

Nassau Sierra coming alive with activities

We are revitalizing our outings program to strive to create connections to the outdoors for all people. We want our outdoor activities to create lifelong connections to nature for the social, physical, mental, and environmental health of our community. We also believe that direct connection with nature can form the foundation of a broad, diverse, and powerful grassroots environmental movement from which a new generation of leaders will be inspired to protect and restore our area through activism.

For the summer, we will be hosting one outing a month. We're looking forwards to building outdoor camaraderie on fourth Sundays: July 23, August 27 and September 24. Check the Nassau Sierra website and Facebook page for regular updates including times and particulars.

See **Calendar** on page 6.

We'd love to offer more outdoor activities! We're looking for you ...

If you have a passion for the outdoors and a willingness to share your knowledge and experiences with your community by leading walks, hikes through the woods, bike rides, or canoe/kayak trips down our waterways, please contact Len Kreger, Nassau County Sierra's Outing Chair @ 224-558-5735.



FL Law 163.045 has sadly prohibited tree removal permits for years now

In Florida, local self-government was never a gift of the State Legislature, it was the expressed will of the people. Home rule was added to the Florida Constitution 50 years ago by a statewide vote of the electorate. Floridians voted to empower themselves with the right of local self-government, or Home Rule. Home rule is the authority of a local government to prevent state government intervention with its operations to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety, morals and welfare of its citizens—local decisions, locally made because communities understand the unique situation that they are in.

In 2019 our hometown values were challenged by FL Law 163.045 which limited the home rule of local communities to require tree removal permits, fees, and the need to replant a tree after one was removed on private property. This meant suddenly that Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, and towns all across Florida suffered a stranglehold to protect their tree canopies.

There were some improvements to Florida Law 163.045, but it still does not allow Fernandina Beach or other municipalities to have tree ordinances that require permits and city permission to remove trees. Large-scale destruction of local trees as been the result.

During the fall of 2022, the Nassau County Sierra Group requested that other Sierra Groups across Florida ask their local municipalities to make "Legislative Requests" for the upcoming 2023 state legislature session to rescind this terribly destructive pre-emptive law. In December 2022, the City of Fernandina Beach took the lead to try to bring back local control when it comes to the urban tree canopy. Like Nassau County Sierra Group, the 2022 Fernandina Beach City Commission (Lednovich, Kreger, Ross, Bean, and Sturges) were frustrated by the lack of control the city had over its trees. They decided that an important local priority was to try to get the State to remove the devastating effects of 163.045.

In December 2022, City Commission members added a request to the Nassau County 2023 Legislative Delegation to rescind F.S.163.045 statewide.

The Nassau County Sierra Club salutes the past 2022 City Commissioners for

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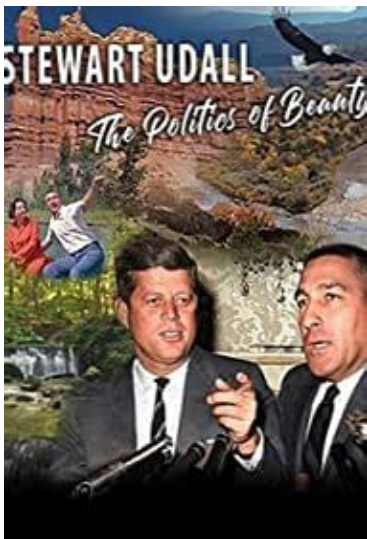


SIERRA'S 'STAY COOL' FILM SERIES STARTING JULY 21

Summer is a special time of year. Nassau Sierra invites you to join us at the Fernandina Beach Public Library for the **Stay Cool Film Series**. We're ready to take you on a journey covering some of the biggest environmental challenges of our lifetime, including the social and ecological impacts of contemporary mining, environmental justice issues, sustainability, a visually stunning journey through U.S. environmental history, and an enchanting wilderness journey through the Grand Canyon.

The Stay Cool Film Series will take place once a month on a Friday evening at 7 p.m. at the Fernandina Beach Public Library. Admission is totally free.

Our first film is *Stewart Udall: The Politics of Beauty*. As Secretary of the Interior during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Udall left a profound legacy of conservation and environmental justice. His successes stemmed from his ability to bring together people with disparate interests, and inspire them to achieve common goals.



Expand Your Environmental Knowledge One Film at a Time

When: Friday, July 21— 7 pm

**Where: Fernandina Beach
Public Library, 25 N. 4th Street**

Stewart Udall

The Politics of Beauty

This feature documentary introduces us to the birth pangs of modern environmental politics. We see how Udall's ideas evolved, best illustrated in his conversion from a pro-power-dam Arizona representative to the Interior Secretary who dealt the death blow to proposed Grand Canyon dams. We examine his long fight to win compensation for Navajo Indians and "downwinders" who

got cancer from their exposure to radiation during the Cold War without being warned of the dangers. And we see the relevance of his concerns—he was the first public official to speak out about global warming, for example—which brings us to our current day crises.

Most importantly perhaps, Udall called on all Americans to move away from our emphasis on economic growth and consumerism and toward quality of life, and a new politics centered on beauty, frugal living, appreciation of nature and the arts, and a recognition of the Earth's limits. Join us!



FL LAW — continued from page 1

their pro-action to try and rescind 163.045 statewide because we need our trees on Amelia Island, in the County, and across the state.

Having a healthy urban forest creates many benefits including protecting the environment, reducing air pollution, reducing wind damage, protecting from sun and noise, improving storm water capture, increasing property values, and beautifying our area. We invite you to learn more about our urban forest, including how you can help properly protect it because neither of our state representatives (Black and Yarborough) supported the Legislative Request to rescind 163.045.

Senator Linda Stewart of Orange County (Orlando metro area) did introduce a similar bill, SB 316, but it failed to gain enough legislative support to be sent to legislative committees for consideration. Subsequently on March 14 the bill died in the Florida Community Affairs Committee.

We at Nassau Sierra support resisting the State as it more and more pre-empt local control. We must work to stop the Florida Legislature from passing aggressive pre-emption laws that nullify specific resolutions and ordinances that are made on the local level. All over Florida, city and county decisions are made in local governments, most often in response to local concerns that impact only the local community. Every community loses when state lawmakers swoop in and limit local control.



Trip to explore wildlife on Egans Creek Greenway in Fernandina

YOUTH NATURE STUDY PROGRAM

Several members of the Nassau County Sierra Group have worked with a group of 25 children at America’s Youth for over a year and a half. Their projects are nature, art, and activity based, and they’re back at it this summer working with the America’s Youth Summer Day Camp! They are introducing the theme, “The Reptiles We Share This Island With.”

Their first project to study during the summer day camp was alligators in the Greenway; then yellow bellied slider turtles were studied, and now gopher tortoises. As the summer marches on, the children will be having more lessons on sea turtles, anoles, skinks, and maybe even a few local snakes.

During the 2021-2022 right whale season, the children not only learned fun facts but also went to the county boat ramp to create a right whale chalk display to raise awareness for those launching boats to slow down during right whale season since right whale mothers come near our shores to have their young.

This summer for Camp America’s Day Camp at America’s Youth, Len Kreger and Julie Ferreira have plenty of ideas up their sleeves but they always can use a helping hand. Especially volunteering to help with art work or other projects—we have a job for you.

Contact us at 904-583-4388 for more information.



Creating a right whale display at local boat ramp

SIERRA POSITION ON ISLAND SOLAR FIELD

Nassau County Sierra Group understands that Northeast Floridians are navigating the pressures of high temperatures and keeping up with rising electricity bills. We at Nassau County Sierra support a commonsense approach to save and produce energy. We support energy efficiency standards for new buildings, as well as adopting advanced codes that encourage the use of rooftop solar, especially when local government facilities need roof replacements.

What we do not support is the proposal discussed at the May 16 Fernandina Beach City Commission meeting to build a solar panel farm on 36 acres of maritime forest that is on Fernandina Airport property and currently leased to the Amelia River Golf Club. This is an inappropriate site. The offset of renewable energy does not justify the removal of 36 acres of trees on a barrier island where every tree is important.

Nassau Sierra is working with other conservation groups like Conserve Nassau, the Amelia Island Tree Conservancy, and Citizens Against Runaway Development to ensure this site is protected.



CALL TO ACTION

We live in a world where human impact is a constant threat to our environment. Nassau County Sierra Group sees these things being widely ignored by figures of authority both locally and across the globe. Everywhere we look, we're confronted with an increasing loss of biodiversity creating unforeseen impacts on entire ecosystems.

If you find yourself ignited by a desire to change the world for the better, we can provide a safe space, great community and a local organization that works diligently to fight for our planet and preserve the best of nature for generations to come.

If you, like us, believe that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the beauty and wonder of everything nature has to offer—join us!

Whether it's wildlife conservation, environmental sustainability, environmental education, climate change, biodiversity loss, air pollution, clean water ... the list goes on ... help us raise awareness and foster a behavior change right here in northeast Florida.

Nassau County Sierra seeks to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. We'll soon to be on **meetup.com** to reach out to you with opportunities to learn about and participate in our activities, such as social hikes, political actions, and educational events.

We welcome you to get involved! Visit our website: www.sierraclub.org/florida/nassau

OKEFENOKEE GETS UNESCO NOMINATION

An Alabama company's proposal to dig up minerals next to Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp has recently dredged up memories amongst conservationists who helped thwart mining there two decades ago.

In the 1990s, DuPont Co. planned to mine titanium dioxide on the east edge of Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Widespread public outcry about the mine's potential impact on the swamp and the economy it supports led the chemical giant to scrap its plans and conserve the land.

Fast forward to recent claims by Birmingham-based Twin Pines Minerals LLC saying that it can do what DuPont said it couldn't: which is to mine heavy mineral sands next to the largest federally protected refuge east of the Mississippi River without disturbing its ecosystem. Environmentalists have worried that digging 50-foot-deep pits on the

ridge adjacent to Okefenokee, an elevated wetland, would cause groundwater to leak from the refuge. Lower water levels could destroy habitats and lead to an increased risk of wildfires.

In 1997 Bruce Babbitt, then the Interior secretary under President Clinton, said in an interview after visiting the 625-square-mile haven for alligators, gopher tortoises and the endangered wood stork, "The idea of compromising integrity of this wildlife refuge for the color of toothpaste is inconceivable." Nassau County Sierra concurs.

Now the swamp and headwaters of our beloved St. Marys River has been included in this year's list of nominees for UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. Nassau County Sierra Club supports and applauds the St. Marys Riverkeeper and all other environmental protectors for their extensive efforts!



MONARCH MILKWEED PROJECT IN NASSAU

Tropical milkweed has exploded in popularity over the past decade. While not “bad,” per se, when planted in warm areas of the U.S. it encourages monarchs to stick around longer in the fall and even enables them to winter-breed.

Over the past 25 years there has been a sharp decline in monarch populations partly due to a loss of habitat at the butterflies’ overwintering site in Mexico. One of the most significant factors driving their decline is the dwindling supply of a plant called milkweed, which is *only* plant that monarch caterpillars will eat. Without it, the butterflies cannot complete their life cycle, sustain their migration and ultimately, perpetuate their species.

Research shows that monarchs breeding on tropical milkweed throughout the winter (rather than returning to Mexico) have higher levels of protozoan infection compared to monarchs’ normal migratory cycles. It turns out that migration is a key to outrunning these pathogens.

In 2021 during Covid, Nassau County Sierra created a project to engage our members and other citizens to attempt to create a monarch habitat conservation project in Fernandina Beach. Not wanting our monarch butterfly gardens to become ecological traps, as a group we decided to work with *asclepius tuberosa* seed. This is the species of milkweed that has supported the monarch population for thousands of years.

If you were one of our volunteers, thank you! It was a tricky process creating the right environment for our little seedlings and growing them on. We thank you for your efforts.

According to the North American Monarch Conservation Plan, we need 1.8 billion milkweed stems to replace those that have been lost to agriculture and urbanization.

Keep the species strong. Make sure to look for *asclepius tuberosa* plants. It’s true that all milkweed species are suitable for food; however in our clime, it’s important that we do not let monarch butterfly gardens become an ecological trap by planting tropical milkweed.



Planting asclepius tuberosa milkweed



... It’s important that we do not let monarch butterfly gardens become an ecological trap by planting tropical milkweed.

TIMM WORKS WITH MARINE MAMMALS

Past Nassau County Sierra Executive Committee member Richard Timm worked with the nine-member National Sierra’s Marine Mammal Team to update the Sierra Club’s Marine Mammal Policy. The 2021 Sierra policy was never formally adopted so the marine team worked from the end of January to April to update it. We owe a lot to the Marine Mammal Team for drafting this core document that allowed National Sierra to develop a comprehensive policy far more relevant to the affected populations and their current circumstances.



Beware! Avoid touching or fishing any of the waters near 8th Street and Escambia Slough in Fernandina Beach. No cast netting or other recreational activities are allowed in this area due to high amounts of coliform.

The Escambia Slough, a tidal creek that runs under Escambia Street, is part of the drainage system for Fernandina Beach. The EPA recommends recreational waters stay below 235 cfu/100ml. Results in this area were running 767 cfu/100ml in June.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ♦ July 21 – Stay Cool Film Series: *Stewart Udall—the Politics of Beauty*
- ♦ July 23 – Bike Pumpkin Hill Creek State Park, Jacksonville
- ♦ Aug. 18 – Stay Cool Film Series: *The Shadow of Gold*
- ♦ Aug. 27 – Kayak Lofton Creek, Yulee
- ♦ Sept. 15 – Stay Cool Film Series: *Into The Canyon*
- ♦ Sept. 24 – Hike Talbot State Park's Dune Ridge Loop to the Beach



NASSAU COUNTY SIERRA GROUP
P.O. Box 38
Fernandina Beach, FL 32035

www.sierraclub.org/florida/nassau



2023 Executive Committee:

Chairperson, Julie Ferreira

Treasurer, John Baker

Outings Chair, Len Kreger

Membership Chair, Tina O'Brien

Meeting Coordinator, Mary Libby

Conservation Chair, Terry Grady

Webmaster, Ira Copperman

Phone: 904-583-4388

Email: l.kreger@comcast.net

Facebook page:

Sierra Club, Nassau County Group