

**NO  
GENERAL MEETINGS  
June, July or August**

**Please join us for our Annual Picnic in a Park  
July 18<sup>th</sup>, 11:00am to 2:00pm**

[Poe Springs](#) 28800 NW 182nd Avenue, High Springs, Fl

Please bring a dish to share and your own cutlery.

## **NEED A SPEAKER?**

The Tri-County Working Group, in conjunction with the Sierra Club Educational Committee, is embarking upon an educational tour, offering a slide show and accompanying discussion to acquaint interested groups in our area with the main environmental issues that Sierra Club is concerned with. The hope is that this education program motivates people to practice both good conservation habits as well as the will to press our government officials to seek more effective solutions. If anyone knows of any type of group, club or home owners association that might be interested, contact Education Chair Jon Brainard.....[\(407\) 491-8158](tel:4074918158) or [jonbrainard@gmail.com](mailto:jonbrainard@gmail.com).

## **CONSERVATION REPORT by Whitey Markle**

### **SPECIAL SESSION IS PLUM SCARY**

As the legislature goes into "Special Session" we are holding our breath. No one can begin to guess what the outcome may be. All negotiations are out of the sunshine behind closed doors. No room here for citizen participation. Only elected officials and lobbyists are allowed. Some system we have, huh? Hopefully, their minds will be on the medical care issues and they will be distracted from furthering their damage to Florida's environment. Keep your fingers crossed.

### **BEAR HUNTING LIKELY TO BE REINSTATED**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will take a final vote on June 25 to sanction the reinstatement of Black Bear hunting statewide. This ridiculous policy change is being touted by the Commission as their solution to reduce human/bear conflicts. Although the researchers have suggested several other means of resolution, the illustrious Commission, which is totally made up by men with hunting licenses, is avidly pushing to reinstate hunting.

Contrary to FWC's belief, Florida's Bear population is decreasing over time. There is no recent data that supports an increased Bear population. An average of 250 Bears die each year by automobile death. The hunting regulations will depend on the hunters' honesty in reporting Bear kills. Oh, boy!

Garbage management and public education are two policies being downplayed by the commission. We feel that hunting will distract FWC's personnel from the food attractant/garbage management policy and public education. The Commission will also likely instate "hazing" by untrained, uneducated property owners (no permit needed to harass hungry Bears on private property). This can be very dangerous, especially when Mama Bear has cubs. Absolutely bad policy.

Finally, the FWC will instate the "One Strike" policy when handling nuisance Bears. In other words: if a garbage-addicted Bear hangs around a neighborhood for 5 days, it will be executed. The Commission used to remove and relocate such humanized Bears. Not now.

***So I am asking every activist and member to simply write an email to the FWC stating that the reinstatement of Bear hunting is an erroneous policy decision in that it will not reduce human/bear conflicts. The Commission should increase public awareness about feeding Bears and techniques of Bear-proofing garbage, as well as tougher enforcement of Bear feeding laws.***

Emails should be sent to sent to: [bearcomments@myfwc.com](mailto:bearcomments@myfwc.com) and [commissioners@myfwc.com](mailto:commissioners@myfwc.com)

## **NEW FOCUS ON OUR SPRINGS**

Ron Cunningham, former Gainesville Sun Editorial page editor, wrote about Dr. Bob Knight's new book, *Silenced Springs-Moving from Hope to Tragedy*:

*"Springs are a source of life and a recipient of death," he writes. "They are as fundamental to the history of humans as we are to their living ecosystems. "We need springs. And silenced springs need us to speak for them."*

*And here's the thing. Even if you have never tubed down the Ichetucknee, even if you will never immerse your body in the constant 72-degree temperature of a clear blue Florida spring, you — indeed every Floridian — need to care very much about what's killing the springs. Because, as Knight points out, the springs are nothing more than windows into the Floridan Aquifer — the state's major source of drinking water. And if less water and more nutrients are pouring out of the springs — if the springs are sick — that means the very aquifer that helps keep us all alive is unhealthy.*

*"Springs do not reside in a world separate from ours," he writes. "We are like Siamese Twins sharing a common blood supply."*

*What's ailing the springs — and contaminating the aquifer — is no mystery. We are pumping too much water out of the ground and leaking too much fertilizer, pesticides, septic tank and dairy wastes, and other nutrient-laden toxics into Florida's porous karst subsurface. There are "fixes" available — water conservation, alternative water sources, limits on farm and lawn treatments, better waste treatment and so on — but they will neither be cheap nor painless. And given the disposition of our political ruling class, the springs won't be saved unless Floridians insist on it.*

*Still, Knight is both a realist and an optimist. Hence his subtitle, "Tragedy to Hope."*

*"Is there a recipe for water resource sustainability in Florida that can accommodate over 20 million people and still maintain a healthy economy and healthy springs," he poses. The answer is yes. But only if Floridians care enough about clean water to lead their leaders for a change. There must be a way to get the citizens back into the Florida political picture.*

## **ALACHUA COUNTY, ALACHUA CITY BATTLING OVER WATER PROTECTION**

After months of negotiating and debating over the proposed Walmart development in the city of Alachua, “the city of Alachua and Alachua County couldn’t reach agreement on the issue before the County Commission filed a legal challenge last week.” said the Gainesville Sun.

There is a long history of conflicts between the city and county over local control that made reaching such an agreement more difficult. But both sides need to put aside differences to work together on an issue important to us all: protecting water quality in the aquifer and, by extension, the area’s springs and drinking water supply.

Fortunately, the legal challenge doesn’t mean both sides will immediately duke it out in court. There are still opportunities for officials to reach an agreement on advanced stormwater treatment and pollution prevention measures on the site. Hopefully, we can put politics aside and do the right thing for our water resources. Stay tuned. This is a critical juncture in water protection on the local level.

## **SWFWMD LIKELY TO SELL OUR CONSERVATION LAND**

The governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District deliberated the sale of thousands of acres of conservation land on Tuesday, May 19. We negotiated tenaciously to convince their representatives to spare many of these parcels. As I reported last month, the Tri-County Working Group was able to save the Halpata Taskanaki parcel near Dunnellon, but no others so far have been removed from the list.

After watching for the minutes of the May 19 meeting and calling the District, I was told the minutes are not yet published and that no one is available that has that information. It is a sad commentary on the recently-shaken administration that receives this non-news. My feeling is that the lands will be sold (or traded) and that development will cover the previously conserved land.

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## **Education/Outreach**

### ***Sierra Club Tri-County Working Group***

May 19, 2015 we met at the meeting room at the old Rexall Drug Store in Inverness. It was an interesting step back into the 1960’s motif.

Brad Rimbey explained the issues with Chassahowitzka and Homosassa lawsuit and explained minimum flows and levels. The lawsuit drags on about flow. Salt water intrusion is occurring as time goes by. The plaintiffs have spent a large amount of money to get the state to protect the flow of the springs that feed the Chassahowitzka River. Degradation of our water is not legal. Brad’s colleagues are all awaiting for the circuit court to make a decision. No one seems to know how long this will take. The US Supreme Court says it is illegal to reduce minimum flows; it is a form of pollution. The group is fighting for an Outstanding Florida Water.

Sewage and fertilizer runoff is polluting water in Orange Creek basin, Whitey Markle explained. No TMDL for Lake Lochloosa was ever put in place for five years. There is still no Total Maximum Daily Load level set but it is promised by June. To understand

the meaning of this issue, please reference

<http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawguidance/cwa/tmdl/>

Plum Creek would only make matters worse for that environment. Whitey believes that the Florida Administrative Code is used as a shield and is used against ordinary citizens.

Nancy Kost discussed the State of Florida and water management districts selling “Surplus Lands” and we imagined how they choose those parcels. The process has been going on for a time. The Governing Board is making a decision today about what lands to sell. Much of the land they want to sell off is sensitive wetlands for that area. Check your news reports for how this turns out.

Jon Brainard asked for referrals for where to show *Seven Wonders* educational presentation. We talked about places over the 15 county area that he has done presentations as well as where I could do presentations in the future. I am making contacts in Alachua County and Gary will be working with me to get bookings in Eastern Marion County.

The Rodman Dam controversy was discussed by Whitey Markle as well as legislative issues. In the Legislature, SB 918 died. Sewage system construction may take money from Amendment 1 if some legislators get their way. Whitey believes most of the money should be spent to purchase land for conservation in Florida.



He stated that Florida Sierra Club growth management committee is asking for research into how the Florida Administrative code can be improved. If you are interesting in researching Florida’s Administrative Code, please visit <https://www.flrules.org/>

Gary Green discussed how we as conservationists can become bogged down with negativity when we are fighting a discouraging battle. He would like us to work together and have a special meeting to take our message for a better environment in Florida. He polled the group on which issues were most important to us. With that information we will form a committee that will work on a presentation that will **motivate** the public to learn more and **take action**.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for our FIRST ANNUAL  
Sustainable House and Garden Tour Fundraiser  
Gainesville, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015

We are looking for bright, energetic group of 5 to 7 members willing to put in some hours over the next few months to create a premier SSJ fundraising event (actually two events, but we will talk about that later.) Do you have some ideas on fundraising in general? Or maybe some experience in running a tour? Or maybe just some interest in being part of a bright, energetic group? Well, speak up now because this is not going to happen unless we get some help! Contact Jon [jonbrainard@gmail.com](mailto:jonbrainard@gmail.com) or Roberta [rgastmeyer@gmail.com](mailto:rgastmeyer@gmail.com).

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## WANTED: YOUR UNWANTED STUFF

Sierra Club is holding a garage sale September 19th to benefit our ICO program which takes local youth on awesome outdoor adventure and service trips. Please keep us in mind when spring cleaning and save your items. Since we have minimal storage space available, we thank you for hanging on to your donations until the beginning of September when we will begin collection. More details to come on when and where to deliver your goods. We will also need a few volunteers to help set up, sell, and cleanup after. Breakfast and great company provided free!

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