



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

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Saving the Springs

ICHETUCKNEE SPRINGS IS IN TROUBLE.

BY KRISTINA JACKSON

Rising nitrate levels from land uses in the spring basin are impacting the health of the springs and river. Ichetucknee Springs is one of the world's outstanding springs. The springs create the pristine Ichetucknee River that is enjoyed by 200,000 visitors each year. These visitors generate \$22 million for the local economy.

Lake City is in the heart of the



Ichetucknee Springs Basin. It is the largest and fastest growing city in the 13 county Suwannee River Water Management District. The Ichetucknee has been important to the quality of life of the people of Lake City and Columbia County for generations; however, growth is compounding the threats to the springs and river.

Our speaker, Jim Stevenson will discuss the current health of Ichetucknee Springs and Lake City's role in its survival. Jim was the chief naturalist of Florida's state parks when Ichetucknee Springs State Park was established in 1970. He is the coordinator of the Ichetucknee Springs Basin Working Group and the former chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force and the Governor's Springs Protection Initiative.

Jim Stevenson retired as a senior biologist with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in 2003. Jim began his career with the Department as a park ranger while attending the University of South Florida. He served as chief biologist for the Florida State Park System for 20 years during which he developed the educational and the land management programs for the state park system.

Jim organized and coordinates spring basin interagency working groups for Wakulla Springs and Ichetucknee Springs. He was chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force that developed a protection strategy for Florida's springs and he was director of the Governor's Florida Springs Initiative that implemented springs protec-

GENERAL MEETING

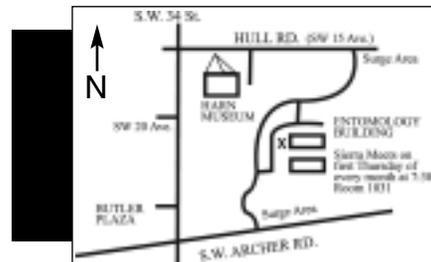
Thursday, Jan. 6, 7:30 PM

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

WILL ICHETUCKNEE SPRINGS SURVIVE?

JIM STEVENSON

COORDINATOR
ICHETUCKNEE SPRINGS BASIN WORKING GROUP



tion projects.

In recognition of his dedication to the protection of Florida's springs, the State of Florida named a spring on the Suwannee River "Stevenson Spring" in Jim's honor. And for his longstanding stewardship of Florida's public lands, the Governor and Cabinet dedicated the Department of Environmental Protection's highest award the "Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year Award" now given annually to the most deserving state lands manager.

Jim and his wife kayak the whitewater rivers of the U.S. and dive the caves of Florida's springs. You can contact Jim at: Florida_springs@comcast.net

Come to the January 6 meeting and learn about the springs from Jim—he puts on an interesting show.

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Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

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 - In item 16, indicate the date of the issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
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Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

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

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E-MAIL TREE

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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New SSJ Officers Picked for 2005

BY KRISTINA JACKSON

At our December 9 meeting the executive committee, with our new members, self-organized to fill the officer positions for the coming year. It is our tradition to take the committee members and work it out amongst ourselves to decide who will fulfill each role. As you can imagine, sometimes this works better than others.

A hearty welcome to our new executive committee members: Tom Begley, Josh Dickinson, Guy Marwick and Russell Roy. And we congratulate returning members Rob Brinkman, Scott Camil, Russell Donda, Kristina Jackson and Annette Long.

Some members retained their jobs but most changed. (Short list of committee members with contact info can be found at bottom of page 2).

New officer positions include: Chair Linda Pollini., Vice Chair for Programs Guy Marwick, Conservation Chair Josh Dickinson, Political Chair David Auth, Public Relations Russell Donda, Government Liaison Rob Brinkman,



Dec. 9 the SSJ executive committee met to hash out the new positions for 2005. Administrative Chair Dwight Adams (standing) smoothed out the process with a matrix of our 15 members and prioritized job choices.

Environmental Education Chair Russell Roy, and Alternate FLEX Com Delegate Tom Begley.

Still committed to their 2004 positions are: Secretary Annette Long, Treasurer and Membership Chair Roberta Gastmeyer,

Administrative Chair Dwight Adams, Outings Chair Karen Garren, Events Coordinator Sherry Steiner, Newsletter Editor/Listserve Kristina Jackson, and Newsletter Folding & Mailing Scott Camil.

THANK YOU TO OUTGOING OFFICERS AND EXCOM MEMBERS

We want to recognize and thank **Kathy Cantwell** for serving as Program Chair this year in addition to her 7 previous years on our Group's ExCom. She is continuing her work with Sierra Club and taking a greater role in the state-level organization, recently becoming Public Lands Chair for the Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Pegeen Hanrahan served our local ExCom as Government Liaison and FLEX Com alternate over the last two years. Pegeen was recently sworn in as Mayor of Gainesville. We appreciate her input, especially her insight into local politics and how things "really" work.

Big thank you to **Dr. Jape Taylor** who will be sorely missed on our board. He has served as Public Relations Chair for the

last two years and has often been a voice of reason in our more contentious ExCom votes. Jape leaves us to spend more time with his wife.

Marion County resident **Christopher Thurow** served in 2004 as our Group Government Liaison. Christopher is focused on improving things in Ocala and Marion

County and recently ran for a commission seat. He had to travel quite a distance for



In November, some of our past and present ExCom members socialize with national Sierra Club Pres. Larry Fahn (second left in back). Outgoing Public Relations Chair Jape Taylor is standing, center back.

our ExCom meetings and we wish him luck in his future endeavors.

Sierra Club Strategic Planning

THE CHALLENGE—CHANGE HUMAN BEHAVIOR

BY DAVID AUTH

Chair 2004

Most of the subset of humans reading these 1,000 words will agree that everyone's happiness is totally dependent on healthy ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems provide all the free services required for life on Earth; clean air, water, and land, and make it possible for all the life forms to carry out their biology, chemistry and physics. We could not grow our food, build our homes, or attend our football games without healthy ecosystems. Despite what political polls tell us: that the environment is 9th on U.S. citizens' list of most important subjects. The people are wrong. The environment is our number one, through the history of the universe.

I think my readers will also almost unanimously agree that we must think and act based on knowing the important trends, constantly adding up our successes and failures to see the big picture, which can't be changed rapidly. This will take great patience on our part. For example, global warming and our exploding human population will take a long time to stop and then reverse and finally stabilize.

The trend we all need most worry about is that all ecosystems are becoming less healthy, solely because of human behavior. The goal is sustainability, to stop as quickly as possible the worsening health of ecosystems, get the health back up and stabilize it as a level somewhere near where it was before the industrial revolution. How do we improve enough individual behaviors, to incrementally improve ecosystem health? We are in general agreement that a purely voluntary approach does not work.

Sierra Club has adopted a carrot-to-stick continuum, from pure voluntarism for those who properly self regulate when given the tools, to strict enforcement for people who can't or won't: 1. environmental education via general meetings, newsletters, outings, etc., both geographically inside our Groups and exportable elsewhere; 2. political endorsements, at local, state, and national levels; 3. legislative and

administrative agency lobbying and watchdogging, and 4. law-enforcement using the court system.

PROCEDURE AT THE GROUP AND CHAPTER LEVEL

Since 1972 when the Florida Chapter formed, the Group and Chapter procedural emphasis has been nearer the stick end of the continuum than the education end. This bias has increased with time, driving many proactive people and controversy-avoidant people away, as the environmental situation in Florida has steadily deteriorated. Sierra leadership at the Chapter and in

1.) Sierra can be all encompassing, attracting both procedurally non-confrontational volunteers who like outings and learning and teaching new things, and confrontational people who want to change things through politics, lobbying, or lawsuits. We need a balanced mix of both kinds of people. Unfortunately, it is very hard to get both to operate at the same time. For example, confrontational people don't show up for a general meeting on Peruvian butterflies, to give their reports and help recruit new members.

People who like to do everything in Sierra are very rare. Nonetheless, Sierra

SIERRA CAN BE ALL ENCOMPASSING, ATTRACTING BOTH PROCEDURALLY NON-CONFRONTATIONAL VOLUNTEERS WHO LIKE OUTINGS AND LEARNING AND TEACHING NEW THINGS, AND CONFRONTATIONAL PEOPLE WHO WANT TO CHANGE THINGS THROUGH POLITICS, LOBBYING, OR LAWSUITS.

most of the 17 Groups now prides itself on its radicalism, on trusting only the few and those not very well, as Florida's population has become more conservative. Meanwhile, the Republican Party in Florida has gotten steadily more radical itself, necessitating a more drastic Sierra Club response.

PROCESS AT OUR GROUP LEVEL

On January 8 our Group leaders will gather for the day to improve our environmental strategies. I think we need to work on our processes, the ways we do things, more than on changing our procedures. Since our Group has always been more academically oriented than others in Florida, we are already more oriented toward environmental education than almost everywhere else. Of course it never hurts to delete old procedures that aren't working and experiment with new ones.

Here are two process areas that I hope we can improve upon in the coming year(s):

enriches because many people broadened their interests once they make their initial leap into activity on an outing or a specific campaign against something. The Club is specifically designed to provide something for everyone at each level, up the geographic scale from regional group to international.

2.) New member socials, awards presentations, canoe outings and bike rides; the fun events, are getting less and less common at our Group level. By always concentrating on work, anger and frustration build and people lose their sense of humor. The result can be quicker loss of interest of non-confrontational people and quicker burn-out of confrontational ones. The "fun things" are extremely important, to recruit normal people and keep them as core activists. This does not mean Sierra Club is a "social organization," rather it is ideally a nurturing group of intelligent volunteers who know how to have fun, keep their perspective, trust each other, and do their job.

Reflecting on 2004 and Looking Ahead

BY LINDA POLLINI

Chair 2005

Well, it's the time of year when we look back at what's been done, where we are and then to assess what issues we'll be facing in 2005. Fasten your seat belts.....we're in for a rocky ride!

There were a few victories amidst the ongoing struggle to protect the environment. The first was the defeat of Clark Butler Enterprises' plan to have a four-lane highway built on a small dirt connector road behind Butler Plaza (to build a WalMart Supercenter) and built mostly with tax-payer money. It would have wiped out a section of the U.F. Natural Area Teaching Laboratory. After much uproar from the community, the plan was down-sized to the original 2-lane road plan which saved the N.A.T.L.

But don't celebrate just yet, since we've just learned that U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns has managed to bring home \$3 million for the road project that he promised when the four-lane was an issue. Stay tuned and keep your eye on where this money will go. We don't want this 4-lane road project to be revived! It is totally unnecessary and will not relieve traffic. These road project funds need to go elsewhere.

The SSJ Sierra Group supported the South West Area Planning Council's request to protect Split Rock Nature Preserve (owned by City of Gainesville) by having a fence installed on the boundary behind the Portofino housing development on S.W. 20 Avenue.

This is a beautiful conservation area that is being encroached upon and would certainly have been degraded by unrestricted use. The city recognized the value of protecting the area and has agreed to install the fencing until a management plan has been formulated for public access.

This also effectively protects the wildlife that lives in the forest/wetland area.

The management of Poe Springs requested our support for the continuation of their contract with the county. After reviewing their ongoing plan and those of a new applicant, we decided to support the current administration. They had already formed ties with the community by offering educational outreach to area schools and had formulated plans for the future that would rely more on education than on tourist development and privatization of the park.

The county commission wisely decided in their favor also and awarded them the contract.

We recently sent a letter objecting to the continued use of off-road vehicles in the Ocala National Forest. Unrestricted use of ORV's should be banned in the National Forests. Many use the forest as a retreat from the city, to enjoy the trails, the waterways and to find a peaceful, quiet place amid nature. To be subjected to the high whine of polluting two-stroke engines careening through the woods is offensive to that sensibility. This is an issue being addressed currently by park management.

There are two issues that we are looking at in Putnam County. The first is a permit that Florida Rock is trying to get to build a sand mine in western Putnam County. Area citizens have successfully come together early in the process to try and stop this mine from happening. Florida Rock would use millions of gallons of water to process the sand.

Since there are many lakes in the region, the residents have legitimate concerns about these extractions of natural resources. So far they have been successful in having the Planning and Zoning Board upgrade previous brief land use regulations to an updated seventeen pages fashioned after the Lake City comprehensive plan.

The Putnam County Commission will be voting on these changes soon. The West Putnam Regional Lake Association, which includes Sierra Club members, is watching this issue closely.

The second issue concerns the polluting effluent discharged from the (Palatka) Georgia Pacific Paper Co. into Rice Creek and subsequently into the St. John's River. The state is currently trying to by-pass the national Clean Water Act by establishing a new process called the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of pollutants allowed in a river. They contend that since Rice Creek is polluted from the mill, it would be better to put all of it into the bigger St. Johns River directly, where it would be more diluted.

This convoluted thinking disregards the fact that they are still putting more pollution into one of our rivers and doing it because it has not reached it's maximum load yet!! Why not figure out a way to stop any and all further degradation of our waterways now?

LOOKING AHEAD

I have barely touched on the three most important issues on our list for 2005 in Alachua County, those issues are (in no particular order): 1) The construction of a second Florida Rock Cement Kiln in Newberry. 2) Gainesville Regional Utilities plan to build a coal-fired power plant. 3) Clean-up of Kopper's Superfund Site on N.W. 23 Avenue in Gainesville. I will address these and other dynamic issues in next month's newsletter.

Defend the Earth!

Editor's note: The SSJ ExCom has a planning retreat scheduled for January 8 where we will be setting goals and finding solutions to some of the issues brought up in this article. If you have a particular environmental concern in our region you would like to see addressed email Linda at thirdeyegraphix@earthlink.net to get it on the agenda.

Next Sierra Club General Meeting—Jan. 6, at 7:30 p.m. Come join the fun. See page 1 for details.

NATIONAL SIERRA CLUB NEWS

NEW DOCUMENTS REVEAL

BUSH ADMINISTRATION ALLOWED DRILLING UNDER NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AREAS

On November 17th, Sierra Club released documents showing that the Bush administration gave special treatment to Texas-based Davis Brothers Oil Producers, Inc., when it reversed a longstanding policy in order to allow oil and gas drilling underneath certain national parks, preserves and refuges regardless of potential environmental impacts.

More than a dozen National Park Service areas could be impacted by the rule, including Big Thicket National Preserve and Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, New River Gorge in West Virginia, and Big Cypress National Preserve in Florida. (Complete list of affected park lands is on the website.)

Documents obtained by Sierra Club through the Freedom of Information Act show that the Bush administration changed the rule specifically at the request of Ross Davis, who runs Davis Brothers Oil Producers. Moreover, the administration made its decision in secret and bypassed the regular rulemaking process, which allows for public input and a high degree of transparency.

"These documents show that the Bush administration bent over backwards to help its friends in the oil and gas industry even when the facts showed that its policy would harm national parks," said Brandt Mannchen of the Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter, who has been tracking drilling problems around Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas. "This administration seems to think there are two sets of rules, one for oil and gas companies and one for everyone else."

In an effort to right the wrong, the Sierra Club today took legal action to overturn this new rule, asserting that the Bush administration broke the law by cutting the public out of a back-door process

of adopting a new rule. The group filed a complaint in federal district court arguing that the Bush administration adopted the new rule in blatant disregard of its obligations to protect America's National Parks.

In November 2003, the NPS issued a new policy that allows private companies unrestricted access to oil and gas underneath NPS units so long as they drill for it at an angle from outside park boundaries using "directional drilling." This new rule ties the National Park Service's hands, forcing them to turn a blind eye to the destruction that may occur around the Park Service areas as a result of the drilling. Prior to the new rule, the National Park Service required oil and gas companies to prove that proposed drilling would not harm the National Park Service unit.

"The Bush administration broke the law. Now they must reinstate the Park Service's authority to require full environmental review and approval of oil and gas companies' drilling operations adjacent to park boundaries," said Pat Gallagher, Sierra Club legal director.

Private oil and gas development is generally prohibited within the National Park system. However, more than a dozen specific areas are unique in that the Park Service only owns the surface rights, while private entities hold title to the subsurface minerals.

For a copy of documents pertaining to the case, please contact Annie Strickler at (202) 675-2384 or Eric Antebi at (415) 977-5747.

SIERRA CLUB STATEMENT ON VACANCY OF EPA ADMINISTRATOR

BY ED HOPKINS

Director Sierra Club Environmental Quality Program

Washington, DC: Whoever is appointed to replace Mike Leavitt as EPA Administrator faces several crucial chal-

lenges left unfinished. Leavitt oversaw EPA at a time when the Bush administration stuck to its agenda of weakening clean air and water protections, and establishing inadequate mercury standards. In the last four years, the EPA has wasted many opportunities to protect the public's health and safety—and has instead often questioned science and disregarded public comment.

The most recent failure occurred December 10 when Leavitt was ordered to delay the Clean Air Interstate Rule that could have been strengthened to protect communities from soot and smog pollution. As we said when Christine Todd Whitman resigned as EPA administrator, "Given the administration's track record on the environment, we have little hope that President Bush's next EPA Administrator will be allowed do a better job of cutting pollution and keeping families safe.

Other key failures of the Bush administration's EPA include:

- Breaking the campaign promise to curb carbon dioxide, which causes global warming.
 - Weakening the Clean Air Act to allow more power-plant pollution.
 - Opposing efforts to make polluters pay for cleanup of their toxic waste sites.
 - Initially opposing efforts to reduce the amount of arsenic in our drinking water before public outcry forced a reversal.
 - Proposing to allow additional sewage overflows—increasing the risk of drinking water contamination.
- There's a better way. The EPA could make communities cleaner and safer by:
- Making polluters pay to clean up toxic waste
 - Strengthening and enforcing the existing Clean Air Act to clean up power plants and other factories with existing technology
 - Enforcing the Clean Water Act to protect wetlands and drinking water sources.

Planning Our 2005 Outings

BY KAREN GARREN

Hope your Holidays are warm and cheery. I would like to end the Old Year by planning the New Year and getting your opinions. What type of Sierra Club outings would most interest you? Historical? We could visit the Rawlings House and Dudley Farm. Natural history? Hike Ocala and Osceola National Forests to learn about Florida ecosystems. Getting away from civilization? Okefenokee and Suwannee National Wildlife Refuges offer as close to wilderness experiences as might be found in this region. How about family outings with the kids? Morningside Nature Center, Ring Park and the Natural Area Teaching Lab are local sites with lots of activities.

You may email me your ideas or come to our Suwannee St. Johns Group Sierra Club Outings Committee meeting January 22 at 5:30 pm. Call me at (352) 371-0008

for directions. Email ideas to ILuvFla@GRU.net

It can be a good idea to take a local issue and make it an informative outing. Would you like to see where your power comes from with a visit to Deer Haven? How about your water by visiting the municipal well-field? Ever wonder where the waste goes when it leaves your house? Where does paper come from and why does Fenholloway River have Florida's only industrial designation?

Speaking of issues, mark your calendar for the Rally for the Ocklawaha River to be held in Putnam County February 19-20. This will be the first annual exhibit of support to

restore this scenic waterway lying beneath the flooded basin of Rodman Reservoir. We hope to "flood the area with restoration proponents. Show your opposition to the status quo. Tell them it is unacceptable to condemn the Ocklawaha, its floodplain



CHECK THE FOLLOWING LIST OF OUTINGS POSSIBILITIES, LET ME KNOW IF ANY OF THESE STRIKE YOUR FANCY:

Canoe Suwannee River, see the many natural springs

Easy backpacking at O'Leno State Park.

Strenuous backpacking along the Florida Trail

Bicycle the Hawthorne Trail

Hike San Felasco Hammock and the Gumroot Swamp.

Learn coastal ecology at Washington Oaks State Park

Canoe/kayak Florida Panhandle rivers

community and the St. Johns River downstream to poor environmental quality. Vote with your visit to Putnam County that weekend and know that we will someday again have manatee swimming in Silver Springs.

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JANUARY 2005 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 6, 7:30 p.m., Thursday, SSj Sierra general meeting at the Entomology and Nematology GBld. on UF campus (see page 1).

Jan. 8, Saturday, SSJ executive committee planning retreat. Give us input at the Jan. 6 general meeting or send to Linda Pollini at thirdeyegrafix@earthlink.net

Jan. 13, 7 p.m., Thursday, SSJ executive committee meeting at SFCC Downtown Gainesville campus.

Jan. 21, 7 :30 p.m., Friday, Newsletter folding party. Contact Scott Camil at 352-375-2563 for location.

To advertise
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Kristina Jackson
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Membership

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