



Adventure Coast Group // Florida Chapter

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

**Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee
ZOOM Thursday, March 14th at 8PM**

**Adventure Coast Meet Up March 20 with Kim
Ross on *The Upper Limit of Sea Level Rise***

**Suncoast Sierra PAC Fundraiser
March 21**

Welcome Noa Adera: Citrus Student Leader

Weeki Wachee Preserve Update

Citrus County Rainy Season Fertilizer Ban

**Adventure Coast Meetup Wednesday April 10th
with Vince Morris on the Withlacoochee Forest**

Earth Day 2024 Events

***Save the Date!*
Weeki Wachee Summit May 3, 2024**

**Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee
ZOOM Thursday, March 14th 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 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](#).

**JOIN SUNCOAST SIERRA CLUB FOR A
SPRING FUNDRAISER**

Art! Music! &
FUN-RAISING

MARCH 21, 2024 | 6 TO 8:30PM @ THE FACTORY
2606 FAIRFIELD AVE S, ST. PETE

\$100 ADMISSION INCLUDES:

- Music by **The Young Lions Alex Malkovich Trio** courtesy of Clearwater Jazz Holiday Foundation
- A special performance of Dane Myer's song **CHANGE** by the St. Pete Academy Prep Choir, courtesy of **SeaUsRise** as part of the "Boston to Boston" world choir event.
- **Silent Auction**
- **GOURMET BITES** grazing table
- Cash Bar with **one free drink** ticket included
- **Canvas of the Wild** Display
- Access to **ART EXHIBITS** at The Factory:
 - **Fairgrounds St. Pete** - an immersive experience honoring all that's cool, kitschy, and authentic Florida
 - Florida Wildlife Corridor's **Wild Space Gallery**.

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

tinyurl.com/SuncoastSierraFundraiser

donations to the Sierra Club FL PAC are not tax deductible



**SIERRA
CLUB**

Suncoast Group

raising funds for the
Sierra Club FL PAC

Welcome Noa Adera: Citrus Student Leader



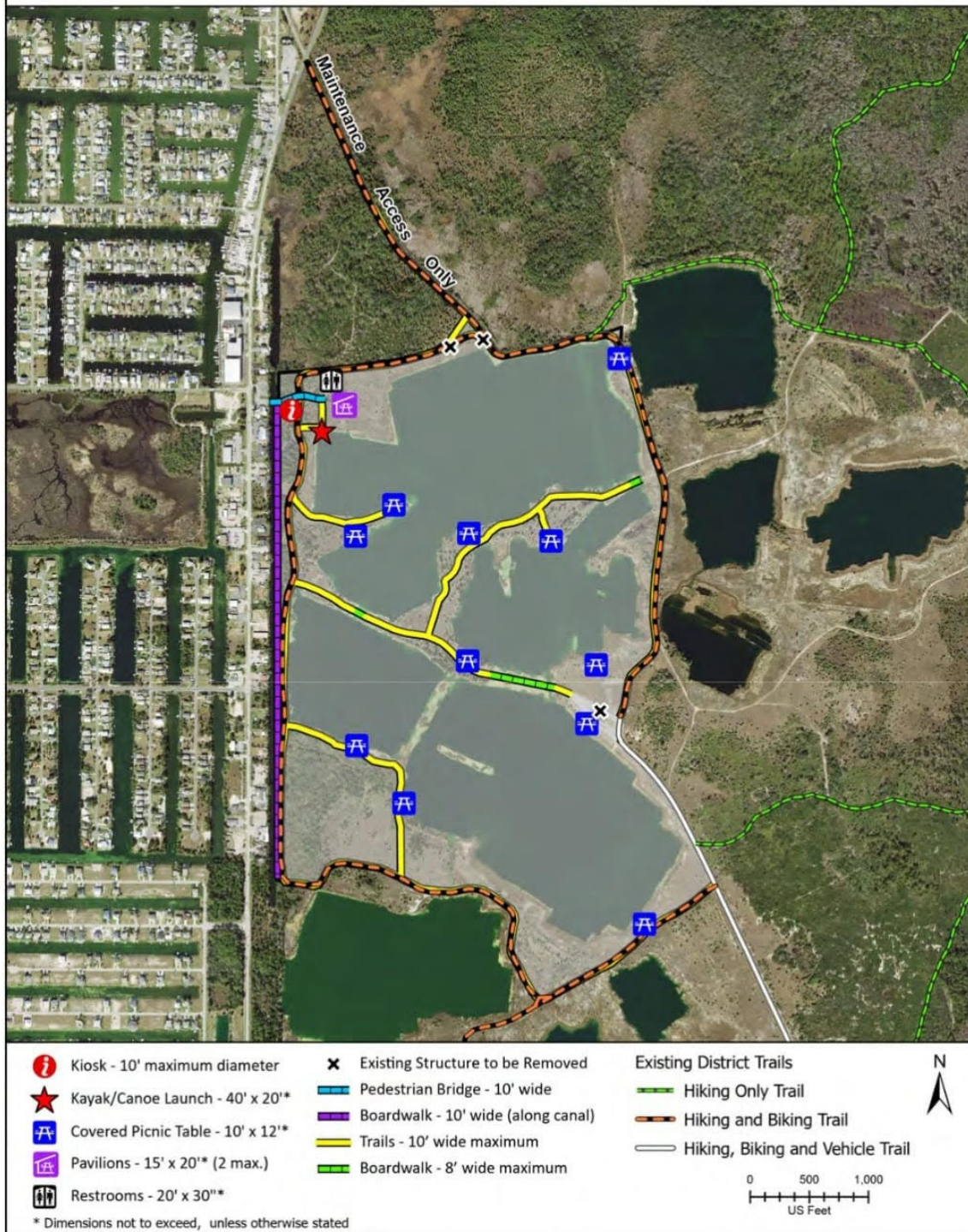
Let's all welcome Ms. Noa Adera to the Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group. She was voted in as the new Citrus Student Leader for our group at the February 14th Executive Committee Meeting. Our first Citrus Student Leader, Ms. Isabel Baxter, graduated and moved away to attend college.

Hi everyone! My name is Noa Adera and I'm so excited to be the Citrus County Student Leader of the Sierra Club. I was born and raised in Citrus County and I am currently a tenth grader at the Academy of Environmental Science. I have always been interested in conservation and when I am older, I hope to become an environmental engineer. I'm so honored to be a part of a club that is so focused on preserving and protecting our beautiful environment and ecosystems. I can't wait to meet all of you and learn more about this wonderful club.

Ms. Adera is a dual enrollment student at the Academy of Environmental Science, a public charter school in Crystal River and a part of the Citrus County School District. The Academy is located on Fort Island.

Weekiwachee Preserve Update

Exhibit "C"



Hernando County is pursuing efforts to obtain a lease from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) to create a county park on lands within the Weekiwachee Preserve. Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group continues to advocate for maintaining current levels of passive recreational activity in this Preserve that serves not only as a critical wildlife movement corridor for black bears and other wildlife species, but is also occupied bear habitat. This is an important distinction, as incompatible recreational uses may not only inhibit wildlife movement, but also induce abandonment of occupied habitat. Numerous bird species, such as the Swamp Sparrow and Henslow's Sparrow, use the Preserve as a wintering ground before migrating north and west in the spring.

The latest update is that the District has submitted a renewable 20-year lease agreement to Hernando County for approval to create a park with visitor amenities to a 350-acre parcel of land within the

Preserve. Plans include a kiosk, a boardwalk over the canal between the park and a county-owned parking lot on Shoal Line Boulevard, an additional boardwalk paralleling the canal; covered picnic tables, development of a kayak launch, a bathroom facility, informational signage, and authority to charge a fee or parking charge. The District spells out that the new park is to be designated the Weeki Wachee Preserve Park.



Prohibitions include any barriers between the park and other preserve lands, any swimming in the park with required signage announcing this restriction, and pre-approval of all new construction. See the map above with planned additions.

Small shade structures with seating and picnic table, and trail improvements to accommodate current public access more effectively are acceptable improvements. However, picnic pavilions with grills to accommodate food preparation for large groups and boardwalks along the shoreline are incompatible enhancements. Sierra is contacting both the District and the County to present our strong objection to these elements that would increase the intensity of human impacts to the area beyond what is appropriate for this wildlife preserve.

We are urging the District to submit this proposal to its Environmental Advisory Committee for review before it is considered for final approval by the District Governing Board. Although it is not included in this initial lease agreement, the development of an artificial beach and swim area in the Preserve is clearly the County's ultimate ambition. A path for achieving this goal after an initial five-year lease has already been proposed by the District. This is completely inappropriate.

In addition, this year the Weekiwachee Preserve Management Plan will be updated. Sierra Club is recommending that this lease agreement be reviewed as part of the update prior to bringing it to a vote of the District Governing Board. The issue of developing the preserve is such a departure from its current designation as a wildlife preserve purchased with conservation funds that it should be reviewed for consistency with the plan update. Sierra Club is also recommending that local stakeholders be

included in that review. We would like to remind both the District and the County that stakeholder buy-in and feedback have yet to be obtained by either party, a district requirement noted in correspondence from March 12, 2021.

The next step is a vote by the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners to approve the lease agreement. Final approval will be considered when it goes before the Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board for a vote.

Citrus County Rainy Season Fertilizer Ban



Last year, Hernando County Commissioners voted to add a rainy season restriction to its fertilizer ordinance. This approach has also been adopted by 18 other Florida counties and over 100 municipalities to reduce the flow of nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizer into our springs, rivers and shorelines statewide. Applying fertilizer during the rainy season creates runoff that reduces water quality and causes harmful algal blooms that threaten wildlife such as manatees and other marine life.

Less than two weeks after Hernando's ban passed, the Florida legislature passed a year-long statewide moratorium on such strict urban fertilizer ordinances and ended such smart home rule initiatives. And this year, there is a great deal of concern that an extension, or even an expansion, of that moratorium, may arise in some form during the current legislative session.

A rising tide of local leaders and business owners have joined the call for more home rule so that communities can protect water quality and take other local actions that are more suitable for local solutions. Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group, under the leadership of Sierra Florida's Lead Organizer Michael McGrath, and in cooperation with other local conservation groups, is now reaching out to concerned Citrus County business owners and leaders to expand Hernando's successful passage of this nutrient reduction strategy to Citrus County this year.

The legislative moratorium last year also included funding for a report by the University of Florida IFAS, which has been completed and published, entitled, [Effectiveness of the timing of seasonal fertilizer](#)

[restrictions on urban landscapes](#). The good news is that contains nothing that would justify relaxing urban fertilizer restrictions. The report was clear that the [Florida Consumer Fertilizer Task Force](#), back in 2007-2008 was correct in its conclusion that a watershed-by-watershed approach, as opposed to one statewide rule, was the best approach; local governments should retain the ability to protect their waterfront economies from urban fertilizer pollution.

Sierra Club released [initial talking points](#) in response to the release of the UF/IFAS report and is leading a statewide coalition of partners to push back on further preemption bids and save our strong urban fertilizer ordinances.

Please also see Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch's recent op-ed, "[Fighting for an ounce of prevention: Urban fertilizer ordinances work for Florida communities](#)"; we think you'll agree that Florida's ailing waters need more, not less, policies and practices that prevent pollution at its source. Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch is a former commissioner and mayor for the town of Sewall's Point. She also served on the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board from 2019 to 2023.

To get involved in Citrus County efforts, contact us at sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com or Michael.mcgrath@sierraclub.org. Volunteers are needed to help reach out to local businesses and leaders to increase protection for water quality in Citrus County.

Adventure Coast Meetup Wednesday April 10th with Vince Morris on the Withlacochee Forest



Vince Morris catching red-cockaded woodpecker chicks in Croom a few years back

Love the Withlacochee Forest? Learn all about it at the April 10th Adventure Coast Group Membership Meet Up. Join us at the South Brooksville Community Center, [601 East Martin Luther King Boulevard](#) in Brooksville, from 7—8pm. Attend in person or remotely via Zoom.

Our guest will be Vincent Morris, Resource Administrator for the Florida Forest Service who will speak about current events in the Withlacochee State Forest including prescribed burning, red-cockaded woodpecker management, and invasive species control.

Vince has a degree in Forest Resource Management from Humboldt State University and came to Florida in 1996 to work at the Withlacochee State Forestry Center in Brooksville as County Forester, Ecology Forester, Ecology Unit Leader, and now Resource Administrator.

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

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAKcujsqj0jHtx949mReyTNR44jWGTTh2dK>

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Earth Day 2024 Events



Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group invites you to mark your calendar now for several Earth Day events that we will participate in. Make plans now to join us at:

Love Your Mother Earth Day at Pasco Hernando State College on Thursday, April 18th from 10am—1pm at the Brooksville campus, [11415 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, Brooksville, FL](#).

Earth Day Festival at OM on Saturday April 26th from 9am—3pm at Wellcome OM Healing and Education Center, [4242 Lake in the Woods Drive, Spring Hill, 34607](#). We are also seeking Sierra Club

members and supporters to help staff these events. Training provided.

For more information, email us at sierraclubadventurecoastcc@gmail.com or call 352 277-3330.

Weeki Wachee Summit May 3rd 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 Spring.

The Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group is planning a Weeki Wachee River Summit on Friday, May 3rd, 2024, at Pasco Hernando State College - Spring Hill Campus, [450 Beverly Court, Spring Hill, FL](#). The purpose of this event is to communicate present and future conditions of the river and watershed and initiatives being implemented by Hernando County and state agencies to protect, maintain, and restore riverine conditions.

The summit is being hosted by a consortium of Hernando County conservation organizations including Hernando Audubon; Florida Native Plant Society - Hernando Chapter; and the Weeki Wachee River Rescue Team. Hernando County staff, Southwest Florida Water Management District scientists and other agency representatives will provide updates on initiatives to reduce nutrient loading and improve riverine habitat. Conservation leaders will discuss the mosaic of remedies currently being implemented and those planned for the future to restore and improve this precious water resource.

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.

Register Here

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](#).