

POLK GROUP

Issue: 08-03

POLK COUNTY CHARTER AMENDMENT PROPOSAL



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

MARCH 2008 NEWSLETTER

serving DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk County

PROGRAM FOR MARCH 13, 2008

Understanding the Drought of 2008. How does the water deficit we now face compare to previous droughts? As population increases how will our water needs be met? What can we do better to conserve water? **Ed Hobin**, Outreach Coordinator, Southwest Water Management District will explain Florida's system of water management and help **us** understand our options.

Dear Sierrans,

We have the opportunity to change the future of Polk County with a charter amendment! The Growth Cap Coalition has launched a campaign to collect 25,000 petition signatures to get the Growth Management issue on the general election ballot.

Do you know that Polk's growth outpaces Florida and the Nation? Are you aware that our current population is almost 600,000 and growing? Our water supplies are strained and we have massive infrastructure deficits, but our local elected officials keep approving new housing developments.

Our goal is to control urban sprawl, protect water quality, open space, agricultural lands, and wildlife resources, and to promote the efficient use of public funds to provide essential services and infrastructure.

What the Charter Amendment Will Do:

- Limit the total number of residential units allowed under County and municipal comprehensive plans to the total that exists upon approval of the amendment. **Current comprehensive plans will allow housing for another estimated 1.2 million people without another single approval by local government!**
- Set the Urban Service Area to limit sprawl into rural areas
- Help protect water and wildlife resources
- Prevent premature conversion of agricultural lands.
- Can reduce taxes and fees by concentrating development in urban areas.
- Allow for the transfer of residential density from rural areas into urban areas.
- Prevent cities from increasing residential density outside of the established Urban Service Area.
- Apply to both Polk County and all its Municipalities.
- Only applies to residential development. Does not affect industrial, commercial, government, schools.
- Will institutionalize cooperation among cities and the county.
- Will encourage redevelopment in city cores.
- Can make mass transit feasible.

Discourage Sprawl



Support the Charter Amendment

This is going to be quite a task and the campaign needs everyone's help! **We need volunteers** to help collect signatures, make phone calls, and distribute literature.

We need money to pay printing costs for petition forms, campaign literature and signs, newspaper and radio ads, fund appeal mailings, postage and other needs. All donations will be used for this local effort; donations are non-tax deductible.

Make your generous donation payable to Sierra Club – Polk Group and mail to:
Sierra Club – Polk Group
P.O. Box 7544
Winter Haven, FL 33883

FROM THE CHAIR...Paul Anderson

HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY

Florida democracy has failed for Florida Hometown Democracy (FHD). FHD President Lesley Blackner, a Palm beach lawyer who co-founded and leads FHD, said her organization submitted 814,000 petitions - far more than the 611,000 needed to qualify for the November, 2008 ballot. But when the February 1, 2008, deadline was reached the State announced not enough valid petitions had been submitted. There were two major problems. 1. The Supervisor of Elections' offices, which verify and validate ballot petitions, announced a failure rate of 20 to 30 percent in some counties. Because each county still sets its own county rules and standards, there are no statewide standards and confusion continues. It is believed some of the counties used illegal standards to discard petitions. Other counties used technicalities and unreasonable standards to toss many petitions. And, most importantly, some counties said an unspecified number of petitions were never examined, sometimes because they said staff ran out of time. 2. Three weeks before the submission deadline, Secretary of State Kurt Browning took his computer down because it had a "glitch". This left the petition gatherers not knowing the number of validated petitions during the last three weeks. For reasons 1 and 2 the Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club, which had raised \$134,000.00 for FHD, called on Kurt Browning to extend the deadline. I think a county by county analysis of petitions submitted and the failure rate needs to be done. At least in those counties with high failure rates the petitions need to be examined and arguments made if the invalidation of petitions is illegal or unreasonable. Court challenges may be required.

What is suggested Polk Sierrans do is:

1. Write Kurt Browning, Governor Crist, and your state legislative delegation asking the deadline be extended.
2. Ask for legislation setting reasonable statewide standards for validation of petitions, AND validation of ballots. Too many petitioners, and voters, are currently being disenfranchised.
3. Continue to collect and send in FHD petitions in case we have to go on the November 2010 ballot.

Secretary Browning
Telephone: 850.245.6500
secretaryofstate@dos.state.fl.us

Gov. Crist: tel: 850-488-7146
Charlie.Crist@MyFlorida.com

SAW DUST SESSION BIRDS AND EDUCATION WIN

Birds and education are the beneficiaries of a cooperative effort by conservationists and wood workers. Our Bob Taylor has been constructing cypress wood nesting boxes for over four years; he and the Group conceived of this project as a means of funding an environmental scholarship at New College in honor of the late Richard Coleman, a prominent local environmentalist. The Lakeland Wood Workers Club became part of the project in 2007; for them it's an opportunity to provide community service and effectively use state-of-the-art wood working tools provided by Jim Hamer of H a r d w o o d Lumber and Millwork. After the Club's saw-dust session on Feb. 9th, they will have constructed over ninety boxes; all total, approximately 400 boxes have been made.



Photo by Al Dodd

Early spring is prime nesting season for wood ducks and screech owls in this area. These birds are cavity nesters; because of the widespread destruction of native trees, the birds are finding naturally occurring hollows hard to locate. Nesting boxes help remedy that situation. The boxes are made of inch-thick cypress which is highly resistant to decomposition. Home-owners are thrilled at the avian activity within easy viewing distance.

To endow the scholarship, a total of \$25,000 has to be raised; to date the New College account has roughly \$22,500 - the majority of which was supplied by the nesting box project. To adopt a box a minimum donation of \$50 is requested; the Group retains \$15 to cover material costs and all remaining money is sent to the scholarship fund. Boxes have been shipped all over the country. Requests for boxes can be made to Bob at 863 439-2251.

Birds win - education is encouraged - wildlife enthusiasts are pleased - wood working skills are used in community service. For all involved there is no downside.

...Frances Howell-Coleman

AT A GLANCE

Two weeks ago John McCain was the only Senator to duck a crucial vote on the future of clean energy in America -- dooming to failure the measure that would have helped make renewable energy more affordable and accessible. Now it turns out this missed vote is part of a pattern. Last week, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) released the 2007 National Environmental Scorecard giving Senator McCain a score of ZERO. According to the scorecard, McCain was the only member of Congress to skip all 15 crucial environmental votes scored by LCV. ...Carl Pope

On this same scorecard Adam Putnam was ranked at 5% out of 100%.

COLT CREEK PARK TRAM RIDE



Photo by Marian Ryan

Last month Sierrans Billye and Bob Taylor, Jenny Jacobs, and John Ryan enjoyed the flora and fauna in backcountry Colt Creek State Park.



Photo by Chuck Geanangel



Photo by Bob Taylor

The **Whooping Crane** is one of the rarest and most endangered bird species in the world. These birds photographed near Winter Haven are part of a group introduced to form a permanent, non migratory flock here in Polk County. A few have already nested. They are not part of the flock that was lead to Florida by motorized glider.

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

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

Mar. 15	Green Horizon Land Trust Annual Dinner. You don't have to be a member to come enjoy the Green Horizon Land Trust's Annual Dinner & Silent Auction at Historic Bok Sanctuary on Saturday, March 15, 2008 - 5:30 P.M. The Keynote Speaker is Arthur "Artie" Morris, arguably the most renowned bird photographer in the country. He will present "BIRDS AS ART/On the Road." This slide-illustrated lecture features 400 of Artie's spectacular images. As we travel the world, seeing it through his lenses, Artie will tell us all about the birds and other creatures he photographs. A heavy Hors d' Oeuvres Buffet will be catered by everyone's favorite, Chef Terrie Lobb. If you are not a GHLT member and would like to purchase dinner tickets (\$30), please call 863-678-1237. Come early to check out the Silent Auction, and to enjoy the Gardens at Historic Bok Sanctuary.
2nd Wednesdays of the Month Through March	South Lake Howard Nature Park - Winter Haven. Guided nature walk from 8:55 - 9:30AM. Call 863 291-5881 for additional details.
2nd Thursdays of the Month Through March	Lake Hartridge Nature Park - Winter Haven. Guided walks with emphasis on the stormwater treatment system from 3:55 - 4:30PM. Call 863 291-5881 for additional details.
Mar. 8	Trek Ten Trails Guided Hike - Gator Creek Reserve - north of Lakeland off Hwy 98. Hike through pine flatwoods interspersed with cypress domes while, hopefully, observing deer, turkey, fox squirrels, and gopher tortoises. Start 9AM - call Marian at 863 293-6961 for more details.
Apr. 5	Trek Ten Trails Guided Hike - Saddle Creek Nature Trail - just off Hwy 92 between Lakeland and Auburndale. Observe birds and other wildlife as we hike through a wonderful natural enclave in a highly developed area. Start 9AM - call Marian at 293-6961 for more details.
Nov. 1	Water, Wings & Wild Things - Polk's version of Earth Day. This event has been shifted to the fall to additionally celebrate the completion of the Educational Center at Circle B Bar.
Service - These Saturday events are Ridge Ranger projects.	
For start times and more details, call Lynne Flannery at 863 699-3742 or email Lynne.Flannery@MyFWC.com	
Mar. 15	TNC's Tiger Creek Preserve - Babson Park. Stewardship.
Mar. 29	Historic Bok Sanctuary - Lake Wales. Stewardship.
Winter Haven, with the assistance of a grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, has purchased 12 kayaks. Participate in the following events and learn to kayak as you clean up waterbodies in the Peace River watershed. For confirmation of details call the Natural Resource Division at 863 291-5881.	
Mar. 22	Cardboard Boat Races - MLK Park, Lake Silver - Winter Haven. 10AM - noon. Primarily an instruction session.
Apr. 5	Sunset Celebration - McDock, Lake Howard - Winter Haven. 3PM-sunset.
Apr. 19	Chain of Lakes Challenge Take-Out, Lake Hartridge - Winter Haven. 8:30-10AM
Apr. 26	Project EAGLE - Lake Shipp Park - Winter Haven. 8AM-noon. Kayaks are a great way to access and pick up trash at the lake's edge.

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. Florida Seller of Travel Ref. No. ST37115



Sierra Club
Polk Group - Florida Chapter
 P.O. Box 7544
 Winter Haven, FL 33883

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Permit No. 1117
 Lakeland, Florida

Published Monthly

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

MARCH MEETING
 Thursday, March 13, 2008

PROGRAM:

**Understanding the Drought of 2008
 Water Resource Issues and Options**

By

**Edward Hobin, Outreach Coordinator
 Southwest Water Management District**

*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

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

2008 POLK SIERRA GROUP

Paul Anderson
 Chair - 965-8241

Marian Ryan
 Vice-Chair - 293-6961

Jenny Jacobs
 Secretary - 439-1926

Charles Geanangel
 Treasurer - 326-5748

Members-at-large

Gunn Honican

Robert Jackson - 646-1475

Membership - 326-5426

Al Greulich - 967-6783

Robert A. Crabbs
 941-424-2976

Newsletter Publisher
Paul Daniel

Outings Coordinator
 Vacant

FL Chapter Issue Chair
Marian Ryan
 293-6961

Email Tree Coordinator
Jenny Jacobs - 439-1926
jennyjacobs1@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor
Frances Howell-Coleman
 956-3771