

Ancient Islands

DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk Counties of Florida

Issue: 09-09

SEPTEMBER 2009

FROM THE CHAIR

...Paul Anderson

CAP AND TRADE refers to the process of capping, or limiting, the amount of carbon dioxide that a power plant or factory can emit, and, if this limit is not reached, they can sell the unused allowance to other companies. If the emitter exceeds the limits, he must buy carbon credits on the market to cover his excess emissions or pay a fine. The effect is to put a price tag on greenhouse gas emissions and to create an economic incentive to look for ways to reduce them. Some analysts predict that carbon credits will become the world's largest traded commodity. The goal is to reduce carbon emissions to stop and reverse global warming and achieve a stable climate for ourselves and our descendants.

As part of the Kyoto agreement, 38 industrial nations agreed to an average 5.2 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions between 2008 and 2012 relative to 1990 levels. By 2007 the agreement had been ratified by 174 nations and the European Union.

On June 26, 2009, the House of Representatives passed Henry Waxman's (D-CA) legislation, which includes cap and trade provisions, by a 219-212 vote. It is titled "The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009" (ACES), (HR2454). This bill will also help jumpstart our economy by creating millions of new clean energy jobs, cutting our dependence on oil, and curbing global warming pollution. Now the Senate needs to take action. I wrote Senators Nelson and Martinez urging action and both responded. Predictably, Senator Nelson supported this legislation, and Senator Martinez opposed it. Senator Nelson said regarding utility bills "In fact, one reliable analysis shows an average savings for consumers of around \$6 per month." I ask that you call or write your Senators and Representatives to encourage them to support this legislation. If the Senate bill is different, it will go to a conference committee and then the merged bill will have to be voted on by both chambers. Thank you.

THE AMAZON HIGH JUNGLE Tourism for a Sustainable Ecosystem

In Peru's backcountry the youth often see no economic future so they migrate to the large cities, live in slums, and dream of migrating (legally or otherwise) to the United States.

And yet, the Peruvian backcountry has natural wonders that, if accessible, would draw tourists from all over the world creating a prosperous local economy. **Charles Motley, our September presenter**, will share with us his dream of building a natural wonders hiking trail through the Amazon high jungle which will pass incredible waterfalls roughly every half mile. A quarter mile has already been completed using village labor to lay the stone. When completed this two-day trek along a nearly level ledge will pass about twenty extremely tall waterfalls.

Mr. Motley, retired from Orange County Engineering, has spent an extended period of time in this area of Peru. He worked with local villagers to build a lodge near Fortress Kuelap, possibly the largest building structure of the early Americas. With the lodge's income it was possible to obtain a generator which provides electricity for five villages. Working with Planning and Development during his career, Mr. Motley knows "development" will come. With good planning, its impacts to our natural world can be minimized and native people will not be forced to move from their ancestral lands.

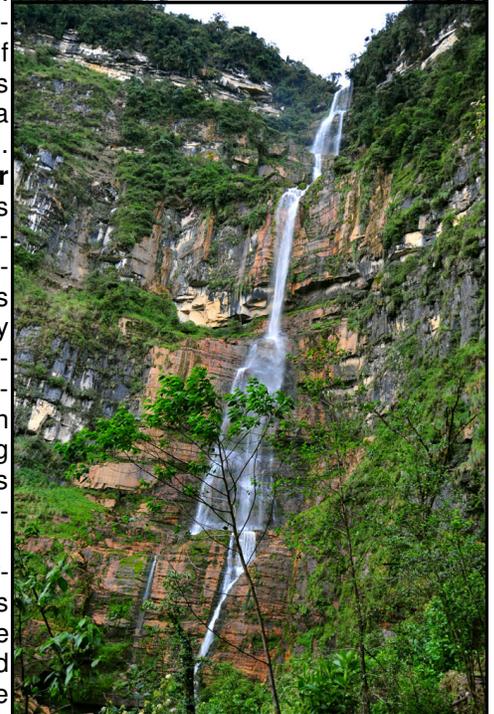


Photo by Phil Wittman

Chinata Falls

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR TABLING EVENTS

The Ancient Islands Group will be exhibiting at two upcoming events and volunteers are needed to staff the booth as well as help with our Nature Guessing Game for kids and our popular butterfly and fish button/badge making activity.

- Water, Wings & Wild Things - Polk Naturefest 2009 will be held at the Circle B Bar Reserve on Saturday, October 31st from 10AM to 2PM. Exhibitors must be set up by 9AM and break down after 3PM.
- The Grand Opening of the MacKay Gardens & Lakeside Preserve will be held on Saturday, November 14th from 9AM till Noon. Exhibits must be set up by 8:30AM and broken down at 12:30PM.

Anyone who is interested in volunteering at one of these events, or who would like to help prepare materials in advance, please call Marian at 863-207-5206.

EPA AGREES TO SET LIMITS ON FERTILIZER AND ANIMAL WASTE POLLUTION IN FLORIDA

New Policy Contrasts with Inaction by Bush Administration

TALLAHASSEE – In a major step forward for the environment, President Barack Obama's administration has signed a consent decree in which it agrees to set legal limits for the widespread nutrient poisoning that triggers harmful algae blooms in Florida waters. "This is a refreshing change of policy after almost a decade of foot-dragging by the Bush administration," said Earthjustice attorney Monica Reimer.

The change in federal policy comes 13 months after five environmental groups filed a major lawsuit to compel the federal government to set strict limits on nutrient poisoning in public waters. Nutrients like phosphorous and nitrogen poison Florida's waters every time it rains - running off agricultural operations, fertilized landscapes, and septic systems. The poison runoff triggers algae outbreaks which foul Florida's beaches, lakes, rivers, and springs more each year, threatening public health, closing swimming areas, and even shutting down a southwest Florida drinking water plant.

In a 2008 report, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection concluded that half of the state's rivers and more than half of its lakes had poor water quality. The problem is compounded when nutrient-poisoned waters are used as drinking water sources. Disinfectants like chlorine and chloramine can react with the dissolved organic compounds, contaminating drinking water with harmful chemical byproducts. Exposure to these blue-green algae toxins – when people drink the water, touch it, or inhale vapors from it - can cause rashes, skin and eye irritation, allergic reactions, gastrointestinal upset, serious illness, and even death. In June 2008, a water treatment plant serving 30,000 Florida residents was shut down after a toxic blue-green algae bloom on the Caloosahatchee River threatened the plant's water supply.

The public interest law firm Earthjustice filed the suit in the Northern District of Florida on behalf of the Florida Wildlife Federation, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida, St. John's Riverkeeper, and the **Sierra Club** in July 2008. The suit challenged an unacceptable decade-long delay by the state and federal governments in setting limits for nutrient pollution. EPA's agreement to set enforceable nutrient limits settles that lawsuit.

This action has nationwide implications. Currently, Florida and most other states have only vague limits regulating nutrient pollution. The U.S. EPA will now begin the process of imposing quantifiable – and enforceable -- water quality standards to tackle nutrient pollution.

The EPA originally gave Florida a 2004 deadline to set limits for nutrient pollution, which the state disregarded. The EPA was then supposed to set limits itself, but failed to do so. Under the administration of President George W. Bush, the EPA let the states off the hook by allowing them to formulate plans without deadlines for action. The dire state of Florida's polluted waters made the delay unacceptable and dangerous, so the five groups sued.

Andrew McElwaine, president of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, said, "Setting a quantitative water quality standard for nitrogen, one of the primary pollutants degrading our coastal waterways, should help limit the development of harmful algal blooms. With a numeric standard in place, we can definitively assess whether our waterways can support healthy ecosystems, a healthy economy and protect public health and safety."

Florida's current narrative standard says: "*In no case shall nutrient concentrations of a body of water be altered so as to cause an imbalance in natural populations of aquatic flora and fauna.*"

Clearly, nutrient poisoning is altering water bodies all over Florida. As Earthjustice noted in a letter it sent to the EPA: "Potentially toxigenic cyanobacteria have been found statewide, including river and stream systems such as the St. Johns River in the Northeast Region and the Caloosahatchee River in the Southwest Region. In the Southeast Region, toxin levels in the St. Lucie River and estuary during an algae bloom in 2005 were 300 times above suggested drinking water limits and 60 times above suggested recreational limits. Warning signs had to be posted by local health authorities warning visitors and residents not to come into contact with the water. Lake Okechobee, which is categorized under state regulations as a drinking water source, is now subject to almost year-round blue-green algae blooms as a result of nutrient pollution."

Nutrient pollution also fuels the explosive growth of invasive water plants like hydrilla, which now clogs countless springs, rivers and lakes.

"The Sierra Club is encouraged by the Obama Administration's strong involvement in addressing nutrient pollution in Florida and we hope that our state agencies will follow with similarly strong actions on this issue," said Frank Jackalone, Florida Staff Director of the Sierra Club.

....Earthjustice

PHOSPHATE MINING ISSUE COORDINATING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The Sierra Club-Florida Steering Committee has appointed members to the newly formed Phosphate Mining Issue Coordinating Committee. A Team Launch Training is planned for September at Sierra Club offices in Sarasota. The primary work of this Committee will be to:

- Coordinate Sierra Club-Florida's comments and positions on decisions, actions, or statements by public agencies and office holders on phosphate mining and related issues.
- Identify team needs – commit to research and preparation of materials that benefit the team or its activists.
- Launch targeted campaign teams, as needed, to influence priority decision points.

Topics will include, but are not limited to: current and future mining applications and permits, reclamation, mining regulations, old mined lands, and environmental impacts on natural systems, habitat, water, air, and soil.

Phosphate Mining Issue Committee members are: Ancient Islands - Andy Quinn; Greater Charlotte Harbor - Percy Angelo; Tampa Bay - Beverly Griffiths; Manatee-Sarasota - Linda Jones; At Large - Cris Costello; Liaison to Steering Committee - Marian Ryan; Legal Liaison to the committee - Eric Huber

....Marian Ryan

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

For more activities/events, please visit our web site at <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

Circle B Bar

Each month Circle B Bar Reserve offers a variety of guided hikes, photography workshops, astronomy nights (in the cooler months), nature oriented presentations, and a tram ride. Because space is limited (especially on the tram ride) and additional events are added, call Karen Hagood, Naturalist Environmental Operations Specialist at 863 668-4673 to find out what is available and to reserve a space.

Sep. 19 **UPKEEP Kayak Program.** Winter Haven, with the assistance of a grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, purchased 12 kayaks. Participants in this September event will learn to kayak as they clean up a section of the Peace River. For confirmation of details and to reserve a space call the Natural Resource Division at 863 291-5881.

Oct. 17 **Kayaking and Camping at Alexander Springs - Non-Sierra Event.** Using Winter Haven's UP-KEEP kayaks (\$5 suggested donation per kayak) paddle, explore and learn about one of Florida's unique spring habitats. Camping will be available on a first come basis. Call Andy Quinn at 863 687-6124 for more information and to reserve a space. Donations will be accepted.

Oct. 31 **Trek Ten Trails Year 2 Finale.** This will be held in conjunction with the Water, Wings & Wild Things Naturefest at Circle B Bar Reserve. Trekkers who submit validation cards by October 5th will be eligible for Certificates of Completion plus great prize drawings. 10AM - 2PM See www.friendsoftheparks.net for details.

Oct. 31 **Water, Wings & Wild Things - Polk County's Naturefest.** The event will be held from 10AM until 2PM at the Reserve, 4399 Winter Lake Road, Lakeland. There will be many exhibits, food and fun for everyone.

Nov. 14 **Grand Opening of the MacKay Gardens & Lakeside Preserve and Trek Ten Trails Year 3 Launch.** The City of Lake Alfred's own 112+ acre nature preserve is on the north shores of Lake Rochelle. Home of the historic Mackay Estate residence and gardens, the site also provides nature trails, a playground, fishing pier and canoe launch area. 9AM - Noon. Free hot dog cookout. For more information call Marian at 863-207-5206 or e-mail: marianryan@gmail.com

Service at Circle B Bar

Volunteers are always needed to help at the reception desk, create signs for special events, etc.; but, because of the Water, Wings & Wild Things major event at the end of October, the next two months are especially volunteer-critical. For more information and to volunteer call Karen Hagood at 863 668-4673 (cell 863 899-6227) or e-mail karenhagood@polk-county.net

Sep. 12 **Water Hyacinth Workday.** From 8:30 to noon +/- we will be working on Wading Bird Way pulling out as many plants as possible. This will involve volunteers: 1. Pulling the plants out of the marsh, 2. Loading them on a truck and 3. Unloading the plants at the designated area to dry out.

TBA **Building Maintenance.** Currently we are in the process of cleaning up the buildings as much as possible. This includes knocking down mud dauber nests and spider webs, sweeping or blowing off the boardwalks, cleaning the boardwalks with the pressure sprayer and more. With a fairly large group of volunteers, this could be done on a particular day in October or, if it better suits an individual's schedule, during several short days over the next two months. If you can help out, please let Karen know what day or just stop by the Center.

Service - These Saturday events are Ridge Ranger projects.

These stewardship projects start at 8:00 at their respective locations unless otherwise noted. For more details call the Volunteer Coordinator, Jim Reed, at 863 699-3742 or e-mail james.reed@myFWC.com or check out the website http://myfwc.com/GETINVOLVED/Volunteer_Ridge_Rangers_index.htm.

Sep. 5 **Highlands Hammock State Park.** Habitat enhancement.

Sep. 12 **Avon Park Air Force Range.** Continue improving the red-cockaded woodpecker habitat.

Sep. 19 **Tiger Creek Preserve.** Install fencing.

Sep. 26 **Bok Tower Gardens.** Stewardship - part of National Public Lands Day activities.

Special activities such as greenhouse work, invertebrate study, fish species inventory, and surveying wildlife populations are available. Become a Citizen-Scientist! Call Jim for details.

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 the above listed activities are events that we think you will find interesting and fun, but they are not official outings. Florida Seller of Travel Ref. No. ST37115



Sierra Club

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or address.changes@sierraclub.org

SEPTEMBER 10 MEETING

PROGRAM:

THE AMAZON HIGH JUNGLE

Creating a Sustainable Tourism Income So Locals Will Protect Their Ecology

Presented By

Charles Motley

*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.**

This meeting will be held at Circle B Bar Reserve. The Reserve is located on State Road 540 (Winter Lake Road) at a mid-point between Lakeland, Bartow and Winter Haven. From Bartow, take US 98 north to SR 540 and turn right; from Lakeland, take US 98 south to SR 540 and turn left; the property entrance is approximately two miles east of US 98 on the south (right) side of SR 540. From Winter Haven, take SR 540 and after the exits to the Polk Parkway (where there is a traffic light) look for and follow the Reserve signs; it will be a left turn. **Bring flashlight for parking lot.**

Web Site: <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>
(links to Ancient Islands)

Sierra Membership Application

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (optional): () _____ **F94Q W3311 1**

Check One **Individual** **Joint**

Introductory \$25

Regular \$39 \$47

Senior \$24 \$32

Student \$24 \$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

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