



## NO GENERAL MEETING IN AUGUST

Please do not go to UUF in August as we will not be there!!!!

### Upcoming General Meetings:

September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7:30pm : Historian, Author and Director of the Matheson Museum, Peggy McDonald will be present her book *Marjorie Harris Carr: Defender of Florida's Environment*. Learn more about Peggy McDonald:

<http://www.peggyacdonald.com/>

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:30pm: Joan Flock from UF college of Law will speak about the racial, ethnic, and economic aspects of environmental justice.



## LOOKING TO GET OUTDOORS???

Go to our website at [http://ssjsierra.org/?page\\_id=1182](http://ssjsierra.org/?page_id=1182) to find out about current Sierra Club led outings throughout the state. Or go to our meetup.com site at <http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Suwannee-St-Johns-Group/>.

## FROM THE CHAIR

Who ever talked about the “slow days of summer” was not talking about my summer...Here are some things I want to share with you:

On July 9, the SSJ Executive Committee heard Vice Chair of the National Speleological Society, TJ Muller, explain the position of the NSS in their fight against the city of Alachua over the rezoning ordinance involving 154.5 acres in Alachua. To support their case, Mr. Muller asked the Suwannee St John for assistance to help pay for the necessary geological survey that would bring more information on the cave formation that is running under the said property. The SSJ Excom voted to support this group with a financial donation, and if you would like to make a donation to the NSS for this cause, please mail a check made out to National Speleological Society with a memo of “Alachua Geo Study” and mail to **Cave Diving Section of the National Speleological Society, 295 NW Commons Loop Suite 115-317, Lake City, FL 32055.**

- 1) Thursday July 23, I participated in a meeting with a new group forming right now under the leadership of Jim Stevenson to raise public awareness and fight introducing cattle ranching, logging and hunting at Paynes Prairie. “Protect Paynes Prairie” is the name adopted by the group on Thursday. Please visit the facebook page of the new PPP at [www.facebook.com/protectpaynesprairie](http://www.facebook.com/protectpaynesprairie) and sign your name to the petition. We all need to speak up to protect this beautiful State Park!!!

Read the article of Paula Dockery, published on 7-23-15, where you can see that the attack on the Florida state parks is really done in a calculated manner to end up with the privatization of our Florida parks. **Read:** <http://tbo.com/list/news-columns/governor-lay-off-florida-stateparks/20150723/>.

Action needed: lots of letters or phone calls with one message “Protect Paynes Prairie for the public use. No cattle grazing, no timbering, no hunting on the Prairie”.

Please contact:

Governor Rick Scott (850) 488-7146

Senator Rob Bradley (904) 278-2085

Representative Keith Perry (352) 264-4040

Representative Clovis Watson (352) 264-4001

Write letters to the Gainesville Sun Editor with the same message. Short letters are best.

If you want to be part of the committee and help out with your skills and your energy, please come to the meetings. Future dates: Thursday (1:00-2:00pm) July 30, August 6 and 13, in the Oak room at Oak Hammock.

- 2) Sleepy Creek/Adena Ranch...Another disappointment with the decision by the St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board in Palatka, on July 14, 2015 that might prove disastrous to maintaining a healthy Silver River...putting first the financial interests of an already wealthy businessman instead of protecting the water resources for the Florida citizens. **See Whitey Markle’s report.**

- 3) After the sad news, let’s look at the brighter side of life:

On July 18, we had a delightful picnic at Poe Springs Park...More than 30 Sierra Club members showed up with delicious food to share, and conversations went on between older members and newer members, while some went swimming in the spring....The weather was good and we had a great time...

Thank you for all who came and for the others, there is always next year!!!

- 4) ICO Outings: On Wednesday July 8, we went to Santa Fe Zoo with a group of 13 kids participating in the summer program at Cone Park Library center. We had a great guide and we walked through the zoo visiting snakes, squirrel monkeys, ocelots, lemurs, kookaburras, some more vocal or social than others.



Next week, July 30 and 31, we will take 7 high school students enrolled in the Environmental Ambassadors to the Crescent beach and UF Whitney Lab



Marine Center. We will go to Matanzas National Monument and Crescent Beach, as well as kayak with the Ripple Effect Ecotours Company.

- 5) Summer is a time for traveling, kayaking, swimming, the beach, and reading...Some suggestions: recently read “David and Goliath” by Malcolm Gladwell (Great book...very inspiring). Now reading “Untamed” by Will Harlan, about the wildest woman in America and the Fight for Cumberland Island (Very wild woman...). Next books on my list: “The better World Shopping Guide” by Ellis Jones and “Silenced Springs” by Dr. Robert Knight, Director of the Florida Springs Institute.

- 6) “Water Quality Tour” I attended was organized by UF-IFAS. The 3 day tour was packed with information with Day 1. the Urban watershed of Gainesville area, Day 2 Rural watershed in Agricultural area, Day 3 Springs watershed –Poe Springs...The tour ended today and there was so much information that I cannot give a brief report. What I learned is that it is a very complex topic. One cannot just have an opinion, one needs to educate himself/herself. More tours will be offered in the fall and spring and I would encourage people to do the tours or to check the website [www.alachua.ifas.ufl.edu](http://www.alachua.ifas.ufl.edu) in a few days, the presentation, maps and graphs, will be available. Dr. Mark Clark and Dr. Robert Knight are two local experts, and their knowledge is very valuable.

Maryvonne Devensky

## **CONSERVATION REPORT by Whitey Markle**

### **Adena/Sleepy Creek C.U.P. approved by SJRWMD**

Despite having appealed decision to transfer a Consumptive water Use Permit (C.U.P.) for 14.2 million gallons/day (GPD) of fresh groundwater the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Governing Board approved it on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

50 persons spent the afternoon in Palatka protesting a recommendation from an administrative law Judge (ALJ) a few months back. We would dearly love to thank each and every person that showed up or wrote in in protest of this bad decision.

I wish I could say here and now that we are moving ahead to appeal this decision to a real court, but despite my inquiries, no news is forthcoming at this moment. It is my humble opinion that citizens of Florida must get past the F.A.C. roadblock in order to get to a just court room.

Administrative Law Judges are appointed by the good Governor and, like most successful workers, they follow the instruction of the boss. The excuse for the “recommendation” which the District’s attorney said mandated an approval by the Board, was the Florida Administrative Code. And, of a matter of course, the Governing Board subsequently voted unanimously in favor of approval.

I was quoted in the Orlando Sentinel and the Ocala Star-Banner for saying that the water managers should “stop worshipping the sacred cow called Agriculture and start paying attention to the true science” (not skewed modelling from within). I also pointed out that in Florida agriculture is using 40% of our water and producing 4% of our total state economy. Unfortunately the papers only reported that agriculture is using 40% of our fresh water and omitted the comparison to their production.

There must be a handle attached to the big farmers in Florida. And this is a monumental task for us. Adam Putnam, Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture, is very popular among young and old Republicans alike. He is very likely to be our next governor, so beware of more of the same insider political policy-making when he is elected after Governor Scott’s next (and last) 3 years is over.



One great example of how the Ag. People work is the system of “projects” that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (F.D.E.P.) runs when implementing their Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP’s). Farmers or other entities such as municipal utilities and local governments are awarded stipend under a “Cost Share” program administered by the Water Management Districts. In the Silver Springs BMAP, \$4million has been awarded so far to 20+ projects in the name of “water efficiency/improvement/conservation”.

I asked the representatives from the SJRWMD staff who were present at the July 23rd BMAP were meeting in Ocala to tell us exactly what the ratio of sharing is. After much squirming, one of them finally said that these gifts were at the rate of 90% to 10% this year and 75% to 25% next year. So this tells me that not only is the “cost-sharing” program really a gift program, but it is also ongoing. In other words, these were the first of several gifts granted in the BMAP budget.

Another issue I hammered home (on mostly deaf ears) is the fact that, like the Orange Creek Basin BMAP that is already approved by the Governor and Cabinet, there is a gross lack of adequate funding in the (draft) BMAP to fund the goals and objectives of the plan. If the plan is adopted, which it will be very soon, without adequate funding, milestones, monitoring, and projects that do indeed improve the Basin’s water quality (that is the reason for mandatory BMAPs to begin with), then the syndrome will continue to revolve. The administrators from FDEP simply shrugged their shoulders and blamed the prior administrations (since the Clean Water Act of 1972) for the rising percentages of pollutants in our drinking water and water bodies.

Ever since I have been involved with the Conservation issues and their state agency counterparts, I have noticed a massive and universal lack of urgency in the work by agency staff and administration. They are appointed to the positions of responsibility and they appear to be doing what they have to do under the circumstances. It appears that they are caught between the devil and the Sea. I feel that it is my obligation as your Conservation Chair to point out this lack of urgency as well as the deficiency in the official plans.

These BMAP’s, when approved, become part of that impossibly penetrable Florida Administrative Code, like all other state plans, making the public’s ability to be involved in those plans that much more difficult.

It has been said lately that Florida is the most corrupt state in the union and I am sorry to say I am beginning to believe it.

Suing the agencies over policy decisions such as BMAPs and C.U.P’s is time-consuming and expensive, (The Adena Springs/Sleepy Creek C.U.P. administrative appeal took several years from the beginning to the end and cost all parties involved something like \$300,000 by the time the judge issued his recommendations), but the greatest problem is that you can’t sue over policy that is “legal”. The F.A.C. makes all these bad policies “legal”. This is why I premised my meager 2 minute statement to the SJRWMD Governing Board with, “We’ve been Out-Moneyed”.

Does anyone have an extra Million Dollars we could use to go to court with? That’s about what it would take to get a fair shake in this Florida system. And the sad part is that the money the agencies use against the public is public money. How did it ever get this way?

## **SUPER-SIZED HOG FARM AND PROCESSING PLANT ASKING FOR PERMITTING IN LEVY COUNTY BY SLEEPY CREEK/ADENA**

Adena Springs (owned by the same Frank Stronach that owns the massive grass-fed beef processing plant and farm in Ft. McCoy (Marion County) and the culprit in the afore-mentioned C.U.P. deliberations has applied for

a modification of an existing C.U.P. by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to graze 70,000 hogs near Chiefland in Levy County. Although he has not asked for a C.U.P. for the processing plant, he has indeed asked for a Special Exception to the Land Use Plan by the Levy County Planning and Zoning department.



Fortunately there is a little time to lodge a challenge. We call upon any and all Levy County citizens to get involved in protesting this massive enterprise. We can, with some effort by citizens, produce an effect public relations campaign to attempt to persuade the Levy County Planning and Zoning Board to deny this Special Exception. We are again up against a giant, but we think this is an issue that deserves our effort. Please email me at [whmarkle@gmail.com](mailto:whmarkle@gmail.com) or 352-595-5131.

**MULTI-USE STATE PARKS?**

With the onset of the Governor’s plan to change our Florida State Parks from single use to multiple use, the vulnerability of our conservation lands becomes an item of more importance. Privatization, farming, and timbering are the 3 uses that first come to mind. Can you imagine places like Oleno and Devil’s Millhopper with no trees? Harvesting of Alligator eggs and Palmetto berries by private corporations? Hunting on nature trails (closed to birders and hikers during hunting season)? Florida’s parks have been lauded nationwide for their quality and beauty for decades. People come from all over the world to see the Florida State Parks. It makes no sense whatsoever to convert them into industrial/commercial sites now. Is there no place left where citizens can go and appreciate natural beauty without commercial interference?



Hopefully we can successfully defend our State Parks in the face of such disdain and disrespect.

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**Education/Outreach**

*Sierra Club Tri-County Working Group*

The Tri-County Working Group of the SSJ Sierra Club is truly a group of dedicated Sierra Club members from Marion, Levy and Citrus County! During the summer, our Motivation Campaign Committee, led by Gary Green, publicity chair, has met every two weeks to gather information for a PowerPoint presentation to voters in our area.

We recently welcomed Kathryn Taubert on board the committee and working group as our instructional designer for the PowerPoint. The goal of the committee is to motivate listeners of the presentation to be able to take concrete, specific actions in Levy, Marion and Citrus Counties to help improve the condition of Florida's springs, rivers, and aquifer.

Kathryn and Gary have a career background in instructional writing for corporations. With that, they are working to keep the committee involved with various aspects of how to achieve this goal. Nancy Kost and Jim Carrell have been researching water quality history and share how human impacts have taken a toll on our water in the tri-county area. Nancy and Gordon and Connie Hart have researched the economic reasons for clean water and good water quality for a healthy business environment in our area--especially since we depend heavily upon eco-tourism.



*Lecturer: Jon Brainard*

Now the committee's large amount of information is being condensed and prioritized for the PowerPoint. To assist with that and to use in various educational and outreach venues, Conservation Chair Whitey Markle, and Environmental Education Chair, Jon Brainard sought volunteers to work on various pamphlets that will provide the public with additional information on various topics-- like growth management, energy, and resources-- to assist the public with being pro-water conservation and pro-environment in the three county area. Members already involved in the PowerPoint plus Ben Berauer and Brad Rimbey have joined in with helping us find relevant information for the pamphlets. There are currently five pamphlets under construction -- ones that can be utilized not only in these three counties but throughout entire Suwannee St. Johns Group area.

The PowerPoint should be completed in the next few weeks or months. We have not yet established a deadline for the pamphlets but are anxious to get them produced.

**NEED A SPEAKER** for your church group, community organization, other?

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).

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## **We Need YOU to Help SSJ Get Better**

The Suwannee St. Johns Group is organized and run by volunteers, performing hundreds (thousands?) of administrative and conservation tasks each year. How many are in this army of volunteers? Right now, fewer than 15. It is not enough and we have been forced to make some tough choices lately. Consider:

Due to lack of volunteer interest, we reduced our executive committee from 15 members to 11.

Due to lack of volunteer interest, we stopped producing a paper newsletter for the 100+ members who wanted one.

Due to lack of volunteer interest, we hired a professional website person.

Due to lack of volunteer interest, we canceled the proposed "green" house tour fundraiser.

Due to lack of volunteer interest, we decided to ....

What will be next on the chopping block? Will it be something you think is really important to maintaining a well-functioning Sierra Club? We are not performing up to our expectations. Are we performing up to yours????

Please contact us and let us know 1) what you think we are doing well, 2) where we can improve, and 3) how you can help in this effort! Send an email to [ssjsierra.membership@gmail.com](mailto:ssjsierra.membership@gmail.com) or call Roberta at 352-494-9662.

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## **CALL FOR 2016/2017 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES**

The Suwannee-St Johns Group is seeking names of members interested in serving on the Executive Committee (ExCom). This committee has a total of 11 officers serving staggered 2-year terms. This year, we have 6 openings. Bylaws indicate that there should be at least 2 more candidates than the number to be elected, so we need to nominate a minimum of 8 people. We do not elect members for particular positions, just as "members-at-large." Once the incoming ExCom members have been elected, they meet with the incumbents to decide how they would like to participate.

The newly elected members will serve a two-year term, beginning January 2016. The main requirements (other than being a current Sierra Club member) are a willingness to work on various tasks providing leadership and direction for the Group, and attending the ExCom meetings each month.

If you are interested in serving on Excom, or know of someone who might be, please contact any of the Nominating Committee members listed below.

Roberta Gastmeyer	352-494-9662	<a href="mailto:rgastmeyer@bellsouth.net">rgastmeyer@bellsouth.net</a>
Scott Camil	352-375-2563	<a href="mailto:s.camil@att.net">s.camil@att.net</a>
Gary Green	352- 817-8077	<a href="mailto:garryegreen@lightningspeed.net">garryegreen@lightningspeed.net</a>

Any interested person who seeks nomination but is NOT nominated by the committee will have the opportunity to run by petition (contact Roberta for a copy of bylaws if you are interested in the petition process.) Petitions must be returned to the Nominating Committee by September 26, 2015.

## !! GET READY TO PART WITH GARAGE SALE ITEMS !!

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 September 5<sup>th</sup>, when we will begin collection.

If absolutely necessary, you may contact Maryvonne or Jeri Merritt to arrange earlier delivery. We will also need a few volunteers to help set up, sell, and cleanup after, so please let Maryvonne know if you are willing to help out.

Breakfast and great company provided free!

Maryvonne: maryvonne.deven@gmail.com or 352-871-1606

Jeri Merritt at merritt.jeri@gmail.com



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**HELP END HOMELESSNESS!**  
The Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry, Inc., a 501(c)(3), is starting a "Get a Ride to Work" Program to support the GRACE Marketplace.

**PLEASE DONATE**  
Bikes, scooters, cars, trucks and motorcycles (running or not)

**352 575-8307**

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### More Sierra Club ICO Outings



"Whoever said Science is boring is definitely not a member of Cultural Arts Coalition After School Science Clubs and they most certainly have not been to the Cade Museum. This amazing field trip was made possible by our partnership with the Sierra Club."

Nkwanda Jah, Executive Director, Cultural Arts Coalition

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**Letter from Florida Springs Council to Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** The Florida Springs Council (FSC) is a consortium of 28 organizations whose 100,000+ members share a deep concern with the health and restoration of Florida's springs. Since its formation last year, FSC has provided recommendations to Florida's legislative and executive branches on a number of programs and policies affecting our springs..... See rest of the letter here: <http://springsforever.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.07-06-FSC-Letter-to-Drew-Bartlett-re-Springs-Funding.pdf>

### Letter from Ron Littlepage on Sleepy Creek - Water officials are all wet

Appointed by a governor who regularly ignores science, board members of the St. Johns River Water Management District switched teams this week and became champions of "science" when they approved another massive withdrawal of water from the already overtaxed Floridan aquifer. This permit allows a giant



cattle ranch not far from suffering Silver Springs to use up to 1.46 million gallons of water a day, mostly for irrigating pastures, to raise grass-fed beef.

Never mind that draining the aquifer has already dramatically reduced the flow of the once majestic Silver Springs. Never mind that runoff overloaded with nitrates from such things as cow manure and fertilizer has already polluted the waters of the springs and the Silver River.

**Read complete letter** at <http://ssjsierra.org/?p=1378>

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### **Sierra News from Around the State**

Florida Chapter newsletter, The Pelican, Summer Edition is now available. Features include Sierra's Legislative Review, threats to Silver Springs, a mining victory in Hernando County, Calusa Group is back in action and more.

<http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/florida-chapter/newsletters/15summer.pdf>

### **Impressions of Sierra Club's Poe Springs Picnic**

Kindness and generosity were the heartbeat of the annual picnic of the Sierra Club. Roberta G. informed me of the improved condition of the spring from last year, partly due to the rain, although signs of too much nitrate pollution in the water were noted. All of the people I met were friendly and shared their enthusiasm for the gifts of mother nature and their dedication to its preservation. Food and drink abounded and happily shared among all. Stories about the joy of exploring nature, including human mishaps with dangerous critters, were shared. I laughed a lot! I especially enjoyed the fact that all generations of people were represented. In short, I had a fabulous time and am grateful to have been in the company of a unique group of individuals from all walks of life.

New Member, Val D.