

Adventure Coast Group // Florida Chapter

Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group December 2023 News, Events & Action Alerts

**Adventure Coast Holiday Party Dec. 13th
Join us to celebrate!**

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Climate Crisis Seriously**

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Adventure Coast Holiday Party Dec. 13th Join us to celebrate!

Greetings Adventure Coast Group Members and Supporters:

The Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group Holiday Party is Wednesday, December 13th from 6:30 pm to 8 pm at The Bistro, [10 South Main Street](#) in Brooksville, 34601.

After a year of monumental challenges and impressive achievements, we are ready to celebrate, so I hope that each of you who have made our successes possible will be there for a moment of celebration and friendship.

The party includes a charcuterie and appetizer buffet and cash bar. Please RSVP to DeeVon at sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com or call 352 277-3330.

A holiday party invitation card with a dark blue background and a decorative border of gold and green lines. At the top, three stylized green Christmas trees with gold stars are arranged in a row. Below the trees, the text "SIERRA CLUB ADVENTURE COAST GROUP HOLIDAY PARTY" is written in a gold, serif font. Underneath, the date and time "6:30 PM - 8 PM | DECEMBER 13TH" are displayed in gold. The location "THE BISTRO, 10 S MAIN ST, BROOKSVILLE, FL 34601" is listed below. A bulleted list in gold includes "CHARCUTERIE & APPETIZER BUFFET" and "CASH BAR". At the bottom, the RSVP information "RSVP TO DEEVON AT SIERRACLUBADVENTURECOASTCC@GMAIL.COM" is provided in gold.

SIERRA CLUB ADVENTURE
COAST GROUP HOLIDAY
PARTY

6:30 PM - 8 PM | DECEMBER 13TH

THE BISTRO, 10 S MAIN ST, BROOKSVILLE, FL 34601

- CHARCUTERIE & APPETIZER BUFFET
- CASH BAR

RSVP TO DEEVON AT
SIERRACLUBADVENTURECOASTCC@GMAIL.COM

**Florida Lawmakers Need to Take
the Climate Crisis Seriously**



Image of damage after Hurricane Idalia by USFWS

"Forecasters report sunny-day flooding has become more common throughout Florida in the past two decades, while hurricanes and storms are growing stronger and more destructive. Residents will see more occurrences of storms, such as Hurricane Idalia, that brought widespread flooding to coastal Hernando and Citrus counties and elsewhere in Florida.

Instead of bold action to help Floridians create safer communities and address climate change head on, the governor continues to veto our own tax dollars for popular, common-sense community benefits. Who are the leaders who will invest in our future?"

Read the opinion piece by Sierra Club Adventure Coast Chair DeeVon Quirolo published in The Invading Sea on November 13, 2023, at: <https://www.theinvadingsea.com/2023/11/13/florida-climate-change-flooding-hurricanes-wildlife-corridor-solar-algae-hernando-citrus/>

Native Plants Demonstration Project for Wilton Simpson Technical College



The land has been cleared for the new Wilton Simpson Technical College at Brooksville Airport and planning is underway to landscape the grounds with native plants and educational signage on their benefits.

The Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group and the Hernando Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, in cooperation with the Hernando County School District and Hernando County, are planning the Wilton Simpson Technical College Native Plants Demonstration Project. The goal is to incorporate installation of native plants and educational signage into the landscaping for the new college. Hernando County Project Manager Eric Van De Boogaard plans to complete construction by August 2024.

A meeting was held recently to review the layout design for the grounds to identify where natives could be planted. The timeline is to have a conceptual design within a month and then finalize it and issue bids. Eugene Kelly and the Hernando Chapter of the Native Plant Society will draft up a list of specific native plants to recommend for various areas utilizing a mix of tree, shrub, and groundcover species. The goal is to impart a range of colors and textures, located where the lighting and exposure will be conducive to healthy growth and longevity. The use of perennial species will minimize maintenance and maximize plant longevity. They would be clustered to focus and/or replaced with species that support native pollinators and are capable of reseeding. After planting, continued careful maintenance and watering will be necessary to insure their successful establishment.

Several areas on campus and parking islands in the parking lot are available for installation of native plants and signage. We recommend durable outdoor informational signage describing native plants, identifying key species represented and the benefits of landscaping with natives, with a credit line for the partners involved.

The contract for this project on county-owned land will be issued through the county engineering firm of Coastal Engineering to its landscaping associate, Terra Tectonics. Sierra Club requested that a qualified contractor experienced in native plant landscaping and professional outdoor signage companies be involved. We recommended a knowledgeable local graphic designer and landscaping firm and provided sample graphic designs and signage.

A representative of Pasco Hernando State College attended. The college is seeking funding this year to build on land adjacent to the school board's technical college to provide complimentary technical education. Their representative supports a seamless native plants design for the landscaping of that site as well.

This demonstration project will bring increased awareness of the benefits of native plants and installation of native plants in a landscaped setting. For more information contact DeeVon Quirolo at dquirol@gmail.com or Eugene Kelly at gmkelly@tampabay.rr.com.

CroomFest 2024 Paddling and Hiking Adventures



It all starts on Thursday, February 1 and goes through Monday February 5 from the Silver Lake Campgrounds at [31475 SILVER LAKE ROAD, BROOKSVILLE FLORIDA 34602](https://www.floridastatesport.com/locations/silver-lake-campground). Sierra Club Adventure Coast and the Hernando Chapter of the Native Plant Society are partnering with the SWAMP Mountain Bike Club, host of the annual Croomfest mountain biking event, to provide trail hikes and paddling excursions to this year's activities. Swamp Mountain Bike Club Inc. is a non-profit group focusing on advocacy for mountain biking and natural surface trail recreation in the Greater Tampa Bay Area. Go to croomfest.com to register.

Come as you are to camp, ride, paddle and play! Experience the Withlacoochee State Forest's renowned trail systems like never before! Added benefit? Your participation contributes to improved access and experiences for all trail riders in the Withlacoochee State Forest. We welcome you, wish you the best of experiences and look forward to sending you home with smiles and great memories.

In addition to mountain biking events planned by the Croomfest team, Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group will be hosting a 6-mile round trip paddle the afternoon of Saturday, February 3rd from 2pm—5pm that departs from the Silver Lake campground boat ramp.

We will be paddling the beautiful Withlacoochee River starting from the Silver Lake boat ramp found at the end of Silver Lake Rd (28.578252N, -82.218058W). Kayak rentals will be available and cost is \$40.

We will paddle upstream on Silver Lake and the Withlacoochee River past the Cypress Glen and Crooked River campgrounds. The paddle will be about 6 miles round trip, and no more than 3 hours long. This will be an easy paddle upstream, followed by a downstream return. There will be an opportunity to get out at Crooked River before turning back.

Saturday morning February 3rd from 9am—2pm, sign up for a nature hike hosted by the Hernando Chapter of the Native Plant Society. Experience the natural wonders of Croom by participating in a guided hike of 3-4 miles that will showcase the phenomenal array of habitats and native species protected in this special corner of the Withlacoochee State Forest. The hike is guided by experienced naturalists, including a Florida Forest Service biologist who is intimately familiar with Croom. It is designed to be family friendly and open to children 12 and older. Those under 16 should be accompanied by a responsible parent or guardian.

We are not seeking to cover distance; rather, we want you to enjoy some leisurely time in the woods with guides who know the area and can help interpret what you see. Prescribed fire is an extremely important habitat management tool in Croom, and the hike will incorporate areas that help illustrate the benefits of fire on Croom's longleaf pine "sandhill" habitat and other natural resources. We will also discuss other aspects of habitat and species management employed at Croom.

To attend, please register in advance and plan to wear appropriate footwear and bring a water bottle. Hats, sunscreen and insect repellent are also recommended. If you enjoy watching birds, bring a binocular. An assortment of migratory bird species should be present during this time of year, and we will be traversing habitat occupied by the rare red-cockaded woodpecker.

Please note that you must register in advance to join the paddling or nature hike and to receive your wristbands, breakfast ticket and if applicable, bike numbers.

Check in after your rides. Check in after your rides, paddle or hike to pick up your swag bags, t-shirts, lunch and beverage tickets. \$45.00 - Includes breakfast, lunch, beverage, t-shirt, and swag. Go to croomfest.com.

IMPORTANT DATES: Events Close Friday, Jan 20th.

Registration transfers close Monday, Jan 15th.

Please plan to arrive early so we can begin the paddles and hikes on time. We look forward to seeing you on February 3!

Defending Local Government Authority to Reduce Nutrient Pollution



Sierra Club of Florida is working in partnership with a coalition of other concerned organizations to protect the authority of local governments to adopt, amend, and/or implement strong ordinances that manage applications of fertilizer to residential and commercial turf grass lawns. To that end, Lead Organizer Michael McGrath recently attended the Florida Association of Counties annual Legislative Conference, conducted in Tampa from November 15-17. With assistance from Adventure Coast Vice-Chair Eugene Kelly, Michael alerted many of the local government officials in attendance of the legislature's recent action that temporarily suspended their authority to enact or amend fertilizer ordinances and encouraged consideration of a model resolution, or other communications with their legislative delegation, to oppose any additional attempts at preemption.

Nutrient pollution has degraded many of Florida's rivers and lakes, and tainted the groundwater that is the source of flow for most of our springs. We see the evidence all around us in the form of algae blooms, fish kills, and large-scale loss of seagrasses and other aquatic vegetation. While the primary sources of the contamination may vary across watersheds, we know that the nitrogen and phosphorous in fertilizer is a significant contributor. So it defies reason that the Florida Legislature, during the concluding hours of the legislative session last April, chose to prevent local governments from being part of the solution to nutrient pollution by preempting their ability to adopt or amend fertilizer ordinances.

Hernando County is one of 18 county governments, and more than 100 municipalities, that have already adopted "strong" fertilizer ordinances. Strong ordinances are distinguished by a strict ban on applications of turf fertilizer during the rainy season. Research has confirmed that much of the fertilizer applied to residential lawns during the summer simply leaches into our groundwater or is washed into our rivers and lakes by the frequent rains. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has designated the Weeki Wachee Spring and River system, Mud Spring, Bystre Lake, Neff Lake and others as "impaired" on the basis of nutrient pollution. Citrus County has not adopted a strong ordinance – yet! But like Hernando, Citrus is home to some well-known waterbodies, including Crystal River-Kings Bay and the Tsala Apopka marsh and lake system, that have been likewise designated as impaired by nutrient pollution. Citrus, and every other local government in Florida that has not already adopted a turf fertilizer ordinance, has been denied that authority while the current preemption remains in place.

The preemption was inserted into the final state budget at the behest of lawncare giant TruGreen and requires the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to conduct a study to determine whether fertilizer ordinances are effective – despite extensive research that has already concluded the ordinances are effective and do not preclude homeowners from having healthy lawns. The only silver lining to this backward decision is that it expires after one year because of the backhanded way it was inserted into the budget, thereby avoiding any opportunities for debate or public comment. Given the legislature's nefarious approach to enacting the preemption, and demonstrated antipathy towards the home rule authority of local governments, it is prudent to expect an attempt to make the preemption permanent, and maybe even retroactive, during the 2024 legislative session that will begin in January.

A model resolution opposing the preemption of local government authority to manage turf fertilizer applications within their jurisdictions has been developed by Sierra Club of Florida and is available for distribution to local government officials. It has already been submitted to Hernando County. Please remain alert for opportunities to assist us in this effort to protect existing fertilizer ordinances, promote the adoption of new ones, and oppose the continued erosion of home rule authority in Florida. Fertilizer ordinances may be the single most cost-effective approach to preventing nutrient pollution. Help protect Weeki Wachee Spring by protecting Hernando County's strong fertilizer ordinance.

Adventure Coast Group Executive Committee Election Results

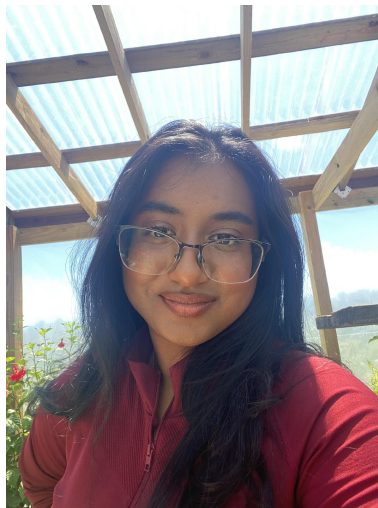
VOTE

Thanks to all members who took the time to vote in this year's election for three members to the Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group Executive Committee. Voting closed on November 28th and the Elections Committee met thereafter to review and tally all the ballots.

This year we tried to make it easy to vote by providing online voting from our website, sent out an electronic newsletter, and an email, as well as mailed a hard copy self-mailer ballot to all members who had not provided email addresses. There were no voting irregularities and all ballots contained member numbers qualifying that member to vote.

Three candidates ran for three open seats: Maxine Connor, Denise Dookeran, and Eugene Kelly. The committee reviewed the ballots and tallied the results. **All three candidates won a seat on the Executive Committee for terms beginning in January 2024, for a two-year period.**

Congratulations to Maxine Connor, Denise Dookeran, and Eugene Kelly.



**Robin Orlandi Joins Adventure Coast
Citrus Conservation Committee**



At the November Executive Committee meeting of the Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group, the board voted to create a Citrus County Conservation Committee to support the efforts of Citrus Conservation Chair Maxine Connor. Maxine is the Executive Committee member who diligently monitors Citrus County environmental issues and supports local Sierra Club campaigns for clean water, clean energy and protection of the natural environment. But as Citrus County grows by leaps and bounds, there is more and more to do.

To provide added capacity to our team, the Executive Committee agreed to establish a Conservation Committee comprised of qualified volunteers interested in getting involved. Robin Orlandi, a long-time environmentalist, has been involved for the past year and offered to step up to an appointment to this new committee. An FIU Honors College graduate who grew up on the beaches of the Gulf Coast, she has witnessed first-hand the negative impacts unwise development and policy decisions have had on Florida's wildlands, waters, and once vibrant coastal ecosystems. She served previously as a citizen advisor to the NAS-KW Restoration Advisory Board, and as a board member of the Florida Keys coral reef conservation group, Reef Relief. A former public library director, she is a voracious researcher, writer, active outdoors explorer, and a dedicated and thoughtful advocate for the environment.

**Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee
Zoom Thursday, December 21st, at 8pm**

SIERRA CLUB FLORIDA PASCO CONSERVATION COMMITTEE



2nd Thurs. @ 8pm on Zoom



Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee is dedicated to preserving, exploring, and enjoying nature in areas of Pasco County. You're invited to join our Zoom meeting the second Thursday of every month at 8:00 pm at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7674695843> with the Zoom ID: 767 469 5843. Call Sasha at (727) 326-2646 for more information.

News and Developments:

- Suncoast Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee joined community gardens endorsements along with FarmNet and NPR City Environmental Committee.
- The Pasco Conservation Committee continues to oppose the development of Anclote River Beach park that has indigenous burial, temple and midden mounds. Along with that, to build a commercial restaurant on public land in a coastal high hazard area is obviously ludicrous.
- We may becoming a group - the Sierra Club Pasco Group!

Upcoming events:

- January 6th, 2024 - Collards Festival at Grand Gardens.
 - January 19th, 2024 - Arbor Day, (location TBA).
 - March 4-9th, 2024 - Florida Loquat Festival at Sim's Park.
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For more information about Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group, visit our website: www.sierraclub.org/florida/adventure-coast, send an email to sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com, or call 352 277-3330. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).