



# Manatee-Sarasota Group Boca Sierra



Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress

April 2015

## Marvelous Myakka State Park

**What:** Manatee-Sarasota Group Meeting  
**When:** Thursday, April 9, 7 p.m.  
**Where:** Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. of the Arts  
Myakka Park, in our backyard, is the largest Florida State Park. Like many things close to us, we often overlook the marvelous diversity and wonders of the treasure close to us. We are lucky to have a member of our group who has spent countless hours in the park, from top to bottom, having co-chaired the Canopy Walk, to leading weekly hikes to the Deep Hole. He spends Sunday mornings on the Bird Walk interpreting the bird sightings for the many visitors. He has organized Sierra Service projects from clearing invasives to

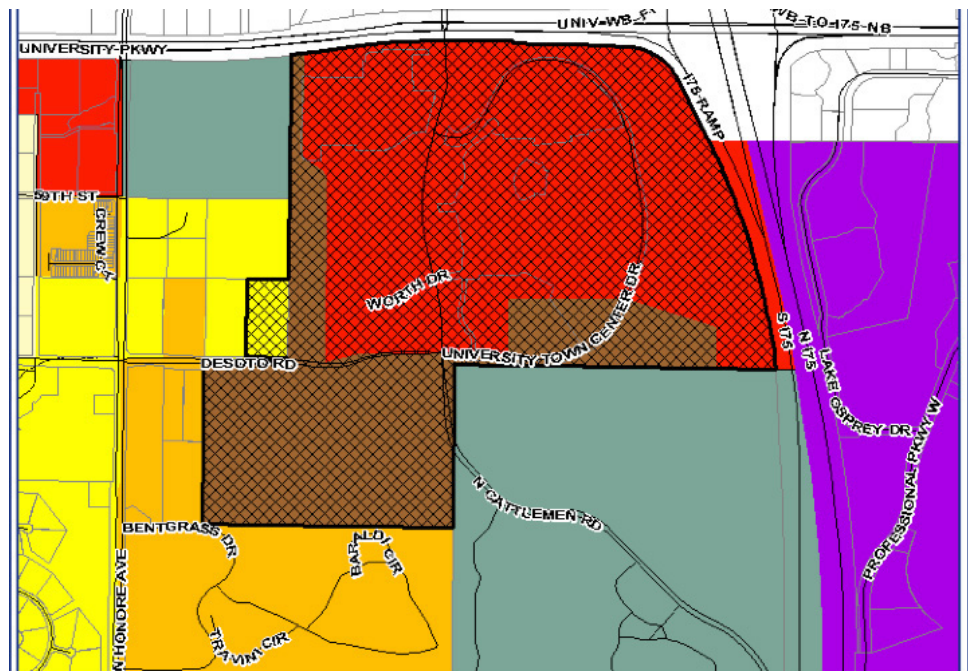
installing playground equipment. Bob Richardson, a past Chair of the Manatee Sarasota group, has a unique view of the park and what it means to us. Join us for the program and bring a snack to share during the social time afterward.



Canopy walk suspension bridge  
-Photo courtesy of Florida State Parks

## Proposed Re-zoning of Conservation Land to High Density Residential at University Town Center

The Sarasota County Commission's appetite for destruction seems insatiable. First it was gutting the few good elements of the 2050 Chapter of the county's Comprehensive Plan. Then it was re-zoning a 44-acre section of the Pinelands Reserve, unequivocally part of the County's Conservation Lands, so that a private shooting trap & skeet club could expand its operations. Now it is rewriting the Comprehensive Plan to allow such re-zonings, the first in the crosshairs is a 50-acre parcel of scarce native mesic hammock and pine flatwoods immediately south of the University Town Center (UTC) shopping center. This large, heavily forested parcel is clearly visible on the right when you turn onto DeSoto Road from Honore to enter the shopping center.



Future Land Use Plan - Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) 2014-C-Substantial Deviation (DRI) - REZONE PETITION No.14-16

The parcel is in a conservation easement, held by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFW-MD, aka "Swiftmud"), and is an integral part of the Co-

oper Creek Wildlife Corridor that runs up the west side of the UTC. These lands were designated as a preserve area in 2003, consistent with Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan. On the satellite map, it is visible as the rectangular appendage at the south end of the whole complex. In

Proposed Re-zoning continued on page 4



### Sarasota Conservation Committee

**Tuesday, April 7, 3:30–5 p.m.** Selby Library’s conference room, 1331 1st Street. Please join us to discuss Sarasota’s environmental issues. Contact Andre Mele at 914-204-0030 or [andymele@mac.com](mailto:andymele@mac.com)

### Manatee Conservation Committee

**Monday, April 20, 1:30–3:30 p.m.** NOTE: LOCATION CHANGE Meeting room, [Women’s Resource Center, 1926 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton](#). Help us contribute to sound environmental policy in Manatee County. Join us and/or contact Sandra Ripberger at 941-794-3878 or [sandrari@yaho.com](mailto:sandrari@yaho.com)

### Newsletter mailout

**Thursday, April 16, 6 p.m.** Help needed to prepare the Boca for mailing. For details contact Lynn Nilssen at [lynnsierra@nilssen.us](mailto:lynnsierra@nilssen.us)

### Not a member? Join Sierra Club today

Act now and become a member of Sierra Club! By joining you’ll support vital environmental advocacy, receive three publications, and gain access to local outings, members-only adventures, and other rewards.

More at: <http://tioga.sierraclub.org/joinorgive/member3.htm>

### Help Sierra save money!

Want to help save local Sierra dollars, ease the burden on volunteers, conserve trees, and receive the newsletter faster and in color? Just follow the steps below to be switched from the paper copy mailing list to the electronic mailing list.

1. Type or copy this address into your browser:  
<http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/FLORIDA-M-S-GROUP-NEWS.html>
2. On the next screen type your name and email in appropriate boxes.
3. Click on the Subscribe (Florida M-S Group News) button.

### Join Sierra Club’s new meetup group!

Become a member and receive information on all meetings, outings, and actions etc. Check it out by visiting

<http://www.meetup.com/Manatee-Sarasota-Sierra-Club-Group>

### New and Different Volunteer Opportunity: Join the Data Team!

We will be building a team of volunteers to take charge of our group’s data entry needs and are looking for people who are interested in trying something new! The team will meet every month for a data entry party - dinner included! All you need to do is have a laptop or tablet to bring with you when we gather to get all of the new contact information we gather into the database. Training will be provided. The more complete the database, the more readily we can mobilize for action and spread important news to our members and friends. Email [cris.costello@sierra-club.org](mailto:cris.costello@sierra-club.org) to sign up or for more information.

### Buy Sugar Land Now Protest

Sierra Club held a protest on March 12 to demand the state’s purchase of 48,600 acres of US Sugar Lands. Governor Rick Scott and his appointed water managers are refusing to buy the sugar land needed to restore the Everglades, protect the coasts, and preserve our drinking water. Time is running out. A large group demonstrated in front of the South Florida Water Management office in West Palm Beach.

### 2015 Executive Committee

**Group Chair:** Linda T. Jones, 941-358-3249, [lindyleetheis@comcast.net](mailto:lindyleetheis@comcast.net)

**Vice Chair/Treasurer:** Bob Fellman, 973-689-5556, [rtf082446@hotmail.com](mailto:rtf082446@hotmail.com)

**Secretary:** Cathy Page, 941-795-8973, [cnpage@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:cnpage@tampabay.rr.com)

#### Conservation Chairs

*Sarasota County:* Andre Mele, 914-204-0030, [andymele@mac.com](mailto:andymele@mac.com)

*Manatee County:* Sandra Ripberger, 941-794-3878, [sandrari@yaho.com](mailto:sandrari@yaho.com)

**Fundraising:** Open

**Inner City Outings:** Sarah Mitchell, 941-721-7132, [mitchell8manatee@yahoo.com](mailto:mitchell8manatee@yahoo.com)

**Membership:** Mary Sheppard, 941-752-3200, [mecomary@aol.com](mailto:mecomary@aol.com)

**Newsletter Editor:** Jessica Benoit, [benwasp@hotmail.com](mailto:benwasp@hotmail.com)

**Outings:** Don Kirkley, 941-493-3085, [donkirk@gte.net](mailto:donkirk@gte.net)

**Program:** Gerry Swormstedt, 941-366-9596, [gswormstedt204@comcast.net](mailto:gswormstedt204@comcast.net)

**Publications/Tabling:** John Myers, 941-961-7095, [sagejohnm49@gmail.com](mailto:sagejohnm49@gmail.com)

**Publicity:** Gerlinde Kohl, 941-474-4712, [fgkohl@verizon.net](mailto:fgkohl@verizon.net)

### Group Communications

**Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group Website**  
[www.florida.sierraclub.org/sarasota](http://www.florida.sierraclub.org/sarasota)

#### Sierra Club Office:

Mailing address: P.O. Box 3485, Sarasota FL 34236-3485

**Web Admin:** Barry Zack  
[barryzed@gmail.com](mailto:barryzed@gmail.com)

**Boca Design and Production:** Barry Zack,  
[barryzed@gmail.com](mailto:barryzed@gmail.com)

**Mailout:** Lynn Nilssen, [lynnsierra@nilssen.us](mailto:lynnsierra@nilssen.us)

**Executive Committee meetings are held once a month. For details about date and time, contact Linda T. Jones, Chair.**

### Boca Sierra Vol. XLIII Issue 4

This newsletter is published monthly by the Manatee-Sarasota Group of the Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club. The intent is to inform members and interested individuals of local activities and national environmental issues. Members of the Sierra Club subscribe to Boca Sierra through their annual dues. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$6 annually.



### Deer Prairie Creek Walk

**Saturday, April 11.** Join us for an 8-to 10 mile walk exploring Deer Prairie Creek. We'll visit a recent winter burn site to observe the vegetation response. In addition, we'll also keep our eyes open for summer nesting birds, bird migrants and signs of summer. Reserve with Bill Lewis at 941-355-2156.

### South Anna Maria Outing

**Saturday, April 18, 5-6:15p.m.** Join us in exploration of South Anna Maria Island with traveling distance of less than a mile. Afterwards, enjoy a potluck supper while visiting with new and experienced walkers. About 7:30 we will walk along the beach to view the sunset and new moon. To reserve please call Mary Sheppard at 941-752-3200 by Thursday April 16. Bring a

potluck dish to serve eight, your drink, plate and silver ware, along with a flashlight and insect repellent. Closed shoes are recommended.

### Cayo Costa Weekend Kayak and Camping

**Friday-Sunday, April 24-26.** Join us for a great weekend at one of the state's premier island state parks. A gulf coast paradise located on La Costa Island west of Fort Myers, it has one of the top-rated beaches in the nation. We'll paddle out on Friday morning and paddle back on Sunday. Primitive cabins and tent sites are available. For those who

**Outings Leaders Needed**  
 Be an active club member and have fun at the same time – become an outings leader. Contact Outings Chair Don Kirkley at 941-493-3085 for details

wish to take it easy, there is a ferryboat, Tropic Star (239-283-0015; tropicstarcrui.com). Rated moderate to strenuous because of open water and possible wind conditions. Be sure to reserve

early. Contact Don Kirkley at 941-493-3085. (Manatee/Sarasota)

## ICO Campout at Myakka River State Park

The March outing with the ICO gave students from a Manatee County School the opportunity to camp at Myakka River State Park on the weekend of February 28th. Upon arrival, the group met in a community circle and participated in an introduction activity, went over expectations and questions, and discussed the Sierra Club and ICO. First on the agenda was unloading the vehicles and setting up camp.

After lunch the group, which included two new volunteers, Cara & Rosalyn, went for a hike on the nature trail by the canopy walk. While some started to feel the walk was a bit long, their energy quickly returned when they reached the canopy walk, which most climbed at least three times.

From there we went to the weir hoping to see alligators and waterfowl that are usually seen there, but there were few to be seen due to the high water and lack of sunshine. Students still benefited from informational signs and interactive displays there.

led the group in a very interesting discussion on alligators. This included stretching string to compare the length of our current large alligators compared to their ancient kin. She also passed around the surprisingly heavy lower jawbones, bony plate from the alligator's armored skin and vertebrae. This was followed by dinner, which was prepared with a lot of help from the students who even came around and took orders with a notepad!

After cleaning up we went out to the bird-viewing platform at the lake for a night hike. With a powerful spotlight we were able to see that there were many, many alligators in the surrounding lake. A half moon and bright Jupiter appeared now and then between the clouds to light the scene. The children were very enthusiastic and interested in the night hike. Back at camp, just after starting our fire and while the girls headed out to shower, it began to rain lightly. Then there was what you could certainly call a cloudburst of heavy rain that lasted nearly an hour. While



Images by John Myers



Back at camp, a relatively new volunteer, Sara Dennisen,

ICO Campout continued on page 5

## Why Are Mangroves So Important?



**Source:** From publication provided by Terri Wonder, "Living with Mangroves," Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2013

### ENVIRONMENTAL

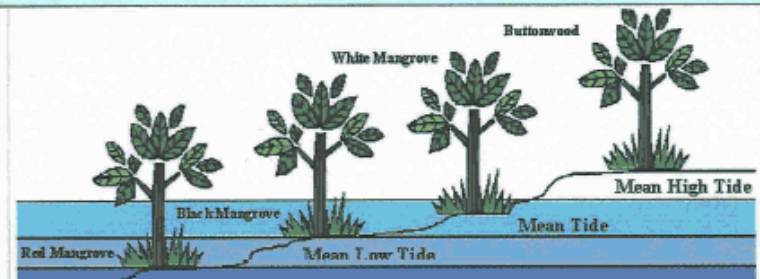
- Habitat for:
  - Fisheries species
  - Arboreal (critters that use the tree canopies: insects, birds, crustaceans; amphibians, etc.)
- Filter pollutants such as stormwater, metals, nutrients – uptake by mangroves and sequestering by soils
- Suspended sediment catch protects seagrasses & coral areas offshore of mangroves
- Detrital export & food web support – the most productive seagrass areas are offshore of mangrove areas

### ECONOMIC

- Property protection from wind
- Shoreline protection from waves - (consider the cost of installing/replacing seawalls and rip rap)

## Where do they Grow?

- Each mangrove specie typically grows in a specific zone along the coastal waterline. Usually, red mangroves are closest to the water, blacks grow a little further upland than the reds, and whites grow the most landward.



## Sarasota County Privatizes More Conservation Lands (continued from page 1)

the upper-right corner of the rectangle, there is a small, plainly disturbed area that is within the existing permit boundaries for Benderson Development's current build-out. Below that area is a light-colored area of wetlands mitigation that runs to the southwest. The rest is roughly half mesic hammock (darker) and pine flatwoods. This parcel is very high-quality native habitat. The proposed amendments call for the entire parcel to be rezoned to high-density residential use, up to 9 dwelling units per acre. The fifty acres of habitat, with all its ecological functions, will be destroyed.

The County Commissioners approved an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan for review by the Department of Economic Opportunity, which must review all changes to counties' comprehensive plans for compliance with statute, conditional upon changes requested of the Benderson group by two of the Commissioners. A new site plan, reflecting the changes requested, is expected from Benderson, but has not arrived yet. It is expected to come before the Sarasota County Commission on May 6. Our readers should email commissioners early or attend the meeting.

To learn more, go to the County staff's report on the matter:

Go to [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net), the County home page. Look for a green box on the left, called "Popular Links."

Click "Meetings on Demand." then Click "Meetings and Agendas." Click "County Commission."

Find the January 27th meeting, and click the word "Agenda."

On the agenda, find item #36, and click it.

A bunch of PDF documents will appear in a box on the right. Click PDF 7. That's the Staff Report, the mother lode of information. Issues are listed, e.g, pp 55-56.

We should write to the DOE immediately. Yesterday. Go to this link:

<http://www.floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/programs/comprehensive-planning> and see Ray Eubanks's contact info in a box on the right.

Tell DOE that conservation lands have great economic, ecological and intrinsic value. Tell them you treasure the preservation of wild habitat for passive enjoyment of birdwatching, hiking or simply sitting and contemplating. The more sprawl development spreads throughout the region, consuming vast tracts of valuable habitat, the more important become even the smaller parcels of native land that remain. If they allow for the continued obliteration of regional character, the very things people come here to enjoy will be gone.

-Andy Mele, Chair, Sarasota Conservation Committee

## Sierra Club Florida Joins Floridians for Solar Choice Coalition

As part of our effort to free Florida's energy grid from dirty fossil fuels, Sierra Club Florida has joined a wide-ranging coalition of conservatives and environmentalists in a campaign to put a solar energy constitutional amendment on the 2016 ballot.

The "Floridians for Solar Choice" amendment will let homeowners and businesses get the benefits of solar power - no emissions, no water use, and lower power bills - without the upfront expense of buying and installing a solar system which is a significant obstacle to distributed generation in Florida. The amendment will open the most popular method of accessing solar energy in the country to Floridians.

The amendment provides that a company that installs a solar system on a homeowner's roof and sells the homeowner the electricity it generates is not a "utility" and is not subject to regulation by the Public Service Commission (PSC). Currently, it's illegal for anyone except a "utility" to sell electricity by the kWh. These contracts between homeowners or businesses and solar system providers are called Power Purchase Agreements or PPAs.

Floridians for Solar Choice has already gathered over 100,000 petitions and enough have been turned in to Supervisors of Elections around the state for the amendment language to be reviewed by the Florida Supreme



Court. Sierra Club Florida encourages its members to go to the coalition website <http://www.flsolarchoice.org/> to download and sign the petition and mail it to:

Floridians for Solar Choice  
120 E. Oakland Park Blvd. Suite 105  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334

"Like" the coalition on FB and encourage your friends and families to sign the petition too.

It's time to leave dirty fuels in the ground. It's dirty to extract them and their emissions dirty the air we breathe. Reducing carbon pollution is essential to mitigating the long-term effects of climate change, including sea level

### ICO Campout continued from page 3

the children seemed to relish playing in the warm rain, many of the tents leaked and much of the children's bedding and clothing got wet. Tents were abandoned and everyone huddled under the canopy we had set up over the picnic tables. Since radar showed that there was likely to be more hard rain later that night, it was decided to load the kids up and take them home. The students were disappointed and several of the boys implored the leaders to have a do over trip. Our planned airboat tour on Sunday morning was obviously cancelled, but all in all, we feel that the outing was a success, even with it ending early and in this unusual way.

We want to extend a special thank you to our local



Images by John Myers



group's Executive Committee for deciding to donate \$1,000 to our ICO activities this year. THANK YOU!

We are always looking for new volunteers so that we can increase the number of students that we can serve in the program. We would be happy if you wanted to spend an hour, the whole day, or weekend. All that is necessary is your desire to help young people understand and connect with the outdoors. Maybe you have a special skill to share like storytelling, making music, or a craft, or birdlife knowledge etc. We are trying to have an outing each month during the school year. If interested contact Sarah Mitchell at [mitchell8manatee@yahoo.com](mailto:mitchell8manatee@yahoo.com) or 941-725-1568.

Manatee-Sarasota Group  
 Sierra Club  
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**Solar Choice Coalition (continued from page 5)**

rise – an issue of major importance to a state with as much coastline as Florida. This is an existential threat to communities of our state. It’s a bonus that transitioning to solar will lower monthly energy bills and create good paying jobs!

By Florida law it takes 8% of the total votes in the last presidential election to place an amendment on the ballot so the number for 2016 is 683,149 petitions. And we’re already 1/7th of the way there! The deadline for getting all the signatures in is December of this year (2015) so all the petitions can be checked and verified by the February 2016 deadline for placing the amendment on the 2016 ballot.

The coalition includes the Tea Party Network, Libertarians, Republicans, and Democrats; environmental groups including (in addition to Sierra Club Florida) Greenpeace, Clean Water Action, Environment Florida, Ideas for Us, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and ReThink Energy; and business groups including the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE), the Florida Retail Federation, and the Florida Solar Energy Industries Assoc. This is a common sense issue. No one should be locked into getting their power from a monopoly. Visit the coalition website <http://www.flсолarchoice.org/> and send in those petitions!

-Dave Cullen, Sierra Club

**Yes! I want to be a member of the Sierra Club and help preserve the beauty of the earth.** **FREE GIFT WITH MEMBERSHIP**

NEW MEMBER NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

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EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you want to be excluded from receiving information from other worthy organizations.

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Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	\$49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	\$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	\$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	\$1250
Senior, Student or Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	\$35

**Contributions, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine, and \$1 for your chapter newsletter.**

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