



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

Newsletter

Published monthly except June and August from Gainesville, Florida

VOLUME 36 • NUMBER 4 • April 2006



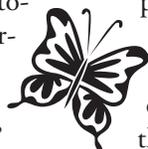
Sweadner's Hairstreak

KEEPING FLORIDA NATURAL

BY COLIN WHITWORTH

Akers Pence, the state coordinator of the Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network, will explain his dissertation research at the April 6 general meeting of the SSJ Sierra Club.

Pence earned his Ph.D. in entomology at UF, specializing in conservation of endangered butterflies. He has done field surveys of the federally endangered Schaus' Swallowtail, and baseline population studies of the state endangered Miami Blue butterfly at its last known natural colony on Bahia Honda Key.



His presentation promises to be interesting. So much of the SSJ Sierra Club Group's work involves the slow grim grind of us vs. them environmental politics in which clear-cut victories are rare and holding the line against sprawl.

The squandering of natural Florida, and the loss of biodiversity, requires constant vigilance and painful compromise. Pence's presentation is a near allegory of this struggle; it is the story of his dissertation research on the conservation biology of a beautiful little green butterfly that lives in native cedar trees.

Sweadner's Hairstreak was named in 1944 and for several decades was considered a coastal species known from only a few widely-separated colonies. It has been

Pence worked with Jaret Daniels and Stephanie Sanchez at the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity of the Florida Museum of Natural History raising thousands of Miami Blues for release in establishing new colonies.

The title of his presentation is: "Habitat Requirements for Sweadner's Hairstreak, a Florida Endemic Lycaenid Butterfly"

described as "rare", "local and uncommon", and even "endangered" by a limited number of authors over the last 60 years.

Pence's research encompassed five years of field trips to find colonies and observe the hairstreak's behavior, and raising several generations in captivity to learn the details of its life history and to determine the precise niche requirements of the butterfly.

Though the species is not currently a candidate for the endangered species list, as rampant development, short-sighted management practices, and sea level rise threaten habitat, the fate of Sweadner's Hairstreak and myriad cedar-associated species rests in the hands of the informed.



GENERAL MEETING

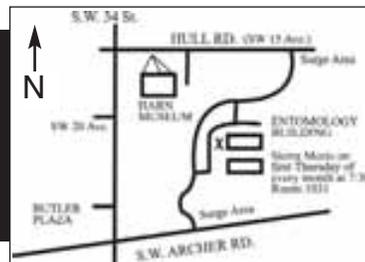
Thursday, April 6, 7:30 PM

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

HAIRSTREAKS AND CEDAR TREES: KEEPING FLORIDA NATURAL

J. AKERS PENCE

COORDINATOR FLORIDA BUTTERFLY MONITORING NETWORK



C.A.R.E. ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY	2
GRU'S PROPOSED COAL PLANT MORE COSTLY THAN ADVERTISED	4
SALES TAX BAD CHOICE FOR SCHOOLS	6

CARE About Your Town

BY ROB BRINKMAN

When Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., spoke at UF last month, his primary focus was pollution from coal-fired power plants. With three sons struggling with asthma and mercury levels in his body twice that of safe levels, he well understands the danger of our continued reliance on "cheap coal power." He said the government has failed to protect us because of the corrupting influence of business interests.

Gainesville residents may have the opportunity to exercise the rights and responsibilities of their ownership of GRU by voting on plans for an additional coal plant.

Last month, I mentioned that Citizens for Affordable and Renewable Energy has launched a ballot petition drive to amend Gainesville's Charter; if passed, the amend-

ment would require a referendum before funds can be used for an additional coal power plant.

Women for Wise Growth also unanimously supported this effort. If enacted, the voters will be able decide if coal is worth the risk to our environmental and economic health of our community and the health of future generations. This is an effort to empower the community to decide its energy future.

CARE needs both volunteers and contributions. Please help this grassroots effort. Contact CARE at care2006@gmail.com or write CARE at P.O.Box 14544 Gainesville, Fl. 32604-4544. Call 352-337-1757 and leave a message.

The Gainesville Charter currently requires voter approval before the City Commission can sell GRU. Isn't the decision to increase coal pollution just as important?

carefully avoided. Nevertheless, I found it astounding that there was evidence of poor maintenance; on the top deck, there was a large pipe containing sensor wires for the boiler below, it had corroded to the point where many small low voltage wires were exposed to the elements. While there is no safety risk, the lack of routine maintenance was disturbing, we were assured that corrective measures were planned for the next scheduled shutdown.

CHAIR'S



CORNER

SOLAR HOME TOUR

Next month on Saturday April 8, I will take interested people to an off-grid home in Putnam County. Randy Cullom and Liz Seiberling have built an energy-efficient house with many passive solar features. The house, near Interlachen, has a composting toilet (no septic tank) and 1,200 watts of photovoltaic power. It is situated on 60 acres of mostly wooded land, adjacent to two lakes.

The property has been managed with prescribed burns to enhance habitat for native wildlife. This could be the last chance to visit this solar home, because there is a sale pending.

Please let me know if you would like to carpool to Interlachen to visit this super green homestead. The meeting place will be at the boat ramp at the south end of Newnan's Lake, on Hawthorne Road, at 8:30 a.m. I hope to see you then.

“this is an effort to empower the community to decide its energy future”

ment would require a referendum before funds can be used for an additional coal power plant.

The SSJ executive committee voted unanimously to endorse the petition drive.

Last month, SSJ Sierra Club Outings Chair Karen Garren led a tour of the GRU coal plant at the Deerhaven Power Station. I joined about a dozen others for a cursory tour; all the dirty parts of the plant were

Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

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

Suwannee-St. Johns Group Chairs & Executive Committee

Chair	Rob Brinkman	337-1757	robbrinkman@cox.net
Program co-chair	Bill Radunovich	375-2354	billrad@mac.com
Program co-chair	Anna Peterson	337-2957	ALP@religion.ufl.edu
Conservation Co-Chair	Josh Dickinson	373-2377	josh@foresttrust.com
Conservation Co-Chair	Paula Stahmer	373-3958	paulastahmer@aol.com
Secretary	Annette Long	352-490-8930	MLongAKorn@aol.com
Treasurer	Roberta Gastmeyer	336-2404	rgastmeyer@earthlink.net
Membership Chair	Whitey Markle	392-0270	markle@ufl.edu
Administrative Chair	Russell Roy	372-7305	rroy4@bellsouth.net
Outings Chair	Karen Garren	371-0008	ILUVFLA@bellsouth.net
Events Coordinator	Sherry Steiner	375-2563	s.camil@att.net
Political Chair	Dwight Adams	378-5129	adams@phys.ufl.edu
Government Liaison	Steve Williams	386-397-2945	old-time-florida@earthlink.net
Environmental Education Chair	Rudy Rothseiden	352-318-3844	rudy.rothseiden@gmail.com
Newsletter Folding	Scott Camil	375-2563	s.camil@att.net
Webmaster	Louis Clark	373-5377	klouisc@bellsouth.net
Newsletter Editor/Design	Colin Whitworth	372-2464	colinwhitworth@cox.net

FOLDING PARTY

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

Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club Newsletter (UPS 317-370) is published 10 months a year, **except June and August**, by the Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club, 1024 NW 13th Ave, Gainesville, 32601. Non-member subscription rate is \$5.00. Periodicals Postage Paid is paid at the Gainesville, FL 32608 post office. **Postmaster: Send change of addresses to Suwannee- St. Johns Group Sierra Club Newsletter, c/o The Sierra Club, Member Services, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968. Send both your old and new addresses and a Sierra address label, which contains your membership number. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SUWANNEE-ST. JOHNS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB TO: P.O. BOX 13951, GAINESVILLE, FL 32604.**

Juniper Springs Jaunt

BY KAREN GARREN

Great day in the morning, and the evenings are pretty nice, too. If you haven't gotten your first mosquito bite of the year, yet, here are a few opportunities:

APRIL 7-12: Backpacking in the Juniper Wilderness area. This beautiful scrub ecosystem is hunting-excluded—an important consideration for hikers. We can shuttle vehicles and hike through, or we can hike in, establish a base camp and



then explore the area. This outing will be moderately strenuous. Some equipment can be borrowed and shared, but all participants must have sturdy shoes, a sleeping bag, food, water, and a flashlight.

APRIL 22: Basic Birding at Split Rock Park, 8:00 a.m. to approximately 1:30 p.m.. Do you have a pair of binoculars? Well, come meet the feathers residents of this city-owned wetlands west of the Hogtown Creek. It has planted pines, and oak hammock and sinkholes. Get pointers on bird identification by sight and sound. We will shuttle in and may have to climb over the gate, but there's a rumor that a pedestrian walk-through gate will soon be installed. I'm in the process of arranging for a city naturalist meet us there.

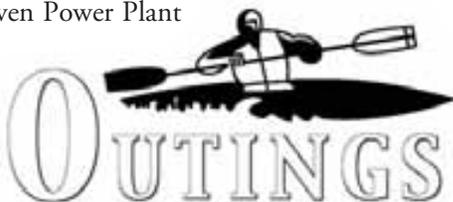
UP AND COMING OUTINGS

JUNE 10: Blueberry picking/picnic at Knox's Berry Farm.

JUNE 23-25: Camping at Rainbow Springs State Park, paddle the Withlacoochee and hike the scrub trails. Contact Karen Garren at ILuvFla@bellsouth.net, or call (352) 371-0008 for more information or additional outings suggestions.

Our tour of the GRU Deerhaven Power Plant was very interesting, as was the brown bag lunch discussion. At the facility, we were shown a promotional video in the conference room. Then we were given hard hats and conducted through the "coal crushing" room, up the elevator to the catwalk, through the operations monitoring center, and back to the conference room.

During our picnic lunch at Northside Park, we discussed GRU's proposed additional coal-fired plant expansion, the cost to the taxpayers and the City Commission's reluctance to consider alternatives, such as aggressive energy conservation measures and construction of smaller distributed generation centers. As the main contributor to city coffers, GRU's voice is highly influential. But, as an incorporated municipality, final decisions rest with the voters. Please sign the petition adding to the November ballot the referendum putting to the electorate decisions concerning coal or pet-coke electricity generation.



news¬es

PAYNES PRAIRIE ALERT

The edge of Paynes Prairie may be at risk if certain plans for increased development by the Gainesville Country Club come to fruition. As reported in the March 16 Gainesville Sun, some members of the club's Board of Directors are contemplating development of additional golf course areas, as well as new condominiums.

Two homeowners and club members addressed our Sierra Excom meeting on March 9. They're concerned about the potentially adverse consequences of such development on the prairie.

About 140 acres may be affected and could become the site for the building of one-to-four units an acre, with the usual road building and other infrastructure as well. No homes have been built on the property since 1963.

At present, there is legal ambiguity about covenants contained in most deeds pertaining to the property. These covenants prohibit development except for recreation. However, some claim that the covenants were subsequently removed with regard to some of the acreage, although this change was not recorded in the chain of title.

Opponents to the project argue that the club and its surrounding houses were only permitted because of the land set aside to serve as a buffer and as protection of the prairie. Inasmuch as development everywhere has increased, the pressure on the prairie is also more intense. Therefore, opponents assert that retaining the current buffer is imperative.

Watch the paper for possible hearings before the Alachua County Commission in the event the club's board decides to petition for a zoning change that would allow more development. I will also try to alert people should the matter move forward.

By Paula Stabmer

GAINESVILLE ELECTION RESULTS

The March election in Gainesville produced two new city commissioners, as well as the passage of the Hogtown Creek amendment.

The new commissioners, Jeanna Mastrodicasa and Scherwin Henry, promised to consider environmental issues seriously when making decisions. Mastrodicasa argued for better transportation alternatives.

There is the potential to form a pro-environment coalition on the seven-member board, if we can keep in touch with them. Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan has long-

see NEWS & NOTES, page 7

Blowing Smoke?

THE BAD ECONOMICS OF GRU'S PROPOSED NEW COALFIRE POWER PLANT

BY PAULA STAHRMER

The Sword of Damocles hangs over the community with regard to GRU's proposed coal-fired utility power plant. Why so dramatic a metaphor? Because the proposal could mean a ruined and bankrupted economy for Gainesville.

Sierrans need not defend themselves as impractical, dreamy-eyed tree-huggers on this issue, but rather as hardheaded, parsimonious penny-pinchers who believe in notions like thrift.

Let us start with the \$450 million minimum capital investment. It is generally conceded by proponents of the GRU plan that the ultimate costs with interest charges could rise to \$1.5 billion. Critics say the reality could be closer to \$3 billion.

This expense would be devoted to the purchase and construction of already antiquated technology.

Although coal is relatively inexpensive today, forecasters see prices rising sharply and dramatically thanks to politics, both foreign and domestic, and competition. A commitment to coal is no guarantee of low rates, contrary to the propaganda eagerly promoted by electric utilities and the coal industry.

If the power plant is built, as proposed, Gainesville will experience dramatic rate increases in addition to GRU's currently planned rate hike of 16 percent over the next five years for electricity alone, according to Moody's October 2005 review (www.ratingsdirect.com). Supposedly, we

have already seen 2 percent of that 16 percent.

Moody's also stated that, in the same time period, GRU is planning other rate increases of 11.75 percent for gas, 44 percent for water, and 48 percent for wastewater. All of this is to merely float our current debt and does not include any allowance for investment in a new power plant.

It was Moody's expectation that, between 2005 and 2011, GRU would have to impose a rate hike on electricity alone of 40 percent if it moves forward with the current proposal.

Standard & Poor's Credit Outlook Rating provides further confirmation of the jeopardy of Gainesville's financial stability. On November 7, S&P noted that Gainesville's capital debt had increased from 30 percent in 2003 to 62 percent in 2005. According to S&P, GRU has been able to sustain such debt because the city has

remained supportive. However, S&P expressed doubt as to whether the city could maintain its current bond rating because "increases [in utility rates] needed to provide adequate debt service coverage over the next several years may be unusually high."

As most readers already know, the Alachua County Environmental Advisory Committee issued a superlative analysis of the coal plant/ future energy needs issue. The report is available on the web (Google "Alachua County, Florida and EPAC").

Although the report is more than 170

see SMOKE, page 5



jewelry • pottery
tribal rugs • weavings
rainforest gifts
clothing
music and instruments
handcrafted baskets
bath products
home decorations

Alternatives

Handcrafted gifts
from around the world



4203 Northwest 16th Blvd.
Mon-Sat 11-6-Sun 12-5
352.335.0806

a member of the fair trade federation

"We turn tap water into
drinking water. It's better
than bottled!"

REX H. JOHNSON

Owner

800-228-8058 • 352-338-6213

Fax: 561-258-7796

amsstar@bellsouth.net

americanstarwater.com

AMERICAN STAR WATER TREATMENT

Your favorite Independent Water Treatment Specialists

GAINESVILLE • OCALA • STARKE



We Service, Sell & Rent All National Brands
Try Our Total Satisfaction Guarantee
Licensed - Bonded - Insured

Appalachian Treasures

SOMETIMES WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE HAVE UNTIL ITS GONE

BY JERRY ROSE

The oldest mountain range on earth is the Appalachian Mountains. Coal companies are systematically destroying this ancient treasure to fuel our insatiable appetite for so called cheap energy.

Mountain top removal coal mining is a relatively new type of strip mining that involves blasting up to 1,000 feet of mountain top into rubble, then dumping the debris into nearby valleys and streams.

This practice, dubbed "strip mining on steroids" by nearby residents, has already turned 400,000 acres of forested mountains into barren moonscape in West Virginia alone. Estimates are that at least a million acres of Appalachia's mountains have been destroyed this way.

Across the Appalachian coalfields, more than 1,200 miles of streams are now buried due to mountain top removal. About 2,500 tons of explosives are consumed daily—the equivalent of a Hiroshima-size bomb every week.

Mountaintop removal coal mining presently occurs in West Virginia,

Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee. Families and communities near these mines are forced to contend with appalling conditions, including the destruction of water supplies. There's also the continual, daily dynamite blasting, which damages homes and wells and creates choking dust, not to mention the fear of fatal, catastrophic floods with every rainfall.

The practice is destroying a rich culture and heritage, as well as our nation's oldest mountains.

There are other ways of mining coal that are safer for surrounding communities, provide exponentially more jobs, and do not destroy the beauty of the Appalachian mountains.

Since the 1990s, Appalachian Voices has worked with coalfield residents to end mountain top removal. Over the course of those years, AV came to realize that mountaintop removal will end only if the American people become aware that such

an unjust, destructive, and short-sighted enterprise is happening on our soil.

The goal of Appalachian Treasures is to educate the public and decision makers about mountain top removal coal mining and about efforts to stop the practice.



Most coalfield communities are rural and isolated. In states where big coal companies hold overwhelming political power, the opposition of coalfield citizens alone is not enough to stop mountain top removal.

Appalachian Voices will bring the tour to five Florida cities, including Gainesville on Thursday, March 30, at the Fellowship Hall of the United Church of Gainesville, located at 1624 NW 5th Ave.

The program will be presented by Lenny Kohm, a long-time activist on behalf of Canadian and Alaskan natives peoples and advocate for protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He is the campaign director for Appalachian Voices.

SMOKE, from page 4

pages, do not feel daunted. Start with Chapter One: Report Overview, for the layman's discussion. Indeed, the entire report does not require scientific background for understanding the issues and the implications for the economy, politics, and the environment.

The EPAC analysis makes abundantly clear that GRU has not substantiated the claim that Gainesville needs a new power plant. The EPAC report is rather liberating because it demonstrates clearly that we have available to us numerous common sense, low-cost alternatives that will keep the lights on while reducing costs, consumption, and pollution. It is distressing

that our city commission seems committed to taking an up-or-down vote in mid-April, with only two commissioners actually expressing significant doubt about the project.

If you have an opinion on the matter, you should make your voice heard since the ultimate decision remains very much in doubt.

North Carolina Mountain Home



\$500 PER WEEK/4, \$50/ extra person, max 8 people

4 BR, 2 1/2 BATH
fireplace
2 miles to App. Trail
6 miles to rafting, hot springs bathing
h/c accessible

Phone: 352-395-7441
Available May thru Oct

Unlock the beauty of your Plants naturally with



GreenEdge[®]

Environmentally Friendly • Adds Organic Matter to Your Soil • Grow Your Plants With Less Water

www.green-edge.com

Gainesville: Garden Gate Nursery
Harmony Gardens

North & Central Florida: ACE Hardware Stores

Slow Release Organic Fertilizer

Sales Tax Bad Choice for Schools

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

The broadened tax base created by growth means that it pays its own way, doesn't it? Yeah, right. That is why areas of rapid growth can reduce their taxes.

Where do you know that this has happened? Nowhere, because it doesn't work that way. Instead, additional taxes are required to pay for the infrastructure that growth requires.

The local-option sales tax is frequently government's choice for additional sources of funding. In the last few years, Alachua County and the School Board have proposed extra sales taxes (added to the regular 6 cents) for all sorts of projects: recreation, roads, low-income health care, etc.

Now, the School Board wants an extra cent for school construction.

The sales tax is certainly effective in producing additional revenue—one cent brings in roughly \$35 million a year in Alachua County.

All it takes is convincing voters that they should vote themselves more taxes, and government rarely hesitates to ignore state laws prohibiting government from promoting issues that have been placed on the ballot.

Sales taxes—rather than the easy first choice on which politicians seize—should be the last-resort source of funding for infrastructure. Sales taxes provide no feedback mechanism to discourage sprawl, which further adds to the infrastructure needs.

Other revenue sources make more sense. For example, a gas tax is a very appropriate way to fund transportation

because the added costs of gas tends to discourage unnecessary driving. Another example are impact fees, which are assessed solely on the growth that creates the need for the infrastructure. Much of the current school situation is the result of the board's failure to act responsibly to help control sprawl and to make use of impact fees.

Sales taxes are paid primarily by individuals. Businesses that are not selling retail, that provide a service, or that just distribute products, such as distribution centers, do not pay sales taxes. This explains the support for sales taxes over more appropriate means of funding within the business community.

Sales taxes are regressive. Those with low incomes pay a disproportionate share

would pay about 30 percent of the taxes. This works only if Alachua County residents don't spend much outside the county and therefore give sales tax revenues to other counties.

With impact fees, new-home buyers, most of whom are relocating here, would pay 100 percent of the fees. Impact fees in line with those in fast-growing counties would provide a few million a year.

Board members who do not want impact fees fear that voters would reject the sales tax if impact fees were imposed at the same time. They have "compromised" with Eileen Roy, a School Board member who advocates impact fees, telling her that they would ask the County Commission to consider them after the sales tax vote.

“sales taxes provide no feedback mechanism to discourage sprawl, which further adds to the infrastructure needs”

of their income in taxes. While sales taxes are not paid on groceries, they are on fast food meals, where someone of modest means might want to eat. The extra sales taxes are doubly regressive because there is a cap at purchases of more than \$5,000. For example, a single working mom would pay the same in sales tax on a \$5,000 used auto that's needed to get to work as would the buyer of a new \$40,000 vehicle. This cap at \$5,000 is the car dealers' SUV and Lexus subsidy.

An argument given in support of the sales tax is that people outside the county

Yeah, right; what would motivate them to seek impact fees if voters approve the sales tax? The school board has this backwards. Voters are likely to reject the sales tax unless impact fees have been enacted so those creating the need help pay for it.

The SSJ Sierra Club has taken a position against the sales tax, and spirited opposition to it can be expected, especially in the absence of impact fees. A large-turnout in the November election does not bode well for passage of the tax. Politicians prefer low-turnout voting situations such as a primary runoff for sales tax referenda.

Dental Arts

Eric J. Amundson DDS
Restorative & Cosmetic Dentistry

- Comprehensive Dental Care
- Cleanings in a Spa-like Setting
- The Art of Cosmetic Dentistry
- Affordable Teeth Whitening
- Restorative Dentistry Including Implants
- Preventative Dentistry for Your Family

4040 W. Newberry Rd. Suite 1200 • Gainesville, Florida • 32607
352-376-3400 www.dentalarts.us



Need a Vacation??

Almost new, secluded,
2-story, 2-bedroom, 2-bath, 2-fireplace **Mountain Home**
with spectacular tri-state view from wraparound deck.
Hayesville, NC area, near Nantahala Nat'l Forest and
white water rafting. \$500/wk Nonsmokers only, please.
Call (352) 472-2169.

NEWS & NOTES, from page 3

time ties to the SSJ Sierra Club.

Mastrodicasa handily defeated former City Commissioner Tony Domenech, 55 to 45 percent, for an At-Large seat. This is Domenech's second consecutive unsuccessful campaign for a commission



Mastrodicasa

seat. She replaces Warren Neilsen, who was term-limited out.

Henry beat Barbara Sharpe, a former Alachua County School Board member, in a landslide, 67 to 33 percent. Henry replaces Charles Chestnut IV to represent District 1. Like Neilsen, Chestnut had also served the maximum two consecutive terms and could not run again.

The Hogtown Creek charter amendment passed easily, 58 to 42 percent. This amendment revises a previous charter amendment to allow paving in city recreation areas for non-roadway, recreational uses, even if such development takes place in the Hogtown Creek watershed.

The previous amendment, passed to stop a proposed paved trail along the creek, prohibited any paving within the watershed, making it illegal to, say, add a tennis court to a park in the watershed.

There were environmental arguments against the newest amendment, as explained in last month's newsletter.

A final comment—a small percentage of eligible voters participating in the election. Only 16 percent of voters went to the polls. While this can benefit energetic campaigns who can get out the vote, it does not make good democracy.

By Colin Whitworth

BUSHES PUSH GULF DRILLING

Both the first President Bush and President Clinton issued presidential directives that banned oil drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, in Alaska's famous salmon-fishing grounds in Bristol Bay, off the coast of Virginia, and up and down the east and west coasts. Congress also has annually reaffirmed a moratorium on drilling off these protected coasts.

But the current Bush administration wants a radical change to that policy.

In February, the federal Mineral Management Service released a new Five-Year Leasing Plan that would open vast areas off our coasts to oil and gas drilling. This plan would open up for the first time about two million acres known as Lease Sale 181 in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico and prepare for leasing areas off Virginia's coast and in Alaska's famous salmon fishing grounds in Bristol Bay. For 25 years drilling in these areas has been banned by both Congressional moratoria and Presidential deferral orders.

The proposal is open to public comment, though, and if citizens express enough outrage, the agency may withdraw its proposal. The comment period ends April 10. Comments can be submitted by mail to Renee Orr, 5-Year Program Manager, Comments on Draft Proposed 5-Year Program for 2007-2012, Minerals Management Service Room 3120, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia, 20170. You can also submit comments online at www.mms.gov/5-year/2007-2012main.htm.

In an effort to advance their proactive vision for this Congress, on Feb. 1, Florida senators Bill Nelson (Dem.) and Mel Martinez (Rep.) proposed the Permanent Protection for Florida Act. This measure provides permanent protection for Florida's coasts and extends the moratoria protecting the entire Atlantic and Pacific coasts through the year 2020.

By Sierra Club Staff

ALASKAN PIPELINE SPILL

Last month, during the Senate Energy Committee's hearing on the 2007 Budget, the chairman praised the Department of Interior for promoting "environmentally-gentle" oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Just days later, America got an unfortunate preview of

just how "gentle" oil drilling operations could be if allowed on the Arctic Refuge's fragile Coastal Plain.

On March 2, a BP oil operator discovered signs of an oil spill at a caribou migration site on the snow-covered tundra of Alaska's North Slope. Three days later, response workers finally uncovered the source of the spill—a breach in an oil transit pipeline feeding into the larger trans-Alaska oil pipeline infrastructure stretching some 800 miles across the state.

Clean-up crews have vacuumed up more than 50,000 gallons of crude oil and melted snow off the delicate tundra, but at least one report from an industry expert has indicated that up to 798,000 gallons could be unaccounted for, possibly making this the largest crude oil spill in the history of the North Slope, and second in Alaska only to the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The accident is just one in a long history of substantial spills seen on Alaska's fragile North Slope since development

began there.

In fact, despite industry hype about the safety of development and new technology, the Prudhoe Bay oil fields and Trans-Alaska Pipeline have caused an average of 504 spills annually on the North Slope since 1996, according to the Alaska's own Department of Environmental Conservation.

Past spills have included a 300,000 gallon crude oil spill from the Trans-Alaska pipeline that was detected as far as 166 miles away, and the disastrous 675,000 gallons that were leaked after a saboteur exploded a two-inch hole in the pipeline just a few miles north of Fairbanks.

As crews of up to 70 people work 12-hour shifts around the clock to clean up after this massive oil spill, we are sadly reminded that there is no such thing as "environmentally gentle" oil drilling. Some places, like America's Arctic Refuge, are just too important to be put at risk for a speculative oil fix.

By Sierra Club Staff



Suwannee-St. Johns Group
 Sierra Club
 NEWSLETTER
 P.O. Box 13951
 Gainesville FL 32604

Periodicals
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 Gainesville FL 32608



SIERRA CLUB
 FOUNDED 1892

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Printed on Post-Consumer Waste
 Recycled and Recyclable Paper

APRIL 2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 6: SSJ Sierra Club general meeting, 7:30 p.m. See page 1 for details.

APRIL 12: Deadline for May SSJ newsletter submissions.

APRIL 13: Executive Committee meeting at Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville campus, 7 p.m. Board meeting room.

APRIL 21: SSJ Sierra Club newsletter folding party, 7:30 p.m., at the home of Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner. Call 375-2563 for info and directions.

APRIL 22: Earth Day celebration, all day, at the Harn Museum on the UF campus. Free. Music, speakers, kids' activities. Event is outside if weather is good, inside the museum if its raining.

GAINESVILLE'S NONFRANCHISED ICE CREAM SHOP

*Your choice for
 locally owned
 homemade ice
 cream*

*Always serving
 the freshest
 ice creams
 and sorbets*



Mike and Lisa Manfredi
 3437 W University Ave., Gainesville, FL 32607
 352-378-0532

Membership

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club

Mastercard Visa Exp Date ____/____

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

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

F94Q **W3305** .1



Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO, 80322-2968