

POLK GROUP

Issue: 05-09

VICE NOTES....Frances H. Coleman

Meetings this summer have been very interesting as our Group followed through on the decision to "ride circuit." In June **Gail Bagley** was our hostess when we met in Lakeland and enjoyed "How Democrats and Progressives Can Win" (this DVD is available for loan). A follow-up visit to the storm water retention/recreation park across from Florida Southern on Lake Hollingsworth was a delight. We skipped the June meeting.

In August **Al and Margery Greulich** welcomed us to their home in Auburndale; we socialized and made plans for this next year. At both meetings we had the pleasure of being with Sierrans we don't ordinarily see at the Nature Center in Winter Haven. Because of this fun and success, it has been suggested we take to the road more often; if you would like to volunteer your home or suggest a meeting place, email foleman@tampabay.rr.com In September we meet in Sebring. See the back page for directions.

Al Greulich, Group Executive Committee member, will be our representative at the Sierra Summit in San Francisco this month. He'll come back with new ideas and exciting strategies which will make us more effective.

One change we're already working on: in May we saw a video entitled "Ancient Islands"; this provided an excellent description of how the ridge was shaped during the course of the ice ages. Because "Polk Group" is not an accurate designation for our ridge territory, it was suggested that we change the name of the newsletter to **Ancient Islands** and create a symbol which would highlight some of the natural wonders which are (or have been) special to our area. We need the help of an artist (any volunteers?)

Win! Win! Win! That's what the Memorial Nesting Box project is. Wood ducks and screech-owls are cavity nesters. With habitat destruction, good nesting sites have become increasingly scarce. These boxes help to address that need. Home



Photo by Mary Jo Braddock

owners love to obtain the boxes because they

(Continued on page 2)



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

SEPTEMBER 2005 NEWSLETTER

serving DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk County

CIRCUIT RIDING

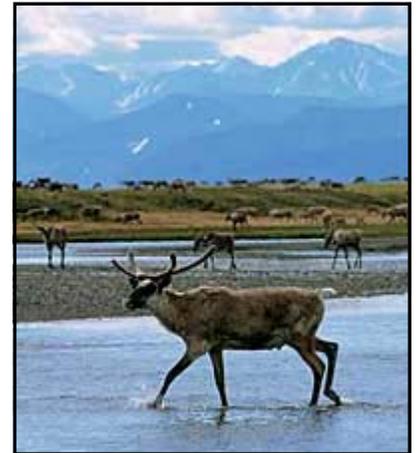
PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER 8, 2005

Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto Sierrans - we're coming to a neighborhood near you! At 6:30PM we will be convening our monthly meeting at Homer's Original Smorgasbord in Sebring (see 4th page for directions). Your issues and activism are urgently requested. If you need further information before the meeting, contact Marian at 863 293-6961 or mryan@pipevines.net

"THIS ISN'T DEMOCRACY – IT'S A MUGGING."

Congress waited until the week before its August recess to do its worst damage: passing an energy bill that lavishes billions of dollars in subsidies upon the oil, gas, nuclear, and coal industries -- more than even President Bush asked for. It also instructs the Department of the Interior to prepare to lease the entire coastline of the United States for oil and gas drilling. As Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope wrote in his blog: "This isn't democracy -- it's a mugging."

Fortunately, drilling the Arctic Refuge was not included, but a critical vote on that issue is coming in September. Because Bush administration allies in Congress snuck projected revenues from Arctic drilling into the \$2.5-trillion budget reconciliation bill, the Arctic Refuge may not get a vote on its own merits. This puts some members of Congress in a terrible bind. ...Insider/Sierra



For some Congressmen the budget bill contains appropriations critical for an ailing state economy; for others, the pressure is on to simply support the President no matter what's in the bill. We need to remind our Senators and Representatives yet once again that Floridians view drilling ANWR as the opening wedge to drilling in Florida Gulf waters and for us, that is not an option!

But if you are assured by Administration promises that Florida Gulf waters are not threatened, remember ANWR deserves protection on its own merits. The Refuge is America's greatest birthing ground for Arctic wildlife, one of the only pristine wilderness areas we have left. Drilling for oil would irreparably harm the nearly 200 species that live there, including polar bears, musk oxen, caribou and 135 different birds.

There is very little usable oil in ANWR and what is there would take more than a decade to extract. This oil would not lower gas prices or reduce our dependence on foreign oil. The best way to lessen our dependence on foreign oil would be for Congress to enact much better fuel efficiency standards. Call, write or email your Congressmen now. ...Frances H. Coleman

(Continued from page 1) Vice Notes

are beautifully constructed from inch-thick cypress; they are attractive additions to any one's yard. And, not to be discounted is the subtle commitment to wildlife a person makes when he puts up a box. The boxes can be obtained by making a minimum donation of \$35 (small box) or \$50 (large); all monies in excess of the actual material costs are redonated to the Richard Coleman Scholarship Fund at New College. Finally, the Group gets great visibility because each box is branded with the Sierra name and address. Richard and Bob Taylor started making the boxes in 2002; together they constructed around fifty. Since Richard's death Bob has perfected the construction technique, held demonstrations and made more than 100.

We have no inventory but Bob will obtain more cypress and start construction in October. Get your orders in early if you're thinking Christmas. And, again, many thanks to Bob.
...Frances H. Coleman

URBAN SPRAWL LEAPFROGS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA

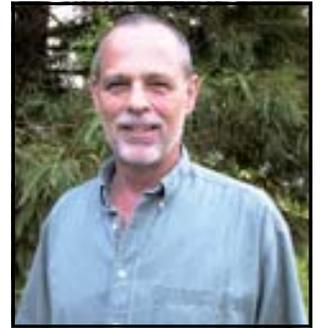
A recent article in The Ledger by New York Times reporter Rick Lyman titled "Exurb: a New Plan for Middle Class", is an upsetting piece for all of us who do not want to see more urban sprawl in Central Florida. The article singles out a housing development near Wesley Chapel in Pasco County called New River Township. About this development the article states "its square mile of tightly packed homes is the outer crest of Tampa's residential swell, four miles from the nearest grocery store and forty minutes from the nearest shopping mall." The article goes on to say that "more than three dozen other communities in Pasco County, some bigger than New River, are in the works, promising 100,000 new homes in the next five years."

The development company responsible for this development, as well as several others on the drawing board like it, is KB Home. Florida is not the only place that KB Home operates. It has 483 communities under development in thirteen states. Most of them promise more uncontrolled sprawl into sparsely settled areas of those states. By the company's own admission, it has targeted undeveloped rural areas of Central Florida for huge developments. One of the masterminds propelling this urban sprawl for KB Home is Swiss born entrepreneur Beat Kahli. Mega development in the middle of nowhere does not seem to be detrimental to this land speculator; there seems to be no concern about "leapfrogging" sprawl beyond services. Mr. Kahli asserts that "most people in Florida are from somewhere else. I was just from someplace a little farther away. Everyone was very accepting of me. There is no way an American could go to where I live in Switzerland and be accepted in this way."

Kudos to the citizens of Switzerland. They must have a good environmental ethic if they would not accept a foreigner coming to their country and forever changing their cherished landscape by financing urban sprawl into the Swiss Alps. For many of us, the unique and beautiful parts of Central Florida that we admire are just as beloved as those Alps are to the Swiss.
...Al Greulich

JOHN RYAN APPOINTED TO POLK PLANNING COMMISSION

John Ryan, was appointed unanimously by the Board of County Commissioners to the Polk County Planning Commission on July 27th. He begins his 4 year term on September 13th. The County Commissioners had been criticized for a number of years about the overwhelming representation of development interests on the Planning Commission. This had occurred in spite of the fact that the land development regulations that created the Planning Commission anticipated a selection of candidates from a number of other areas of expertise such as environmental and agricultural.



County Commissioner Randy Wilkinson asked John if he would be willing to be nominated to the Planning Commission. After considering the implications to his environmental advocacy, John accepted the nomination the day before it was presented to the County Commission.

John and Ellis Hunt, Jr. a citrus grower (president of Hunt Brothers Citrus) and past president of the Polk County Farm Bureau, are the new appointees to the Planning Commission. Planning Commissioner Augie Fragala was reappointed to his seat on the Commission. John replaces Larry Glenn, and Mr. Hunt replaces "Bill" Tiger Read as Planning Commissioners.

...photo and article by Marian Ryan

ONA/FORT GREEN MINE DECISION DELAYED

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has delayed issuing its Final Order for the Mosaic Company's plan to strip mine the headwaters of Horse Creek in Hardee County.

The decision, which was due on August 8, is on hold because Colleen Castille, the Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, has asked the Administrative Law Judge Robert Meale for clarification on several conditions that he outlined in his decision last year.

Charlotte, Sarasota, and Lee Counties and other organizations challenged the FDEP permit for the 4,200 acre Ona/Fort Green mine. The Judge heard the case last year and ruled that the permit could be issued - along with 26 special permit conditions to protect the public and the environment; however, his recommended conditions are not binding.

Castille has asked the judge to be more specific on how to implement some key conditions. Those conditions would provide significant protections for Horse Creek and its wetlands. She also raised questions about how to apply the judge's conditions within the confines of Florida's phosphate laws, saying she wasn't authorized to make such conclusions.
...Marian Ryan

DEVELOPER LOSES BID TO INCREASE DENSITY IN GREEN SWAMP

The developer of a six acre parcel in the Green Swamp attempted to increase allowable density by having the designation changed from "Transitional Area" to "Ridge". If approved, the change would have increased the density from 6 units to 21 units on the property near Lake Susan in Lake County. The site is currently a "non-conforming use" - a lodge, restaurant and convenience store have been operating on the property since the 1940s - long before the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The existing use would not be approved under today's Lake County Comprehensive Plan since those activities create significant environmental impacts. While no one wants to see these activities continue, a large increase in density does not offer a good solution.

The Ridge designation in the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern was determined scientifically, not arbitrarily. The Ridge Land Use category was delineated by mapping those areas above the water line where the Green Swamp rises on its Eastern border to the Ridge Ecosystem. The area of the Ridge within the Green Swamp boundaries is hydrologically connected to the Green Swamp.

The developer asked the Lake County Land Planning Agency to change the property designation to "Ridge" even though the site is in the wetlands portion of the Green Swamp and nowhere near the Ridge.

John Ryan gave testimony about how and why the Ridge designation occurred and supported denial of the new land use designation. After nearly two hours of testimony the Planning Agency (Lake County's equivalent of Polk's Planning Commission) denied the request based on the improper designation of the area as "Ridge" Land Use (7 votes to 2).
....John Ryan

GREEN SWAMP & KISSIMMEE PRAIRIE Featured in myregion.org Publication

The myregion.org Board of Directors meeting held recently in Winter Haven was devoted to the organization's release of the Naturally Central Florida publication. The document, which will be used to educate citizens and community leaders, features the following natural systems and authors:

The St. Johns Mosaic & Econlockhatchee by Bill Belleville
The Indian River Lagoon by Duane De Freese
The Greater Kissimmee Prairie by Robert Dent
The Volusia Conservation Corridor by Clay Henderson
The Green Swamp by Marian Ryan
The Wekiva-Ocala Greenway by Keith Schue
The Lake Wales Ridge by Gaye Sharpe

Myregion.org is a partnership of community leaders from Polk, Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Volusia counties. The objective of the Naturally Central Florida initiative is to bring together the elements necessary to preserve these seven key Central Florida habitats. The document is available on line at:

http://www.nasites.com/cmprojects/projects/MyRegion/docs/ncfl_book.pdf
....Marian Ryan

SHOW YOU CARE BY WHERE YOU SPEND

After more than a decade, Exxon has still not kept its promise to pay for the extreme damage that resulted from the Exxon Valdez spill in Prince William Sound. This company is leading the lobbying efforts in DC to open ANWR to drilling. And while you and I are watching gasoline prices soar, Exxon is reaping record profits...over \$25.3 billion in 2004 - money that is paying for junk science designed to stall action on global warming. None of the Big Oil companies have clean environmental records, but you don't need to spend your hard earned dollars with the worst of the worst.
...edited from Insider/Sierra

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/>

Sept. 8-11 Sierra Summit. Plan on going to the Sierra Club National Environmental Convention and Expo in San Francisco. As of now the headliners are: Summit Speaker Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Columnist Arianna Huffington, Comedian Bill Maher, Chez Panisse Chef Alice Waters and Linguist Dr. George Lakoff. Get more information and register at www.sierrasummit2005.org

Sept. 10 Landscaping with Native Plants Workshop. This 9-10:30AM event is sponsored by Florida Yards & Neighborhoods and City of Lakeland Adopt-A-Lake Program at the Kelly Recreation Center, Lakeland. A free plant is offered to the first 25 people who register. For more information call Anne at 863 519-8677, ext 121.

Oct. 1 Florida Black Bear Festival. This annual event is held at Caldwell Park in Umatilla, the "Gateway to Ocala National Forest."

Oct. 15 Peace River Clean Up/Ecofest. A river clean-up is being hosted by Keep Polk County Beautiful in coordination with the FL Coastal Clean Up. The event starts at 8AM at the Fort Meade Outdoor Recreation Area. Free canoe and kayak rentals are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is a free cookout for volunteers after the clean up. Sierra will be one of the environmental exhibitors. Information: 533-8423

Dec. 9-11 Florida Sierra's Annual Conservation Conference. Join us at beautiful Luther Springs - the programs are excellent and the food terrific. Details and registration forms will be in the Fall Pelican.

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 many 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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Polk Group - Florida Chapter
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 Winter Haven, FL 33883

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SEPTEMBER MEETING

Thursday, September 8, 2005

PROGRAM

Outreach and Strategic Planning

or

**Bringing Sierrans Together to Solve Problems
 (and Have a Fun Evening!)**

*General Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting Run
 Concurrently*

Join Sierrans from Polk, Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto Counties at Homer's Original Smorgasbord, 1000 Sebring Square, Sebring (863 386-1440) for the last of our summer circuit riding meetings. We will start to eat at 6:30PM and by 7:15 intend to be in active discussion of the issues that are troubling you.

Homer's is in a shopping center at the intersection of US 27 and Memorial Drive across the street from Walmart. You can't see Homer's from the road; you have to drive into the shopping center that includes a Winn-Dixie. Dinner is approximately \$6-\$8 for the buffet and we have a room reserved.

In October we return to the Audubon Nature Center in Winter Haven.

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

The Polk Group newsletter is published monthly by
 Sierra Club, Polk Group, P.O. Box 7544, Winter Haven, FL 33883

Sierra Membership Application

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (optional): () _____ FRIP No 3311

- 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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