

POLK GROUP

Issue: 07-02

FROM THE CHAIR...Al Greulich

The Sierra Club is a highly structured organization; its home base and articles of incorporation are in San Francisco, California. Under its auspices it oversees at least one Chapter in all 50 states. California and a couple of other states have multiple Chapters, but most states are organized as a single Chapter. Within the State Chapters are the various "groups" which divide the Chapter into separate geographical areas. Each group has its own name, its own list of members, and its own elected officers, called the EXCOM (Executive Committee). The Florida Chapter is broken down into 17 separate "groups" of which Polk Sierra is one. Our group includes Polk, Highlands, DeSoto, and Hardee Counties.

The different Sierra "groups" are in regular contact with the State Chapter, and the Chapter coordinates with National Sierra in California. About five times per year the Florida Chapter has meetings that include the Chapter officers and representatives from all 17 groups. These meetings set priorities, policy, and programs for the year and they monitor the progress and activities of the Sierra Club throughout the Chapter. The first and most important Chapter meeting of 2007 will take place on the weekend of January 20th and 21st.

The State Chapter's planning sessions are called FLEXCOM meetings—Florida Executive Committee—and I will be attending the January one in West Palm Beach. Their "group" is called the Loxahatchee group, named after the only river in Florida to be classified "wild and scenic" by the Federal Government; it runs through their area. As your "group chair" I will be representing our members at this meeting. I, or another officer of the Polk Group, have attended all the Chapter's FLEXCOM meetings in 2006, and I am looking forward to this important session down in West Palm.

The Loxahatchee group has worked very hard to lay the ground work for a successful FLEXCOM and we begin the weekend with a Friday night "social". We will be keeping ourselves very busy all day Saturday and half of Sunday with the meetings and reports. I will be anxious to report to our members in the March edition of the Polk newsletter the highlights of this important meeting. Working together, the various components of the National Sierra Club stay coordinated and focused on the important environmental work we have ahead of us.



SIERRA
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FEBRUARY 2007 NEWSLETTER

serving DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk

PROGRAM FOR FEBRUARY 8, 2007

A Reptile in Peril. Endangered bog turtle, *Clemmys muhlenbergi*, is the "canary" for fragile saturated wetlands. **Wayne Hill**, Herpetologist, will guide us through the story of this small colorful turtle which has been threatened by wholesale loss of habitat in the eastern US.

COLT CREEK STATE PARK

Polk County has a new State Park and it's a beauty. Located in the heart of the Green Swamp on CR 471 about 16 miles north of Lakeland in extreme northern Polk County, this gem will forever protect and showcase a piece of our historic and environmental heritage. The 5,067 acre former cattle ranch is a mosaic of longleaf pine, cypress domes, creek bottoms, oak hammocks, and small ponds typical of the famous Green Swamp lands. The former owner, the Charlie Overstreet family, is to be commended for its stewardship of the land. Local State Senator Paula Dockery was instrumental in the creation of this State Park and her hard work deserves the thanks of all her constituents. Without her this project would be in limbo.



Photo by Frances H. Coleman

Dave Moore, Executive Director SWFWMD, thanking Paula Dockery, State Senator, for her leadership in acquiring the Colt Creek property; Scott Spaulding, Park Manager, is also pictured.

In preparation for a year-long bird and butterfly census I recently toured the property and it was a joy to examine the numerous habitats that make up the new park. There are several large lakes, which will be enjoyed by the public, and in the northern sections there are extensive stands of longleaf pine. This tree is becoming uncommon in Polk County and the thousand or more acres here are a remarkable treasure. Interspersed are numerous domes of Bald Cypress and along Colt Creek itself there is a substantial riverine wetland which runs through

(Continued on page 3)

CAST YOUR VOTE FOR THE CONSERVATION SCENARIO!

January 26 - February 14, 2007

Over the last nine months, more than 9,000 Central Floridians have worked to identify ways that our region could grow and prosper given the projected doubling of our population by the year 2050. Now it is your turn to choose your preference for how Central Florida should grow.

January 26 is the kick off of a 20-day period during which Polk County residents, as participants in the seven county myregion.org planning effort, will have a chance to vote on one of four different Growth Scenarios; the 2050 Trend Option, the Conservation Option, the Centers Option or the Transit Option.

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND VOTING FOR THE CONSERVATION OPTION; second choice is the Centers Option.

Beginning January 26 and running through February 14, you will have the opportunity to select your preferred scenario at www.myregion.org. Click on "Choose Your Future". For background information, click on "How Shall We Grow?"

A special In-Depth: How Shall We Grow? Page will be accessible on wmfe.org as of January 8. www.wmfe.org will offer links to relevant resources.

Watch for further information on Polk Government Television (PGTV) and in your local newspapers.

...Marian Ryan

FLORIDA FOREVER ADVOCATES PRESS FOR ACCELERATED FUNDING FOR 2007-2008 BUDGET

Florida's wildly successful conservation land acquisition program, Florida Forever, will sunset in 2010 and a coalition of groups is advocating for acceleration of this program's spending. Because of increasing land prices and newly available willing sellers resulting from the recent softening of the real estate market, Florida has a unique opportunity to get more for its money if the remaining four years of funding are instead spent in two. Calling on Governor Crist and Senate President Pruitt, the Florida Forever Coalition is advocating for a \$600 million appropriation to the Florida Forever budget this legislative session, rather than the expected \$300 million.

....Excerpted from the Jan. 2007 Audubon Advocate

Please contact Governor Crist and your legislators and ask them to support a \$600 million appropriation in this year's budget.

IS CONGRESS LISTENING?

Carbon dioxide emissions caused by mans activities are a major cause of global warming. When the CEO of Duke Energy says "Until there are penalties for emitting carbons, business won't move. A clear signal from government, such as a carbon tax, would make clear that emitting carbon is a liability, not an asset." Is DC listening?
...Excerpted from a National Sierra Club Release

POLK LAND STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE UPDATE

The Polk Land Stewardship Alliance (PLSA), formed in January of 2006, was established to identify stakeholders interested in exploring the feasibility of implementing a Rural Lands Stewardship or natural resource based Transferable Development Rights (TDR) type program in Polk County. These programs are used to conserve agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and other public interest values. Alliance members are farmers, ranchers, real estate developers, conservationists, land planners, private consultants, government staffers and others.

A seminar was held the end of February 2006, which featured experts on the Rural Lands Stewardship Program and TDRs; how they work, what is involved, the planning process for counties and municipalities and what the benefits can be for participants. Following the seminar, the PLSA steering committee held a number of meetings to examine data, discuss the issues and hammer out goals and develop a list of objectives to present to the Polk County Board of County Commissioners.

The County Commissioners, at their October 25, 2006 meeting, agreed in concept to pursue a consultant study in cooperation with, and on behalf of the PLSA. The purpose of the study is to identify recommended options for the implementation of a Polk Lands Stewardship Program. The goal and objectives of the program are:

Goal:

Provide incentives that would strongly encourage the conservation of agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors and would be self initiating.

Objectives:

- Broaden the Polk Environmental Lands Program to include less than fee acquisition through conservation easements.
- Seek traditional and non-traditional funding sources or mechanisms to support the acquisition of conservation easements.
- Establish a system to define public interest values for open space, agriculture, wildlife habitat and other resources.
- Create a modified Rural Land Stewardship type program to fit Polk County and/or a natural and cultural resource based Transfer of Development Rights Program that will provide alternatives to development for property owners.

This consultant effort will include an analysis of program alternatives to meet the stated goal and objectives. It will culminate in the development of a Conservation Strategy and Business Plan for the Polk Lands Stewardship Program.

It is hoped that the County Commissioners will approve the study parameters and hire a consultant for this project in February.

We will keep you posted on the PLSA's progress.

...Marian Ryan

(Continued from page 1) Colt Creek State Park

the middle of the property. Several large pastures with a full complement of cows will be present until the cattle leases run out. For the time being, the cattle will help maintain the open spaces. There is a power line running along the eastern boundary which borders the extensive Water Management holdings in the area. Deer and Wild Turkey are plentiful, and our first monthly census turned up 76 bird species; there will be more. All of the birds of the Green Swamp are present with good populations of Carolina Chickadees, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and flocks of Pine Warblers and Eastern Bluebirds. At least two families of Bald Eagles are on site and streaming Red-shouldered Hawks are everywhere.

Perhaps the quality I enjoyed the most is how quiet the world becomes while you are walking along one of the many woods roads. The only sound you hear is the wind in the pines. In today's busy world that is priceless. Opening day was January 20th and you need to go and see for yourself this new attraction. You won't be disappointed.

....Charles Geanangel

OUR FAILURE IN THE KCOL COULD CASCADE TO FL BAY

At the recent Everglades Coalition I moderated a discussion on the Kissimmee Restoration. Having the Kissimmee as the first topic of the conference drove home the point that the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes (KCOL), the Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades and Florida Bay are one huge system - each part of which must be nurtured. If a Long Range Management plan for the KCOL - the headwaters of the entire system - isn't scientifically established, the Kissimmee and Everglades restoration may be doomed to failure. Massive reduction in phosphorus and devising a "natural" hydrologic schedule must be achieved.Frances H. Coleman



Photo by Frances H. Coleman

Several of the many Polk Sierrans who attended the Colt Creek opening ceremonies admire the fine fishing lake, cypress stands and longleaf pine forest with which the park abounds.

Sierra Membership Application

Name _____
 Street Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone (optional): () _____ F94Q W3311 1

Check One	Individual	Joint
Introductory	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32



Annual dues include subscription to Sierra (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1). Dues are not tax-deductible.

Please mail your check and this form to:
Sierra Club, PO Box 52968, Boulder, Colorado, 80322-2968

OUTINGS/ACTIVITIES

If you have suggestions for outings or if you wish to lead an outing, call our Outings Coordinator, Gail Bagley at 683-3334. For more activities/events, please visit our web site at <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

Feb. 5, 8, Living at the Lake. Learn more about Central Florida's lake resources at six free programs offered at the 12, 15, 22 Winter Haven Public Library, 325 Avenue A, NW from 9:30 to 11:30AM. Registration is required; call 863 & 26 519-8677 ext. 112 or email jbrenneman@ifas.ufl.edu Topics include watersheds, wildlife and aquatic plant management.

Feb. 17 From Grasslands to Green Lawns..and Back! The Friends of the Parks Foundation will conduct its third gardening workshop from 9 until noon at Historic Bok Sanctuary in Lake Wales. Learn more about Florida's native plants and spend the day at Bok Sanctuary. The cost of the workshop is \$10 and includes your admission to the Sanctuary. Registration deadline is Feb. 14 and participation is limited to the first 100. Call 863 293-6961 or email mryan@pipevines.net

Feb. 24 Hike Colt Creek State Park. Join us for our first foray into Polk's newest state park. Outing Leader Chuck will help us with bird identification as we marvel at the magnificent stands of long leaf pine and various other habitats. Call 863 326-5748 for details and to sign up.

Apr. 14 Water, Wings and Wildlife. Mark your calendars now to celebrate Earth Day in Bartow at the IMC Park next to the Bartow Civic Center. Hours 10AM - 2PM.

In order to participate in one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver which will be furnished at the beginning of the outing. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5528. In the interests of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. Please note that some of the above listed activities are events that we think you will find interesting and fun, but they are not official outings.



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Members should send **changes of address** to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968
 or address.changes@sierraclub.org

FEBRUARY MEETING
 Thursday, February 8, 2007

PROGRAM:

Endangered Bog Turtle
A Flagship Species for Ephemeral Wetlands
By
Wayne Hill, Founder
Central Florida Herpetological Society

*General Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting Run
 Concurrently*

Join us for our pot-luck suppers at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month. Bring a dish to share, a drink and your utensils. Dress is casual. **The meeting will start around 7:15 p.m.**

Meetings are held at the Audubon Nature Center, 115 Lameraux Rd., Winter Haven. From the traffic light at the intersection of Hwy. 540 (Cypress Gardens Blvd.) and Cypress Gardens Road (look for the Shell station and Blockbuster Video) - Turn east onto C.G. Road and follow around sharp right hand turn & then sharp left hand turn. After left hand turn, Lameraux is fourth road on left, two blocks west of Garden Grove Elementary School. Distance from the light to the Nature Center is about 2.3 miles. (Phone 324-7304)

Web Site: <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

LOVE
IS IN THE AIR

Valentine's Day is almost upon us - do you have a unique and appropriate remembrance selected yet? A nesting box carries with it the qualities of caring and concern that will show just what a sensitive type you are! These cypress wood boxes are yard or lake appropriate and are very easy to put up. A minimum donation of \$50 is requested and all monies in excess of costs will be donated to the Richard Coleman Scholarship Fund. Contact Bob at 863 439-2251 or Frances at 863 956-3771 for immediate delivery.



Photo by Bob Taylor

2007 POLK SIERRA GROUP

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