

Florida Fish and Wildlife News

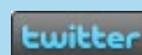


Florida Wildlife Federation

Keeping the Wild in Florida since 1936!

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Volume 30, Issue 1

Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

February 2016



FWF board, staff, friends and hosts at the Crystal River NWR on Saturday, January 23, 2016. FWF showed support for Malheur NWR in Oregon. Federal land is public land - land held in trust for the benefit of ALL AMERICANS and future generations. Special thanks to Ivan Vicente and Andrew Gude of the Crystal River NWR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, who provided an excellent field trip for the FWF visitors.

Photo by Lou Kellenberger.

2016 Legislative Session

by Preston Robertson and Jay Liles

We are now in Week 3 of the eight week 2016 Legislative Session and

sometimes the headlines say it all. Below are some of the better observations of the actions taken in weeks 2 and 3 of the Legislature as bills move forward that unfortunately give short shrift to the cause of conservation and retaining Florida as a special place to live. Thank goodness there are only six weeks left.

Water

Burt Eno: New law does little to help water crisis

Ocala Star-Banner

Are you thirsty yet, Florida?

You will be. The state Legislature just passed a water bill which caters to Big Ag

and Big Business. This bill was passed in the first week of the 2016 legislative session and was signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott a week later.

What's wrong with this bill? Simple. It doesn't conserve water and it doesn't prevent water from being polluted with nitrates. As a result, we are going to see a continuance of depletion of our aquifer and growth of algae in our rivers, streams and springs. This comes from overpumping of ground water and continued deposition of nitrates from fertilizers, animal waste and septic tanks.

Our state agencies have recently derived reports for minimum flows and levels, plans for limiting nitrate pollution, and best management practices for agricultural operations. Unfortunately, these limits and plans have no teeth, no enforcement. They cannot achieve their desired outcomes.

Recognizing that, 1000 Friends of Florida, Sierra Club, Florida Springs Council and other major environmental organizations (*editor's note: including FWF*) tried to offer amendments to the water bill to include some measures of conservation and pollution control enforcement. Our

legislators didn't listen.

With this approach to our water treatment, we can soon expect that Florida will displace California on the Thirst Index and we will be drinking unhealthy water.

Land

HB 1075, by Representative Caldwell, deals with the surplus (read "sale of") valuable state lands, including conservation lands. The bill passed the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee on February 1 and is headed for its final committee of reference, State Affairs. FWF is opposing this bill.

The Senate bill companion to the above bill has not yet been calendared for its first committee of reference, Environmental Preservation and Conservation. **Please contact the chair, Senator Dean at (850) 487-5005, and urge him not to agenda the bill (SB 1290).**

We know from the success of Amendment 1 that conservation of important natural lands still has the utmost significance to

LEGISLATIVE con't page 7

Announcing the 79th Annual Conservation Awards Banquet June 25, 2016 at the Bradenton Courtyard Marriott/Riverfront.

Please mark your calendars! Stay tuned for more about the events June 24-26, 2016.

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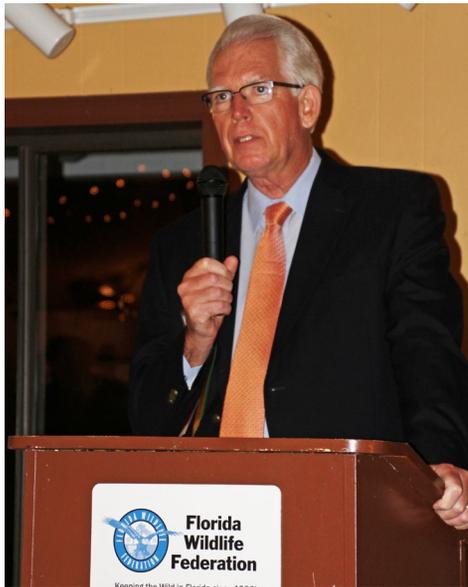
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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

by Steve O'Hara



Keep Public Lands in Public Hands

The standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon is an eruption of pus from a long-festering sepsis – fear by a few of federal ownership and oversight of public lands.

In the West, the controversy is over who controls how public land is used. Property rights advocates contend that the United States Constitution does not grant Congress broad authority to regulate activities on federal land, but merely grants the federal government the right to own land within states subject to state and local land-use and real property law. Although this question was answered by the United States Supreme Court in 1976, holding that the Constitution gives Congress both the power of an owner and a legislature over the public domain, the controversy

obviously still exists at a level so toxic that a life has been lost.

The controversy is not confined to the Western states. Even here, in Florida, a few citizens resent the federal government's control of those citizens' access to and use of public lands.

Thankfully, both common sense and a sense of the public good usually prevail. There are many examples of property rights advocates and governmental representatives working together to overcome land and water use disagreements.

The Florida Wildlife Federation's Board of Directors held its last meeting in Crystal River, Florida, and had a first-hand look at how collaboration and cooperation can heal wounds of toxic disagreement. The Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1983 specifically to protect the Florida manatee. Some local citizens resented resulting restrictions on the way they used the local waters. They felt threatened by federal regulation of their traditional recreational activities.

Over time, however, the local citizens and the federal government learned to collaborate and cooperate and build partnerships allowing for a symbiotic co-existence. Consequently, both the Florida manatee and the wildlife refuge have become not only major eco-tourist attractions but also mainstays of the local economy.

One local organization warrants special mention. Save Crystal River, Inc., is committed to maintaining and protecting a unique quality of life in that part of Florida. This organization, which at one time filed a lawsuit challenging the "endangered" status of the Florida manatee, has evolved over time. As stated in its website, www.savecrystalriver.com, members of the "community can work together to provide opportunities for individuals seeking to engage in all waterborne recreational activities while safely treasur-

ing the diverse and extraordinary natural resource components that make this our home."

A shining example of the good and healing work of Save Crystal River, Inc., is the King's Bay Restoration Project. King's Bay comprises more than 600 acres and is fed by multiple first and second magnitude springs which are the headwaters of Crystal River.

This eight-week restoration project, funded by the Florida Legislature in 2015, removed more than 8000 cubic feet of toxic algae from three canals that feed King's Bay. The algae chokes the local springs, depletes the oxygen, crowds out native plants, and threatens manatees. After its removal, native grasses were planted and protected, allowing them to take root and grow. As a consequence, more

than 70 spring vents were unclogged and reopened. More than 99% of the phosphorus and 40 to 70% of the nitrogen, which had been polluting the water, was removed as part of the process.

Save Crystal River, Inc. partnered with numerous others to make this project successful. Communication, collaboration, and cooperation overcame suspicion and distrust. As a result, the door has been opened to full restoration of King's Bay.

There is much more to do. The estimated cost to complete the project is \$40 million over the next eight years. Hopefully, the Florida legislature will continue to fund this restoration.

There are many ways for individuals to help. For more information, go to <https://kingsbaypilotrestorationproject.com/get-involved>.

2015 FWF Photo Contest Winners

FWF is pleased to announce the winners of the 2015 Photo Contest. This year, we were grateful to have David Moynahan of Tallahassee as our judge for the contest for the second time. He is an excellent photographer and a member of the Federation. Thank you to the over 500 photographers who entered, and to David for taking the time to review over 750 photos that were entered. You will find other winning photos from the contest throughout FFWN. Visit www.snappiephoto.com to view the winners online and we hope you enter the next contest starting in May 2016.



Overall Winner

The American Flamingo, by Al Hoffacker, Bunche Beach Preserve, FL

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Manley Fuller



Dear Friends of Florida Wildlife Federation,

Florida Wildlife Federation is greatly concerned that a number of our officials do not appreciate and value our public conservation lands. You can see that with the Amendment 1 funding which unfortunately we have had to legally challenge. The Legislature has, despite overwhelming public support, failed to properly fund Florida conservation lands protection. Moreover, it underfunds state lands management and then complains that the lands are not properly managed. This is circular reasoning. Efforts to get rid of public lands continue despite strong public opposition.

Our beautiful conservation lands are places to enjoy the outdoors and a magnet for tourists and Florida residents alike as well as vital fish and wildlife habitat. Florida's state parks have won many awards for exemplary management and high quality visitor experiences. Please read Dana Bryan's commentary of the current efforts to change our state parks on page 10. One of the traditional roles of Florida's state parks has been to provide our citizens and visitors opportunities to experience natural Florida. Traditional forest management at state parks has long included working closely with the Florida Forest Service to restore native forest types rather than active rotational timber management. While we support sustainable hunting within state wildlife management areas, we believe the state parks should remain un hunted. Hunting is also currently allowed in two state reserves but not in parks. In certain state park units, which when acquired contained improved pasture, cattle grazing leases have been allowed. That said, but grazing has not

been allowed in natural habitats. Currently there are proposals to significantly expand state park grazing.

FWF supports large scale wildlife corridors linking private and public conservation lands across the state. Amendment 1 dollars should be used to build and maintain these corridors through negotiation of permanent conservation easements with willing private landowners and acquisition of strategic conservation lands to augment existing public conservation lands. Florida now has over 20 million residents and is continuing to grow at a fast clip, and as development spreads and new highways are built more pressure is being generated on wildlife habitat. It is time to move forward with crucial land protection projects from North Florida to the Everglades.

FWF and the National Wildlife Federation were co-hosts of the 2016 annual Everglades Coalition Conference. Collin O'Mara, NWF President and CEO, and I jointly spoke at the award's ceremony at the conference closing. FWF played an important role at the conference. FWF Board Member Terry Gibson moderated a panel of both experienced recreational anglers and commercial fishermen concerning the highly significant fishery in Florida Bay and the ongoing crisis there with lack of freshwater inflows, hypersensitivity and algal blooms. I moderated a panel looking at the lessons learned from restoration activities on the Gulf Coast, coastal Louisiana and the Everglades and the nexus between those projects. My panel included former U.S. Senator and Governor Bob Graham; John Hankinson, Jr., former EPA regional director; Howard Gonzales, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers; Dr. Fred Sklar, South Florida Water Management District; and David Muth, NWF Gulf Restoration Director. All of the participants on my panel have a great deal of experience and knowledge working on behalf of major aspects of both Gulf and Everglades restoration. Franklin Adams presented on a panel regarding the Big Cypress National Preserve and its critical role as a "freshwater reserve" for the western Everglades. Nancy Payton, FWF's Southwest Field Representative, was an active participant at the conference as were FWF Board Members Billy Causey, Ned Stone and Martha Musgrove. FWF's newest board member Julia Yarbough (welcome aboard), also attended the conference. Martha Musgrove and I were also able to attend a C111 canal groundbreaking in south Dade County.

Major issues at the conference included the dire straits in which Florida

FWF Scholarship Update

10 Years + \$117,000 + 40 Scholars Supported =
A Brighter Future For Us All!

It's been 10 years already! That's how long the Florida Wildlife Scholarship has been in existence at the University of Florida's Ecology Department. What began as a dream over lunch, is now a growing and important part of securing the future of Florida's land, water and wildlife.

Through the generosity of many FWF members the Scholarship Fund now stands at more than \$117,000 and is growing each year. During the past 10 years the FWF Scholarship Fund has granted awards from \$500 to \$1500 to more than 40 UF Ecology Scholars who plan to work in Florida after their graduation. In 2015 we supported two students selected by the Department to receive awards. In other years there have been as many as 5 students who received awards.

The FWF Scholarship Fund is a vital way in which we help to insure that there are properly educated professionals who will continue to work to protect Florida and the resources that we all love so much. Some have remembered FWF in their Will and designated that their gift go to the Scholarship Fund. All donations are appreciated and go directly to the FWF Scholarship Fund at UF.

To all who have helped this important work grow - thank you! I especially want to thank the Ehrhart Family Foundation of Venice, Florida, for substantial annual gifts that helped us get where we are today with the Fund. To those who have not yet considered a gift to the Scholarship Fund, we invite you to consider it now. We've grown from an initial gift of \$5,000 to more than six figures now, and the future for its growth has never looked brighter!

Thank you all very much.

Sincerely,
Tim O'Brien, FWF Eagle Member

To make an online donation to the FWF Scholarship Fund, please go to:
<https://www.uff.ufl.edu/OnlineGiving/FundDetail.asp?FundCode=013403>

You may also send your donation to the FWF office, P.O. Box 6870, Tallahassee, Florida 32314. Attn D. Hines.



Bay finds itself. We must move forward with critical Everglades restoration components of moving clean water south from the Water Conservation Areas to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. There is a great need for the Legislature to provide long-term funding for Everglades restoration and critical land acquisition in partnership with Congress.

A very troubling item reported at the conference was the continued spread and increase in the exotic Black and White Tegú population. Tegús are large carnivorous lizards, originally from Argentina, that consume a variety of small animals and eggs. They actually pose a statewide threat as they are able to tol-



Overall Runner-Up

Surreal, by Robbyn C. Spratt
Sebastian Inlet, FL

erate cold weather in part due to their use of burrows. They are a problem now both in portions of the Everglades and near Tampa where they have been docu-

PRESIDENT con't page 5

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REPORT

by Nancy Anne Payton, Southwest Florida Field Representative



Panthers Get Safe Passage

In response to a study commissioned by Florida Wildlife Federation, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) announced it will be installing wildlife exclusionary fencing along the nine mile stretch of Alligator Alley I-75 from the FakaUnion Canal Bridge west to the Naples toll booth in Collier County.

Since 2004, there have been 14 Florida panthers killed by collisions with vehicles on this nine mile segment. It is the deadliest highway for Florida panthers and the only section of Alligator Alley I-75 without wildlife exclusionary fencing.

In 2015, FWF, alarmed by the increasing panther death count, commissioned a study by transportation ecologist Dr. Daniel Smith. He recommended fencing the nine miles and improving wildlife movement under the Miller and FakaUnion Canals. Dr. Smith also suggested two new wildlife underpasses between the Miller Canal Bridge and Naples toll booth.

Dr. Smith's report is available upon request from nancypayton@fwfonline.org.

FDOT Secretary Jim Boxold expressed appreciation to Florida Wildlife Federation "for bringing this concern to our attention" and also stated "FDOT supports Florida panther recovery efforts."

In addition to the exclusionary fencing, FDOT will reset the existing rubble riprap under the west side of the FakaUnion Canal Bridge and both sides under the Miller Canal



Bridge to create a comfortable 2ft wide pathway for wildlife use.

Look closely at accompanying photo and you will see a panther finding his way through rubble riprap under the Miller Canal Bridge. This



rubble riprap will be rearranged to create a comfortable 2ft wide pathway for use by panthers and other wildlife.

It is important to maintain habitat connectivity for panthers and other wildlife because Picayune Strand State Forest is on the south side and Collier County's North Belle Meade Natural Resource Protection Area is on the north side of this currently exposed stretch of Alligator Alley I-75.

The Florida panther has been on the U.S. Endangered Species list since 1967. They once roamed across the entire southeastern United States. The only breeding population, estimated at 180 animals, is in South Florida.

Collisions with vehicles are the major cause of panther mortality. Thirty Florida panthers were killed on Florida's highways in 2015. Where fencing and underpasses are installed, the deaths drop to almost zero.



"Mrs. Ricky" Pires and FWF President Manley Fuller meet in January to discuss how FWF can help expand FGC's Florida Panther Posse and Bear Brigade Programs across Florida.



Florida Gulf Coast University "Wings of Hope"

January 04, 2016

RE: Florida Gulf Coast University "Wings of Hope" Program "Donation of Hope"

Dear FWF,

The FGCU "Wings of Hope" program and thousands of students and teachers thank you for building bridges of hope for South Florida's wildlife and the environment by awarding the program funding for the printing of the CREW Hiking Adventure program journals, Bear Brigade journals, book-markers, and purchase of the infrared video camera.

During the FGCU 2015 fall semester, the "Wings of Hope" program, with the assistance of 250 Florida Gulf Coast University students, presented the Florida Panther Posse program to over 4,500 students in Lee and Collier County. The students educated over 10,000 family members, friends and the community on the Florida panther, wildlife, water conservation, and how to live with the panther and black bear.

They are looking forward to the CREW hiking adventure during the FGCU spring semester. I will be leading them with my staff and FGCU students. It's so important to continue their connection with the natural world by hiking them in a 60,000 acre watershed.

The infrared video camera will help with the Panther Posse's continued wildlife underpass research. The photos and videos aid Florida panther biologists and promote educational awareness of wildlife underpasses as safe passage.

More Bear Brigade programs are scheduled in the Collier area for the spring semester to educate youth and their families about co-existing with black bears. The Collier Bear Brigade is looking forward to connecting with the Orlando Bear Brigade with letters to their new "Bear Buddies."

Thanks for your continued support. We would be thrilled and honored to have you join us during a CREW hiking trip.

Sincerely,

"Mrs. Ricky"

Ricky Pires, Founder and Director FGCU "Wings of Hope" Program
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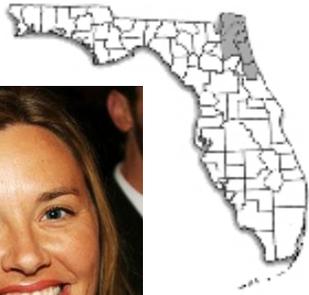


Pinecrest Elementary School (Immokalee) Panther Posse junior biologists enjoy a FWF-sponsored field trip to CREW public lands.

NORTHEAST FLORIDA REPORT

by Sarah Owen Gledhill, FWF's Northeast Florida Planning Advocate

PRESIDENT from page 3



Pass the Torch

The Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute of Florida hosted Northeast Florida's first ever Pass the Torch event at the J. Johnson Art Gallery. By nomination only, 50 of the region's young environmental stars were gathered for an amazing event to be honored and most importantly start networking with each other as we look towards the future of environmental advocacy. The room was full of dedicated individuals who specialize in eco-tourism, urban planning, land conservation, getting youth outdoors, recycling, energy conservation, marine protection and more. The two key note speakers were past Mayor of Jacksonville and now UNF President John Delaney and the iconic Neil Armingeon, the Matanzas Riverkeeper.



Sarah Owen Gledhill with FWF Board Member and Pass the Torch Mentor Mark Middlebrook.

I was honored to be one of the nominees selected not only because I fell into the "young category" but also for the recognition of what the Federation has accomplished in the last twelve years we have had an office in Northeast Florida. There are so many leaders in our community that I look up to and hope I can come close to filling their shoes as the torch is passed.



Sarah with Dr. Quint White (FWF 2015 Marine Conservationist of the Year) and Neil Armingeon, the Matanzas Riverkeeper, at Pass the Torch.

Battle for the Barriers

St. Augustine's Film Festival hosted the *Battle for the Barriers*, which the Federation was instrumental in producing. Viewed at the Corazon Cinema, the attendees explored adaptation strategies and projects in coastal states along the Eastern US seaboard which are designed to help safeguard people, wildlife and properties in these storm and flood prone areas. The film's emphasis is on the Coastal Barriers Resources Act (CBRA). Northeast Florida is home to a number of CBRA units that safeguard our homes but also save the American taxpayers billions of dollars every year. These CBRA units, in many cases, are open for public recreation. We suggest you explore the CBRA units near you and see what priceless gems they are. To find your closest CBRA unit, please access the following website <http://www.fws.gov/cbra/Maps/Mapper.html>.

Florida Wildlife Federation is promoting *Battle for the Barriers* as an educational tool for those living near the coast.

St. Johns County Defends Denial of Development Project

In September 2015, St. Johns County denied (3-2 vote) a large development proposed for the southern part of the county. The developer has filed an appeal to overturn the county's decision. In what could have resulted in a move to accede to special interests, the county commissioners voted unanimously to uphold and defend their decision in court.

The Kings Grant development would be a first of its kind, regarding the level of development, in a region known for its rural lifestyle, agricultural opportunities, water quality and wildlife habitat linkages. This proposal may set the stage for an area that could benefit from a comprehensive visioning process which would allow the various stakeholders to look at how the region should grow.

The Federation is proud to see our friends, the South Anastasia Community Association (SACA), throw their hat in the ring and help St. Johns County uphold its denial of this massive development.

mented consuming gopher tortoise eggs. The Black and White Tegus and the Nile monitor lizard are yet another injurious exotic along with the Burmese python. We need better control of the importation and trade of these and other organisms with invasive potential. Some federal and state officials currently have much better legal tools to deal with agricultural pests than do the U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Revisions to the federal Lacey Act by Congress to provide the U.S. Department of Interior and partnering state fish and wildlife agencies the equivalent authority with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to address invasive exotic plants and animals would be a very useful tool in addressing invasive species.

Another serious problem land managers face is finding sufficient funds to address invasive plants. This is particularly a problem at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Palm Beach County (please see Martha Musgrove's article).

The Florida Wildlife Federation is seeking to expand our work promoting more wildlife crossings at critical junctions for wildlife movement. We are encouraging the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to do all it can to reduce human food habituation with bears and to base its management decisions on the best data and models. We are also encouraging the Commission to support a series of bear sanctuaries in prime bear habitat across the state.

On the marine side, FWF is supporting establishment of more areas to protect reef fish spawning aggregation. Florida Wildlife Federation has begun showing a film, "Battle for the Barriers," which highlights the values of the Coastal Barrier Resource Units along our coast. We welcome opportunities to show the film in your area.

Thank you very much for your critical membership and support of the Florida Wildlife Federation!

Manley

New Northeast Office Space

The FWF Northeast Florida office has started the New Year with a new address. FWF is now in the heart of downtown St. Augustine at 88 Riberia Street. The office is on the Fourth floor of the Solla-Carcaba Cigar Factory Building, completed in 1909, which is the last remaining remnant of St. Augustine's cigar industry. This location will heighten our visibility with the tourists and locals as well as help FWF to engage with Flagler College students.

New FWF Northeast office.





Preston Robertson
Vice-President for Conservation &
General Counsel

How about some good news?

As someone who has dealt with state government and the many disappointments that are associated with that effort, it is easy to get discouraged, especially for someone who cares about our fragile and unique environment and what we hope to leave our children. Thankfully, there is some good news in our nation and maybe even for Florida as far as power production. That news centers on offshore wind power and the potential to limit greenhouse gas emissions going into the atmosphere even as we work with the forces of nature, not against them.

At present, most electricity producing wind turbines generate 1 to 2 megawatts (MWs) of energy, with the largest being 8 megawatts. Thankfully, collaboration amongst Sandia National Laboratories, the University of Virginia, the University of Illinois and other schools has greatly increased the possibility of building a low-cost turbine that will produce 50 MWs. To have that much production, the blades of this structure will be more than 650 feet long - the length of two football fields. But it is not only size that matters in this case, it is design. Traditional blades are very stiff so as to not break during major wind events. Moreover, the mass of traditional blades is problematic for structural integrity as well as cost and energy production. The new blade designs are very different. They are based on the actions of our cabbage palm, which twist and bend with the wind. Known as SUMR (Segmented Ultralight Morphing Rotor) turbines, the blades actually bend and align with the direction of the wind. When the winds calm down, the blades spread out and maximize energy



Female black bear up a tree in Volusia County, courtesy of Clay Henderson.

generation. Again, the blades act like palm fronds.

Manufactured in segments, the enormous blades would be simpler to transport than traditional blades.

It is true that these proposed structures must be placed in areas that will have the least possibility for bird strikes and, of course, the marine environment must be taken into account. Also, navigational issues must be dealt with.

The goal of the US Department of Energy seeks to obtain 20% of the nation's energy with carbon-free wind power by 2030. As climate change increases, this is a most worthy goal.

Amendment 1 Lawsuit Update

FWF's lawsuit against the Legislature continues as both sides file motions in anticipation of the final court order on the merits in this important matter. Our case, in Leon County Circuit court, seeks to have the court give direction to the Legislature as to Amendment 1 spending. In 2015, and at present in the ongoing 2016 Session, the Legislature has used Amendment 1 funds for unrelated state expenses and not for conservation as required by the Florida Constitution. Please stay tuned as the case moves forward.

Preston T. Robertson



FWF Staff and friends at St. Marks NWR supporting Malheur NWF in Oregon.

Malheur and beyond: Our public-lands heritage under siege

The Florida Wildlife Federation has long supported public lands as American treasures to be passed from one generation to the next. This is the legacy President Teddy Roosevelt intended for all of us when he created the very first National Wildlife Refuge here in Florida in 1903 at Pelican Island. Even as some misguided people have occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon, the truth of the matter is that this land is indeed in public ownership, it is not owned by individual public members, but all 300 plus million citizens of this nation. -Preston Robertson

Here is what a local Oregonian has to say about this situation:

Local residents and officials have made it clear the armed militants who took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge don't speak for them. Americans across the country have made it abundantly clear through their support of parks, outdoor recreation, wildlife and conservation that they don't speak for us on national public lands.

Once the armed takeover has been resolved, the authorities will have to sort through the various violations. Right now, what's crystal clear is how badly the armed lawbreakers trampled all over bedrock American principles. There's nothing more American than our national public lands, where people of all means and backgrounds can hunt, fish, paddle, camp, hike and watch wildlife. The public lands belong to all Americans, not just those who live nearby. They are managed for many purposes, including sustaining the fish and wildlife populations that make this country the envy of the world.

However, what the militants wanted to do at the point of a gun, state legislators across the West and members of Congress want to do at the point of a

pen – raid our shared public-lands heritage for ideological wins and the private gain for a few.

The majority of Westerners don't support such un-American impulses. A new, bipartisan poll of voters in the West, where the bulk of the nation's public lands are located, found strong public support to protect and maintain our outdoor legacy. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents oppose giving states control of the public lands owned by all Americans.

Last year, the National Wildlife Federation and its Western state affiliates helped defeat 21 bills in state legislatures that promoted shifting public lands to state control. The number of people rallying for public lands at statehouses from New Mexico to Nevada dwarfed the small contingent holed up at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

The National Wildlife Federation and its state affiliates have worked for years on constructive, local solutions that improve public land management by finding common ground between ranchers, loggers, hunters, anglers, hikers, and other interests.

We need to stand up to the fringe elements in Burns, Ore., who seize our public lands at gunpoint – and the fringe politicians in state houses and Congress who would hijack the legislative process to do the same thing.

In coming weeks, there will be much to address in Congress and statehouses, but there's something easy we can do now. The Association of Northwest Steelheaders is joining the National Wildlife Federation and other state affiliates to ask Americans to send a message that we oppose these takeovers of the public's lands and support conservation: buy a federal Duck Stamp. Duck hunters must buy one every year and others buy them to support wildlife and habitat. Today, ninety-eight cents of every dollar spent on federal Duck Stamps go directly to purchase vital habitat or acquire conservation easements for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Let's demonstrate the importance of our national public lands by investing in conservation and sending our message to state and federal lawmakers.

Bob Rees is a sixth-generation Oregonian, a fishing guide and executive director of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders, one of the oldest conservation organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

LEGISLATIVE from page 1

the vast majority of Floridians. These lands are the places where our natural heritage is conserved and protected, including wildlife, their habitat, and our precious water resources. They also provide public recreation for our exploding population and are integral to our economy and way of life.

These bills threaten Florida's ability to acquire, preserve and manage state conservation lands. As denoted by the below news article, these bills are highly problematic.

####

Legislators using wrong yardstick to measure conservation lands

Lakeland Ledger, by Tom Palmer

To read provisions of one bill (*ed. - the above-noted water bill*) that has already passed and another that's still being discussed during this year's session of the Florida Legislature, you wouldn't know that two years ago Florida voters overwhelmingly voted to fund more purchases of conservation lands in this state.

Tucked into the 134-page water bill that the Legislature quickly passed and Gov. Rick Scott signed is a mandate to analyze how much not only what the state is spending and planning to spend on conservation lands, but also what federal, regional and local agencies are planning to spend. In addition the law mandates an analysis of the total percentage of the state that is publicly owned conservation land and an analysis of the impact on local property tax revenues.

Finally the new law requires to identify gaps between what it costs to manage conservation lands and the revenue they produce and the difference in the cost of buying and managing land and the cost of purchasing conservation easements and leaving management to the landowner.

Another bill (**HB 1075**) ups the ante on the reporting by also requiring state officials create a database that is to be updated every five years that includes not only lands purchased for conservation but also lands under state or federal conservation easements. They also want cities and counties to supply the state with a list of their conservation property to include in this database.

In addition, the bill asks for a study of the feasibility of including privately-owned conservation lands, all lands from which development rights have been transferred and all lands where zoning regulations either do not allow development or restrict development to one home to 40 or more acres, such as the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern. The bill also allows land conservation funds to be used for some of the public works projects mentioned in the new water policy.

The listing of all of the public conservation lands in Florida is not the problem. The land was bought by public agencies

with taxpayer money. This should all be a matter of public record anyway. What's troubling is the narrow economic focus.

When the state buys land for a new state park or forest or similar use that purchase removes the land from the tax roll, though usually the land was greenbelted farm land that didn't pay much property taxes anyway. Critics of acquiring land for conservation appear obsessed with the idea of these purchases seriously affect the tax base. If you only look at property taxes, you're not looking at the entire picture.

These lands generate tourism, which yields tourist taxes, sales taxes, gas taxes and money in the pocket of local businesses who hire people and pay taxes. A 2006 study put the economic impact of wildlife viewing alone at more than \$1 billion.

They also provide what are known as ecosystem services such as providing flood protection, carbon sequestration, aquifer recharge, pollinator diversity.

The examination of whether conservation lands are financially self-sustaining appears to set the stage for renewed arguments for commercializing state parks rather than a serious public policy discussion on the amount of public financial support state parks deserve and whether something as simple as enacting an escalator provision in state park admission prices would do the trick.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to let your legislators know how you feel about this issue while the bill is still being considered.

Again - please contact the chair, Senator Charlie Dean at (850) 487-5005, and tell him you oppose the bill and to please not agenda the bill (SB 1290).

Pollution

HB191 by Rep. Rodrigues

"Fracking" bills are speeding through the legislature and the results may be harmful to your water and your health. The bills, backed by the oil and gas industry, not only enable the dangerous drilling practice in places like the Everglades, but they would force local communities to accept it. Research shows that fracking has caused water contamination and air pollution, massive amounts of fresh water usage, and led to declining property values.

However, ignoring overwhelming public opposition, HB191 by Rep. Rodrigues passed the full House of Representatives last week 73-45. Now the debate carries over to the State Senate where the companion measure, SB 318 by Senator Richter, will be heard in Senate Appropriations. FWF opposes these bills, in part, because Florida's karstic (that is swiss cheese-like) topography will not be able to contain the chemicals that are part of the fracking process.

Resolve to Restore the Gulf Coast

by Jessica Koelsch
National Wildlife Federation
Florida Policy Specialist

The New Year brings both reflection on the past and planning for the future. This past year was an important one for the Florida's Gulf Coast: more than five years after the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, there was finally a legal settlement with BP. In the coming years, Florida will receive more of the oil spill penalties than ever before; now that is something to celebrate!

Florida's Gulf Coast Counties will each receive a portion of these dollars via various legal avenues and they will have different strings attached. But the funds have one thing in common: It will take vision and real commitment to spend this money wisely and in a way that truly heals the Gulf.

One excellent example of wise in-

vestment in meaningful restoration would be the creation of Estuary Programs. Places like Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor, the Big Bend, and Apalachicola, have a significant impact on the local ecology and economy, providing benefits to fish and wildlife, as well as residents, visitors, and businesses. Whereas National Estuary Programs (NEPs) already exist in Southwest Florida, establishing Estuary Programs in Northwest Florida would facilitate restoration efforts that would have the biggest impact on improving water quality and coastal habitat in places such as Pensacola Bay, St. Andrews Bays, Choctawhatchee Bay and Apalachicola.

And this is exactly what's needed along the Gulf coast. The health of many of Florida's estuaries—the nurseries of the sea—have declined over the decades. The oil spill funds are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make this right.

This year, Floridians should resolve to ensure these penalty monies are dedicated to projects that restore the coast and increase the resiliency of our communities while boosting our economy.

Solar Choice Petition Drive Update



Floridians for Solar Choice

On Monday January 11th, Solar Choice leaders hosted a press conference in Tallahassee to discuss the future of the coalition and opposition to the misleading utility-backed petition. While it is disappointing that we fell short of gathering all the petitions we needed to qualify for the 2016 ballot, the Solar Choice coalition is moving forward and is growing stronger than ever before. As a key supporter of Solar Choice, here's what you need to know to continue to fight for solar in the Sunshine State:

1. Keep collecting Solar Choice petitions! We are exploring the option of placing the Solar Choice amendment on the 2018 ballot and are continuing to gather signatures. Every petition collected is valid for 24 months from the date that it is signed, so we encourage you to continue to mail your petitions in on a weekly basis to keep the momentum going! Remember - every petition signed represents another Florida voter who wants access to affordable solar power. This is an incredibly powerful message to legislators as we

continue the fight to advance good solar policy in our state.

2. Speaking of good solar policy...we may need your help at the State Capitol soon: The Florida legislative session kicked off January 12th and there are a few bipartisan solar policies that are already moving through committees as a direct result of the momentum from the Solar Choice campaign that you helped to grow. We will alert you when there are ways for you to get involved in the coming weeks, including reaching out to your representatives, attending events, and voicing your support, so stay tuned!

3. Our coalition is fighting the monopoly utility-backed petition: On Monday, we joined other parties in filing briefs with the Florida Supreme Court opposing the utility-backed amendment, which was created to maintain the status quo and confuse Florida voters. The utilities may have more money, but they are on the wrong side of the issue. We trust that the Supreme Court will strike their misleading amendment from the ballot, and we will continue to fight against the utilities' campaign of deception. We need you to fight alongside us!

Thanks to YOU, our coalition has grown a powerful solar army. We hope you will continue to march on as solar champions fighting to open up the solar market in Florida!

Visit the website for more information: <http://www.flsolarchoice.org>.



Jay Liles
FWF Policy Consultant

FWF Involved in Bringing Innovative Transportation Options to 30A

From time to time the Florida Wildlife Federation finds itself involved in public policy matters that, on their surface, don't appear to have a direct nexus to wildlife conservation and access to public lands for hunting, fishing and other forms of recreation. Coastal insurance policy is a good example. Tying the cost of coastal living to insurance has helped lead policymakers to a new understanding of how we can influence people's buying decisions, especially when it comes to housing in flood-prone areas. A more realistic price signal, not softened by government subsidies, makes people think twice about where and how they want to live. Coastal lands are protected and we get the added benefit of storm protection from undeveloped barrier islands.

The same holds true when it comes to transportation issues. FWF is working to reduce the impacts caused by our reli-

ance on the automobile. The future calls for shared electric vehicles that replace gas powered cars for much of our daily use and when traveling long distances. A vehicle that meets your needs can be as close and reliable as a call from your smart phone. The need for parking spaces and multi-lane highways disappears. While for some this seems like a pipe dream, the reality is we are on the cusp of a revolution in car ownership and the driving experience. If you don't believe me just "Google" the Google car!

Small, electric, shared transportation; and did I mention, its self-driving! That is the wave of the future and the future is already upon us. This session in the state legislature a bill is likely to pass that will allow for the use of "autonomous vehicles," as they are called, to be driven on public roads in Florida.

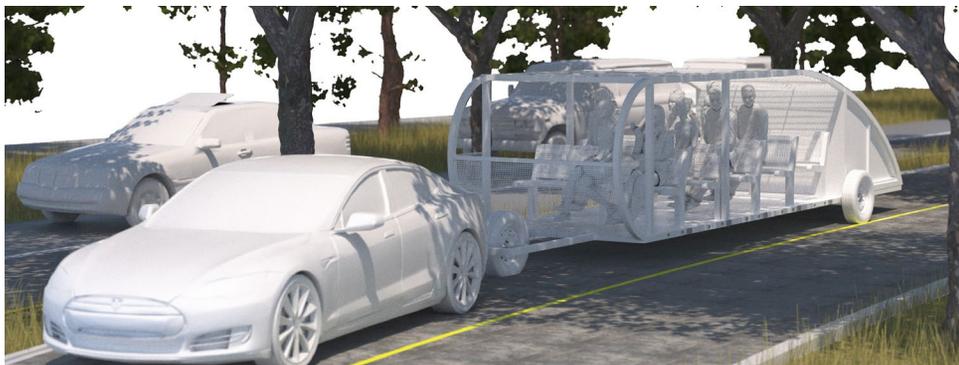
With a generous grant from the Robert Davis Family Foundation, FWF has been asked to help bring a transit system using autonomous, electric powered vehicle technology to South Walton County. Our goal is to get visitors, residents and workers along the famous 30A corridor to leave their personal vehicles at home and rely upon a system of transit that allows you to select from trolleys to golf carts and buses for transportation. In October of last year we helped organize a workshop in Seaside FL that featured some of the pioneers of this technology, including Dr. Joachim Taiber, CTO of the International Transportation Innovation Center (ITIC) and a professor at Clemson University, and Lukas Neckermann, author of "The Mobility Revolution" and a leading expert on vehicle interconnectivity and autonomous vehicles. We were joined by Transportation Secretary Jim Boxold who told the audience that,

"Florida wants to be on the forefront of this technology." Other speakers talked about the inherent safety computer-controlled vehicles can bring to our highway system. If you eliminate driver error you can reduce accidents by as much as 80% according to some studies.

"I want families visiting 30A to have the freedom and mobility that little kids feel when they arrive in Seaside" says Robert Davis, the founder of Seaside. "To be able to park their cars once and enjoy all of our beautiful area with a choice of many fun ways of going from one village

to the next, from electric-assisted bikes, to electric-assisted rickshaws to a trolley that will be as entertaining as any ride."

In January, the Walton County Commission approved a \$120,000 grant to the Seaside Institute and ITIC to explore ways in which we can bring this system of travel to life on 30A. Where it goes from there is anybody's guess but wouldn't it be great to see other communities adopt a similar approach? And in the end we have less need for our personal cars, we use less space for parking lots and have less need for widening roads!



Artist's rendering of a conceptual transit system as it passes through one of the villages on 30A in Walton County

New Wildlife Legacy Club Member:

Alexander Doska, Orange City

New Eagle Club Members:

Jay Exum, Longwood

Beverly Cox, Ponte Vedra Beach

New Life Members:

Colleen Murphy, Winter Springs

James Schortemeyer, Naples

Dr. Stephen Lexow, Sarasota

Lynn Collins, Panama City

Marcia Smythe, Vero Beach

Thank you for your generous support!

**Legacy Club Members are those who have donated \$5,000 or more in a single gift. Eagle Club Members are \$1,000 donors and Life Members are \$500 donors.*

Remembering the Federation

If you wish to name Florida Wildlife Federation in your will or estate plan, please use the following language:

The Florida Wildlife Federation, a nonprofit cooperation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of Florida, with principal business address of PO Box 6870, Tallahassee, FL 32314-6870.

Our federal tax identification number is 59-1398265.

Help Us Plan

If your plans already include a gift for Florida Wildlife Federation, please let us know. We will honor all requests for anonymity, and you can always modify your gift if your circumstances change. For more information please contact **Tim Bachmeyer**, FWF Development Consultant, at **561-801-5752** or **Diane Hines** at **850-656-7113**.



Claudia Farren
Education Consultant

FWF Celebrates Arbor Day with the Trees for Wildlife Program

The Florida Wildlife Federation recently partnered with the Iris Garden Club (IGC) of Wakulla County and the National Wildlife Federation to give away hundreds of trees on January 16 in Crawfordville, Florida, a small town south of Tallahassee. At the IGC's annual Arbor Day Celebration and Tree Giveaway, hundreds of adults and children came to a downtown park to choose a tree to take home and plant in their yards. The National Wildlife Federation's Trees for Wildlife Program aspires to connect people with their surroundings by educating them about the crucial role trees play in their community. NWF partners, such as affiliates, schools, garden clubs, and community wildlife habitats, make a plan, plant, and then care for their new trees. Partners also plan tree giveaway events.



Taking home trees from the 12th Annual Iris Garden Club of Wakulla County's Arbor Day Celebration and Tree Giveaway.

At the Crawfordville giveaway, tree seedlings donated by NWF's grant included 100 each of the Southern Red Oak, River Birch, Southern Red Cedar, Buttonbush, Redbud, and Bald Cypress. The seedlings were planted in one-gallon pots with potting soil in December by volunteers of the Iris Garden Club, the Florida Wildlife Federation and local school children.

For twelve years, trees have been offered by the Iris Garden Club to residents of Crawfordville and Wakulla County. This year the garden club's 800 free trees were Live Oak, Tulip Poplar, Fringe Tree, Ashe Magnolia, Redbud, Ogeechee Tupelo, Arrowwood, Post Oak, Bluff Oak and Mockernut Hickory. These trees had been planted in pots as seedlings by IGC members and kept at a local nursery for a year to help them grow into small trees. Five hundred Longleaf Pine seedlings were also distributed by the Florida Forest Service.

The day's total was close to 2,000 trees given away. The NWF grant enabled the IGC to increase by a third the number of trees given away the previous year.

"NWF's Trees for Wildlife Program aspires to educate youth about the role of trees in our environment, how individuals can take action to plant trees and provides stewardship for sustaining trees locally, across Florida, and across the nation," explained Luisa Grant, Community Programs Senior Coordinator for the National Wildlife Federation. "Trees for Wildlife also explores the unique connection wildlife have with trees. It's a great opportunity to have youth learn about how to improve their environmental footprint and serves to provide schools an opportunity to green their school, green their grounds and



NWF's Trees for Wildlife grant helped the IGC increase the number of trees they could give away this year at their 12th Annual Arbor Day Celebration. FWF assisted with fulfillment of the grant, publicity, and participated in the January 16 tree giveaway.

green the students."

"Florida's Arbor Day is in January which is the perfect month to plant trees in Florida," said Jeannie Brodhead, Acting President of the Iris Garden Club. "Our goal is to replace native trees lost to development, storms, and old age so as to beautify the county, benefit wildlife, and protect our environment. Trees also provide cooling shade, reduce electric bills, and help to lower carbon emissions," added Lynn Artz, one of the event's coordinators.

"Replacing trees is necessary to protect wildlife. Trees provide shelter, berries and seeds for nourishment, places to hide, and nesting sites to raise young," said Manley Fuller, President of the Florida Wildlife Federation.



Left: By planting trees, children and their families can help to ensure that wildlife thrive for many years to come.

Below: Picking out a tree at 12th Annual Iris Garden Club of Wakulla County's Arbor Day Celebration and Tree Giveaway.



Right: At the IGC's 12th Annual Arbor Day Celebration and Tree Giveaway hundreds of families came to a downtown park to choose a tree to take home and plant in their yards.



Left: The Florida Wildlife Federation recently partnered with the Iris Garden Club of Wakulla County and the National Wildlife Federation to give away 2,000 trees on January 16, 2016.

More photos of two potting events and the tree giveaway:

<https://goo.gl/7CPcOZ>

Florida State Parks should remain natural and protected

Dana C. Bryan, My View
Tallahassee Democrat, January 30, 2016

Florida State Parks are special places for many reasons. You would think Gov. Scott and Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Jon Steverson would protect them, but instead they're trying to change them.

State parks are among the few remaining places you can experience Florida's rapidly vanishing unexploited natural areas. For 80 years, our award-winning park system has preserved healthy native ecosystems through time-tested stewardship practices. As a result, state parks are refuges for Florida's original ecosystems, beautiful landscapes and natural abundances of wildlife.

Florida State Parks contain some of the most magnificent old-growth pine and hardwood forests to be found anywhere. Close to home, Wakulla Springs State Park is designated a National Natural Landmark and alone contains a dozen state champion trees. The majesty of a forest of large trees is breathtaking, and venturing into it soothes the soul.

When park managers around the state return your forests to stately and pristine conditions, free of litter and exotic plants, they are removing the static so you can hear the pure music. But now, Gov. Scott and Secretary Steverson would like to hear chainsaws and heavy equipment so they can sell those valuable board feet.

They say that the state parks have always cut trees, grazed cattle and allowed

hunting. This is a half-truth designed to deceive you. For the record, trees have been cut in state parks, but always for restoration purposes. For example, pine plantations are restored to natural Florida pine forests and other tree species that don't belong are removed to restore the correct mix. But DEP is now proposing ongoing commercial forestry, which state parks have never done before. Once the door is open, how well do you think state park staff will be able to protect the old growth forests that they have protected for 80 years?

And yes, grazing has been allowed as an interim management measure, but only on improved pastures that came into the system with larger acquisitions. Now, DEP has told state parks to allow cattle on natural communities like prairies. State parks have never done this before and should not start now.

And hunting is a prohibited activity in state parks by statute. Yes, hunting was mandated on the state's two "reserves," which were assigned to state parks and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to co-manage. But the prohibition on hunting in state parks should not be changed.

The old growth forests of Florida are largely in Florida State Parks because they are protected there. All citizens who believe this is the right decision and who are proud of what the Florida Park Service has achieved in building an extraordinary state park system should speak up now – because these changes are coming if you don't!

Dana C. Bryan is a recently retired 29-year veteran of the Florida Park Service, serving most of that time as the system's chief biologist in the central office.

THINK BIG Get Wild Challenge

FWF is proud to be a leading partner of the THINK BIG Get Wild Challenge. In collaboration with zoologist Jim Fowler, the Challenge seeks to restore, protect and preserve our natural world TOGETHER!

Stay tuned for more details and visit the THINK BIG Get Wild Website to learn more at www.actepic.com.

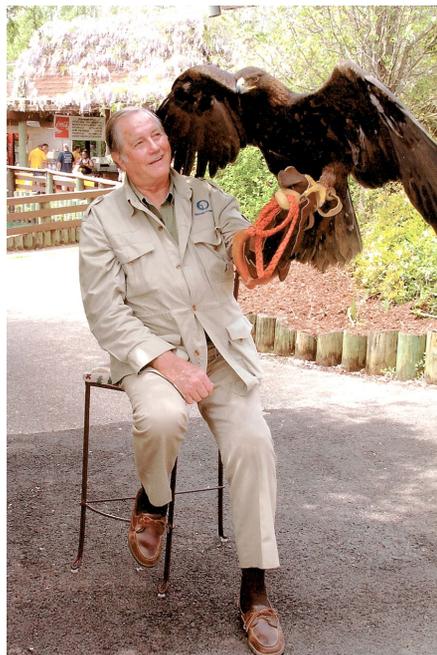


Photo of Jim Fowler.

Go to www.fwfonline.org for these items and more great merchandise!

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Special Price

BPA-Free & Phthalate-Free

"Polar Bottle" has never used BPA in any water bottles. Even their first water bottles in 1993 were BPA-free.

Insulated Technology

The double-wall construction of the insulated water bottles creates a thermal barrier of air to keep heat out and cold in. Foil layers reflect solar rays for additional thermal protection.

FP- 495
Price \$4.00

eGreen 20-pack Zippered Cooler Tote

FWF has a great new cooler for a day trip getting out into the wild or relaxing on the beach! This soft shell cooler can hold 20 cans and is lined to keep items cool.

FP - 546
Price \$10.00



Congratulations to those members of FWF who earned GreenStar Certification!

The Federation began its GreenStar Certification program to acknowledge our members' personal commitments to a clean and healthy environment through the use of environmentally beneficial practices in their daily lives. We truly appreciate all those who responded and requested GreenStar Certification. The program is still up and running on our website, www.fwfonline.org. Go to PROGRAMS on the main menu at the top, and you'll find GreenStar Certification on the drop down menu. From there you will be taken to the online GreenStar Questionnaire.



New Green Star Members

American Heritage School, Plantation
Jeffrey Holstein, Largo
Christopher Potts, Ft. Lauderdale
P. Pieper & B. McMichael, Jacksonville

Thank You, Pat!

We congratulate Patricia Pearson on 20 years of service to the Florida Wildlife Federation and wish her "Happy Birthday!" as she recently turned 83 years old. Beginning in 1996, Pat served as Manley Fuller's right hand assistant and the office receptionist. During that time her talent as a program coordinator became apparent as she headed up FWF's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program in conjunction with the National Wildlife Federation. Pat helped coordinate press releases, still writes the Kids' Quiz for "Fish and Wildlife News," has written several gardening articles, and created the current Annual Kids' Wildlife Habitat Contest which is in its 7th year. The list of great things Pat has done for FWF over the past 20 years is so very long! She is a charming and talented lady;

FWF is proud to have Pat continuing her service to the organization. She works primarily from home these days and is more computer savvy than most folks her age. A number of years ago, Pat created the Florida Cracker Bench and instructions for making one. (If you would like a copy of the instructions for making a Cracker Bench, please email dhines@fwfonline.org). If you would like to congratulate Pat or wish her happy birthday yourself, her email is: patricia@fwfonline.org.

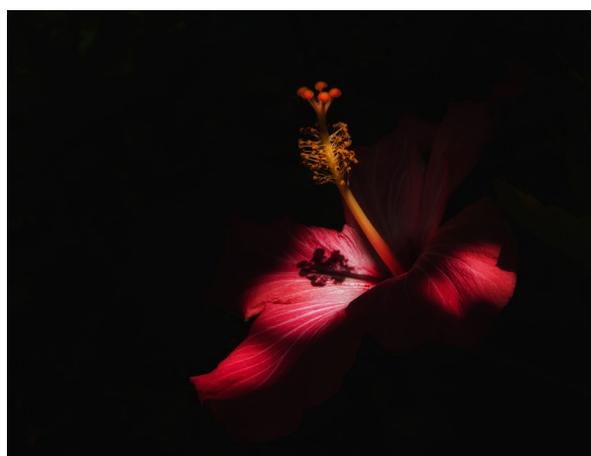


Pat Pearson helping with the Tree Giveaway in Crawfordville, January 16, 2016.



Portrait

Summer Tanager, by Linda Steele, Ft. DeSoto Park, FL



Flowers

Hibiscus in the shade, by Dick Caldwell
Sunken Gardens, FL

7TH ANNUAL KIDS WILDLIFE HABITAT CONTEST...COMING UP!

On Earth Day, Friday, April 22, 2016, the Florida Wildlife Federation will again award a commemorative plaque and an age-suitable gardening book to the Florida kid or group of kids 12 years old or under who have helped to establish and maintain a habitat for wildlife at home or on school property. The habitat will also be featured on our website and in our newsletter. A representative from Florida Wildlife Federation will travel to the contest winner to present their award. Entries close March 31, 2016.

The Florida Wildlife Federation is dedicated to encouraging young Floridians to be good environmentalists and to care for our native animals and plants. We believe that time spent outdoors working on a

habitat project is of great value in encouraging young people to learn about nature. Experts say that lack of active outdoor play and projects contributes to many childhood health problems.

It's easy to enter. Just tell us how the habitat provides the following four elements for critters you want to attract: food, water, cover and a place to raise young. Send us some photos of your habitat, preferably with children working there.

Teachers, please note that it is not necessary for schoolyard habitats to be certified by National Wildlife Federation or any other organization, just that they provide the four necessary elements for a good wildlife habitat. We are especially interested



in the science that students learn in the habitat. IF YOU HAVE ENTERED BEFORE, AND DIDN'T WIN, PLEASE ENTER AGAIN!

A description and photos of your habitat can be e-mailed to patricia@fwfonline.org or mailed to Florida Wildlife Federation, 2545 Blair Stone Pines Drive, Tallahassee FL, 32301.



FLORIDA KIDS' QUIZ by Pat Pearson



1. What was the warmest year on record in the United States, and why is that important?



2. Is the Monarch butterfly still in as much danger of extinction as before, or is it doing better?



3. Why is it important for you to be a good conservationist, and to care about nature and take care of the plants and wild animals that live in Florida?

See page 14 for answers, and more information.

Email to patricia@fwfonline.org or call the FWF office at (850) 656-7113 for more information, if needed. See our website at www.fwfonline.org for photos and information about previous winners, and the PowerPoint and videos there for general habitat information. We look forward to hearing from you.

Call For Director Nominations

If you are interested in serving as a director of the Florida Wildlife Federation during the September 2016 to September 2017 term, or if you wish to nominate someone to fill one of these positions, please write to the Florida Wildlife Federation Nominating Committee, P.O. Box 6870, Tallahassee, FL 32314-6870; FAX (850) 942-4431.

Nominations must be submitted by

May 2, 2016.

To be eligible, a candidate must be a resident of Florida and a member in good standing of the Florida Wildlife Federation. District and Regional Directors must reside in the region or district for which they would serve. Officers and At-Large Directors may reside anywhere within the state.

Federation Directors are expected to

regularly attend Federation meetings, participate in Federation activities, assist in building Federation membership, be actively involved in fund-raising efforts, attend public workshops, act as a liaison with other conservation organizations, and generally promote and lead state-wide conservation activities through the Florida Wildlife Federation. Being an FWF Director requires a substantial

commitment of time and resources but will give the individual an opportunity to be a conservation leader in Florida.

Also, if you are interested in assisting the directors in your region, or in serving on one of the Federation's committees, please contact Diane Hines at the Federation office in Tallahassee at (850) 656-7113 or dhines@fwfonline.org.

Northwest Region

District I

Escambia, Santa Rosa, Walton, Holmes, Bay, Okaloosa, Washington

District II

Jackson, Calhoun, Gulf, Franklin, Liberty, Gadsden, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson

Northeast Region

District III

Madison, Taylor, Hamilton, Suwannee, Lafayette, Dixie, Columbia, Union, Bradford, Gilcrest, Alachua

District IV

Baker, Nassau, Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Putman, Flagler, Volusia

Central Region

District V

Marion, Lake, Seminole, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Brevard, Indian River, Sumter

District VI

Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Hillsborough, Pinellas, Levy

Southern Region

District VII

Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Glades, Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Lee

District VIII

Hendry, Collier, Broward, Dade, Monroe

In Memoriam Joe Cox (1940 - 2016)

The Florida Wildlife Federation expresses deepest sympathy to the family of Joe E. Cox, who provided bookkeeping services to FWF for 20 years, from 1991 to 2011. Joe recently passed away at age 75 after a two year battle with cancer. Joe was admired by all who had the opportunity to know him through his work, his church or on the golf course, as golf was his favorite hobby. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Marty, and two daughters, Carrie and Cathy, and their families including five grandchildren.

IN MEMORIAM

Donations have been received in
memory of:

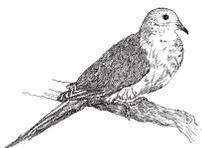
Mary Keith Hovis

(Mother of Diane Hines)
by John Dufek



F.M., J.J., V.H., W.T., and I.E.

by Betty Lou Reid



Robert Reeves

by Barbara Schultz

Dorothy M. Buehn

by Amy, Ted, Joy, Becca, Tori, Tara, Martie, Vicky, Sebastian,
Shannon S., Karen L., Dave G., Ric, Terry F., and Shannon C. --
Co-workers at Lockheed Martin

The Federation thanks you for your thoughtful contributions. We express our sympathy to family and friends of those who have passed away.

FWF PARTNERS PROGRAM

Friend of Wildlife

Irma Scudder

FWF PARTNERS is an annual donor recognition program designed to provide a continuing stream of unrestricted support to FWF year in and year out. PARTNERS gifts will support FWF's most critical priorities.

A PARTNER pledges to make a gift each year to join one of the PARTNERS gift clubs. PARTNERS names will also be acknowledged regularly in FWF communications including the *Florida Fish and Wildlife News*, the FWF website and our annual report. Of course, any PARTNER may choose to remain anonymous.

As an FWF donor, member, or friend you **are now invited to join one of the PARTNERS clubs** according to your capacity and to what FWF's conservation action means to you. The giving clubs are:

FWF PARTNERS Levels

Conservation Visionary - \$25,000; *Conservation Hero* - \$10,000;
Conservation Champion - \$5,000; *Wildlife Sustainer* - \$2,500; *Wildlife Advocate* - \$1,000; *Wildlife Steward* - \$500; *Friend of Wildlife* - \$100.

To become an FWF PARTNER, to receive a pledge form, or for more information, contact **Diane Hines** at dhines@fwfonline.org or **850-656-7113**.

Go Solar!



Save money. Save the planet. Become energy independent. Now is the time to Go Solar!

Solar electricity is a great return on investment! Solar electric system costs have come down dramatically. There are federal tax credits and commercial depreciation benefits. There is an immediate and reliable return on investment. Even financing is available, enabling no up-front costs. Agricultural solar applications can obtain grants and loans from the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy for America Program (USDA REAP).

A solar electric system tied into the electric utility grid (your electricity provider) allows the best of both worlds: cheap solar energy, back-up by the utility grid, and utility payback for excess electricity generated by your solar power system fed back into the grid. A battery storage system can provide independence from the utility power grid, thereby preventing power interruption during ex-

treme weather events or other chaotic incidents.

Battery storage technology, as well as solar panel technology, has evolved and improved. The array of solar-powered and energy-efficient products has greatly expanded. Ductless AC/heat systems. Efficient refrigerator-freezers that run on direct current. Hot water heaters that use heat pump technology. Solar swimming pool heaters. Solar well irrigation systems. Solar pond aeration. Efficient light emitting diode (LED) lighting systems. Solar window screens. Electric cars, car chargers, and carports with solar panels. And more!

The cost of solar panels has plummeted. The average wholesale panel price was approximately \$23 per watt in 1980, around \$4 per watt in the year 2000, and less than \$1 per watt in 2012. Approximately one third to one quarter of the cost of a solar system is the panel price. Federal tax law provides for a tax credit of 30% of the cost of the solar system. And for commercial applications, the solar system cost can be depreciated over five years. So, if you're in the 30% tax bracket, you'll save 30% of the system cost over five years. The return on investment is substantial and dependable, unlike the Stock Market! If electricity utility rates rise, this return on investment is even higher. And, after paying off the asset, you will enjoy decades of free electricity. Solar systems come with a 25-year warranty, but last even longer. For agricultural solar appli-

cants, the USDA REAP can provide grants up to 25% of total eligible project costs and additional low-interest loans for 50% of the project cost.

Solar systems that tie-in to the electric utility grid enable reverse metering credit – when the solar system is generating more electricity than is being consumed, the excess electricity is fed back into the utility grid and the owner is given financial credit for that supplied electricity. Some solar systems instead have a battery and the excess electricity is stored, and can then be used during the night or during times of electric utility grid outage. And, some solar systems are a combination of grid tie-in and battery storage, or a hybrid system. Battery technology has evolved providing more options considering price, efficiency, weight, and capabilities. Battery options range from lead-acid batteries, to lithium ion batteries, to lithium iron phosphate batteries with smart electronics enabling automated appliance management. Batteries convert electrical energy into chemical energy when charging and vice versa when discharging. Lead-acid batteries are most common. Several lead-acid batteries are typically required: they are interconnected, and called a battery bank. Lithium ion batteries are lighter in weight, have a much longer life span, and require less maintenance. Lithium iron phosphate batteries now enable facility electricity load management with remote control and monitoring. This can be very important in reducing electricity costs due to demand charges, and optimizing use of the stored electricity.

Solar photovoltaic panels are comprised of cells that convert the sun's radiation into direct current electricity. An inverter converts the direct current (DC) into alternating current (AC). Your household electrical plugs provide AC power. Alternating current is the best way to transmit electricity over large distances. However, several appliances are now available in DC, which may be five times more efficient than a comparable AC appliance.

Energy efficiency should be a first consideration, or in conjunction with switching to solar energy. Energy efficiency is "using less energy to provide the same service". Energy efficiency and renewable energy are said to be the twin pillars of sustainable energy policy. There are often many opportunities for reducing your amount of electricity use by implementing energy efficiency. This may include attic or roof insulation, window replacement or door sealing, solar window screens, switching to more efficient heat and air conditioning systems, efficient hot water systems, efficient better thermostat management, and efficient appliances and lights. Conversion of lighting from conventional incandescent bulbs to fluorescent or LED bulbs not only reduces electrical demands of the lights, but also reduces the amount of heat that is generated by conventional bulbs, thereby reducing air conditioning electrical demands. Solar swimming pool heater systems can reduce the use of electricity or natural gas.

Energy efficiency and solar energy can save you money, and reduce the amount of carbon dioxide that is released into our planet's atmosphere, that is causing climate change and sea level rise. Solar energy in combination with a storage battery system can provide energy independence. Please don't wait - Go Solar!

Bart Bibler
Simpler Solar Systems, LLC
Bart@simplersolar.com
www.simplersolar.com
(850) 576-5271 office
(850) 570-8165 cell

Your purchase of a Simple Solar System described here will result in a generous donation to FWF by the Company, which will provide you with a Life membership in the Florida Wildlife Federation.



Answers to Florida Kids' Quiz

1. The warmest year on record was 2015. To most scientists, this means that the world is getting warmer. Knowing that is important so that we can stop doing the things that are causing it to happen, like using fossil fuels to generate electricity and driving automobiles that pollute. Governments of the world seem more willing to make laws that cut down on polluting activities. It's a big job, but it can be done.

2. There's good news. The Monarch butterfly is doing much better this year. Their winter home in Mexico is much healthier for them, and the drive to plant milkweed, which is the Monarch's only food source and which makes it possible for them to reproduce is in better supply. Farmers have heard the requests of the people of the United States and are avoiding destroying milkweeds, and many, many other people are planting milkweeds to help the butterflies along on their migration to Mexico. If this keeps up, there is hope for the Monarch.

3. It's important because young people are the ones who will still be around for a long time to enjoy the wonderful plants and critters that live in Florida...think what it would be like not to be able to show your own children the manatees and orchids and butterflies and panthers and burrowing owls and live oak trees and the other wonderful things that live here, and nowhere else in the world. That's worth thinking about.

How did you do, Florida Kid??!!



Sunset-Sunrise

Itch to Scratch, by Michael Fitzsimmons
Destin, FL

New Board Member Julia Yarbough



The Florida Wildlife Federation is pleased to welcome Julia Yarbough of Pembroke Pines as an At-Large Member of its Board of Directors. A former TV anchorwoman, Julia started her own media consulting firm in 2011. She specializes in broadcast media, video production, provides hosting, emcee and moderating services, and creates press release materials for clients based on functional newsroom and media experience. FWF is pleased to have a multi-talented person like Ms. Yarbough on its Board of Directors who will be able to help FWF with ideas for better outreach

and communications. Julia has a great fondness for the outdoors and conservation efforts. She is looking forward to spending time with the Federation board and staff, especially some of the Board field trips to locations across the state.



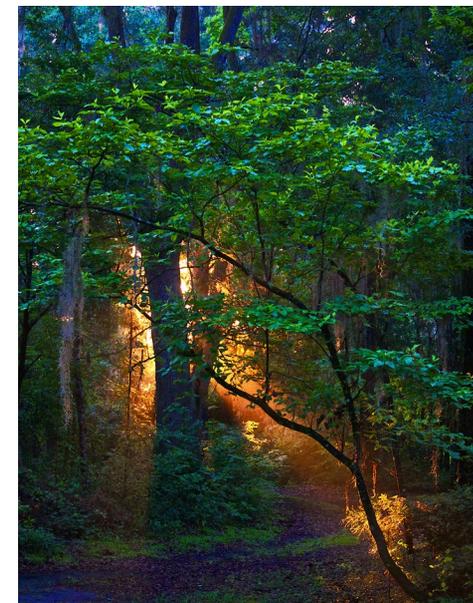
Waterscape

Silky Sunset, by Jesus Penalosa
Naples, FL



Birds

Mockingbird in flight! by Anthony Goldman
Tampa, FL



Landscape

Dawn in the forest, by Tedd Greenwald
High Springs, FL

Florida Wildlife Federation asks:

Do you want to make sure that your children and grandchildren have a healthy environment and can enjoy quality outdoor recreation in Florida?

Do you want to ensure our lands and waters are conserved and available for resource-based public recreation?

If you agree that we must protect the future of well managed outdoor recreation by acquiring public conservation lands, encouraging private-lands conservation, and restoring habitats and populations of fish and wildlife through sound management, then we would like you to become a member of the Florida Wildlife Federation!



By joining with us, you will become part of a dynamic, statewide organization with the goal of conserving Florida's fish, wildlife, water and plant life in the face of rapid loss of habitat statewide. **It is only with the financial support of our members that we may continue to pursue these goals. Please join or donate today!**

We need your support to conserve Florida's wildlife and habitat for the future!

Don't forget about a gift membership!

Yes! I want to join the **Florida Wildlife Federation** to conserve, protect, and restore Florida's natural treasures such as springs and water bodies, fish & wildlife habitats, and to enhance the public's enjoyment of resource-based, outdoor recreation in Florida. With your membership you will receive the FWF publication, *Florida Fish and Wildlife News (FFWN)* by mail or email (please select your choice below).

- Student..... \$15
- Associate..... \$25
- Family..... \$35
- Sustaining..... \$50
- Sponsor..... \$100
- Life Member..... \$500
- Eagle Club Member..... \$1,000
- Wildlife Legacy Club... \$5,000
- Benefactor..... \$25,000

*A Life, Eagle Club, Wildlife Legacy or Benefactor Membership is a one-time donation.

Please send completed form with check, money order, or credit card information to:
Florida Wildlife Federation

**PO Box 6870
Tallahassee, FL 32314**

or
Join or Donate Online at:
www.fwfonline.org

Enclosed is my payment for \$ _____

Please charge my payment to:

Visa MasterCard American Express Discover

Card# _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ Sec. Code _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please send me my *FFWN* by ___ Mail ___ E-mail

___ Please add me to your list to receive occasional e-mail updates.

This is a gift membership from: _____

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Spectacular Scenery and Exciting Fishing Adventures Await the Winner of Florida Wildlife Federation's 4th Annual "Fish or Cruise" Sweepstakes

By Claudia Farren
FWF Sweepstakes Coordinator

The Florida Wildlife Federation is pleased to announce the 4th Annual "Fish or Cruise" Sweepstakes which started in January. Here's your chance to win one of three amazing trips – five days for you and a companion at the legendary Waterfall Resort on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska, an ocean to ocean cruise through the Panama Canal with Holland America Cruise Lines, or a National Geographic tour on the Endeavour to the Galapagos Islands.

If you'd like to stay closer to home or craft your own vacation, but wish to support the Federation through this program, the 2016 winner can also choose to receive \$10,000.00 in cash in lieu of a trip.

The drawing will be held at the FWF offices on Thursday, June 16, 2016.

To enter the "Fish or Cruise" Sweepstakes or for more information visit www.fwfonline.org and click on any of the icons for the Sweepstakes located throughout the site, including

the Sweepstakes navigation at the top of every page. Then click on "Fish or Cruise" Sweepstakes.

Ticket contributions are \$5 each, or 6 tickets for \$25. You can also order 15 tickets for \$50 or 35 tickets for \$100.

As the state's population continues to grow, paying critical attention to our remaining natural resources is more important than ever. Since our founding in 1936, the Florida Wildlife Federation has grown in membership and resources, enduring ups and downs,

victories and losses. Like many other non-profit organizations, we rely upon the good will of our supporters and donors to keep the doors open.

If you believe, as we do, that all citizens and visitors benefit from a clean, healthy and productive environment, and that our state's future will be brighter with natural habitats intact and flourishing, please support the Florida Wildlife Federation by participating in the "Fish or Cruise" Sweepstakes!



Congratulations to the winner of the 25th Annual Boating Sweepstakes. Florida Wildlife Federation's sweepstakes helped raise funds to pursue vital wildlife and fish programs that ensure that we all continue to enjoy Florida's wondrous outdoors.

2015 Boating Sweepstakes Winner



Beverly Cox, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, (right), winner of the 25th Annual Boating Sweepstakes, accepting her Grand Prize certificate from Sarah Owen Gledhill, FWF's Northeast Florida Planning Advocate.



Claudia Farren, Sweepstakes Coordinator, with Stephen Roeder, CPA at Carroll and Company, who pulled the Grand Prize Boating Sweepstakes ticket at Federation Headquarters in December.



FWF's 25th Annual Boating Sweepstakes Drawing was held on December 17, 2015 at 3 pm at Federation Headquarters. The drawing was supervised by Carroll and Co., Inc., Certified Public Accountants. Attending the drawing were: (from the left) Danny Gwynn-Shapiro, Florida Fish and Wildlife News Producer and Editor; Jenny Brock, Immediate Past Chair; Jeannie Scruggs, Bookkeeper/CPA; Tessa Kleck, Administrative Assistant; Claudia Farren, Sweepstakes Coordinator; Stephen Roeder, CPA, Carroll and Company; Michelle Forman, Executive Administrative Assistant; Officer John Beeman, Tallahassee Police Department; Diane Hines, Vice President of Administration; and Matthew Aldrich, Guest.

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Wildlife refuges on front line of land and water wars

by Martha Musgrove
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 View online at: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/opinion/columnists/fl-mmcol-oped0127-20160126-column.html>



I'm going out to buy a "Duck Stamp" — just to show support for National Wildlife Refuges and the concept of public lands.

All money from the sale of the \$25 Duck Stamps goes directly to the underfunded refuge system that's under attack and needs support right now. I'm outraged that armed thugs could invade, take over Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, declare themselves "the owners" and set about destroying refuge equipment, im-



Macro
 Peek-a-boo Frog, by Kathleen Catusus Brandon, FL

poundments, fences and records. These guys aren't protesting federal government overreach. They're trying to steal public land for themselves — land you and I own.

I'm not happy either that Congress didn't come up with the money that South Florida's Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge needs to halt an invasion of Melaleuca (Melaleuca quinquenervia), a resurgent enemy, and Old World climbing fern (Lygodium microphyllum), a frilly vine with a lethal ability to smother Everglades tree-islands.

The Loxahatchee refuge needs \$5 million per year to pay for the labor, herbicides, bio-controls and helicopter air-time over five years just to "knock 'em down," then \$3 million annually to maintain control of these plants. Refuge Project Leader Rolf Olson will get just \$3.6 million this year, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission kicked in \$2 million of that.

The "best" Congress could do is increase the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's base budget by \$500,000, half of which went to Loxahatchee. Sadly, that's right in keeping with fiscal year 2015, when FWS' total budget for dealing with invasive plants and animals on the nation's 563 refuges was a ridiculously low \$10 million.

A surprising number of politicians in Washington and Tallahassee (appalling, really) are contemptuous of public lands. They're the ones complaining "the government owns too much land." Yet what would New York be without Central Park? Boston without its Commons? Washington, D.C., without the National Mall? South Florida without the Everglades and public beaches? Probably unlivable.

Open spaces, public lands are part-and-parcel of our natural heritage and culture.

Nonetheless, in Tallahassee, Gov. Rick Scott and the Legislature studiously ignore the 75 percent majority vote in 2014 to amend the state Constitution to dedicate 33 percent — about \$600 million annually — of the documentary stamp taxes to be used to acquire land to protect Florida's water resources and wildlife. In Washington, reauthorizations of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, were blocked for months by a House committee chairman from Utah. Eventually the reauthorizations were slipped into the just-passed 2016 budget bill.

The Loxahatchee refuge is located on state-owned land leased to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Terms of the lease, last-renewed in 2002, set out 13 "performance measures" for the feds. FWS met 12 of those measures but last month Dan Ashe, director of the service, wrote the South Florida Water Management District that FWS would not meet the 2017 deadline for reaching "maintenance control" for two of four invasive plants: Melaleuca and Lygodium.

Melaleuca can be controlled using a known combination of herbicides and an insect that munches on new growth. Controlling Lygodium still requires hand-to-hand combat, a sharp machete and the kind of stamina glorified in gritty-movie fantasies. Both are expensive but costs would drop if a "bio-control" were found. Researchers at the U.S.D.A. center in Davie recently reported good results testing a moth that attacks Lygodium.

What happens next with the lease is uncertain. Two district governing board

members appear ready to void the lease, but doing so could put district taxpayers on the hook to pay the costs of control. Other board members have asked for "options."

As the district's executive director, Peter Antonacci, points out, the federal government has been suing the district since 1988 to enforce water-quality standards the district can't quite meet. The irony is obvious — weirdly humorous but maddening. Until water-quality standards are met and invasive species are "under control," no one "wins."

Postscript: The Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge holds its annual Everglades Day celebration on Feb. 20, with guided tours, canoe trips, animals, live music, fishing and archery lessons. All but the food is free. The refuge is on U.S. 441, between Atlantic Avenue and Boynton Beach Boulevard. Buses run frequently from off-site parking to the visitor center.

Martha Musgrove is a veteran journalist, formerly with *The Miami Herald* and *Cox Newspapers* and a director of the Florida Wildlife Federation.
mlmcolumn@gmail.com



Wildlife
 Feeding Time, by Kay Wells
 Circle B Bar Reserve, FL

Conservation Calendar

February 20, 2016
 Orlando Wetlands Festival
 Fort Christmas Historical Park
 Contact 407-568-1706 or
www.CityofOrlando.net/wetlands

April 2-3, 2016
 FWF Board of Directors Meeting
 Ocala Hilton
dhines@fwfonline.org

April 13-14, 2016
 FWC Commission Meeting
 Jupiter, FL
www.myFWC.com

June 16-19, 2016
 National Wildlife Federation
 Annual Meeting
 Estes Park, Colorado
www.NWF.org

June 21-23, 2016
 FWC Commission Meeting
 Apalachicola, FL
www.myFWC.com

June 24-26, 2016
 FWF Board of Directors Meeting
 & Annual Awards Banquet weekend
 Bradenton Courtyard
 Marriott/Riverwalk
dhines@fwfonline.org

September 8-9, 2016
 FWC Commission Meeting
 Amelia Island/St. Augustine
www.myFWC.com

September 23-25, 2016
 FWF Board of Directors
 Annual Business Meeting
 Singer Island Hilton
 Riviera Beach
dhines@fwfonline.org