



## **Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group July 2023 News, Events & Action Alerts**

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**Have a great Summer Vacation  
No Member Meetup in July**

**Next MeetUp August 9<sup>th</sup> 7—8 pm with Eugene Kelly on Homegrown  
National Park**

**Weeki Wachee Springs Protection Zone FWC votes at July 19 Meeting**

**Join us at *Bee Conscious Honey Bee Day & Craft Fair* Sat. Aug. 19<sup>th</sup>  
10am—2pm**

**Protect Ozello Waters: Be there Citrus BOCC hearing August 22<sup>nd</sup>  
5PM**

**Weekiwachee Preserve: Act Now**

**Hernando Rainy Season  
Fertilizer Ban Passed**

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**Next Meet Up August 9<sup>th</sup> 7—8pm with Eugene Kelly on  
Homegrown National Park**



Join us for the next Adventure Coast Group Membership Meet UP at the South Brooksville Community Center, [601 East Martin Luther King Boulevard](#) in Brooksville, from 7—8pm on Wednesday, August 9th. Mark your calendars now to attend or remotely via Zoom.

Our speaker will be Adventure Coast Vice Chair Eugene Kelly who will speak on “The Homegrown National Park – Put Your Homesite on the Map!”

There are many advantages to landscaping with native plants, instead of nonnative turf grasses and ornamentals that remain ubiquitous in our developed landscapes. From reducing our water needs due to superior drought tolerance, to supporting our declining pollinators, native plants have much to offer. And the public is increasingly aware of some of those advantages.

But have you ever imagined what could happen if native plants became the ubiquitous choice for landscaping? Now, instead of just imagining such a future, you can help make it a reality by making your homesite part of the Homegrown National Park.

The HNP ([HomegrownNationalPark.org](http://HomegrownNationalPark.org)) is a nationwide, grassroots movement to “bring nature home” by simply making our homes more inviting to it. Based on the work of Dr. Doug Tallamy, the University of Delaware entomology professor who wrote *Bringing Nature Home*, the HNP has an initial goal 20 million acres being incorporated into the park. Join us for a discussion about the movement, the myriad benefits it could generate, and how you can put your own homesite on the map as a segment of the Homegrown National Park.

To participate remotely via Zoom, you must register in advance at: [https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAkf-qtgTliHdB1keZqrPAh2IBGkKUz\\_Ew4](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAkf-qtgTliHdB1keZqrPAh2IBGkKUz_Ew4)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

More info at [adventurecoast@florida.sierraclub.org](mailto:adventurecoast@florida.sierraclub.org) or call 352 277-3330, check out our website at [www.sierraclub.org/florida/adventure-coast](http://www.sierraclub.org/florida/adventure-coast), or find

## Weeki Wachee Springs Protection Zone FWC votes at July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting

Last month, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) released a revised proposal to create a Springs Protection Zone for Weeki Wachee Springs and opened the comment period until July 14th. Sierra Club Adventure Coast submitted comments in support of this initiative. We urge our members and supporters to do the same. At the [July 19-20 Commission Meeting](#), FWC staff will present a summary of the input received during public comment and the proposed final rule and then vote on it.



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| <p>The proposed Spring Protection Zone for Weeki Wachee would prohibit vessels from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• anchoring</li><li>• mooring</li><li>• beaching/grounding</li></ul> <p><b>WHERE?</b> In the spring run of the Weeki Wachee River extending from the spring boil within Weeki Wachee State Park to the Rogers Park Boat Ramp.</p> | <p><b>WHY IS THIS NEEDED?</b><br/>Restricting these activities would protect the bank and vegetation, native habitat and aquatic grasses in and along the spring run.</p> <p>The SPZ proposal will <u>not</u> restrict boaters and property owners' access to the water. They will still be able to use their vessels recreationally in Weeki Wachee River/Weeki Wachee State Park.</p> |
|--|---|

We encourage springs lovers to show up and ask the commissioners to vote YES to establish the Weeki Wachee Springs Protection Zone. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting will be at the Hilton St. Petersburg Bayfront, [333 1st Street SE, St. Petersburg, Florida, 33701](#) on Wednesday, July 19th after the lunch break. The Commission meeting starts at 8:30 am.

The original proposal submitted by Hernando County was based on competent expert information compiled in a carrying capacity study produced by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and a working group of state and county agencies. The study documented that “the cumulative effect of many vessels/users and in-water activities such as docking, wading, and swimming contributed significantly to turbidity along the river, reducing water quality” and recommended “changes in boat

docking practices to reduce direct impacts to vegetation.”

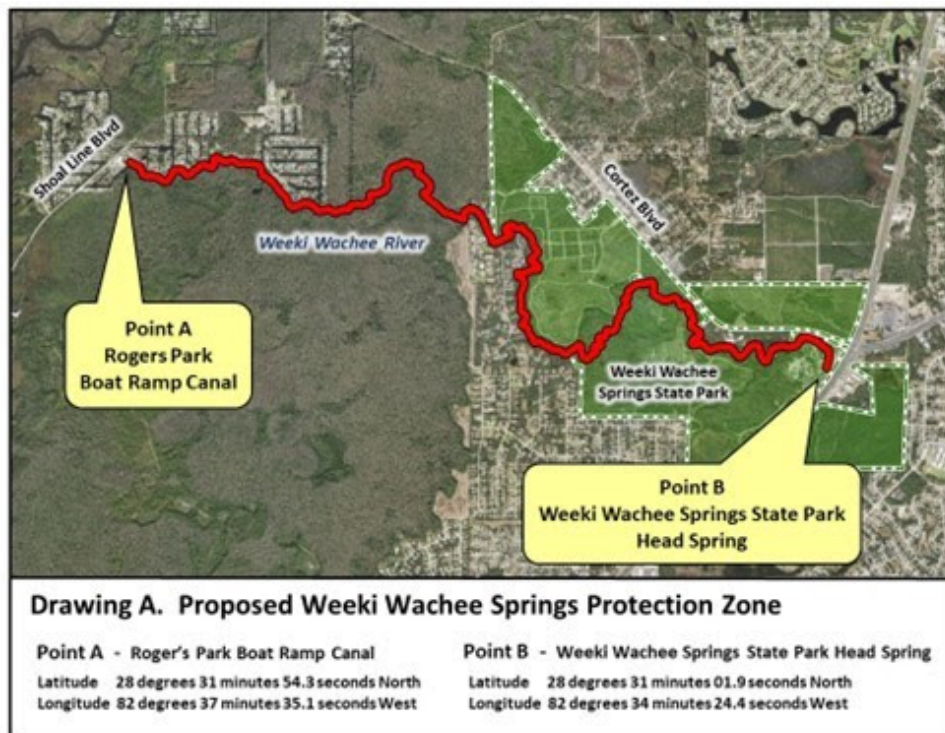
The FWC replied to that proposal by offering a counterproposal to restrict just 0.62 miles at 20 damaged sand bars, not the 2.35-mile area with 34 sand bars identified in the study for restoration and not the entire length of the river from Rogers Park to the State Park boundary in the county proposal.

**After extensive public comment, the FWC has revised its position and is now seeking approval for the entire spring run beginning within the Weeki Wachee State Park at the spring boil to the Rogers Park boat ramp.**

This is a great improvement and will achieve the goals intended in establishing the Springs Protection Zone. If passed, it will make it possible to limit damaging activities, restore degraded sand bars and improve water quality for Weeki Wachee Springs.

Sierra Club Adventure Coast will be there to encourage a YES vote and ask the commission to support the local working group led by County Administrator Jeff Rogers to develop a management plan with an enforcement component to ensure that this new initiative is fully funded and implemented.

### Map and Description of Proposed Weeki Wachee Springs Protection Zone



The establishment of a Springs Protection Zone designation for Weeki Wachee Springs will be a huge step forward to ensuring the future health of this first-magnitude spring and worldwide attraction.

**Send in your comments today! Public comments are being accepted until 5:00 pm on Friday, July 14th at <https://myfwc.wufoo.com/forms/s1g2xh6f009a30i/> or to [BoatingPublicComments@MyFWC.com](mailto:BoatingPublicComments@MyFWC.com) and via mail to:**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Attn: Boating and Waterways, 1M  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Join us at **Bee Conscious Honey Bee Day & Craft Fair** sat. Aug.  
19<sup>th</sup> 10am-2pm



# BEE CONSCIOUS

## *Honey Bee Day & Craft Fair*

It's National Honeybee Day! Discover how these vital pollinators impact the world — and what you can do to help save the bees!

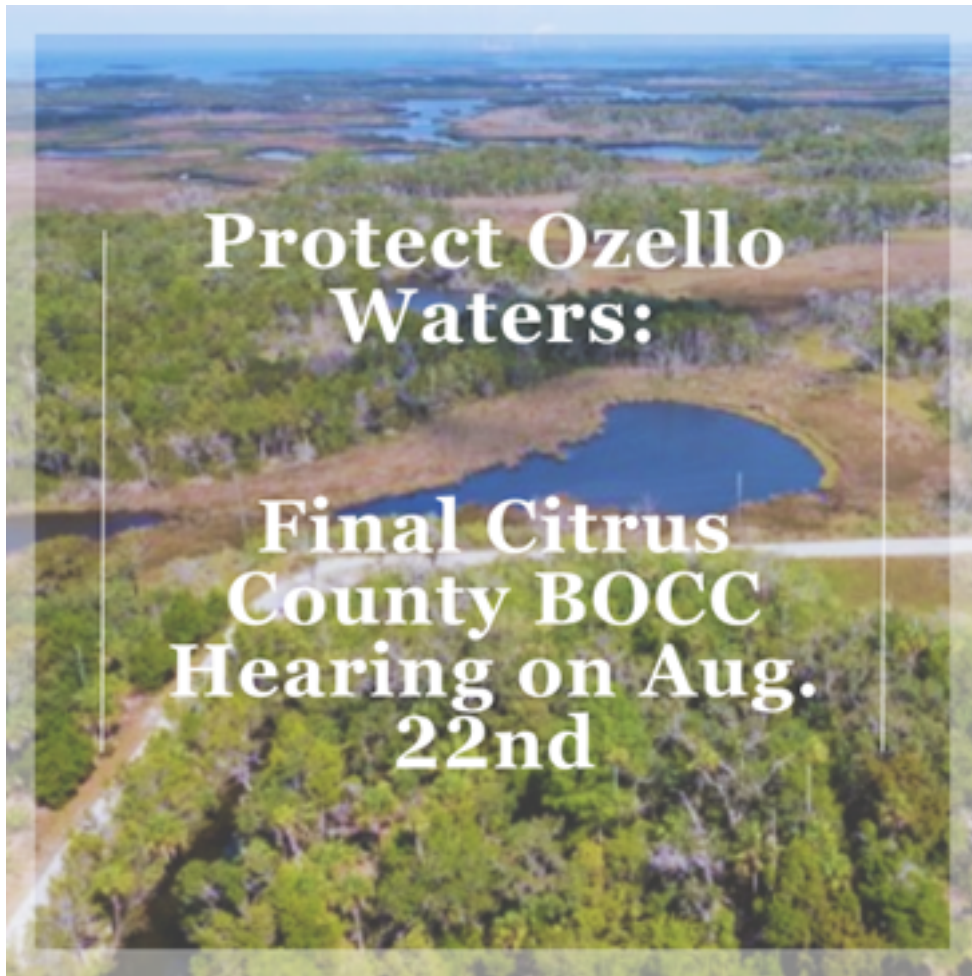
----- 19 -----  
Saturday August 10-2 pm  
----- 2023 -----

Join us for a fun-filled day of educational workshops, indoor craft vendors, and family-friendly activities to serve and build community through the celebration of one of our favorite pollinators: bees!



**THE WELLCOME OM CENTER**  
4242 LAKE IN THE WOODS DR  
SPRING HILL, FL 34607  
[www.welcomeomcenter.com](http://www.welcomeomcenter.com)





**Mark your calendar now to attend the Citrus County Commission (BOCC) final hearing on Tuesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:01 pm at the Citrus County Courthouse.** The commissioners will consider an amended proposal for a land use change and a zoning change to develop **an RV Park/Campground** on Fish Creek in Ozello. The agenda item is *Clark Stillwell, Sunshine RV Campground, LLC*. The Planning and Development Commission denied it their May 18<sup>th</sup> hearing. Now it is set for final hearing.

**During the hearing, the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners will consider an amended proposal to develop an RV Park/Campground on Fish Creek in Ozello.**

***What does the proposal include?***

- **32 RV sites**
- **16 “glampsites”**
- **20 primitive campsites**

**All on about 16.1 acres at 1540, 1560, & 1650 S. Fishcreek Pt., Crystal River.**

### ***Why oppose the proposed RV Park?***

- **It would endanger wildlife in the bordering St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve: fish, scallop, wading birds, manatees, and dolphins.**
- **Impervious roads, parking areas, RV pads, building roofs, and more would drain contaminated stormwater runoff into Fish Creek.**
- **The site is in the Coastal High Hazard Area and Special Flood Hazard Area. The large septic system proposed will likely fail during flood/storm and high tide events, releasing sewage into Fish Creek Estuary and the Preserve.**

This parcel is zoned residential in the Low-Intensity Coastal Lakes (CL) Land Use District. There's no central sewage system and RV Parks are not allowed in this residential area. It violates the county's desire for "preservation" or "only the lowest intensity development" in this land use. The infrastructure is just not there.

The property is accessed by S. Fishcreek Point and Ozello Trail, the only hurricane escape route. These narrow roads and others leading in/out are inadequate for increased traffic and large RV's, that would cause congestion, traffic issues and accidents.

The landowner is under review by the Fla. Dept. of Environmental Protection for actions taken on mangroves, has hauled in fill, and installed a floating dock without permits. For many good reasons, this application should be denied.



**SPEAK OUT at the Citrus County Commission hearing set for 5:01 PM on Tuesday, Aug. 22th at the Citrus County Courthouse, Room 100, 110 North Apopka Avenue, Inverness, FL 34450.**

*What else can I do?*

**Send a message to the Land Development Director, Joanna Coutu, Re: CPA/AA/PUD No. 22-13: [joanna.coutu@citrusbocc.com](mailto:joanna.coutu@citrusbocc.com), and copy the Citrus County Commissioners: [Diana.finegan@citrusbocc.com](mailto:Diana.finegan@citrusbocc.com), [Ruthie.schlabach@citrusbocc.com](mailto:Ruthie.schlabach@citrusbocc.com), [Holly.davis@citrusbocc.com](mailto:Holly.davis@citrusbocc.com), [Rebecca.bays@citrusbocc.com](mailto:Rebecca.bays@citrusbocc.com), [Jeff.kinnard@citrusbocc.com](mailto:Jeff.kinnard@citrusbocc.com), bcc: [revans@fast-air.net](mailto:revans@fast-air.net).**

**For more information**, contact Sierra Club's Citrus Conservation Chair, Maxine Connor at [maxineconnor@gmail.com](mailto:maxineconnor@gmail.com) or Robin Orlandi at [fla34433@gmail.com](mailto:fla34433@gmail.com).

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**Weekiwachee Preserve: Act Now!**



## **DID YOU KNOW?**



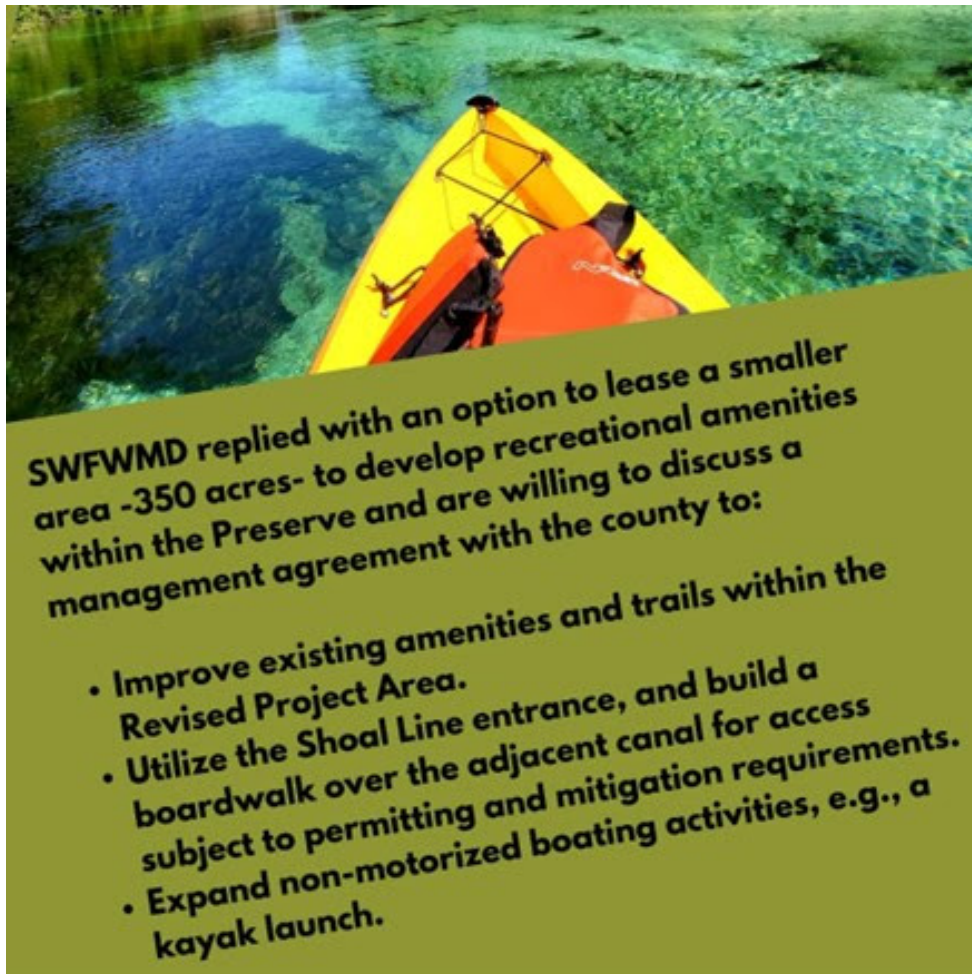
The Florida black bear was a Threatened Species until 2012.

They are now listed as a Recovered Species and the FWC approximates that there are 4,050 black bears in Florida. The Weekiwachee Preserve is a critical juncture in the Florida Wildlife Corridor for bears and other wildlife.

# What's Going On?

Hernando County submitted a proposal to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to develop part of the Weekiwachee Preserve. The Preserve is already a well-established passive recreational site for biking, hiking, bird watching and nature lovers





Sierra Club supports improvement of existing trails for passive uses. **But we are deeply concerned with the potential for unprecedented development of a beach and swimming area on publicly owned conservation land.** We do not support picnic tables or other intrusions for large gatherings, cooking and food that would disrupt wildlife and attract bears. This area of the Florida Wildlife Corridor is a critical linkage for wildlife.

**The proposed swimming area we objected to has been rejected, for now.** But the counter proposal says SWFWMD would consider selling the property to the county after five years of management, pending funding for purchase and maintenance of the proposed swim area, all required permits, and stakeholder support.

**Really? Selling lands purchased with Florida Forever funding?** They will revise its Management Plan for the Preserve in the next fiscal year, including the acreage in the Hernando proposal.

**Recommendations: Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group urges the county to assemble an Advisory Board to provide oversight for this process. As far back as 2018, The District advised the county of a need for stakeholder input. We've engaged with the county and the district to encourage a positive outcome. We believe these lands should remain in District hands and hoped the district would reject Hernando County's flawed proposal, but that is not the case.**

**At the public workshops, a majority of the attendants expressed opposition to the County's proposal, yet there was no reference to stakeholder input in the final sketchy county feasibility study. This lack of accountability and transparency could be cured by establishing an Advisory Committee to publicly review and comment on this project if it proceeds to fruition.**

**Sierra Club will continue to advocate for stakeholder engagement and against a land swap or purchase of Preserve lands. But we need your support. Now is the time for everyone to contact Hernando County Commissioners and encourage them to establish an Advisory Board to provide much-needed stakeholder oversight into the county lease negotiations to develop Weekiwachee Preserve. Express your concern for turning a wildlife preserve into a party scene.**

Please email our county commissioners at:

[ENarverud@hernandocounty.us](mailto:ENarverud@hernandocounty.us), [BHawkins@co.hernando.fl.us](mailto:BHawkins@co.hernando.fl.us),  
[JAllocco@hernandocounty.us](mailto:JAllocco@hernandocounty.us), [JerryC@hernandocounty.us](mailto:JerryC@hernandocounty.us) ,  
[SChampion@hernandocounty.us](mailto:SChampion@hernandocounty.us).

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**Hernando Rainy Season Fertilizer Ban Passed**



In order to reduce the flow of harmful nutrients into local waters, the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners unanimously voted to pass a revised urban fertilizer ordinance that sets up a rainy season restriction and other limits on fertilizer use at their May 23<sup>rd</sup> public hearing. Twenty-two percent of the nitrogen affecting Weeki Wachee Springs comes from urban turf fertilizers according to the Weeki Wachee Basin Action Management Plan that has classified this Outstanding Florida Spring as "impaired" by nitrates.

This decision came just in time to avoid new state legislation that bans Florida cities and counties from creating or modifying their fertilizer ordinance after July 1, 2023, while the state undertakes a year-long study of the matter. More than 18 counties and over 100 municipalities have successfully improved their environment with rainy season bans. This is not controversial and studying it only delays local efforts to improve water quality from urban landscape runoff high in nutrients that degrade local water bodies.

**Here are the new rules for fertilizing in Hernando County:**

- \* Prohibits the use of urban turf fertilizers containing nitrogen from December 15 to March 15 and from June 1 to September 30.
- \* Removes the exemption for commercial applicators.
- \* Increases the distance that fertilizers can be used adjacent to wetlands and surface waters to 25 feet.
- \* Requires businesses that sell fertilizers during the restriction period to post County provided signage stating the restrictions.

Hernando County is now preparing to launch an awareness campaign to let homeowners and businesses know the new rules. Fortunately, they don't have to reinvent the wheel, as many other counties have already done this, and Hernando can benefit from their efforts.

The next step in the region is to get Citrus County, which currently has no rainy season ban, to adopt rules akin to Hernando's. Sierra Club Florida Lead organizer Michael McGrath made a presentation at the June meeting

of the League of Women Voters of Citrus County on preventing urban yard fertilizer and spring restoration efforts in the Nature Coast. If you want to reference the material and information covered during the presentation you can access the [slide deck here](#) and this [factsheet](#).

Our ability to organize around securing a stronger fertilizer ordinance in Citrus County in the short term is limited by this recent sneak attack preemption. The “attack” is two fold: it would prohibit new strict ordinances for one year and it would give UF-IFAS \$250,000 to “evaluate” strict ordinances in a 6-month long period of time. What that means for local governments like Citrus County are doomed to let the urban fertilizer pollution keep running off landscapes and leaching from turf for at least another year and are under the same threat of what comes after the UF-IFAS shenanigans.

Sierra Club Florida has led the rainy season fan urban fertilizer ordinance movement and will continue to do so. We have challenged UF-IFAS’ pseudo-science in the past, and we will do so again and again and as long as it takes. Our aim is to make sure this sneak attack is ultimately only a temporary setback.

If you are interested in getting more involved in local efforts to prevent urban yard fertilizer pollution or have ideas to share, contact Michael McGrath. You can [schedule a meeting with Michael McGrath here](#).



**For more information on Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group, or any of these issues, visit our website at [www.sierraclub.org/florida/adventure-coast](http://www.sierraclub.org/florida/adventure-coast), send an email to [sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com) find us on Facebook, call 352 277-3330 or Twitter [@coast\\_adventure](#)**

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