

# POLK GROUP

Issue: 08-01

## FROM THE CHAIR...Paul Anderson

First, thank you to all who voted for me to be the new Chair of the Polk Group. I will try to do a good job, and hope all who read this will help me in this task. Please call (863-965-8241), e-mail (jjandr@aol.com), or write me (907 Kristina Court, Auburndale, FL 33823) about issues you feel the Polk Group should address, meeting agenda items, suggestions for speakers, etc. I will listen.

The emphasis of our Group's activities will be on conservation. I hope to see improvements in a number of areas, including:

1. I hope to involve more Polk Group Sierrans in our activities and efforts.
2. I hope to increase attendance at our monthly meetings.
3. I hope to increase our Polk Group membership.
4. I hope to draw more young people in as members, and as contributors to our efforts. After all, the actions we take today will benefit our children and grandchildren more than they will benefit our current aging leadership. It is certainly appropriate that the young contribute since they will benefit the most. In keeping with the above I ask you pass this newsletter on to your children and acquaintances, with the emphasis on youth.
5. I hope to get the Polk Group more politically involved. For example, I have been attending all the very interesting and important CSX railroad public meetings here in Polk County, and on November 29th attended the excellent Water Supply Workshop in the County Commission chambers. The water supply problem and the CSX railroad initiatives will have serious effects on the economy of Polk County, and our quality of life. I encourage more Sierrans to attend such meetings, write letters to the editor, and write or call your city, county, state and federal officials. Also sign and distribute such petitions as the CSX petition, Hometown Democracy, Fair Legislative Redistricting and Fair Congressional Redistricting.

Recent published articles, and TV shows such as "Planet in Peril", show we have huge problems on both a local and planetary scale. As the book "Civilization" by Kenneth Clark concludes, "One may be optimistic, but one can't exactly be joyful at the prospect before us." Being human, we will not do everything we should or could do. But we can do something: conserve, recycle, protect wildlife, remove invasive exotic plants, etc. We can all make a difference.



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## JANUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

serving DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk County

### PROGRAM FOR JANUARY 10, 2008

Energy Conservation - Clean Energy - Green Energy. **Buddy Ellers, Progress Energy** Public Relations Department, will present energy conservation strategies that we can directly use to reduce our 'carbon footprints'. On the broader front he will lead a discussion on energy independence and lowering carbon emissions.

### EVERY FISH COUNTS: Bycatch and Overfishing

Overfishing and careless destruction of habitat and wildlife in the Gulf of Mexico are jeopardizing the future of the ecosystems found there. Overfishing occurs when an unsustainable amount of fish is harvested or destroyed. Unfortunately, even with fish management plans in place, many catch limits are routinely exceeded and there is little accountability for managers to enforce sustainable take levels. Bycatch, unintentional take of fish or wildlife when something else is targeted, contributes to these unsustainable catch numbers.

The Gulf of Mexico has unique animals and habitats of great intrinsic value and economic benefit to surrounding communities. The Gulf is a vitally important source of U.S. seafood. Unfortunately, the Gulf suffers from effects of pollution and wetland loss. There is additional uncertainty about how climate change will affect the system. Sierra Club believes we should manage this natural resource with precaution: where there is a lack of data or understanding we must err on the side of greater protection.

The biggest hurdle to ending overfishing of some species is that managers have not required collection of adequate data on bycatch and its mortality. Without these numbers, they cannot create realistic policy to sustain populations. Some methods of reducing bycatch are gear changes, establishing areas closed to fishing, and bycatch quotas that, if exceeded, require a fleet or fishery to halt for a set amount of time.



Photo from NOAA

Bycatch is not limited to fish species; sea turtles, marine mammals and sharks are captured and injured or killed in fishing gears. When any species is severely impacted the loss ripples through the rest of the system. The Gulf cannot have healthy ecosystems without big predatory fish like sharks or without tiny filter-feeding men-

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haden.

Since July 2005, Sierra Club has been organizing public input in the Gulf of Mexico federal fishery management process. The Club is helping to bring more public participation to the management process and it is making a difference.

The Gulf of Mexico is a public resource – akin to a National Park – it should be managed by all of us and for all of us, not just for sometimes short-sighted user groups. We hope you will join us to help protect the Gulf for the future!

What you can do right now!

- Participate in the process. Write, email or call your Governor and representatives on the Gulf Council.
- Go to [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) or call 888-833-1844 for contact information. Tell them we must decrease bycatch.
- Ask them to set science-based catch limits that include bycatch to end overfishing.
- Buy only sustainable seafood. Use the Monterey Bay Aquarium lists of sustainably caught or farmed seafood. Bycatch and overfishing status are part of their criteria for “sustainability.” See [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org).
- Join Sierra Club’s Gulf Sustainable Fisheries listserve. We will provide you with information and action items so you can make a difference. Contact Kristina Jackson at 352-375-1441 or [Cristina.jackson@sierraclub.org](mailto:Cristina.jackson@sierraclub.org).

....Kristina Jackson,

Organizer with Sierra’s Gulf of Mexico -Sustainable Fisheries

## DANON MOSLEY RECIEVES OSPREY AWARD

Danon Moxley, Project Leader of the Tenoroc Fish Management Area, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission was presented the Osprey Award by Marian Ryan at the November meeting of the Polk Group. The Osprey Award is a Florida Chapter award presented for extraordinary effort by a governmental staff person to promote or affect changes in policy or practice to protect or preserve Florida’s environment.

Danon has been the manager of the Tenoroc FMA since 1992, when the FWCC began management of this former phosphate mined land. The original 6,030 parcel

was un-reclaimed land donated to the state in 1982. Additional parcels were added over time, including the southern portion of a DRI known as the Bridgewater tract (967 acres of reclaimed land) which was purchased in 2002.



Photo by John Ryan

The Bridgewater property had been reclaimed as pasture and lakes under the Non-Mandatory Reclamation Program. The Bridgewater tract is the subject of an ambitious

project to reclaim a significant portion of upland and wetland habitats. The wetlands will improve water quality of the property’s public fishing lakes, as well as water draining to Lake Parker which is headwaters to the Peace River. The reclaimed uplands will provide much needed habitat for gopher tortoises and their commensal species.

Danon is described by his associates and members of the conservation community as tenacious, dedicated, relentless, driven, adaptive, creative and persistent. Those qualities are allowing him to literally turn what was a sow’s ear into a silk purse. His unique ability to partner with other entities and agencies and find creative ways to generate funds to achieve the overall goal of maximizing the wildlife habitat and nature-based recreational values of Tenoroc cannot be overstated.

The metamorphosis of Tenoroc from former phosphate mine to fishing and wildlife viewing and hiking hot spot over such a short period of time on a shoestring annual budget of \$82,000 (FY’07) has been amazing. This is especially significant because Tenoroc is the largest green space in close proximity to the greater Lakeland metro area.

....Marian Ryan

## WATER WARS

Fresh water has always been at the top of our list of worries when it comes to environmental problems in Central Florida. We either have too much of the resource or not enough. Many times, amazingly, we have both problems at the same time. Right now, long term, we have to deal with a growing water shortage. According to some experts, Orange and Lake Counties have already dangerously depleted the aquifer. Come 2013, the water districts plan to freeze groundwater withdrawals and new alternative sources of water will have to be found. Alternative sources are rivers, lakes, springs, desalination plants and the like. You can be sure that all of these options will be expensive. The era of cheap water is over. Orange County water users are eying the Ocklawaha River to our north in Marion County as a source of millions of gallons of water to be carried by pipeline. Of course, Marion County the source of the water doesn’t want to see ‘their’ water siphoned off to other locations. Hence the term “Water War” is born (actually resurrected - we’ve fought this ‘war’ before.)

If we would only use less water, this problem could be put off a few more years. Water conservation is always a good option; high on the list of waste is the unsound practice of using drinking water to irrigate lawns. I plan on a longer article on changing the mindset about lawns for a future article. Another hidden problem is the ubiquitous practice of using private wells to pump vast amounts of unmetered water from the aquifer. According to Cynthia Barnett’s book Mirage, there are thousands of such wells throughout the State of Florida; no one knows how many or how much water they take from the aquifer. While those on government utility systems pay for every drop of metered water they use, those on private wells pay nothing.

There is a crisis coming and most of us have only a vague notion of the changing rules that govern us. We all need to learn how the system works and what the ramifications of the proposed changes will be.

....Charles Geanangel

## NEW GREEN SWAMP SIGNS GRACE POLK COUTNY ROADS

Lots of Polk residents know the importance of the Green Swamp and the Floridan Aquifer - they just don't know where it is exactly. New signs like the one pictured here will help. The signs have been installed at the entrance to the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern on four county roads: Rockridge Road east of US 98, Dean Still Road west of US 27, CR 557 at the north end of the Lake Alfred city limit and Polk City Road (CR 17) west of US 27. We hope that more signs will be installed on state roads once approval is granted by the Florida Dept. of Transportation. THANKS TO JEFF SPENCE, Director of Polk County Natural Resources Division, for making this happen!



Photo by Marian Ryan

...Marian Ryan

## CHRISTMAS PAST



Photo by Frances H. Coleman

Some of the many Sierrans and friends who enjoyed good food, music and conservation at the Christmas celebration

## EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

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

<b>2nd Wednesdays of the Month Through March</b>	<b>South Lake Howard Nature Park - Winter Haven.</b> Guided nature walk from 8:55 - 9:30AM. Call 863 291-5881 for additional details.
<b>2nd Thursdays of the Month Through March</b>	<b>Lake Hartridge Nature Park - Winter Haven.</b> Guided walks with emphasis on the stormwater treatment system from 3:55 - 4:30PM. Call 863 291-5881 for additional details.
<b>Thursdays in January</b>	<b>The Water's Journey video series</b> will be shown from 10-11AM in the Winter Haven Library but you are strongly urged to call 863 291-5881 to confirm title and time as variations may occur.
<b>Jan. 13</b>	<b>Trek Ten Trails Guided Hike - Crooked Lake Prairie.</b> Stroll sandy trails through ancient sand dunes - habitat for Florida scrub-jays. Start 1:30PM - call Marian at 863 293-6961 for more details. Basic GPS instruction will be offered at 12:30. Those interested in geocaching will find it very helpful.
<b>Feb. 2</b>	<b>Colt Creek State Park Backcountry Tram Ride.</b> Fifteen seats have been reserved for Sierrans - a naturalist will help us identify the flora and fauna along the two-hour route. Start time at the park is 8:45AM. Call Frances at 863 956-3771 to reserve your seat. Also, if you wish to arrange car pooling, call Frances.
<b>Feb. 10</b>	<b>Trek Ten Trails Guided Hike - SUMICA - 10 miles east of Lake Wales.</b> Observe wildlife ranging from gopher tortoises to deer to wading birds as we hike through habitats as diverse as wet flatwoods and riverine floodplain. Start 1:30PM - call Marian at 863 293-6961 for more details.
<b>Service - These Saturday events are Ridge Ranger projects.</b>	
For start times and more details, call Lynne Flannery at 863 699-3742 or email <a href="mailto:Lynne.Flannery@MyFWC.com">Lynne.Flannery@MyFWC.com</a>	
<b>Jan. 5</b>	<b>Lake McLeod tract of the Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge - Eagle Ridge.</b> Fencing.
<b>Jan. 19</b>	<b>MacKay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve - Lake Alfred.</b> Stewardship.
<b>Jan. 26</b>	<b>Historic Bok Sanctuary - Lake Wales.</b> Stewardship.
<b>Feb. 23</b>	<b>Historic Bok Sanctuary - Lake Wales.</b> Stewardship.
<b>Mar. 1-2</b>	<b>Lake Kissimmee State Park - Lake Wales.</b> Camping and Conservation. Enjoy a morning workday followed by an evening of good company, grilled goodies and fresh air.

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.



**Sierra Club**  
**Polk Group - Florida Chapter**  
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 Winter Haven, FL 33883

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

**JANUARY MEETING**  
 Thursday, January 10, 2008

**PROGRAM:**

**Energy Conservation - Clean Energy  
 and Green Energy**

By

**Buddy Ellers**  
**Progress Energy**

*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/>

**Sierra Membership Application**

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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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