmail.com

B.S. degree from F.S.U. in Education, and an M.A. Urban and Regional Planning from U.F., lead the movement to control air-boat noise in Alachua County in 2010. SSJ Executive Committee since 2003. Conservation Chair since 2010. Has represented SSJ on: GREC biomass incinerator, Tarmac Mine expansion in

Levy County, Minimum Flows and Levels in the Chassahowitzka/Homosassa Rivers, Adena Springs Ranch Consumptive Use permit, breaching of Rodman Dam, the Marion County Task Force, the conversion of the Silver Springs State Park, and as a Board member for the Silver Springs Alliance.

Melanie Martin

melaniemoksa@gmail.com

Melanie Martin is a local business owner and founder of Moksa Organics. Her company and personal life with family involve environmental practices, awareness and love of community. She's a mother of 2 young children and has been a resident of Gainesville for 17 years. Melanie has worked with the SSJG for 4 years and has served on the executive committee as Program Chair as well as several other committees. She is committed to conservation and wants to help preserve Florida's natural habitat and beauty.

Tamara Robbins

tamararobbinsjm@cox.net

I do not trust our Public Officials, both elected and appointed, to protect the public interest; Health, safety and welfare. The air quality, water resources, food supply, wildlife habitat, open space and conservation land are under attack. As a passionate activist and former City Commissioner, I have an understanding of the political process and the power of the voice. We must be diligent, bold and be heard.

Sherry Steiner

SherrySteiner@att.net

Special education teacher for Levy County homebound handicapped students. Worked on campaign against the Newberry cement plant; on Charter One Amendment to allow Alachua County to have stricter environmental regulations than the state; to elect environmental candidates to Alachua County Commission, including Byerly, Hutch and Chestnut; on campaigns to prevent major industrial development, including those of Robbins and Kosman-Rothseiden. Worked to support the Coalition for Responsible Growth in their fight to prevent the Spring Hills development. Served on EXCOM for twelve years: Political, Newsletter Folding and Nominating Committees and newsletter editing. For the past ten years, serving as Events Coordinator.

SUWANNEE ST. JOHNS GROUP SIERRA CLUB ELECTION FOR 2014-2015 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Each year, the Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club is required by its By-Laws to hold an election for Executive Committee (ExCom) members. The ExCom makes policy decisions and represents Sierra Club on a local level. We currently have 15 ExCom positions, with officers serving staggered 2-year terms. This year we should be electing 8 officers, however we were not able to get the required number of candidates, so there are only 7 members on the ballot. Do you find this unacceptable? Then contact us to let us know that you are willing to serve!

Additional Ballot Items this year: There are two additional ballot items that we are asking you to vote on this year, each concerning changes to our By-Laws. The first requests a reduction in the number of Excom members from 15 to 11. If approved, this reduction will take place in December of 2014. The second item changes the mandatory vote by ExCom on whether to remove non-attending members to an optional vote. There is more specific information on these changes elsewhere in the newsletter.

Voting Instructions: Indicate your choices by checking the line in front of the names of the candidates and in front of the "For" or "Against" on each of the By-Laws changes. Each member may cast one ballot, voting for no more than eight (8) 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 5, 2013. Please be sure to mail your ballot in time to allow delivery by that date. To protect your confidentiality, after confirming your membership, election committee members will remove the label portion before opening the rest of the ballot. If you have any questions about this procedure, contact Roberta Gastmeyer at 352-336-2404 or rgastmeyer@bellsouth.net.

Ballots will be counted on December 6 at 5:00pm at Roberta Gastmeyer's house at 4118 NW 69th St, Gainesville. This meeting is open to all Sierra Club members.

<p>Use this column for single memberships or the 1st voter in joint membership households. *Vote for up to, but no more than, 8 candidates*</p>	<p>Use this column only for 2nd voter in joint membership households. *Vote for up to, but no more than, 8 candidates*</p>
<p>_____ Jon Brainard _____ Maryvonne Devensky _____ Frank Lineberger _____ Whitey Markle _____ Melanie Martin _____ Tamara Robbins _____ Sherry Steiner</p>	<p>_____ Jon Brainard _____ Maryvonne Devensky _____ Frank Lineberger _____ Whitey Markle _____ Melanie Martin _____ Tamara Robbins _____ Sherry Steiner</p>
<p>Amendment I: For____ Against____ (a FOR vote changes ExCom from 15 members to 11 members)</p>	<p>Amendment I: For____ Against____ (a FOR vote changes ExCom from 15 members to 11 members)</p>
<p>Amendment II: For____ Against____ (a FOR vote changes the mandatory vote by ExCom on whether to remove non-attending members to an optional vote)</p>	<p>Amendment II: For____ Against____ (a FOR vote changes the mandatory vote by ExCom on whether to remove non-attending members to an optional vote)</p>

Suwannee-St. Johns Group
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NOVEMBER 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOV. 7—SSJ General Meeting, Thursday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville. See Pg. 1 for details.

NOV. 14—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, Thursday, 7 p.m., at the Alachua County Housing Authority Conference Room in Gainesville.

NOV. 16—Green Generation Environmental Youth Summit at GRU's Eastside Operations Center. See Pg. 5 for details.

NOV. 23—SSJ Hiking Outing to Alapaha Dead River. See Pg. 5 for details.

NOV. 27—Folding Party for the December SSJ Newsletter, 7pm. Contact Scott Camil at 352-375-2563 for more information.

SSJ Sierra Club
 is on the web

<http://ssjsierra.org/>