



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

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Money Talks

Alachua County voters will have the opportunity to adopt their first local campaign finance regulations for candidates seeking local county offices this fall.

Adoption of one or both of the two campaign finance reform ballot items offered (see page 6) will secure Alachua County's right to home rule for local campaign finances. (See sidebar below.)

Susan Wright, chairperson of Alachua County Citizens for Campaign Reform, will speak about this amendment and its

importance. For more information, go to www.AlachuaCampaignReform.org.

We also will have Ben Wilcox, executive director for Common Cause Florida, speak about the need for campaign finance reform in general. Common Cause is an advocate for government reform and is known as the citizens' lobby organization. Its members seek to reduce the influence of wealthy special interests on public policy and make government more open and accountable to the average citizen.

Ben was a reporter and then news director for Florida Public Radio for 23 years, reporting on the Florida legislature. He has first-hand knowledge of why we need this reform throughout the state and country.

We are excited about having these two speakers at our meeting and invite all to not miss it!

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, July 1, 7:30 PM

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

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

BEN WILCOX
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMON CAUSE FLORIDA
SUSAN WRIGHT
CHAIR, ALACHUA COUNTY CITIZENS
FOR CAMPAIGN REFORM



Campaign Finance Reform Vote on Nov. 2

BY SUSAN WRIGHT

Alachua County will have the opportunity to enact its first local campaign finance regulations this November. Alachua gained the home rule authority in 2002 to regulate its local campaign finance; but it came with a "use it or lose it" stipulation. To retain this right Alachua voters must exercise this authority by adopting at least one local campaign finance reform by 2006.

Two local reform measures will appear on the ballot. They are the result of an 18-month study by the county's Campaign Finance Reform Advisory Board

(CFRAB). The CFRAB report and recommendations can be viewed at www.AlachuaCampaignReform.org.

If adopted these regulations will apply to candidates running for Alachua county commission, supervisor of elections, property appraiser, sheriff, clerk of court and tax collector beginning with the 2006 elections.

The first ballot item establishes reporting requirements to provide for the auditing and public disclosure of campaign money. It requires financial reports to be submitted in electronic format and provides more time for auditing, correction of

mistakes, publication, and public access to the information in the final report before an election.

The second ballot item reduces the amount of money a single contributor may give to a candidate. It does not limit the total amount of money a campaign may raise. It encourages candidates to seek support from a broader base of more modest donations.

The first ballot item (see page 3) addresses four recommendations made by CFRAB which relate to timely and full public disclosure or transparency of the money behind the campaigns for our local county offices.

CFRAB found that the "current state

see **CAMPAIGN FINANCE**, page 3

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Slow to Act

GOPHER TORTOISE NEEDS FEDERAL LISTING AND STATE ACTION TO BE PROTECTED

BY DAVID L. AUTH

In March, 2004, the gopher tortoise was nominated as a "threatened" species to be protected in Florida under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). The tortoises' nomination was sponsored by the Ashton Biodiversity Research and Preservation Institute, a private non-profit organization located in south west Alachua County near Watermelon Pond.

Ray and his wife, Pat Ashton, along with all other Florida herpetologists with whom I have communicated, have wanted the gopher tortoise federally listed in Florida for almost 40 years. Ecosystem deterioration has become critical in Florida for many vertebrate, invertebrate, and plant species, part of the "sixth extinction" in earth history our species is causing.

What makes the gopher tortoise more deserving than the many other justified species presently politically blocked from federal listing?

The gopher tortoise is a "keystone species." More than 400 other species of invertebrates and vertebrates live all or part

of their lives in gopher tortoise burrows. Incredibly, the gopher tortoise is not federally listed for Florida, even though it has been Florida listed for many years. The tortoise is included on several comprehensive lists of Florida flora and fauna: the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC; "species of special concern"), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, by its Florida Natural Areas Inventory ("rare, restricted, or otherwise vulnerable to extinction"), and the non-governmental Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals ("threatened").

The gopher tortoise is one of many examples of ridiculous listing discontinuities due to federal, state, and private entities constantly engaging in turf battles over authority and research money. What is needed is one list for Species in Trouble in the United States, determined by an unbiased group of citizen-scientists, not by government bureaucrats who are incapable of working together and by politicians controlled via corpo-

rate campaign contributions and lobbyists trying to destroy the Endangered Species Act rather than enforce it.

Right now, the Ashton Biodiversity institute is spearheading a unique program to encourage input and support for both federal and state listing of the gopher tortoise and functional new state regulations. They are bringing together stakeholder groups in individual conferences to discuss how to preserve viable populations and habitat in perpetuity in all counties of the state. The individual stakeholder groups (developers, landowners, agriculture, conservation organizations, local government associations, sportsmen, scientists, etc.) will be asked how they can support these goals in lieu of the current state system that is not working. Each group's recommendations

CHAIR'S



CORNER

**MORE THAN 400 OTHER SPECIES OF
INVERTEBRATES AND VERTEBRATES
LIVE ALL OR PART OF THEIR LIVES IN
GOPHER TORTOISE BURROWS.**

will be forwarded to the agencies and other stakeholder groups. Legislators and agencies will be encouraged to support and enact the primary goals.

see TORTOISE, page 6

Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

National: <http://www.sierraclub.org> • Local: <http://www.gatorsierra.org>

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Please contact Kristina Jackson at 372-2464 by phone or by e-mailing kristinajackson@cox.net if you would like to assist with the Sierra Club e-mail tree.

FOLDING PARTY

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

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CAMPAIGN FINANCE, from page 1

reporting schedule does not adequately insure public disclosure of campaign finance reports prior to an election; nor does it provide adequate time for auditing of the reported finances; nor the disclosure and remedy of any violations or deficiencies uncovered by an audit prior to the election.”. CFRAB recommended that the last report prior to each election be due 48 hours earlier than currently required by the state. It also recommended the last date by which a candidate may accept money be moved forward accordingly because “In order to provide full public disclosure of the contributions a candidate receives prior to the election, the last date by when a candidate may accept contributions must occur prior to the date that the report is due.”

Under the state rule reports may be unavailable or inaccessible until the day before election day. This is due in large part because of the weekend immediately following the 5 p.m. Friday due date. In primary elections that follow Labor Day, the reports may not be available or accessible until election day due to the holiday. Moving the report deadline 48 hours earlier ensures the reports will be received and publicly available three working days rather than 1 working day before the election.

CFRAB found that “timely and accurate auditing and publishing of the campaign finances is severely hampered” by paper formatted reports. Handwritten reports are often illegible. They must be converted to digital format in order to be

published in printed media or run through computer analysis programs which assist in the auditing of the reports for compliance with state regulations. Retyping handwritten reports into digital format introduces a significant margin for error, adds significant delay in availability of the information for publication, and incurs labor costs.

maximum amount allowed by the state for local, statewide, congressional district, and multi-county district campaigns. The amount of money that individuals, corporations and political committees such as PACs can contribute to the campaigns of candidates seeking office has long been limited by both federal and state regulations.

CFRAB determined that lowering the contribution cap to as much as \$200 would not prohibit or impede a candidate from conducting a viable campaign for local county office, but rather would require the candidate to reach out to a broader base of supporters. CFRAB discussed that this would “not only benefit the candidate’s campaign, but would also:

- engage a larger portion of the community in the election process,
- and at the same time reduce the public perception that wealthy donors have a disproportionate influence on those candidates to whom they contribute,
- and increase public confidence in the election

process.”

Alachua would not be the first Florida county to reduce its maximum allowable contribution. Sarasota County, Florida, established a \$200 limit in 1990, and Miami-Dade adopted a \$250 limit in 2000.

In recent campaigns, some local candidates have voluntarily adopted lower contribution caps. In 2002 Commissioner Pinkoson raised \$84,000 in his successful campaign for county commission from contributions he limited to \$250.

BALLOT ITEM 1

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TIME FOR ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS

SHALL THE ALACHUA COUNTY CHARTER BE AMENDED TO REQUIRE CANDIDATES FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER, CLERK OF COURT, PROPERTY APPRAISER, SHERIFF, SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS, AND TAX COLLECTOR TO FILE LAST PERIOD FINANCIAL REPORTS ON THE SIXTH DAY PRIOR TO THE ELECTION; TO ACCEPT ONLY CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE MIDNIGHT OF THE SEVENTH DAY PRIOR TO THE ELECTION; TO FILE ELECTRONIC REPORTS TOGETHER WITH SIGNED PAPER REPORTS AND TO REPORT CUMULATIVE AMOUNTS RECEIVED FROM EACH CONTRIBUTOR.

YES / NO

BALLOT ITEM 2

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION LIMITATIONS

SHALL THE ALACHUA COUNTY CHARTER BE AMENDED TO PROHIBIT CANDIDATES FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER, CLERK OF COURT, PROPERTY APPRAISER, SHERIFF, SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS, AND TAX COLLECTOR FROM ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS IN EXCESS OF \$250.00 FROM INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS AND SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS, POLITICAL COMMITTEES, AND COMMITTEES OF CONTINUOUS EXISTENCE IN EACH ELECTION.

YES / NO

The State has required all candidates running for state offices to submit their reports in electronic format for several years. The Alachua County Supervisor of Election has asked for electronic formatted reports since July 2002 and has provided the necessary software at no cost to effected candidates. Free use of public computers is also available for candidates. Adoption of this ballot item will insure that this requirement persists under future Supervisors.

The second ballot item proposes a \$250 contribution cap which is half the \$500

doors confidence, and group dynamics skills development. Other requirements for certification include CPR and First Aid training as well as participating in several outings as a co-leader for which this workshop will qualify participants.

The \$10 cost covers the Outing Leader Manual and the handouts. Everyone should bring a three ring note book. The

topics covered will include history of the Sierra Club Outings program, Club structure, planning and conducting an outing, Club regulations and insurance. For more information and directions, call Karen Garren at 352-371-0008, email at lluvFla@GRU.net. This event is open to the public. Come join us, invite your friends.

Outing Leader Training

A Sierra Club Outings Leader Training workshop will be conducted by Rudy Scheffer on Saturday, June 26th at 9:00 am at Fifield Hall on UF Campus. The training is the first step to becoming Sierra Club certified as an Outings Leader. It is also a step toward adventure, new friends, out-of-

Penny Wheat

Public Interest Commissioner

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

If Penny Wheat has a League of Conservation Voters rating, it must be A+. More than any other Alachua County commissioner during her tenure in office, Wheat has consistently voted in the public interests. (Jim Notestein, 16 years ago, and now Mike Byerly stand right up there with her.) With few exceptions, Wheat does her own research on issues, not relying on staff reports, then votes for the public interests. I have not checked the records, but do not recall her ever voting for a tax increase. She does not vote for new taxes, and if the question is increasing a tax such as gasoline or sales tax, she insists on putting the issue on the ballot to let the public decide.

EARLY ISSUES IN PUBLIC HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT

Penny Wheat came into politics through environmental issues, one of which affected her family personally. I first saw Wheat in action at the crowded LOGIC meeting (Leaders of Government in Cooperation, the arrangement that the local legislative delegation devised to make sure that local city and county leaders "toed the line"). The crowd was there to give the delegation hell over a bill that they had introduced in the legislature that took control of the Gainesville airport away from the city.

Wheat was there to complain about gasoline contamination of water wells. Her son had been drinking contaminated water when he visited his father who lived in a trailer park on Old Archer Road near SW 34th Street. Wheat had been trying, without getting much support, to get the problem addressed and she was "hopping mad." At that meeting, she got their attention, although they only wanted to talk about the airport. Later, Alachua County enacted a tough underground storage tank ordinance that the state saw fit to override with a weaker law that let polluting gas stations

off the hook.

The other issue at the time in which Wheat was involved was the disposal of municipal solid waste (MSW). The state had earlier enacted legislation that identified "resource recovery," i.e. mass burn, as the method of choice for disposal of MSW. Alachua County had been identified as the location for one to handle the region's waste. At a May 1985 LOGIC meeting, Rep. Sid Martin announced that there was to be a joint city/county/UF study of waste



WHEAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A "MAVERICK" ON THE COMMISSION.

Photo by Randy Batista for *Chairwomen*, a fundraiser for breast cancer awareness (www.mediaimage.net/chairwomen)

disposal. Although the study had not been done yet, the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to consulting firms indicated that mass burn would be the choice.

At the LOGIC meetings, Wheat and I (I had recently become the Sierra Club Florida Chapter Solid Waste Issue Chair) continued to object to the idea of burning MSW and said that we knew how to manage most of it through reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting (RRRC). Wheat and I had attended a workshop held by Citizens' Clearing House for Hazardous Wastes (organized by Lois Gibbs of Love Canal fame) that gave us ammunition to wage the fight here against mass burn. However, officials who had their heart set on a big mass-burn facility did not want to hear about RRRC.

It turns out serendipity was on our side. There had been a meeting of various city, county, UF, and state officials to discuss the language in the RFQ and the meeting had not been properly publicly noticed. Wheat, consummate snoop that she was, found out that the illegal meeting had

occurred and blew the whistle on it. As a result the County called an emergency meeting to withdraw the RFQ.

Following this, Wheat, Lee and December McSherry, and I decided that we would organize a conference that would focus on ways to manage MSW through RRRC rather than burning it. In collaboration with Suzi Ruhl of LEAF, in the Spring of 1986 we held the conference "There Is No Away," with expert speakers from across the country, and attended by almost 200 people. Although we had gotten the Department of Environmental Protection and the City of Gainesville, through Mayor Gary Gordon, to co-sponsor the conference, we could not get Alachua County to have anything to do with it. In fact, Leveda Brown, who was chair of the commission, forced the Florida Association of Counties

to withdraw its co-sponsorship. This conference, for which we published proceedings, played an important role in the

1988 solid waste legislation that moved Florida to the forefront in solid waste management (it has since slipped).

RUNNING FOR OFFICE

Wheat was such an effective spokesperson for the environment that many encouraged her to run for county commission. Near the last day of qualifying in July 1986, Wheat agreed to run and the necessary filing fee was raised (it was long past the deadline for petitions). Some thought that Wheat had no chance since the campaign had little money and there were only six weeks until the election in which she faced developer-backed Jane Walker.

A "rag-tag" group, Francine Robinson, Ruth Van Doren, Kay The Losen, Jim Aikin, Joan and Dwight Adams, and a few others, ran the campaign from the Adamases' dining room table. We learned as we went. John Mahon served as her campaign treasurer. Jape Taylor, Caleb King (Wheat's high school swim coach) and a couple of others in medicine wrote a letter to fellow physicians soliciting donations to

Penny's campaign. Wheat's campaign slogan was "When citizens talk, Penny listens." A major issue was to save taxpayers' money, e.g. by reducing hiring of expensive out-of-town consultants.

An issue that really caught the public eye was the cutting of John Simpson's trees where the County wanted to widen the road. Simpson, 82, had offered to buy land opposite his so that the road could be widened without taking his trees. However, the County did not want to curve the road around Simpson's property. Commission Chair Walker had the misfortune to say, "We can't have rules in Alachua County for feisty old men," which got quoted in the Tampa Tribune. Simpson loaded one of the stumps onto his pickup truck with a sign reading, "Jane Walker did this to me." He would drive around the County all day, coming to the Adamses' house where Joan let him rest on the living room floor before going out again. This made an exceedingly effective campaign tactic. Upstart Wheat won by a comfortable 52.5%. With the shoestring budget, no money was available for a victory party so it was "pot luck" at the Adamses' home.

Once Wheat was in office, she made good on her campaign promise to listen when citizens talked. She did this so effectively that she became the unofficial ombudsman on the commission. Wheat quickly established a reputation of always voting in the public interest that served her well in her three subsequent re-election campaigns.

After two four-year terms, Wheat declined to run for re-election and entered law school at UF. However, she soon decided that there was not a pressing need for more lawyers and dropped out to run for county commission again in 1996, win-

ning handily, and again when she stood for re-election in 2000.

Wheat has always been a "maverick" on the commission, being elected as chair only once during her 16 years on the commission. She was endorsed by the Gainesville Sun only for her first run. Three years later (1989), Ron Cunningham wrote an editorial lamenting Wheat's "lack of savvy to implement her ideals," stating, "it's not enough to be right—you must be able to do something about it." She has, indeed, been on the short end of lots of 3-2 votes but she served a useful public interest in bringing out the issues involved. Of course, it is hard to persuade someone backed by special interest money to support the public interest.

UPS & DOWNS ON THE COMMISSION

Although burning solid waste had been put to rest in Alachua County, how to manage the large quantity being buried in the landfill south of Archer continued to occupy the commission's attention. A decade after the "There Is No Away" conference, instead of insisting that the commission implement the RRRC methods that she had helped identify, Wheat supported NIMBYS who wanted to send our trash away to an out-of-county landfill.

Two years ago, Wheat forgot about her early campaign issue against hiring expensive out of town consultants and, instead of voting to proceed with a living-wage ordinance, voted for a \$100,000 study of the county wage and salary structure. This gave the living-wage ordinance as a campaign issue for opponents to Hutchinson and

Newport. We know all too well the resulting amendments to the comprehensive plan passed by the new commission.

One of Penny's passions has been stamping out ugly, intrusive, pervasive, billboards. She led the county's 2000 effort to ban new billboards and became a statewide spokesperson against "litter on a stick." Penny was listed among "The Spoilers" in the June 2001 Florida Trend. This article pointed out that developers, aided by the billboard industry and without Gainesville Sun support, had "tried their darnedest" to prevent her reelection in 2000. However, she won with 62.3% of the vote, while her opponent spent \$60,000 to Wheat's \$26,000.

On more than one occasion, it was pointed out to other "green commissioners" who were trying to "work both sides of the fence" that the best way to assure their re-election was to emulate Penny Wheat and always vote in the public interest. Failing to heed this, they lost their seats on the commission. Given the huge amounts that are now being spent on commission races—many times what Wheat spent in 1986—it may be awhile before we have another green commission.

Wheat will surely be missed on the County Commission. However, we may not have seen the last of her as a public official. Her answer to "what do you expect to be doing after November" was, "The commitment to public service is my passion in life." Will we have a surprise announcement in July that she is running for some office?



Wheat celebrates her 2000 re-election victory with newly elected County Commissioners Rodney Long (left) and Mike Byerly (right).

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Birddoggers

HOW YOU CAN HELP WIN THE WAR OF IDEAS.

BY EMMA WHITE

Conservation Organizer
Sierra Club Building Environmental Communities

Over the next few months, the Bush Administration has and will continue to visit Florida with an environmental message wrapped in lies. At Rookery Bay in Naples, for example, the President stood behind this estuarine preserve touting his environmental policy, the news media recording every bit of it. The irony? Rookery Bay is under a fish consumption advisory due to unsafe levels of mercury. The Bush Administration's move to weaken the Clean Air Act significantly contributes to this kind of pollution. If the Sierra Club hadn't been bird-dogging in Naples that day, only one side of the story would have appeared on television.

We bird-dog by making our presence known and by getting our message out to the media wherever the Bush

bird-dog (*bûrd'-dôg*), *v.* Also *birddog*. To observe, follow, monitor and/or seek out with persistent attention.

bird-dogger (*bûrd'-dôg'ger*), *n.* One who bird-dogs.

Administration visits. We create press conferences, protests, and photo opportunities to draw attention to their dismal environmental plans in Florida... and to point out that there is a better way! Bird-dogging at the Bush Administration's visits gives us a chance to reach thousands of citizens who may not otherwise realize that this Administration is waging war on our clean air and water. It is a priority of the Sierra Club staff in Florida to support volunteer's bird-dogging events across the state.

Opportunities for bird-dogging often pop up with only a day or two to prepare, as tracking the Administration is complex. Some of you may have received calls to become involved at very short notice, and we thank you for jumping in. Bird-dogging is always an exciting and incredibly effective way to volunteer. From creating and holding posters that say "Support Kids Not Polluters," to riding in a boat, chanting

"Clean Air, Clean Water!" to news cameras, we need lots of people out at these events, each person symbolic of folks across the country who will no longer stand for the Bush Administration's double-talk.

Jonathan Ullman, our Southern Florida Conservation Organizer, recently organized a big bird-dogging event in Miami (complete with a real steamroller crushing paper mache manatees and dolphins to symbolize the Bush Administration) and makes a great point about birddogging. He says, "Birddogging is like being a Minuteman. We are in a war. A war of ideas, yes, but also a war of numbers, pizzazz, and media savvy. This administration is willing to lie to win each battle. We want to tell the truth ('cause that's the kind of people we are) and we believe the public can sort out lies from the truth eventually. But we cannot expose the lies unless we get our message heard, and to do that in today's media world you need to be faster, more interesting, and resilient. That's what the Minutemen did. That's what we'll do." Come join us.

If you would like to join us, call the Florida Office of the Sierra Club at (727) 824-8813 ext.306 to be put on a contact list so that we can update and involve you when the Bush Administration comes to a town near you!

TORTOISE, from page 2

"If we can get these meetings done before the FWC establishes a program of rules and regulations, we can expect positive meetings and recommendations," Ray Ashton says. "We are hoping that the state Sierra Club and all of its local chapters will participate in this effort. The organizing is already underway."

Despite the weak state listing, without

federal protection the gopher tortoise is destined for ultimate extinction, plummeting down rapidly in Florida from an estimated total population of over 300,000 individuals in 1976. Go to WWW.Ashtonbiodiversity.org to read the discussion paper detailing all the reasons for the gopher tortoise population collapse in Florida, and how to stop it.

Take Action: Write the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service and recommend the gopher tortoise be listed as a threatened species. (Division of Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1875 Century Blvd., Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30345), call (404-763-7959), or e-mail via their website at (www.fws.gov <<http://www.fws.gov>>).

David L. Auth has a Ph.D. in Zoology (Herpetology)

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Taxpayers Asked to Pay to Clearcut America's Rainforest

BY TOM WHEATLEY

Southeast Field Organizer, Alaska Coalition

Americans can take great pride in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. Established in 1907, by President Theodore Roosevelt, the Tongass is part of the largest intact coastal temperate rainforest in the world. The Tongass stretches from Yakutat to Ketchikan in southeast Alaska, encompassing 17 million acres making it the size of West Virginia. Its giant Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and yellow cedar trees are home to wolves, bears, salmon, and bald eagles; species that have disappeared from many parts of America. This remote rainforest of ancient trees covers an island landscape marked by narrow inlets and glacier-carved fiords. America's Rainforest is an incomparable wonder of nature owned and valued by all Americans.

Despite the majesty of the Tongass, the U.S. Forest Service is allowing timber companies to chop away at America's pride. For over 50 years, timber companies have had access to the biggest and best trees in the Tongass National Forest, leaving Americans to foot

the bill. Since when did it become the responsibility of American taxpayers to subsidize the clearcutting of America's Rainforest? If there is one thing that the Forest Service has proven with its fiscal irresponsibility, it's that money does not grow on trees.

The Tongass National Forest is many things to many different people. Fishermen rely on the fresh water streams of the Tongass to provide ample spawning grounds for all five species of Pacific salmon. Local businesses rely on the beauty of the Tongass to lure millions of visitors and their tourist dollars each year. Hunters rely on the Tongass to provide habitat for the Sitka black-tailed deer and other game species. Scientists rely on the Tongass to get a glimpse of an ecosystem which has remained virtually unchanged since before Columbus landed in America. Native Americans rely on the Tongass to provide food and spiritual meaning. Future generations of Americans are relying on us to preserve and keep this ancient rainforest intact.

In an effort to guarantee profits for the

timber industry in Alaska, the Forest Service has offered to sell trees for far less than they are worth. These bargain basement prices for our old growth trees are a travesty.

American taxpayers are also paying the bill to build and maintain the logging roads in the Tongass National Forest. Already, over 5,000 miles of roads crisscross the Tongass, and the Forest Service has plans to build over 1,000 additional miles of roads. America's cities sit in gridlock while the Forest Service spends millions of tax dollars building roads into the rainforest so the timber companies can cut down our trees.

These clear cuts and timber roads don't just damage the Tongass National Forest; they damage hunting, fishing, recreation, and tourism industries that are the foundation of Southeast Alaska's economy.

It is simply irresponsible for the federal government to spend tens of millions of our tax dollars subsidizing the timber industry in Alaska and, in the process, damage an international treasure that attracts hunters, fishermen, and tourists from around the world.

If the President and Congress are serious about cutting government waste, the annual subsidy to build roads, clearcut the rainforest, and subsidize the timber industry in Alaska is a good place to start. We have a responsibility to leave our economy, our government, and our environment in better shape than we inherited it for future generations. This blatant disregard for taxpayer dollars and the health of the Tongass National Forest must stop.

For more information on how to help, visit: www.alaskacoalition.org. Or contact Tom Wheatley at: tom@alaskacoalition.org, 813-935-3422.

You Can Run for Sierra Club Office

Each fall, we elect new members of the Executive Committee who handles affairs of the Suwannee St. Johns Sierra Group. This year we will elect eight of our 15-member board (on alternate years the number is seven). Executive Committee members serve two years beginning in January.

Per our bylaws, a nominating committee (NomCom) has been appointed to seek

nominees from among our membership (all Sierra Club members are eligible to run for office). Nominees do not run for a particular office; all are elected "at large" and then duties are parceled out at the first organizational meeting of the

newly elected Excom.

If you are interested in serving or know someone whom you think would be a good officer, please contact any of the

members of NomCom listed here. They can use all the help they can get since the slate of nominees must

be completed by September 2!

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Christopher Thurow cthurow@thurow.us
 Sherry Steiner s.camil@worldnet.att.net
 Colin Whitworth colinwhitworth@cox.net
 Linda Pollini thirdeyegrafix@earthlink.net

Suwannee-St. Johns Group
Sierra Club
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JULY & AUGUST 2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 26, Saturday, Sierra Club Outing Leader Training at UF Fifield Hall. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. See page 3 for details.

July 1, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, General meeting at the Entomology and Nematology Bld. UF campus.

July 8, 7 p.m., Thursday, Executive committee meeting at Santa Fe Comm. College, Downtown Campus meeting room.

THERE IS NO AUGUST GENERAL MEETING OR NEWSLETTER FOR THE SSI SIERRA CLUB GROUP. SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER.

August 12, 7 p.m., Thursday, Executive committee meeting at Santa Fe Comm. College, Downtown Campus meeting room.

August 20, 7:30 p.m., Friday. Folding party for September newsletter at Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner's house. Call 352-375-2563 for directions.

September 2, 7:30 p.m., Thursday, General meeting at the Entomology and Nematology Bld. UF campus.

To advertise
in the newsletter,
contact
Kristina Jackson
at 372-2464.

Membership

Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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