

Adventure Coast Group // Florida Chapter

Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group February 2024 News, Events & Action Alerts

**Croomfest 2024 Feb. 1-5th
Register now for hiking & paddling**

**Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee
ZOOM Thursday, February 8th at 8pm**

**Adventure Coast Meet Up Feb 14th with Susannah
Randolph on The Dirty Truth About Climate Pledges**

Adventure Coast Board Sets Course for 2024

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**Suncoast Sierra PAC Fundraiser
March 21**

Action Alert: Weekiwachee Preserve

Weeki Wachee Summit Spring 2024

**Croomfest 2024: Feb. 1-5th
Register Now!**

CroomFest 2024

CAMP • PEDAL • PADDLE • PLAY

FEBRUARY 1 - 5

CroomFest.com



SILVER LAKE CAMPGROUND

31475 SILVER LAKE RD, BROOKSVILLE, FL

Get ready for the ultimate outdoor extravaganza at CroomFest 2024! Dive into the heart of Florida's breathtaking Withlacoochee State Forest. This is not just an event; it's a celebration of nature's splendor and the thrill of adventure. Join us for heart-pumping mountain bike races, peaceful paddles down the Withlacoochee River, and nature hikes revealing the forest's hidden gems. Revel in the vibrant atmosphere with live music, tantalizing food, and a community of fellow nature lovers. Your participation not only fuels your spirit of adventure but also contributes to vital trail maintenance and local initiatives. Embrace the wild, be part of the unforgettable CroomFest 2024 experience!

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](#). 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.

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). 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, 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.

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

**Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee
ZOOM Thursday, February 8th 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. The Pasco Conservation team is working towards spinning off into its own Nature Coast Sierra Club Group - if you would like to join us in leading the efforts to educate and protect Pasco's natural open spaces, please email sashabuddha@gmail.com.

You're invited to join our Zoom meeting the second Thursday of each month at 8:00PM at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7674695843> with the Zoom ID: 767 469 5843.

Adventure Coast Meet Up Feb 14th with Susannah Randolph on The Dirty Truth About Climate Pledges

Susannah Randolph



Florida Chapter Director



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, on Wednesday, February 14th from 7pm—8pm. Attend in person or remotely via Zoom.

Our guest speaker will be Susannah Randolph our new Sierra Club Florida Chapter Director. Susannah will present on the Sierra Club Report entitled “The Dirty Truth About Climate Pledges.” Many utilities are delaying the transition to clean energy despite their commitments to do so. A majority of the 50 parent companies are not on track to achieve President Biden’s national goal to reach 80 percent clean electricity by 2030.

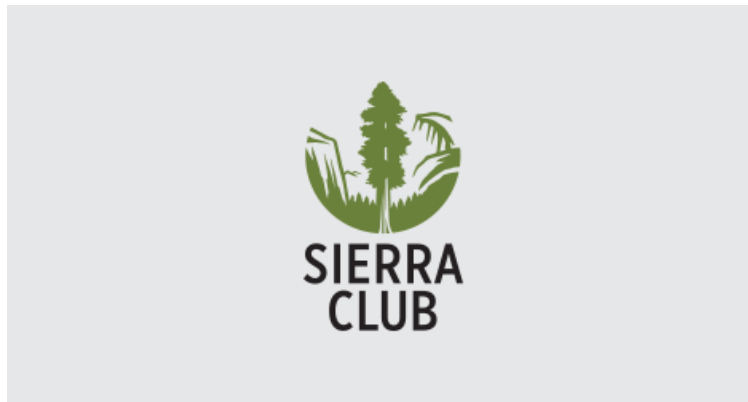
Susannah has been with the Sierra Club since 2017, previously serving as Senior Campaign Representative for the Beyond Coal campaign in Florida. She brings a wealth of environmental, social justice, and political expertise.

To participate remotely via Zoom, please register in advance at:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0ucu2hrjgvGtDmAK-L9JzUqK6MD92Zk7vZ>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. More info at adventurecoast@florida.sierraclub.org or call 352 277-3330, check out our website at www.sierraclub.org/florida/adventure-coast, or find us on [Facebook](#).

Adventure Coast Board Sets Course for 2024



At the January Retreat of the Adventure Coast Group Executive Committee, we reviewed the past year’s efforts and set out a plan for our 2024 goals for Citrus and Hernando Counties. We have achieved a lot and have plans to do a lot more in the coming year.

The priority program areas are:

- **Environmentally sustainable growth:** We will monitor county and state policies and speak out when necessary to promote enforcement of appropriate land use regulations and land conservation initiatives that preserve green space and sustainable living.
- **Weeki Wachee River Summit:** We are planning this community event for May, 2024, to be hosted by a consortium of conservation organizations and county representatives to highlight county level steps underway to improve the water quality and the health of the Weeki Wachee River watershed.
- **Weekiwachee Preserve:** We will continue to advocate for maintaining current levels of passive recreational activity within the preserve that serves as a critical wildlife corridor for black bears.

- **Clean Energy Schools:** Construction of the new Wilton Simpson Technical College has begun. We will monitor its progress to achieve the planned high performance/low energy use goals. We'll explore launching a similar effort for public schools in Citrus County to adopt clean energy building standards.
- **Native Plant Landscaping Pilot Program:** We will continue efforts underway to incorporate native plants into the landscaping plan of the new Dennis Wilfong campus that includes the Wilton Simpson Technical College, a future Pasco Hernando State College technical education building and eventually a third building for Hernando County Administration.
- **Hernando County Solar Coop:** We'll explore partnering with Solar United Neighbors as we did in Citrus County earlier to expand residential solar power.
- **Citrus County Rainy Season Fertilizer Ordinance:** Hernando's success in passing a rainy season ordinance provides a template for Citrus County however, we must monitor state legislative activity that has placed a temporary pre-emption on such ordinances and hope it is lifted to allow such ordinances.

Organizational goals include:

- Appoint a **Membership Chair** to our Executive Committee. If you are interested in coordinating member activities, reach out to us.
- Find a **Citrus Youth Leader** to be receptive to the voice of the next generation in our deliberations in collaboration with our Hernando Youth Leader. If you are an interested current student in Citrus County, please get in touch with us.
- Activate a **Political Committee** to encourage voter participation, share news of national, state, and local Sierra-endorsed candidates and get out the vote for this presidential election year.

Members are always welcome to attend, get involved and even attend our monthly Executive Committee meetings held at 5pm prior to our Monthly Membership Meeting.

Bust The Myth about Recycling



The Adventure Coast Group member meetup held on January 10th featured Ms. Liana Teague, Recycling Coordinator for the Hernando County Solid Waste Department. She described the solid waste and recycling programs currently available to residents of the county and emphasized that the approach to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is the most effective strategy for waste management.

Many of our members were most interested in the details of the recycling program. Hernando County is not the only place where there is a persistent myth that the items collected for recycling do not actually end up being recycled. It is cited as one of the primary reasons that people don't bother to recycle, which drives down the level of recycling and increases the amount of trash at our landfills.

The truth is - there are widespread opportunities for residents of Hernando and Citrus Counties to recycle. There is really no good reason for you NOT to recycle. Curbside service is available in Hernando County while in Citrus County, mixed recyclables can be dropped off at the Inter County Recycling facility at [230 West Gulf to Lake Highway](#) in Lecanto or at the nearby gate entrance to the main Solid Waste Department. Yard waste can be picked up as well upon request in either county. Hernando is also planning a composting facility for yard waste.

Ms. Teague provided details to rebut this myth. The recycling items collected in Hernando County include magazines, newspapers, office paper, junk mail, cereal and soda boxes, clean pizza boxes, shredded paper (in paper bags, not loose), and cardboard under 3' X 3' that is flattened and fitting inside the recycling bin provided. There is a second bin provided for aluminum and tin (steel) cans, rigid plastic containers, milk, soda, water, cooking oil, salad dressing, shampoo, and laundry detergent. Chemical containers must be empty and rinsed. Recycling items must be free of food waste, trash, plastic bags, or any materials not listed above. All recycled items must fit into the bins and if needed, additional containers of the same size and style can be used. Mixed or contaminated items cannot be recycled, but can be disposed of separately as garbage or if appropriate, hazardous waste, which is also available at county facilities.

Once the recyclables in Hernando County bins are collected by truck, they are delivered to a sorting area for delivery to a contractor that further sorts and cleans them before delivering them to recycling centers for re-use. In Citrus County, all of the same recyclable items noted above can be dropped off and deposited into large containers at the actual Recycling facility where they are sorted and bundled for re-use.

Here are the facts from experts on how much is actually being recycled.

- From 1960 to today (2023), the U.S. increased its rate of recycling and composting from 6.4% to over 32%. Over the past 60 years, that's a 4.5x improvement in recycling.
- The total generation of municipal solid waste (MSW) in the U.S. in 2018 was 4.9 pounds per person per day. Of that, 23.6% was recycled, and 8.5% was composted. An additional 17.7 million tons of food were managed by other methods.
- 94% of Americans have some sort of recycling program available to them today.
- Of the 79 million tons of paper waste in the U.S. every year, around 63% gets recycled. 91.4% of cardboard in the U.S. was recycled in 2021.
- The US rate of glass recycling is roughly 33% for about 10 million tons of glass a year. 39.6% of beer and soft drink bottles are recycled.
- Aluminum can be infinitely recycled and accounts for just 1% of the waste in the U.S. with about 620,000 tons of aluminum recycled each year.
- The U.S. plastic bottle recycling rate for PET bottles is around 30% Of the 38 million tons of all plastic waste in the U.S. every year, 5-6% gets recycled.
- Americans had 6.92 million tons of e-waste in 2019, and 15% was properly recycled.

So, help us bust this myth once and for all. While we can always improve these statistics, Hernando and Citrus Counties and the rest of the world DO recycle and we need your help to increase recycling. The environmental benefits are numerous:

- Recycling reduces the use of fossil fuel energy and CO2 emissions from manufacturing processes that degrade air quality and contribute to the climate crisis.
- Recycling conserves finite natural resources and can reduce up to 95% of fresh water used to manufacture many materials.
- Recycling reduces the volume of usable items that will still be here for hundreds of years in our landfills and reduces trash in the ocean and on land.

For more information, contact the Hernando County Solid Waste Department at 352-754-4112 or the Citrus County Solid Waste Department at 352-527-7670.

Sources: Recycle Across America, Chemical & Engineering News. US EPA. Recycling Statistics 2024, Statistica, and RubyHome blog, Citrus County, Florida website.

Save the date! Adventure Coast Meet Up March 20 with Kim Ross on The Upper Limit of Sea Level Rise



Join us for the March 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, March 20th. Attend in person or remotely via Zoom.

Our guest speaker will be Kim Ross, Co-Executive Director and co-founder of ReThink Energy Florida, a non-profit dedicated to engaging, educating, and empowering Floridians to take action to achieve a just transition to clean energy in a healthier, more sustainable environment.

Kim will discuss The Upper Limit Project, created to Keep Florida Above Water by changing the sea level rise conversation in Florida from being responsive to being proactive, and prioritizing carbon pollution reduction strategies to address the root cause of the problem.

“Our goal now is to move Regional Climate and Resilience Compacts, local governments, and ultimately the Florida government to recognize that there are upper limits to sea-level rise beyond which Florida cannot maintain its economic viability. We’re looking for partners to help us build the grassroots movement” she notes.

To participate remotely via Zoom, please register in advance at:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYlc-Gprj0pHde1MvrlfFXXmnbox2FFeM2C>

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

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

Save the Date!

SPRING
fundraiser

03.21.24 | 6-9PM | THE FACTORY | ST. PETE

Sponsors & Auction Items Needed!
email: info@suncoastsierra.org



SIERRA CLUB
Suncoast Group
raising funds for the
Sierra Club FL PAC



Action Alert: Weekiwachee Preserve

PROTECT WEEKIWACHEE PRESERVE



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. Weekiwachee Preserve is Critical Linkage in the Florida Wildlife Corridor for bears and other wildlife.

Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group has created **an updated** letter to protect Weekiwachee Preserve addressed to Brian Armstrong, Executive Director at SWFWMD, urging him to deny Hernando County's proposal to lease and develop a 350-acre parcel of land within the Preserve.

[Send the Letter](#)

Here's the full message:

Dear Mr. Armstrong,

Hernando County has submitted a proposal to the Southwest Florida Water Management District to lease and develop a 350-acre parcel of land within the District-owned Weekiwachee Preserve (Preserve). I am urging the District to deny the County's proposal as currently conceived. The Preserve lands were acquired to protect the area's water resources and natural systems. For more than 25 years the District has provided quality management of the Preserve and its

conservation values have only increased since then. Hernando County is proposing to promote high-intensity recreational activity that is incompatible with resource protection. The Preserve is already a well-established and popular site for passive recreational uses like biking, hiking, and bird-watching.

Weekiwachee Preserve has been designated a Critical Linkage in the Florida Wildlife Corridor and serves as a core habitat for the state's most imperiled subpopulation of the Florida black bear (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 2019). Maintaining existing habitat connectivity within this portion of the species' range is identified as the highest priority for its conservation; second only to enhancing connectivity. The high-intensity recreational usage envisioned by the County's proposal would only compromise an already-tenuous connection.

Recent research on dispersal and landscape connectivity reveals a "means of determining the likelihood of settlement into key areas from other protected areas" (Fletcher et al., 2023, p. 2498). Researchers from the University of Florida found a low likelihood of expected dispersal of the Florida black bear into the Preserve (Fletcher et al., 2023, p. 2498), placing a premium on the protection of bears already inhabiting the Preserve and adjoining habitats. If protecting habitat and wildlife resources in the Preserve remains a goal of the District's management, then the County's proposal as currently described runs counter to that goal and will only make the Florida black bear's continued presence, and future dispersal into the Preserve, more problematic.

The addition of shade structures and trail improvements to more effectively accommodate current public usage would be welcome. Picnic pavilions, boardwalks, and an artificial beach and swimming area would not be compatible enhancements, yet they are the County's ultimate ambition - whether or not they are explicitly included in the County's current proposal. Please deny any such future development within the Preserve.

Thank you.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2019. Florida Black Bear Management Plan. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee, Florida, p. 209

Fletcher, R.J., Iezzi, M.E., Guralnick, R. et al. A framework for linking dispersal biology to connectivity across landscapes. *Landsc Ecol* 38, 2487–2500 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10980-023-01741-8>

Weeki Wachee Summit Spring 2024



The Weeki Wachee River is an invaluable feature in Hernando County, driving tourism, employment, and renowned for its waterways as a prime recreational destination in addition to being a first magnitude Outstanding Florida Waters Spring.

The Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group is planning a Weeki Wachee River Summit for the spring of 2024. The purpose of this event is to communicate present and future conditions of the river/watershed and initiatives being implemented by Hernando County and state agencies to protect, maintain, and restore riverine conditions.

The summit would be hosted by a consortium of Hernando County conservation organizations that will plan and implement the event. County initiatives from sewer conversion to retention pond remediation, to the establishment of the Spring Protection Zone and replanting seagrasses are all part of a mosaic of remedies being implemented to restore and improve this precious resource that will be part of the discussion.

Conveying this important work to the public and residents of Hernando County is intended to garner support, showcase solutions, and ultimately, bring the river back to a sustainable condition. Stay tuned for further information regarding the summit. For further information, contact sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com.



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](#).