



Manatee-Sarasota Group Boca Sierra



Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress

June 2015

Sustainable Environment is Important to a Sustainable Economy

What: Manatee-Sarasota Group Meeting

When: Thursday, Jun 11, 7 p.m.

Where: Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. of the Arts

Our June 11 speaker will be Dr. Sharon Hanna-West, Department of Management, University of South Florida, Muma College of Business. She teaches in the MBA program there and is a very inspiring speaker for the need to our economy to protect our natural resources. (More about our speaker on page 3)

So often we environmentalists are accused of having our heads in the sand when it comes to economic prosperity. It is refreshing to hear an educated voice putting the issue into perspective, one that acknowledges the importance of our natural world. Come and learn how we can enhance our advocacy for these issues we hold near and dear to our hearts. Join us for the program and bring a snack to share during the social time after.

-Submitted by Gerry Swormstedt

Ten Phosphate Strip Mining Issues

The draft and final area-wide environmental impact study of phosphate mining (FAEIS) contained comment letters written by county and government officials, scientists such as hydrologists and reclamation experts, environmental organizations, and members of the public. These comments were often lengthy and well supported, but the responses to the comments, which were grouped together by topic, were short and did not adequately address many of the specific points made by the writers. The FAEIS did describe a number of adverse impacts, but then indicated they could be addressed through mitigation. However, no research or field studies were conducted to determine if reclamation/mitigation works or to what degree it is successful. The FAEIS relied heavily on industry reports, not actual independent scientific field evidence.

What can be seen from aerial films and photographs of mining is the same devastation and slime ponds spread over vast landscapes. The specter of new mines moving into the Peace and Myakka river watersheds creates heightened concerns. The same issues that have been raised previously are still there. Following is a short list of ten significant issues. Others have written lengthy documents including more issues and technical information.

Strip mining issues continued on page 5

UTC Plans Including Conservation Easement Delayed

On May 6, the Sarasota County Board of Commissioners postponed approval of the massive plans for expansion of the University Town Center.

Included in the plan is destruction of the part of the conservation easement at the southwest end of the property on DeSoto Road for high-density residential construction, which we expressed concern about in a prior newsletter. The 64-acre easement contains high quality rare mesic hammocks, forested wetlands and Cooper Creek runs through it. Many different kinds of wildlife reside in or visit the area. At the BOCC meeting, Andy Mele, Linda Jones, Margaret Kristjanson, and Larry



Aerial view of UTC conservation easement (see outline of 64 acres) held by Southwest Florida Water Management District. Easement includes Cooper Creek, rare mesic hammocks, forested wetlands, and variety of wildlife. Photo credit: SWFWMD.

UTC Plans continued on page 2



Sarasota Conservation Committee

Tuesday, June 2, 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 andy mele@mac.com

Manatee Conservation Committee

Monday, June 15, 1:30–3:30 p.m. We’ll be back in the newly remodeled Bradenton Central Library, 1301 Barcarrota Blvd. Help us contribute to sound environmental policy in Manatee County. Join us and/or contact Sandra Ripberger at 941-794-3878 or sandr arip@yahoo.com

Please Help!

We need volunteers to help us with our newsletter mailing. It’s Thursday, June 18 at 6pm. Contact Lynn Nilssen at lynnsierra@nilssen.us

UTC Plans including Conservation Easement Delayed (continued from page 1)

Grossman each spoke for five minutes, making different points to try to avoid impacts to this high quality habitat. There were also other members and supporters in the audience. The commissioners did ask questions but in the end focused on the traffic situation, reluctant to approve the expansion without knowing when road improvements will be place. They are scheduling a special meeting in about two months to vote on approval, but no specific date has been set. The *Herald Tribune* did a good job highlighting some of the main points of a long meeting. Contact Andy Mele (andy mele@mac.com) for more information or to get involved. To read the HT article, follow this link:

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20150506/ARTICLE/150509778/2416/NEWS?Title=Questions-slow-UTC-expansion>

-Summarized by Chair, Linda Jones.

Listen to Sierra Club Radio

Broadcast every Monday at 6:30 pm. WSLR 96.5 FM--low power radio. Folks that live outside of Sarasota can listen online at www.wslr.org. They also have a smartphone app that you can listen with.

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>

2015 Executive Committee

Group Chair: Linda T. Jones, 941-358-3249, lindyleetheis@comcast.net

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Manatee County: Sandra Ripberger, 941-794-3878, sandr arip@yahoo.com

Fundraising: Open

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

Boca Sierra Vol. XLIII Issue 6

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.



Delta to Headwaters

Saturday, June 6. Travel from Alluvial Delta to the headwaters, an exploratory hike traversing marsh, hammock, prairie, and upward creek, ending up at the headwaters of the channel. It is located in the Myakka river system and will be mostly off trail, possibly in heavy palmetto. Limited size group. Reserve with Bill Lewis at 941-355-2156.

Carlton Preserve Walk

Saturday, June 6, 8 a.m. Join us at the Carlton Reserve for a 4-6 mile walk. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water, sunscreen, insect repellent and lunch if your time allows. Must reserve with Sally at 941-484-4113

Myakka River State Park Walk

Saturday, June 20, 8 a.m. Enjoy a 5-mile walk at Myakka River State Park. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water, sun-

screen, insect repellent and lunch if your time allows. Must reserve with Sally at 941-484-4113.

Kayak Little Sarasota Bay to North Creek

Saturday, June 13, 9 a.m. Meet up with a 9:30 launch time. Starting from Little Sarasota Bay, we'll paddle through some mangrove islands, then into some mangrove tunnels before reaching North Creek. The creek will take us under U.S. 41 and into a housing area before heading back. There's one section where we can stretch, snack and walk before heading back. The trip should take about 3 hours and is suitable for those with basic paddling skills. For those interested, we can extend the paddle a little longer by paddling through another trail into the ICW. Bring water, snack, sunscreen, insect repellent, sneakers for walking over oyster beds and your own kayak and equipment. Reserve with Mike Lehner at 941-365-1073 or mklehn@hotmail.com.

ICO organizes Outdoor Leadership Training



Our group's ICO (Inspiring Connections Outdoors, formerly Inner City Outings) organized a day long training for Outdoor Leadership Training. Inner City Outings would be more appropriate for our group's effort since nearly all of our participants come from 3rd, 4th and 5th graders from a Bradenton elementary school. Eight volunteers including two teachers from the school, and an Outing leader from the Port Charlotte group attended. The very interesting and informative course was taught by Rudy Scheffer from the Tampa Bay Group. Now all we have to do is take a First Aid class and we will all be set to lead ICO outings or group outings (hikes, paddles, bike rides etc).

-Article by John Myers

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

Shown in photo: Back row (from L to R). Sara Mitchell, Lynn Meier, Sarah Dennison, Katie Kitchen, Kate O'Hare, Cindy Everhardt
Bottom row (from L to R) Rudy Scheffer(Suncoast Group), our own John Myers, Jim (outings leader, Port Charlotte)

About This Month's Speaker

Dr. Hanna-West teaches business ethics, sustainable business practices and environmental law. She is a faculty associate for the USF Center for Entrepreneurship and the Patel College of Global Sustainability, and she teaches business law in Lima, Peru at the Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola. She chaired the two USF Sustainable Business EXPOs in partnership with the Hillsborough City/County Planning Commission, events which drew more than 4,000 attendees, and the Florida Campus and Community Conference in 2009. She serves on the President's Council on Ethics and Integrity, the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Office of Community Engagement and the Global Sustainability Advisory Committee. Hanna-West is the Faculty advisor for the USF chapter of Net Impact, an international organization of business students who use their business skills to further sustainability related initiatives.



Venice City Council Public Hearing on “The Woods” Subdivision

You may remember a previous Boca article about Neal Communities trying to get a zoning variance for its planned project “The Woods” on 151 acres in the north Venice area right along the Myakka River. The Woods would be a planned, gated community. This whole area including The Woods is currently zoned 1 home per five acres. Neal wants to be able to build 263 homes there. This is being challenged by a very organized and energetic group of people who live near the planned project, The Wildlife Center of Venice, and other conservationists who are concerned about the impacts on nearby wildlife corridors and just the inappropriateness of this kind of “development” in this area. The Wildlife Center feels that if this “development” is approved as planned, a real opportunity for an east/west wildlife corridor (from the Carlton Reserve and the Myakka River to the Bay) will be lost.

The Venice planning commission in a recent 4 to 3 vote has approved the “development”. Even the 4 yes voters

seemed to be reluctant, citing possible adverse effects for the immediate area and the city as a whole. Nearly 200 people attended this meeting opposing The Woods and presented the commission with a petition containing 2,000 signatures.

The “development” must still pass two City Council meeting hearings. The first of those meetings was May 22 at Venice City Hall. This was planned as an all day session due to the amount of public interest in it. Our SC group has supported the opposition to this “development”. We would encourage anyone who wants to oppose this unwise “development” project to attend future city council meetings and express their views.

If you missed the May 22nd event, plan to attend the June 9th 9 am meeting of Venice City Council . You could also email, write, or call the city council with your concerns.

citycouncil@venicegov.com 941-486-2626

-John Myers, Executive Committee

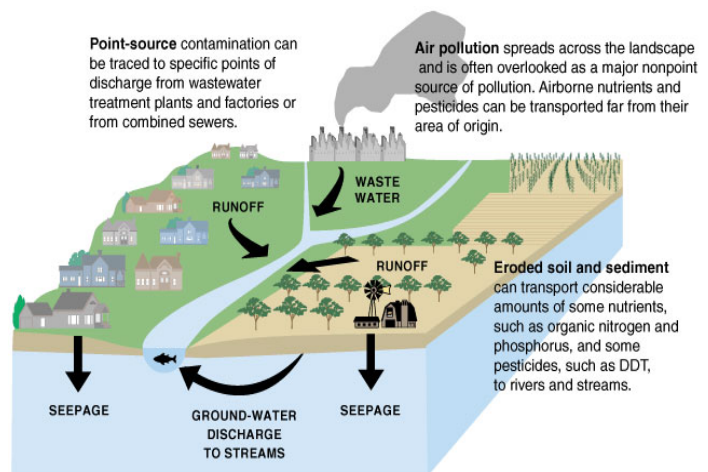
Effects of Fertilizer Run-Off on Water: Eutrophication, Excess Phosphate and Nitrogen Pollution

Agricultural run-off is a major contributor to the eutrophication of fresh water bodies. The main contributor to eutrophication is phosphate. High concentrations produce the growth of cyanobacteria and algae, reducing sunlight and oxygen. Cyanobacteria blooms (algal blooms) can also produce harmful toxins that can accumulate in the food chain, and can be harmful to humans.

The nitrogen-rich compounds found in fertilizer runoff are the primary cause of serious oxygen depletion in many parts of oceans, especially in coastal zones, lakes and rivers. The resulting lack of oxygen reduces the ability of these areas to sustain fauna. The number of oceanic dead zones near inhabited coastlines are increasing. The dead zone in the Gulf is a prominent example.

Excess nitrogen and phosphorus, or “nutrient pollution,” are the primary causes of water quality impairment throughout Florida. Numerous articles and pho-

tographs have been published documenting the problem in springs, lakes and rivers. As individuals, we can do our part by following the fertilizer ordinances, especially during the rainy season when run-off is more likely.



ICO Earth Day Outing

On April 19th the Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program participated in the annual Earth Day celebration at Oscar Scherer State Park. The service project of relocating water plants around Lake Osprey kept the fourteen students busy and muddy. The work was done to make fishing at the lake easier for park visitors. The most natural thing to do with hot, muddy kids is to go swimming in the lake. The students and volunteers also took advantage of the free kayak and stand up paddleboard trials at the lake. The rinse off in the lake was enjoyed by everyone, cooling off and getting a bit cleaner. Next on the list was lunch and visiting all the booths and

displays at the park for Earth Day. Mote Marine’s display with a touch tank was a big hit with the students. Finally all the students rode the tram around the backwoods of the park with commentary by a park guide. It was a great day for the students, full of activities and involvement in a park improvement project. We hope to make this an annual event for the program.

This program is always on the lookout for volunteers to participate in our outings. Please contact Sarah Mitchell, 941-721-7132 mitchell8manatee@yahoo.com if you are interested.

-Submitted by Lynn Meier

Ten Phosphate Strip Mining Issues (continued from page 2)

1. Mosaic is permitted to withdraw up to a yearly average of 69 million gallons of groundwater a day. That is more than what many municipalities and counties use. This massive water use also deprives wetlands, streams and rivers of water.

2. Strip mining destroys thousands of acres of native ecosystems, forests, streams and critical habitat for endangered and threatened plants and animals, resulting in a loss of genetic diversity.

3. Over 60% of Mosaic's product is shipped to other countries while our watersheds and natural habitat are devastated.

4. Reclamation does not mean the land is returned to its pre-mining condition. Some habitat types, such as forested wetlands, may take 20-30 years or more to mature. Subsurface groundwater systems destroyed by mining cannot be reclaimed.

5. Mining companies routinely obtain variances that delay reclamation for a decade and allow deep-pit lakes without enough oxygen for fish.

6. Slime ponds ("clay settling areas" or CSAs) will permanently cover more than 40% of an average mine site and have limited uses after mining.

7. Hazardous waste created by mining goes into radio-



active gypstacks that can be 200 feet high and will be here forever. There are twenty five gypstacks in Florida. Approximately thirty million tons of new waste is produced each year.

8. Mined lands have elevated levels of radioactivity from radium 226, including radon gas (222) with known negative health effects. However, mining companies and elected officials have opposed EPA surveys to help determine the health risks from this radioactivity.

9. Short-term mining jobs displace long-term agricultural and ranch jobs. More land in mining means loss of natural ecosystems, water resources and loss of economically viable agricultural lands and future products that could accommodate an increasing population.

10. The industry has a long history of contaminated waste and acidic process water overflows and spills into waterways, soils, rivers and bays that have been covered in media accounts.

Watch this four-minute film that shows the real face of phosphate mining: www.youtube.com/watch?v=spzER-HYeKw

The draft, final AEIS and addendum can be found on this website: <http://nucat.library.northwestern.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=6522401>

<http://nucat.library.northwestern.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=6522401>

What Listed Wildlife Species Are Found on Land Proposed for Strip Mining?

The landscape of the Wingate East mine site contains a large variety of different ecosystems, scrub habitat, wetlands, and forests. Many animal species also make this land their home, including both federal and state-listed species. Four federally listed species were observed on Wingate East during surveys: the woodstork, which is federally listed as Endangered, and the eastern indigo snake, Florida scrub jay, and Audubon's crested caracara, which are federally listed as Threatened. Animal species in Florida that are not federally listed but which are determined to be at risk of extinction are state-listed as Threatened. These include the gopher tortoise, southeastern American kestrel, and sandhill crane. Species that are

considered vulnerable and have the potential to become threatened, called Species of Special Concern, that also have been observed include the burrowing owl, gopher frog, little blue heron, snowy egret, tricolored heron, white ibis, Florida mouse, and Sherman's fox squirrel. The bald eagle which is no longer state or federally listed, but is afforded protection under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, has been consistently observed on phosphate mine sites. What happens to all of the wildlife, not just the listed species, that is not relocated or may not be able to relocate? They may be killed during land torching and clearing prior to mining. (Reference: FAEIS, Chapter 3-144,145)

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Mosaic Phosphate Mining Leaves Permanent Damage

The following letter was recently printed by the *Bradenton Herald*.

The praise for the Mosaic Company in the *Herald's* May 2 editorial is just what the company wants to buy with contributions for the nature center at Robinson Preserve, the expansion at the South Florida Museum and donations to many other organizations.

The funds are placed by Mosaic to deceive the public about the harm caused by Mosaic's business in Florida, which is strip mining for phosphate ore.

Close to home, in the Four Corners area, private wells near mining sites are contaminated by excess radiation, causing health problems for residents and their animals.

Mosaic's name on environmental facilities distorts these realities:

- Phosphate mining's massive groundwater withdrawals are linked to the loss of springs, reduction of fresh water flows to rivers and dewatering of wetlands and other lands.
- Agriculture and tourism are decimated when areas

are mined. The environment is worth more than its destruction.

- Synthetic fertilizer is not the best way to grow crops (organic fertilizer can be used) and overuse has led to a massive Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico and many other impaired water bodies around the world.

Phosphate mining causes destruction of wildlife and degradation of water quality and quantity. Most of this damage is permanent. Moonscapes of unreclaimed land are left for years in spoil piles and deep pits.

Phosphogypsum is the hazardous waste created when phosphate ore is processed into fertilizer. It is stored in mountain-like structures that will be here forever.

One of these, at Piney Point, has overflowed several times, polluting Tampa Bay and costing the state of Florida more than \$200 million. There are now 25 phosphogypsum stacks in Florida, disasters waiting to happen.

The vast expenditures by Mosaic for image boosting are for the purpose of blunting criticism of the destruction that mining brings to our county and state.

Sandra Ripberger, Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group