



Suwannee-St. Johns Group

# Sierra Club

Newsletter

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## Solar Heating for Your Home

BY TOM LANE

For many people interested in going solar, the first question is, “How long will it take to pay itself off?” A new study from the Department of Energy’s Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory suggests the answer may be *immediately*.

The study included information on over 72,000 home sales in California from 2000 through 2009. Of the 72,000 homes, roughly 2,000 had installed solar power systems before the sale. Researchers concluded that homeowners made back a substantial portion of their investment when selling their homes, seeing re-

turns between \$3.90 and \$6.40 for every watt of solar energy capacity. The average installation produced 3,100 watts and raised home values by roughly \$17,000 compared to an average initial investment of \$15,000.

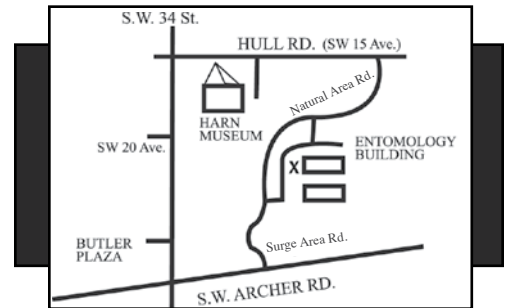
The study proves that solar systems create substantial equity value for homeowners, making their homes easier to sell while commanding higher prices. Because solar electric systems can be accurately monitored and their savings on electric bills can be accurately projected, prospective homebuyers can easily quantify the difference between homes with and without solar. According to Berkeley Lab scientist Ryan Wiser, “This research might influence the decisions of homeowners considering installing a PV system and home buyers considering buying a home with PV already installed.”

*Mr. Lane, of Energy Conservation Services in Gainesville, Fla., has spent over thirty years contracting and installing solar hot water, solar pool heating and solar electric systems, along with train-*

**GENERAL MEETING**  
 Thursday, July 7, 7:30 p.m.  
 Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus,  
 \*\* room 3118 \*\*  
 (Just east of the Performing Arts Center. Turn south off  
 Hull Road on to Natural Areas Road.)

**SHINE, BABY,  
 SHINE**

TOM LANE  
 AUTHOR OF “SOLAR HOT WATER, LESSONS  
 LEARNED 1977 TO TODAY”



*ing other contractors worldwide on how to install these systems. His 250-page book, “Solar Hot Water, Lessons Learned 1977 to Today,” is the basic handbook of solar water heating in the United States. Tom was named as a 2006 inductee into the Solar Hall of Fame, the first time a solar contractor has ever been inducted. This award has been given to 45 men and women from various countries throughout the world since 1976.*



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# Don't Expect Protection

BY BRACK BARKER

You might be thinking of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), that state agency responsible for making sure we are protected from pollutants and other nasty stuff. But more recently, lack of protection would apply to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWCC) and the decisions of the Commissioners during a recent meeting in St. Augustine.

The occasion was the delisting of 16 species from special protection, ranging from snails to the black bear. The black bear was the most publicized species with its issue of hunting, but the list included the brown pelican, white ibis, snowy egret, alligator snapping turtle, and the gopher frog, among others. Most species delisted had "threats to habitat" and "impacts to wetlands" as criteria on why they were in trouble to start with.

It seems that removing protection flies in

the face of logic, as threats to habitat and wetland issues are still rampant. I spoke at the meeting and urged the Commissioners to keep the species on the list, if for no other reason than to keep extra protection for their habitats. It does provide an extra layer of protection when it comes time for developers to bulldoze through our state's wetlands.

The Commission and their biologists claim that their "management plans" will be the new layer of protection for these species. I responded that keeping them listed was better protection, management plans not so much due to no teeth in the enforcement arena.

So whether it's this new regime of Gov. Scott or a more consumer-friendly FWCC, it doesn't bode well for our native wildlife and what is left of it. Departing FWCC Chair

Rodney Barretto stated that these de-listings were "cause for celebration as we have been successful in saving these animals." If you don't have habitat and wetlands for these so called "success species," then they'll be right back on the list, if they survive the threats to their environment.

In the good news column, the City of Gainesville placed 11 parks and conservation lands on their list of Registry of Public Lands, with a first reading on June 16. The next hearing is on July 7.

And Alachua County Commissioners finally added the next four parcels to the County's Registry of Public Lands list after months of waiting. Barr Hammock, Phifer Flatwoods, Mill Creek, and North East Flatwoods were finally given an extra layer of protection, minus some road right-of-way acreage.

Maybe the FWCC should take a look at the concept of a Registry of Natural Species, where it includes citizen input on protecting our native Florida flora and fauna.

## CHAIR'S



## CORNER

## Visit the National and Local Sierra Club Websites!

National: [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

Local: <http://ssjsierra.org>

### Suwannee-St Johns Group Chairs & Executive Committee

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## FOLDING PARTY

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

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# Dire Times, Bare Bones, and Bureaucrats

BY WHITEY MARKLE

Howard Troxler, St. Petersburg Times columnist, wrote that we should pay attention to national and state politics regarding our natural resources. "I don't have the time" is not an option.

The last election hurt us psychologically and politically. The politicians seem to be selling everything we own. The worst economic situation in many years has cut funding to the bone, and the government agencies that were designed and funded to protect our interests have been pared down or eliminated. I noticed a trend in attending the many workshops and presentations this year. When threatened by job elimination, most state agency representatives are scared for their job security. Subsequently, when ordered from above, they always obey. This is not a good time to argue with the boss, nor the ideas from above the boss.

I attended the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Workshop (SWFWMD) on the Minimum Flows and Levels in the Homosassa/Chassahowitzka Rivers, and noticed that the term "stakeholder" was modified. I was relegated to the Peanut Gallery (the public seating area) a few weeks ago. Several "stakeholders" at the table were local politicians (3 County Commissioners, one of whom never said a word out of a dozen panelists). The point is: Who decides who is a stakeholder in these situations?

Chairman Brack Barker and myself reminded the SWFWMD authorities several weeks before the workshop that I had written a letter to them in February requesting a moratorium on water permitting in that area. Doug Leeper, the bureaucrat in charge, responded that we were relegated to the public seating area. So, NOBODY from the Sierra Club was on the panel.

Leeper presented a brief bullet-point slide show describing the SWFWMD's objectives. The panelists then spoke briefly about their positions. About a third were agency

bureaucrats following their orders, a third were the local politicians, and about a third were Sierra Club allies. Finally, the public was allowed to comment. In my three minutes, I asked why, since the MFL requirement went into effect in 1974, the District still hasn't established the data. Then Marty Kelly came from the public seating area. He was charged with the MFL's data for SWFWMD. He bragged about having established the data for several hundred MFLs in the District, but unfortunately, all that work and money was NOT applied to the crucial area in question. Then Leeper dismissed the attendees with no future date. Frustrating and obvious.

Georgia Pacific moves forward with the discharge mega-pipeline to the St. Johns. A new tire-burner is moving forward in Dixie County, when Jacksonville was given a mega-water permit by SJRWMD that will probably dry up the Itchetucknee and Suwannee. The Silver and Rainbow River Working Groups were deleted.

Anybody care to get involved?

## Interested in Getting More Involved in Your Sierra Club?

*Consider a Position on the Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club Executive Committee*

The process of selecting eight officers for the Executive Committee (Excom) of the SSJ Sierra Club has begun with the selection of a Nominating Committee. NomCom is composed of Scott Camil, Dan Vazquez and Knox Bagwell. Don't wait for them to contact you. Find the contact information for one or more of them in the directory on page two, and let them know you would like to be a candidate. Nominations are due Sept. 1. If you just can't do it this year, please offer suggestions of others who would make good Excom officers.

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# Alligators as Neighbors: A Florida Reality

BY RILEY PECK

Because of Florida's population growth, it is not uncommon to run into an alligator. Many Floridians share their land with these awesome prehistoric creatures that can cause forced interactions between humans and alligators, leading to potential conflicts. Knowing a few things about alligators, you can avoid dangerous contact.

Alligators may appear anywhere there is water—lakes, ponds, rivers, swamps, and even man-made canals. Although almost exclusively a fresh-water species, they have been found in brackish water or marine salt waters. Alligators play important ecological roles both as top-level predators and because they often dig or wallow to create "gator holes" that hold water during dry periods. These "holes" ensure survival for the alligators because they provide a continued food supply throughout the year. In addition to gator holes, alligators sometimes dig dens in stream banks. They may occupy dens year-round, but they are particularly important in winter to protect the alligator from the cold.

Alligators typically hunt at dusk or during the night. They may be hard to spot because they tend to lay motionless in wait for their prey. Alligators will eat just about anything; they are not too picky. Once the prey

is caught, it is normally swallowed whole. An alligator's powerful jaws give it the ability to crush turtle shells and the bones of small mammals.

Mating season for alligators occurs from mid-April through May. To attract females, males display by head-slapping the water and producing a deep rumbling bellow. During mating season, it is important to keep your distance as males typically become more aggressive.

While there are recorded attacks and occasional fatalities, Floridians and alligators have managed a peaceful coexistence. To remain safe while exploring Florida nature is to always be aware of your surroundings and what may be lurking. NEVER feed gators or swim where alligators are known to be, especially at dusk or night. Remember that it is illegal to feed alligators. Feeding an alligator

causes the it to lose its fear of humans and instead associate them with food.

Typically alligators avoid humans, but alligators fed by humans will move toward humans and can become aggressive. Alligators that have been fed by humans are dangerous and should be reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Never allow your children or pets near the edge of the water, especially when alligators could be present. Do not allow dogs to swim or explore waters that are known to have alligators because dogs look like prey to alligators. There are far more alligator attacks on dogs than on humans.

Alligators are a threatened species according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To protect them, we must protect ourselves.



"What a friendly fellow." An alligator suns on the bank at Payne's Prairie. Photo by Matt Peck.

# JEA's Power to Drain the Aquifer

BY KAREN AHLERS

JEA (formerly Jacksonville Electric Authority), one of the largest utilities in the state, pulled off a sweet deal with the St. Johns River Water Management District (the District) on May 10.

The District's governing board approved a 20-year consumptive use permit to withdraw up to 162 million gallons per day (mg/d) of groundwater from our shared aquifer. District scientists determined that JEA's current average withdrawal of around 110 mg/d is already negatively impacting the Floridan aquifer, spring flows and surface waters throughout north Florida including all of Putnam County. Curious how they could possibly justify giving them more.

The science doesn't support it, unless you have a multi-million-dollar budget to buy the science you need, another multi-million-dollar budget to defend it in court, and a Tallahassee political engine that pushes a growth-at-all-cost agenda.

The cost to Putnam County is our lakes - waterfront real estate that generates a hearty share of ad-valorum tax income for our county. Our lakes are not

only one of our most valuable ecological resources, but an economic resource as well. According to the District, up to 20 percent of lake level declines can be attributed to over-pumping of groundwater. JEA, GRU, mining operations, ferneries and other large users are to blame. The other 80 percent is due to the extended drought we are experiencing.

Emotional outbursts is how JEA representatives characterized comments made by the Putnam County Environmental Council (PCEC), other grassroots groups, local governments and professional scientists who do not share their opinion. They call their approach legal and scientific, and rationalize their unconscionable acts of thievery of shared resources. They do not admit that objectors to the permit supported the District's science. The biggest complaint was that the District wasn't more aggressive.

It is my conscience, my moral compass that drives me to speak truth to power. Folks who love Florida and value its natural resources are moved emotionally when they not only witness but are forced to pay the price for out and out abuse by others. Some of us use that emotion as fuel to fight the good fight simply because it is the right thing to do. There is no shame in defeat.

It will be up to the grassroots, people like you and me and organizations like PCEC, to hold the District's feet to the fire and insist they make JEA adhere to the permit conditions that require increased reuse and involvement in a prevention/recovery plan for Keystone area lakes.

If northeast Florida chooses to continue to grow beyond its own local resources, utilities must commit funds to a desalinization plant so they can back off pumping groundwater and stop toying with the notion of draining our rivers. Rural counties should not be the donors for unbridled growth in other places. Hogging water resources may hamper our own future growth and development, and are already having a huge impact on our property values and quality of life.

It is with a grateful heart that I am stepping down as president of PCEC. The past nine years have given me opportunities for personal and professional growth and perhaps more importantly, entrance into a wonderful community of dedicated like-minded people. Please stay in touch!

*Karen is the Water Resources Coordinator for PCEC.*

## book of the month

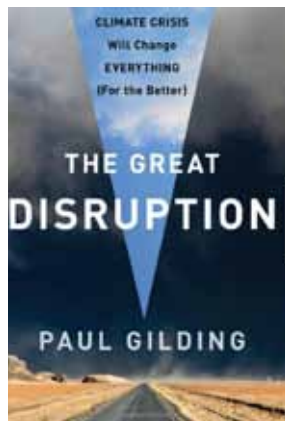
### *The Great Disruption:*

*Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring on the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*

By Paul Gilding

Paul Gilding is an international thought leader in the field of sustainability. This book goes beyond the usual hand-wringing prophecies of doom and points out that climate change offers an unprecedented chance to replace our addiction to growth with an ethic of sustainability.

In the aftermath of the "Great Disruption," Gilding writes that we will measure



this eye-opening book. Developers like Deborah Butler and others who are counting on shopping for "stuff" by an ever-growing population will not like what Gilding has to say. Nor will Rick

"growth" in a new way: not in quality of stuff, but in quality of life.

Gilding says that there is life after shopping and points out the way in

Scott and other politicians who expect growth to bring Florida back to a thriving economy.

Perhaps Gilding's most provocative thoughts are in the chapter, "No, the Poor Will Not Always Be with Us." He asserts that, "fixing poverty permanently won't be simple and it won't be quick, but we can certainly do it."

Gilding asserts the obvious that, "a society where some have private jets while some die for the want of a bowl of rice or a glass of clean water is just not right."

The review of Gilding's book recently (June 9) in the New York Times by Thomas Friedman motivated me to go right out and buy it.

*By Dwight Adams*



# Inner City Outing in June

BY MARYVONNE DEVENSKY

On June 1st, the Lake Forest Inner City Outing (ICO) group picked blueberries at a UF Agricultural Facility in Citra. It was not a “wild” expedition in nature, but these students had never been to a local blueberry farm, and I thought it would be a good outing. Many of us are so happy to enjoy this fun activity every June and July.

The students get excited seeing the vineyards and watermelons on the property. They picked loads of beautiful blueberries that they took home to their families. Thank you to Roberta Gastmeyer for arranging the

visit with Elke Weibelzahl, who is in charge of the blueberry farm there. Many thanks to Taylor Henning and Rikki Seguin from the UF TriP program, to Compassionate Community Outreach Ministries, and Mr. Madison for driving us there.

I invite you to the national website of Sierra Club. There you can click on “ICO outings,” where you will read, “The Sierra Club is embracing some exciting internal changes. The Outings Department is now part of the Conservation Department, linking environmental protection with outdoor enjoyment. The transition epitomizes what ICO seeks to do – get kids to not only enjoy and explore the planet, but also to protect it. ICO will also now be able to collaborate better with other Sierra Club programs to keep ours growing and strong...” (Excerpt from “A Note from Debra” by Debra Asher,

ICO National Administrator).

Locally or nationally, the ICO program volunteers take kids who usually are not exposed to natural areas and take them on hikes, canoeing trips or camping trips. It is vital for all children to be in nature and experience the connection we have with nature. It is also a great way for them to increase their social skills, learn how to play games, how to canoe, set up a tent, as well as stop to observe a snake or watch a red shoulder hawk fly over. So if you want to be involved, please contact me at marydeven@yahoo.com or 352-871-1606. As always, take time to go out in nature and enjoy your summer!

A few trips are planned for the months of July and September, either to the beach or to the springs to enjoy the cool water in these long hot days of summer.



ICO participants canoeing on a trip to Lake Wauberg in Payne's Prairie Park on April 16. Photo by Maryvonne Devensky.

# SSJ Members Win Florida Sierra Club Awards

BY LARRY MARSH

The Manatee Award honors a member who has done outstanding service to the Group. The Barred Owl Award is for a business that has made environmental concerns a major part of its presence in the marketplace through its product and its dealings with suppliers, consumers, and the general public. SSJ has two winners.

Conservation Chair Whitey Markle was awarded the Manatee Award and Program Chair Melanie Martin won the Barred Owl award. Melanie's company Moksa Organics adheres to a sustainable business plan on its product, and its philosophy of giving back to the community and environment is highly commendable. Melanie's award will be presented later in the fall, so we will detail Whitey's accomplishment now and Melanie's at that time. Whitey's nomination is reprinted.

Whitey, as co-chair, led the citizens

group responsible for placing a referendum on the ballot amending the Alachua County Charter to impose a nighttime curfew on airboats. It is known as the Quiet Lakes referendum, and it passed by a clear and convincing majority. Although the airboat curfew will promote peace of mind among lakefront residents, it also protects valuable habitat by allowing wildlife, particularly roosting wading birds and other nocturnal species, an opportunity to rest and not expend energy escaping the nighttime intrusions of incredibly noisy airboats.

The effort required to pass the Quiet Lakes referendum was enormous. Whitey deserves the highest level of recognition Florida Sierra can offer.

Whitey Markle began the charge against airboat noise in 1996 (Master's Thesis "Airboat Noise on Orange Lake, Florida as a Community Planning Issue"). Whitey stayed in front of the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners as the issue developed until 2001 when he was appointed to the Alachua County Water Use Zoning Team. After 10 years of negotiation and testimony, the issue was placed on the Alachua County ballot in the 2010 elec-

tion. The ordinance passed by a 12% margin and became law in January of 2011.

Meanwhile Whitey became more involved in SSJ Group activities, and continued soliciting Sierra Club membership as membership chair and as a Florida Folk singer/songwriter. In 2010 he was appointed as Conservation Chair for the SSJ Group.

Whitey was awarded the Stetson Kennedy Foundation's Fellow Man and Mother Earth Award at the Florida Folk Festival in May of 2010. He was given a special award from the SSJ Group in February 2011 for "Extraordinary Effort and Outstanding Achievement on behalf of Florida's Environment," and he was awarded the Putnam County Environmental Council's Don Quixote Award for his accomplishments in the airboat noise issue (February, 2011). Whitey Markle has represented the SSJ Group in the Smart Growth Coalition, Ocala, Nature Coast Coalition, Crystal River, Quiet Lakes of Alachua County, Evinston, Withlacoochee Area Residents, Yankeetown, Silver Springs Working Group, Ocala, and the Rainbow Springs Working Group, Dunnellon.

## Gasoline, CO2, and \$\$

BY CHUCK HAWKINS

I am a miles per gallon (MPG) freak who measures at each fill up. When gas prices rose recently, I gathered data on the effects of slow driving.

I took MPG data from my 2001 Subaru Forester without AC or extra weight. The measurements were repeated and are listed at the end of this article.

The dramatic advantages of slow driving are clear in every column. The miles per gallon rise sharply with slow driving. The equivalent pump price is the reduced fuel cost of slow driving referenced against the 65 MPG trip. \$3.85 per gallon was the pump price for all trips to fill up. If you drove 50 MPH, then the savings in fuel is equivalent to purchasing fuel at \$2.83 per gallon versus the high speed driving. We emit about 20 pounds of CO2 per gallon

of gas burned. The pounds of CO2 emitted is correspondingly reduced with 50 MPH achieving a 31% reduction.

Caveat: You can't drive less than 65 MPH on I-75 without causing chaos. You cannot slow down excessively in rush hour traffic. But you can slow down when driving in our beautiful North Florida country roads or on the Nature Coast portion of Highway-19. Spread the word, slow driving is cool.

Speed	MPG	Equivalent Pump Cost	Lbs. of CO2 per 100 miles
65	26.5	\$3.85 (reference)	75
55	30.4	\$3.26	65
50	35.6	\$2.83	57
45	38.2	\$2.62	52

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## JULY 2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY 7—SSJ Sierra Club Group general meeting, Thursday, 7:30 pm, in the Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus, room 3118. See Pg. 1 for details.

JULY 14—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, Thursday, 7 pm, at the Santa Fe College Downtown Gainesville Campus Board meeting room.

JULY 17—National Park and Recreation Day, free entry at Florida State Parks.

JULY 23—Ancient Shell Mounds of Florida, 3 pm. Walking tour/talk near Cedar Key, limited to 10 people. For more information, contact Brack Barker.

JULY 29—No folding party since no August Newsletter.

AUGUST 11—SSJ Excom Meeting, 7 pm at SFC Downtown Campus Board Room.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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