

# Ancient Islands

The Polk Group also serves Desoto, Hardee and Highlands Counties

Issue: 08-08

August 2008

## COLEMAN LANDING

The Polk Board of County Commissioners will consider at their August 6th meeting the rules for and the naming of the new park on Lake Kissimmee (the old Shady Oaks property). In mid-May former colleagues of Richard Coleman realizing that the new park was an ideal location for a tribute to him contacted Commissioner Reed; her response was very positive and she suggested that the possibility of naming the park for Richard be explored. A substantial number of organizations and individuals have written the County Commission endorsing this proposal.

This is not to take the place of the memorial at Istokpoga in southern Highlands County that has been planned since early 2004; this new ramp/park will provide immediate access to the restored section of the Kissimmee River - Richard championed restoration for 34 years. The original memorial proposal for this location centered around an educational three-panel kiosk which illustrates the historic Kissimmee, channelization, restoration, and the activists who dedicated themselves to restoration and protecting this watershed (Richard is featured). In 2006 the SFWMD stated that Highlands County was in favor of naming the ramp (not the park) for Richard; this would mean that a bronze plaque on a stone would also be appropriate. Earlier this year Highlands County withdrew this pledge but left the door open by suggesting we should make a formal presentation to their County Commission when the WMD presents the lease on the property. This will be done; the WMD is very much in favor of this recognition, as we are, so hopes are high but it is not a sure thing.

The kiosk is also very appropriate for the Lake Kissimmee park; topics on the panels include historic uses of the watershed and KICCO. An educational component should be present at all our heavily used parks; the conservation community will cover the costs of the embedded fiberglass panels so neither county government is being saddled with the funding. Win-win.

In summary: it is important and appropriate for Polk County to honor Richard at Lake Kissimmee because of all the work he did to protect and enhance that watershed and to recognize his many environmental contributions to the well-being of Polk. And it is also very important that Highlands County and the WMD recognize his contributions to the Kissimmee restoration so that the users of the restored river will understand what has happened.

In support of both of these memorials write, email or call your county commissioners and, if you can, attend the appropriate Commission meeting. Call 863 956-3771 if you have questions. ....Frances Howell-Coleman

## MILKWEED HOSTELS

Motels for Monarchs was an article that caught my eye recently. Conservationists know that many species' survival is dependent on a single type of plant, a single type of food or even the specific depth and duration of an ephemeral wetland. For instance, snail kite and limpkin diets consist of apple snails. No snails, no birds. The Southern chorus frog needs a very shallow pond (less than 4 inches deep) to last 45-70 days to successfully develop through the tadpole stage into a frog. That brings me back to the Monarch butterfly.

Monarchs are the one butterfly that most folks can readily identify. A lot of people are familiar with the Monarch migration each spring and fall. But not many people are aware that milkweeds are the key to the butterflies' survival. Scientists say that Monarch caterpillars appear to feed exclusively on milkweeds. Adult



butterflies drink nectar from milkweed plants and also lay their eggs on them. Unfortunately, development, new agricultural practices and poor roadside management have greatly reduced Monarch habitat in recent years.

Monarch Watch, based at the University of Kansas, created the Monarch Waystation program in 2005 to help people create oases of Monarch-friendly plants so the butterflies can reproduce in the summer and have nectar available to fuel their migrations. The program has already helped to establish over 1000 waystations in 43 states. The website below describes the program and has links to help you get started in creating your own butterfly oasis. You can even have your waystation certified and listed on the site. This program offers everyone a way to make a difference in the world by restoring valuable wildlife habitat even if that habitat is in flower pots on your patio! Please visit <http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/index.html> or just Google "Monarch Watch" and start your butterfly oasis to-



## **LAWSUIT WOULD REQUIRE LIMITS ON NUTRIENT POLLUTION IN FLORIDA RIVERS AND LAKES**

### **Weak Rules Lead to Contaminated Drinking Water, Toxic Algae Blooms and Closed Beaches**

The public interest law firm Earthjustice filed a lawsuit in mid-July on behalf of the Sierra Club and four other environmental groups seeking a court order that would require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to impose quantifiable – and enforceable – limits for fertilizer, sewage and animal waste runoff which contaminate Florida's rivers and lakes.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court for the Northern District of Florida. It is available at [http://www.earthjustice.org/library/legal\\_docs/complaint-and-exhibits-fwf-v-usepa-07-17-08.pdf](http://www.earthjustice.org/library/legal_docs/complaint-and-exhibits-fwf-v-usepa-07-17-08.pdf).

Earthjustice is representing Florida Wildlife Federation, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida, St. John's Riverkeeper, and Sierra Club in the case which challenges a decade-long delay by the state and federal government in setting limits on the nutrient poisoning which triggers harmful algae blooms.

Pollution-fueled algae blooms are fouling 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 serving 30,000 people.

Every time it rains, run-off from factory farms, fertilized landscapes, and agricultural operations pour fertilizer and animal waste residue into Florida's rivers and lakes. These contaminants nourish algae blooms and therefore are referred to as "nutrients."

The lawsuit has nationwide implications. Currently, Florida and most other states have only vague limits regulating nutrient pollution.

The EPA 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. EPA recently approved a plan that would have limits, at best, being "proposed" by 2011.

Clearly, nutrient contamination is altering water bodies all over Florida. As Earthjustice notes 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, the Caloosahatchee River in the Southwest Region, and the Peace and Kissimmee Rivers in the Central 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 Okeechobee, 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."

Inland freshwater resources are also affected by pollution from agricultural runoff and other sources: half of the state's rivers and more than half of its lakes were found to have poor water quality in a 2006 report by the state Department of Environmental Protection. The problem is compounded when nutrient-poisoned waters are used as drinking water sources. Disinfectants such as chlorine and

chloramine can react with the dissolved organic compounds, contaminating drinking water with mutagenic chemical byproducts.

"EPA has admitted that excessive levels of nitrogen and phosphorus are a direct cause of toxic blue-green algae blooms," Earthjustice wrote to the EPA. "Exposure to these blue-green algae toxins through ingestion, skin contact or inhalation can cause rashes, skin and eye irritation, allergic reactions, gastrointestinal upset, serious illness, and even death. Last month, 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 source water supply. ....SC FL News

## **POLK ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS UPDATE**

All of the acquisition activity this period involves the huge Crooked Lake West project which is west of US 27 and south of Frostproof. This sprawling 14,000 acre property is the largest, most diverse that CLASAC has ever tackled.

**Dunham tract** The County and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission closed on June 27 by buying 1,147 acres designated as a gopher tortoise mitigation park; our share of the \$12,353,716 price tag was \$750,000.

**Stuart tract** Polk County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District have an Agreement for Sale and Purchase on the tract and should close on the property by the end of the year.

**Atgar tract** An Agreement for Sale and Purchase for \$2,200,000 for about 996 acres will be brought before the BoCC on July 23.

**Britt tract** An Agreement for Sale and Purchase for \$295,000 for 77 acres will also be presented to the BoCC on July 23.

While this ambitious project has a long way to go, outstanding progress has been made. Once again partnerships have saved the Polk County taxpayer a bundle.

If the budget is approved by CLASAC we will have \$2.1 million set aside for land acquisition and \$648,460 for land management. I'm sure that everyone realizes that property on our acquisition list far exceeds available funding.

With that in mind, planning is going ahead to place the new Environmental Lands Referendum Question on the ballot in 2010 in order to continue the funding into the future. Details have yet to be announced but we will need the help of all our members to pass the referendum.

The Circle B Bar grand reopening is scheduled for November 1, 2008 so make your plans to be there. The new Nature Discovery Center will knock your socks off.

....Chuck Geanangel

## **GROWTH CAP PETITIONS NEEDED**

Polk County members who are serious about controlling residential growth need to sign Growth Cap petitions and get friends, family and co-workers to do the same! We need help to accomplish our goal of getting the issue on the ballot. If you can help gather petitions in your neighborhood, church or social club, call us and we can get blank petitions to you. We are also available to speak to clubs and organizations about this issue. Please visit [www.GrowthCapCoalition.com](http://www.GrowthCapCoalition.com) to learn about the issue and download petitions. For information contact Marian Ryan at 863-293-6961 or e-mail [mryan@pipevines.net](mailto:mryan@pipevines.net).





# Sierra Club

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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](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org)

## AUGUST 14 MEETING

### PROGRAM:

**Establishing Programs and Priorities  
for the Coming Year**

And

**Being Caribou  
A Gorgeous DVD of the Arctic Tundra**

*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 special summer meeting will be held at the home of Scott and Kay Hedden, 142 Homewood Drive, Winter Haven. If you are coming from the Winter Haven area take SR 540 (Winter Lake Road) west; after Spirit Lake Road, go three turn lanes and make a U-turn at the third; drive back to the east 1/2 block to Homewood Drive. Turn right on Homewood and follow it to the very end. Hedden's is the last house on the right. If you are driving from Lakeland take SR 540 until you spot All Saints Academy; then start looking for Homewood Drive on your right. Phone 293-3047.

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

### 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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