



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

# Sierra Club

Newsletter

January 2016

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<p><b>GENERAL MEETING</b></p> <p><b>Unitarian Universalist Fellowship</b>  <b>4225 NW 34th St, Gainesville, FL 32605</b></p> <p><b>Doors open at 7:00pm, Presentation begins 7:30pm</b></p> <p><i>Free and Open to the Public</i></p>	<p><b>JANUARY'S FEATURED SPEAKER:</b>  <b>County Commissioner Mike Byerly</b></p> <p><b>Thursday, January 7th, 2016</b></p> <p><b>Updates and Actions on Plum Creek's Proposed Development</b></p>
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The Plum Creek Real Estate Investment Trust continues to pursue extensive new development rights on its rural timberlands in eastern Alachua County. After its initial application to alter the county's Comprehensive Plan received a strong recommendation of denial from Alachua County staff, Plum Creek withdrew their application and submitted a revised application earlier this year.

County staff has now again recommended denial, on the same bases. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are first considered by the Planning Commission, a citizen advisory board appointed by the Alachua County Commission, before going to the County Commission. After public hearings November 18th and 19th, the Planning Commission voted 4 to 2 to recommend approval to the County Commission, overriding the staff recommendation. We were dealt another blow when, on November 23rd, the County Commission voted not to challenge the City of Hawthorne's annexation of Plum Creek property.

The application now goes to the County Commission, possibly as early as January 26th, but more likely February 9th. Commissioners need to know that the public cares about this issue, and is watching. Commissioner Mike Byerly will bring you up-to-date on the issue at our January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 General Meeting.

## GET INVOLVED

Unique among environmental organizations, the Sierra Club is run by and for volunteers. There are so many fun and meaningful ways to get involved in the Suwannee St. Johns (SSJ) Group's vital work. Below are a few things we need help with:

**Environmental Youth Summit:** This is an annual March event that encourages college and high school youth to participate in activities that benefit the environment and serves as an important educational/outreach effort. Many organizations come together to create events/activities to involve young people in environmental stewardship. SSJ Sierra Club is looking for a member or two to take leadership roles for our part in this event - attend a few organizational meetings, come up with an activity, and/or attend the summit to educate and recruit participants.

**Membership/Volunteer/Social:** We are looking for a few members to help in different roles on our Membership/Volunteer/Social team. We need someone with computer skills to maintain our database, create labels, send out new member postcards, and monitor our membership emails. We need someone who enjoys meeting new people and making sure everyone who wants to be involved finds an appropriate place to help out. We need someone to organize social events.

**Programs:** Arrange monthly General Meeting speakers, write article about monthly meeting for newsletter, attend the meetings to introduce speaker.

**Ongoing:** Write articles for the newsletter and/or website; website maintenance; arrange speakers for monthly programs; attend commission meetings and report back; visit commissioners and legislators to educate them about environmental issues.....

Contact us at [sjsierra.membership@gmail.com](mailto:sjsierra.membership@gmail.com) or 352-494-9662.

# HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES!

*By Maryvonne Devensky*

**We are starting a New Year with a lot of the same issues that we were concerned about in 2015. Most important is to push for a Water Bill in Tallahassee that is strong enough to protect our water resources. On December 9, Sierra Club presented a letter signed by 106 environmental groups to Senate President Gardiner and House Speaker Crisafulli, asking for several amendments to be added to the Bills. Sierra Club organized 3 press conferences that day, one in Orlando, one on Merritt Island, and one of them was in Gainesville, at the Ring Park/Glen Springs parking lot. I want to thank all SSJ Sierra Club members who came to this event, as well as Bob Knight, President of the Springs Institute, Steve Robitaille with Florida Defenders of the Environment and Merrilee Malwitz Jibson, President of Our Santa Fe River. All these organizations had signed the letter as we all want these amendments to be put in place. See the Call to Action below, written by David Cullen, our lobbyist in Tallahassee. Photos of the event will be on our website. We need renewed energy to keep on working together to resolve these issues:**

1) Stopping Plum Creek in their attempt to annex Hawthorne and to change the Alachua County Management Plan for their own profit. Educate yourself and come to the General Meeting on January 7 for an update with Alachua County Commissioner Mike Byerly, and plan to attend a county BOCC meeting at the end of January to voice your concern and oppose the Plum Creek Envision project. Check Agenda of BOCC for exact date. Thanks.

2) Contact your elected officials so that they amend the Water Bills on the floor in early January, SB #552 by Senator Dean, and HB # 7005 by Representative Caldwell. They have to create a strong water bill that we all need in the next 10-15 years to protect our water, our springs and Florida Aquifer. Please read the following, educate yourself and take action by calling your Senator and Representative before January 8.

## ***Call to Action - Amend the Water Bills on the Floor***

The Water bills, SB 552 Environmental Resources by Sen. Dean and the companion bill, HB 7005 by Rep. Caldwell, are ready to go to the floor the first week of the legislative session that starts Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2016. Between now and then is our last chance to get these bills amended to do what they are supposed to do. Your State Representative and Senator will be in their home district from now until Friday, Jan. 8 and they need to hear from you about how to improve the bills.

This call to action includes amendments Sierra Club Florida and our allies have offered to improve the bills and which would make the legislation worth supporting. If the amendments are rejected, loopholes and omissions will remain and the waters of the state will suffer for it.

### What you need to know about the process:

Pursuant to the Florida Constitution, every bill gets three 'readings' (Art III, Section 7): The first reading is when it is introduced and referred to committees; the second, when it is reported favorably by its last committee of reference and sent back to the full chamber for further consideration, and the third reading is on the final passage of the bill. SB 552 and HB 7005 have been reported favorably from their last committees and are now eligible for second reading. Bills can be amended by majority vote on second reading and a two-thirds vote on third reading. It takes a majority vote to pass the bill. Bills that pass second reading are usually taken up for final passage the following day, so there won't be much time.

Legislators are generally most familiar with issues that come before the committees they sit on; on other issues they tend to follow their leadership's position unless they have a good reason to do otherwise. This is where you come in. Legislators care about what their constituents want. After all, the people in their district are the ones who can vote them in or out. If you make an effort to convince them the water bills need work and show them what needs to be done, they are much more likely to do it. The window of opportunity for us is between now and the beginning of session on January 12.

What to do:

Familiarize your legislators and the members of your county's legislative delegation with these amendments that address the deficiencies cited in the attached letter signed by 106 organizations and businesses (including Sierra Club Florida). The amendments are drafted to SB 552 and are listed in the order in which they will appear in the bill.

We have made some progress in improving this legislation, but it's not good enough. Florida's waters need more than halfway measures. Florida needs a good bill. Please meet with your legislators or staff and urge them to support these amendments when they come to the floor.

3) Our Sierra Club members in Suwannee County need help getting organized to oppose the Sabal Trail Pipeline coming to their county, and we plan to have a meeting in Live Oak on Saturday, January 16, 2016. Contact me if you live in Suwannee County and want to participate.

Location will be: SUWANNEE RIVER STATE PARK - Look for Sierra Club Banner/Ask at entrance, Address is 3631 201st Path in LIVE OAK, FL 32060. Phone # 386-362-2746

Time: 11:00 to 1:00pm

RSVP to [maryvonne.deven@gmail.com](mailto:maryvonne.deven@gmail.com)

[EPA says Sabal Trail pipeline is threat to Florida's drinking water, then recants](#)

The Sierra Club strongly opposes any oil and gas pipelines proposed for Florida. Currently we are working in opposition to the Sabal Trail Pipeline, a joint venture of Spectra Energy, Duke Energy and Next Era, the parent company of Florida Power & Light Co.

The pipeline is slated to originate in Alabama, run through Georgia and run 266.8 miles through parts of north and central Florida, to end in Osceola County at the Southeast Connector Project. Three compressor stations are proposed for Suwannee, Marion and Osceola counties, with pipeline proposed to run through Alachua, Hamilton, Suwannee, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion, Sumter, Lake, Polk, Osceola, Orange and Citrus Counties.

The proposed path of the pipeline will run through **environmentally sensitive areas including the Green Swamp**, over Florida's springs, drilled under rivers and will cross nearly 100 acres of state parks, state forests and state recreation trails, not to mention its potential to drastically impact the Floridan aquifer.

In April, 2015, **Sierra Club Florida filed an emergency petition** with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) seeking designation of the Floridan Aquifer as a Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) under the EPA's Sole Source Aquifer Protection Program. The emergency petition would protect Florida's drinking water and create a roadblock to building of the pipeline.

On November 21st, 2014, Sabal Trail filed an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the lead agency

reviewing the proposed project. On September 3, 2015, FERC issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to assess the potential environmental effects of the pipeline. Sierra Club Florida, in partnership with the Alabama and Georgia Chapters, and represented by Green Law, submitted joint comments to FERC in opposition to the proposed pipeline. In October, EPA wrote a 30 page letter to FERC, stating it had “very significant concerns” about the proposed route of the Sabal Trail Pipeline and the impact it will have on wetlands. Further, EPA cited the Sierra Club petition for SSA in its comments and strongly recommended an alternative route for the pipeline to avoid impacts to the Floridan Aquifer. FERC must issue a permit before the Sabal Trail Pipeline can be built. They are expected to issue their final ruling in March, 2016.

On December 11th however, **EPA reversed its course on the pipeline** when a different division of EPA said the wetlands-related issue was addressed after it met with Sabal Trail Management officials. In response, Frank Jackalone, senior organizing manager, Sierra Club of Florida, questioned the “about face” in such a short time and said, “I smell a skunk.” Further, Jackalone stated “This was really bold. There was a very detailed analysis of why the pipeline was flawed in the 30-page letter by the EPA to FERC. Now suddenly in a five-page letter, James Giattina (an EPA administrator) throws it all out the window.”

Back in Florida, after the EPA issued its scathing report, the WWALS Watershed Coalition asked a Florida administrative law judge to take judicial notice of the EPA objections. But the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) joined Sabal Trail Transmission LLC, the company proposing the pipeline, and objected to the judicial notice. The Administrative Law Judge denied the Coalition’s request and on December 11th, the judge recommended that DEP should issue an environmental resource permit for the proposed pipeline.

Sabal Trail Transmission LLC must also acquire a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act before the pipeline can be built. Sierra Club Florida, working with the Gulf Restoration Network and Green Law recently submitted comments in opposition to the Sabal Trail Pipeline to the U.S Army Corps of Engineers.

We will continue to do everything we can to oppose the Sabal Trail Pipeline and will keep our Members posted about ways you can take action to oppose the Pipeline.

-- Stephanie Kunkel

#### **4) PROTECT PAYNES PRAIRIE COALITION**

Our coalition is planning a rally to Protect Paynes Prairie at 1:00 pm at First Magnitude on Saturday January 23. There will be music, speakers and we will meet at Main and University Avenue at 2:00pm. More information to be coming...Mark your calendar for that date. Check the SSJ website and the Protect Paynes Prairie website and FB.

## **CONSERVATION REPORT**

*by Whitey Markle*

## **GOVERNOR, HIS MINIONS, MOVE RAPIDLY TOWARD ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER**

**At the event called, "An Evening at Silver Springs", benefitting the Florida Springs Institute in Ocala on Dec.11th, the Guest Speaker was Sonny Vergara, former Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.**

Vergara's comments were based on his vast experience as Executive Director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the St. Johns River Water Management District and very interesting. His description of the history of Florida's water management policy and its developmental process were candid from the inside viewpoint. A remarkable paragraph related to the present governor's influence on state growth management policy (including subsequent water management). To paraphrase, Vergara said the governors before Rick Scott tended to stay within the guidelines of the Florida statutes and the rules developed by the respective agencies. But, according to Vergara, this governor, who very few people knew much about, was elected from virtually "out of nowhere" over a weak opponent by a fervent Tea Party voting wave in an off year for elections (2010). As soon as he was elected, the heads began to roll.

The Department of Community Affairs, which oversaw Florida's growth management, was beheaded and retitled, "The Department of Economic Opportunity," and reconfigured to assist in what will likely become the biggest development and expansion of population in Florida for decades. Then came the further dismantling of the Water Management District and Department of Environmental Protection staff. Most scientists were eliminated and the administrations were packed with campaign donors and related special interest groups (like hunters and developers).

Science-based decision-making became a thing of the past overnight. And the situation has worsened over the next 4 years. Due to poor planning and funding cuts in the name of "Governmental efficiency", infrastructure is now lagging far behind the rapid population growth.

One of the biggest infrastructure problems at present is the road system. I-75 is being scorned as "overcrowded" and in need of "relief". Actually the Interstate Highway system was originally designed to link all of the states in the continent together, not to be commuter roads as they have evolved. In fact, the good governor has appointed his buddies to oversee the ***I-75 Relief Task Force***, which includes the Suncoast Parkway monstrosity. The first "extension" of the Parkway is dangerously and sloppily planned to dissect several critical wildlife resources including the Chassahowitzka-Ocala Bear corridor and the Homosassa Springs wellfields. It appears that, regardless of public questioning and protest, the I-75 relief task force is moving full bore with the governor's orders: "Move the new people into the wild lands where it is cheap to build and cheap to live (and profitable for my donors, like St. Joe and Plum Creek)". The second extension is being designed as we speak, in the dark as usual, and nobody I've asked has a clue exactly where it is going. And nobody will know until the plans are complete and approved (I've asked a plenty of state bureaucrats and local politicians with absolutely no answers). Every person on the "Task Force" is either one of the governor's donors or is plum eat up with the Growth disease. As Representative Jimmy T. Smith (R) told me last month, "We've got good growth management.... We are growing everywhere".

Apparently even The Florida Wildlife Commission is in the action for Growth. When asked about some critical wildlife corridor lands that were on the surplus lands list last spring, an FWC land manager told me that those lands were "for development". I mean, this government doesn't even pretend to think about our environment nor about the consequences development will bring to it. Service to the public comes last under this government and development comes first.

The same attitude exists in the other state government bodies too. The Public Service Commission in Florida is one of the few that are appointed by the governor as opposed to being elected. So now Florida is one of the few states that don't have an incentive program for home solar energy. And we saw what happened to the money ratepayers paid up front for Duke Energy to build the new Nuke plant that doesn't exist. The Duke Energy stockholders got the money. How did it get this way? Well, I personally didn't think the growers could be so bold so quickly. And we've got 3 more agonizing years ahead to the next gubernatorial election, which likely will elect Adam Putnam as governor. We're in trouble, big time!

Another of Vergara's comments in concluding his speech was that Florida's economy depends on continual growth. Unfortunately that thesis exists throughout the political community.

### **PLUM CREEK GETS FOOT IN THE DOOR REGARDLESS OF COMP. PLAN**

Alachua County Commissioner and supposed "environmentalist" Robert Hutchinson did an about face in the Hawthorne Annexation issue last week. Hutchinson, who worked as consultant for Plum Creek's Envision Alachua campaign before being elected, said - after voting with Commissioners Lee Pinkoson and Chuck Chestnut against appealing the annexation on legal grounds - that he regretted "losing many friends" over the vote. Perhaps "Hutch" sees a clear view of his political future and perhaps it was worth turning on his friends over the deal that opens the door to the development of some 60,000 acres of eastern Alachua County that is owned by his previous employer. Perhaps it was worth his reputation as an "environmental leader". As executive Director of the Alachua Conservation Trust, Hutch was able to amass tens of thousands of acres with donors' money and manipulate some sketchy deals in the meantime with both Frank Stronach (Adena Springs/Sleepy Creek water grabs) and Plum Creek in eastern Alachua County. Is this a valid example of modern-day politicians? He should be ashamed. Historically, every annexation in Alachua County that violated the comprehensive plan has been appealed for legal relief. But not in Hawthorne. There is something apparently different in this case.. Plum Creek is what's different. Lots of influence and lots of misleading and outright false information. Lots of weak leadership. So this illegal annexation won't be appealed and Envision will destroy the wildlands to the East. The wildlife corridor that will be destroyed, the pollution of Gainesville's water supply, the Murphy well fields and Hawthorne's greatest asset, Lake Lochloosa, and the obnoxious sprawling development that will result from this decision will exemplify the thinking of these growth-at-all-costs politicians and community "leaders". The Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club Group has stood out as the opposition leader against this giant corporation and its underhanded tactics throughout the process. We and our environmental allies will continue to lead against further environmental destruction.

The next important meetings will be Feb. 16th and 18th at 5:30 at Eastside High School. The commissioners will be discussing the Plum Creek application, take public comment, and then vote. It's important for our members to contact the county commissioners and the media to express their opinions. Commissioners Byerly and Cornell have steadfastly supported Alachua County and its comprehensive plan and need to hear that we appreciate what they are doing for us. The other commissioners, Chestnut, Hutchinson, and Pinkoson, need to hear how and why this issue is so important to us.

### **LEGISLATURE PRIMED FOR ACTION.**

Democracy in government is practically non-existent these days in Florida. It looks from here like the powers in Tallahassee don't care to consider the wishes of their constituents. Both bodies of the state legislature are poised to "fast track" the weak Water Bill that will affect our most valuable resource for at least ten years with no amendments. As I have written in previous columns, the Water Bill(s) in its present form is sorely lacking in conservation measures, oversight, funding, and vision.

It seems that any self-respecting representative or senator would at least favor debate on amendments to this terrible legislation. Unfortunately in ten years when another water-related bill is likely to be addressed, it will be far too late. This was the opportunity to do the right thing for our water resources. All of the legislators responsible for this legislation will be long gone and replaced and the replacements will blame these guys for the carnage.

If every Sierra Club member were to write just a brief email to his or her representatives and senators, I guarantee we would see amendments to the Water Bill. Come on, members. Write one more bunch of emails. It's our last chance. Simply go to the *Myfloridahouse.gov* or *Myfloridasenate.gov* websites and look for the legislators' addresses. (They actually do still make that available). Just ask them to allow the amendments on the floor for debate. Any good politician should allow discussion. Why should they rush to push this legislation through for another ten years? Good politicians don't rush.

Thanks and Happy New Year, Whitey Markle, Conservation Chair

### **IT NEVER ENDS..... Blues Creek Developer back for more**

In the 1980's, the area northwest of NW 53<sup>rd</sup> Ave and NW 43<sup>rd</sup> St, commonly known as Hunters Crossing, was mostly rural – no shopping centers, few homes. The main draw to the area was the Millhopper Sinkhole which was surrounded by woods, more sinkholes and lots and lots of wetlands. Of course, these sensitive environmental features were not going to stop determined Gainesville builders from getting their due.

As developer Larry Ross set out to create the Blues Creek subdivision, the Sierra Club and a group of dedicated Gainesville citizens decided to fight for some set asides to protect at least a portion of the wetlands and creeks that flow throughout the area. As part of a legal agreement with Alachua County, the Suwannee River Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation, Ross was required to permanently set aside a 90 acre wetland area located within the neighborhood. The stipulations were clear – other than minor recreational structures (trails, gazebos, etc), development of any kind (houses, roads, utility lines) was strictly prohibited within the conservation area.

But Ross has been persistent about asking for exemptions to this agreement, even to the point of suing the City of Gainesville (which had annexed in the neighborhood). He lost the last lawsuit in 2013.

He is now counting on the current pro-development City commission to finally grant his request to install utilities, including water and sewer pipes, through the conservation area and under Blues Creek so that he can build an additional 54 homes. This request is in clear violation of his development agreement.

The water from this site flows through Blues Creek Ravine Preserve to Big Otter Ravine in San Felasco State Park, a Floridan aquifer recharge site. In addition to potential sewage leakage, residents are concerned that storm water from this development could contaminate the area's water.

Please contact Gainesville City Commission at [citycomm@cityofgainesville.org](mailto:citycomm@cityofgainesville.org) and the Suwannee River Management District at <http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/contactus> to let them know that you do not support the placement of utilities through the Blues Creek Conservation Area and that New Generation Home Builders should be required to follow the Millhopper Special Study Area Development Standards as currently required.

If you would like to get more involved in this issue, please contact Mike Turco at [protectbluescreek@cox.net](mailto:protectbluescreek@cox.net)

## TRI-COUNTY WORKING GROUP of the SUWANNEE-ST. JOHNS SIERRA CLUB

The Tri-County Working Group met in December at the Crystal River Preserve State Park. **Whitey Markle** headed up a meeting which discussed the new relief highway in discussion for I-75 that would link up Tampa with Jacksonville. In concert with that, **Nancy Kost** brought up the concerns that the Suncoast Parkway extension into Citrus County posed an environmental threat because of anticipated gas and oil spills into a sensitive karst area that has no confining layer. Wells could easily be contaminated. A local water expert who came to the meeting expressed his concern as well.



Citrus, Levy and Marion County Members are very concerned about water issues. It was announced that our group has booked 19 presentations of *Water Works--Stand up and Act Now* at various venues throughout the three county area. Contact *Nancy Kost, Kathryn Taubert or Gary Green* to attend one of these important PowerPoint meetings.

We also discussed getting more visibility for our work. Susan Shipp, local trolley car vendor and journalist, suggested we set up a Facebook page. That was done shortly afterwards and can be viewed at [facebook.com/tcwg.ssjsierra/](https://facebook.com/tcwg.ssjsierra/)

Our next meeting is on January 19 at noon at Crystal River Preserve State Park. We also decided to alternate with evening meetings so members who work can more easily attend. Our February 16th meeting will be at 5:30 at the Dunnellon Public Library.



**LOCAL SIERRA CLUB RELEASES NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**  
**Contact: Kathryn Taubert, 19436 SW 101<sup>st</sup> Place Road, Dunnellon, FL 34432, 352.489.5085**

Local Sierra Club officials announced the release of a new presentation for area clubs and organizations describing the impact of problems with Florida's water resources upon people living in Marion, Citrus and Levy counties. *Water Works: Stand Up and Act Now* is an interactive, presenter-led PowerPoint program for clubs, organizations and civic groups offered, at no charge, by the Sierra Club's Tri-County Working Group.

"This program differs because it makes difficult things easy to understand," says Whitey Markle, Conservation Chair for the Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club. "*Water Works* translates scientific facts into common language, detailing the specific impact of Florida's and the tri-county's water problems on jobs, property values, lifestyles, ecotourism and most importantly, our drinking water," further states Markle.

Developed by a Sierra Club Task Force from a variety of scientific and governmental resources, *Water Works: Stand Up and Act Now* also describes the impact of population growth and development in the next 15 years upon current and future water resources in the tri-county area as well as specific things individuals can do to help.

“Programs of this type generally discuss broader issues in scientific terms,” says Gary Green, *Water Works* Task Force leader. “Our team translated the facts into understandable language specific to Marion, Citrus and Levy counties, telling people specifically why we should care about what’s happening to our local springs, rivers, and drinking water, and what we can do about it.” To schedule *Water Works* for your group, contact: (Citrus) Nancy Kost, [nkost@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:nkost@tampabay.rr.com) or 352.628.0698; (Levy), Whitey Markle, [WHMarkle@gmail.com](mailto:WHMarkle@gmail.com) or 352.595.5131; (Marion), Gary Green, [garryegreen@centurylink.net](mailto:garryegreen@centurylink.net) or 352.817.8077.



Members of the local Sierra Club participated in the development of *Water Works: Stand Up and Act Now*, the new free presentation for clubs, organizations and civic groups in Citrus, Levy and Marion counties. Pictured left to right: **Nancy Kost, Harriet Jones, Whitey Markle, Kathryn Taubert, Dwight Porter, Jon Brainard, Connie and Gordon Hart, Jan Hitchcock, Marie Hall.** (Not pictured are Gary Green, Jim Carrell, Nathan Whitt, and John Moran (photography). To schedule *Water Works* for your group, contact: (Citrus) Nancy Kost, [nkost@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:nkost@tampabay.rr.com) or 352.628.0698; (Levy), Whitey Markle, [WHMarkle@gmail.com](mailto:WHMarkle@gmail.com) or 352.595.5131; (Marion), Gary Green, [garryegreen@centurylink.net](mailto:garryegreen@centurylink.net) or 352.817.8077.

### **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).

## OUTINGS

**GET OUTDOORS!** Visit our website at [sssierra.org/outings-2/](http://sssierra.org/outings-2/) to find out about outdoor adventures sponsored by Sierra Club throughout the State.

### WE HIKED THE (soon to be gone) BIKE TRAIL

Eleven Sierra Club and Florida Trail members recently walked along a lovely bike trail in area slated to be intensely developed in the near future - a new community of shops, office parks, apartments and residences will join the Springhills Publix on NW 39<sup>th</sup> Ave near I-75 just north of Santa Fe College.

A new road is proposed to connect NW 83<sup>rd</sup> street and Millhopper Rd to accommodate increased traffic and provide easy access to shopping. Currently, a well maintained bike trail runs the length of this property traversing wooded areas full of wildlife and crossing a pretty stream.

Get out there soon if you want to see these lovely hammock woods.



## FLORIDA CHAPTER AWARDS TO LOCAL MEMBERS



Whitey Markle presents the Florida Chapter Sierra Club Cypress Award to Merrilee Malwitz Jibson, very active member of Our Santa Fe River - Advocating for Ban Fracking in Florida, and the protection of the rivers and springs. The Cypress Award is given to an individual who has contributed greatly to the public's environmental awareness in his or her own locale or Florida as a whole. Merrilee is an amazing woman who spends so much of her time and energy to speak up for all of us in Florida, and educate elected officials as well as the public on the dangers of Fracking.



Maryvonne Devensky presents the Florida Chapter Sierra Club Manatee Award to Scott Camil and to Sherry Steiner - The Manatee Award is given to Group members who have done an outstanding job of service to the group. Both Scott and Sherry have done a tremendous job preparing for meetings, planning SSJ events, as newsletter editors, and Scott as Political Chair for many years. Thank you so much to both of them!