LAZY DAYS OF SUMMER

Manatee/Sarasota Group of the Sierra Club will not have a General Membership Meeting in July. No Meeting at the Garden Club in July! Enjoy the uncrowded beach, hiking trails and paddling! BUT, in August we are planning an ICE CREAM PARTY at the Garden Club at our regular 2nd Thursday of the month meeting on Aug. 10th at 7 p.m. We’ll plan to have a “cool” time exploring some the environmental issues we are facing. We will exchange ideas, and give new and old members an opportunity to find the areas in which they want to explore, pursue and jump up and down about!!

I’ve often said, we don’t have a lack of environmental issues! This will be a chance to find others who share our concerns and map some plans to effect changes.

There are many opportunities for support from Sierra Club’s National Organization if we identify members who are interested in promoting awareness of the public and our legislators. They have informational pamphlets and assorted resources that we can take advantage of when we have volunteers who are interested in promoting an issue. As an example, we have been working on Energy the last couple years, particularly in response to attacks on solar plans.

NATIONAL SIERRA LISTS THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

AGRICULTURE, AIR QUALITY, CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM, COAL, CONTAINED ANIMAL FEEDING, CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY, ENDANGERED SPECIES/WILDLIFE, ENERGY, TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, GENETIC ENG., CAFE STANDARDS/GLOBAL WARMING, INTERNATIONAL POPULATION AND TRADE, MARINE, MINING (PHOSPHATE IN OUR AREA), FORESTS, NATURAL GAS /OIL, PARKS/REFUGES, WASTE, WATER QUALITY/HABITATS, WET LANDS. Listing your interest in a particular area means you will receive information and promotional materials.

As a Group, we are looking for more Outings Leaders for, hiking, kayaking, and bicycling! We also need leaders for the ICO (Inspiring Connections Outdoors) program to take school children out for hiking and camping. (See Page 6 for an example of what ICO does). And the Political Committee will be gearing up for next year also. Guess that doesn’t sound too “Lazy”, but the nice thing is you can do what you want, when you have some time and find some kindred souls to do it with! See you at the Garden Club on August 10, or call Gerry Swormstedt, Group Chair at 941-366-9596 if you can’t be there!
Manatee Conservation Committee

No meeting in July, but join us for updates on Manatee County developments on Aug 14 at 1:30 p.m. at the Bradenton Central Library 1301 Barcarrota Blvd. PLAN TO ATTEND the meetings of the PLANNING COMMISSION ON August 10 and the BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS on AUGUST 16. (See Page 3, “Plan Doesn’t Measure Up” for details of these meetings). Contact Sandra Ripberger at 941-794-3878; sandrarip@yahoo.com, or Judy Johnson and Stuart Smith at 941-755-6110; jedit79@gmail.com

Sarasota Conservation Committee

We will not have a Sarasota Conservation Committee meeting in July. But please plan to join us at the Conservation Committee meeting on Aug 14 at 1:00 to 3:00 PM, at the Selby Library’s conference room, 13312 1st Street, Sarasota. Contact Larry Grossman 941-225-5741 or pdclkg@hotmail.com

July/August Outings:

Myakka Ecosystem Interpretive Walk for July
Saturday July 15. Join us for a seven to ten mile morning interpretive walk exploring summer in the Myakka ecosystem. We will visit a remnant of the largest, most biologically diverse forest type in North America and historical sites of cattle ranching. Group size limited and reservation is required. Call Bill Lewis at (941) 355-2156.

Oscar Scherer Walk
Saturday July 22 Oscar Scherer State Park, a four mile walk at 8:00 a.m. Wear sturdy shoes, carry water, sunscreen, insect repellent, camera and a snack. Must reserve with Sally at (941) 484-4113.

Myakka Ecosystem Interpretive Walk for August
Saturday August 12 - Join us for a six to eight mile morning interpretive walk exploring summer in the Myakka ecosystem. Specific location and gear needed will depend on current hydrologic conditions. Group size limited, Reservation required with Bill Lewis at (941) 355-2156

Deer Prairie North Walk
Saturday August 19. Deer Prairie North three mile walk at 8 am. Wear sturdy shoes, carry water, sun screen, insect repellent, snack. Must reserve with Sally at (941) 484-4113

Suggested donation for each Outing: $5
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR AQUA BY THE BAY DOESN’T MEASURE UP

Developer Carlos Beruff has tried for three years to permit Aqua by the Bay in pieces through four agencies – the Department of Environmental Protection, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and now Manatee County – without a master plan that lets them see how the pieces fit. The biggest missing piece for Manatee County is a 262-acre mitigation bank covering half the property – almost its entire coastline – a bank Mr. Beruff started pursuing with DEP in 2014 without telling the county.

Mr. Beruff tells the county that Aqua by the Bay – with its linear lagoon, seawall and 2,900 homes – will not impact coastal mangroves. His General Development Plan says next to nothing about them but the mitigation bank proposals he has given DEP and the Army Corps call for more than a linear mile of mangrove trimming. DEP says it intends to grant the mitigation bank, but the Army Corps has rejected it twice because it said the adjacent development, the seawall, the lagoon, and the trimming would not be good for the mangroves.

Just as he did not tell the county about the mitigation bank, Mr. Beruff did not tell the Army Corps about the lagoon, the seawall or the development in his mitigation bank proposal; local opponents had to do that. Mr. Beruff tells the county that a state conservation easement that goes with the mitigation bank would ensure that nothing would ever happen to the mangroves; but the easement itself enables the trimming. He also did not tell the county that the easement also forbids local governments from imposing regulations or requiring permits on the bank, so Manatee County could lose control over its own coast.

Along with misleading information about oversize buildings and constructing a lake on the property before commissioners had a chance to review it, the mitigation bank is yet another glaring omission. The county Land Development Code says a General Development Plan must show existing and proposed conditions as well as how all activities relate to each other so commissioners can make informed decisions. The Code says they have a right to rely on the accuracy and completeness of the plan. They can’t. What commissioners should do is deny this General Development Plan and start all over with a true master plan that shows everything proposed for the property through every agency.

The Planning Commission takes up the General Development Plan and zoning ordinance for Aqua by the Bay for a second time on August 10; the County Commission will consider it again on August 16. Both boards convene at 9 am in the County Commission Chambers, 1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, 34205. All interested parties are encouraged to attend. Being a voter in Manatee County is not a requirement for attendance. Stuart Smith – For Suncoast Waterkeeper and Sierra Club.

LET'S MAKE THE 2018 ELECTIONS A VICTORY YEAR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CANDIDATES

The 2018 state, federal and local races will be here before you know it and the Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group’s Political Committee will be meeting to discuss and plan for the upcoming races. If you’ve been frustrated wondering what you can do to make a positive difference post November 2016, here’s your chance to get involved with your local Sierra Club political Committee. You can make a difference by being part of a team that will see that the next environmental champions get elected. The time commitment is minimal and tasks can be tailored to your interests and skills. For more information please contact Lynn lynnsierra@nilssen.us
UNCONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT CAUSING MORE AND MORE COYOTES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Are you seeing coyotes for the first time or in greater numbers in your neighborhood? No doubt due to uncontrolled development and destruction of natural habitat in our county. Coyotes kill pets and can attack people as well. The following is a good article on what to do about coyotes. To summarize, hunting, killing, transferring doesn't work. What does work (besides stopping destruction of natural habitat) is to make sure that coyotes aren't finding food such as pet food left outside, fruit and vegetables left unpicked or not picked up and other organics such as garbage stored where they can get to it. The other thing that has proven to work is "hazing" or loudly shooing coyotes away whenever you see them to keep them afraid of humans. The less comfortable they are the more they will keep their distance from you, your home and your pets. So pick up an air horn and start yelling and waving your hands whenever you see a coyote. Oh yeah, and protest destruction of their and our natural habitat.

THE CLEAN ENERGY REVOLUTION IS HERE:

Glaciers continue to melt in the Arctic and Antarctica. Based on the latest NOAA projections our area likely will see sea level rise of a half foot by 2040. With the decision by Trump to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement and the inaction of congress to do much of anything to address the threats we face from climate change you might just want to give up. I’d like to give you two good reason not to:

1) The economics are on the side of clean energy: The argument that renewables are too expensive is no longer valid. “Today, energy companies are developing solar PV projects that can deliver energy at half the cost of coal (1)”. The amount of solar power coming online almost doubled from 2015 to 2016, enough to power 2 million homes (2).

Jobs in the renewable energy sector outnumber jobs in the coal and gas industry by a margin of 5 to 1 according to Department of Energy jobs data(3). The solar industry already employs over 260,000 people in the US. And has added $84 billion to the US GDP in 2016 (4).

The clean disruption of the energy and transportation sectors is happening. The technology around renewable energy and transportation has advanced so quickly that we have reached the tipping point of where the application of clean energy makes more economic sense than the old dirty fossil fuel model. The clear indication of this in the U.S. is the recent urging by several large multinational corporations, like Apple and Exxon Mobile, for the president to stay in the Paris Climate Agreement.

We are living in exciting times. Tony Seba, Silicon Valley entrepreneur, projects that by 2030 “all new energy will be provided by solar or wind and all new mass-market vehicles will be electric”(5). And, some experts say this will happen even sooner. Think of a car replacing the horse and buggy, computers replacing well, just about everything we did manually or mentally. (Continued on page 5)

(1) http://news.energysage.com/solar-energy-vs-fossil-fuels/
(2) http://www.ucsusa.org/publications/catalyst/clean-energy-takes-hold#:~:text=Today%2C%20energy%20companies%20are%20developing%20solar%20PV%20projects%20that%20can%20deliver%20energy%20at%20half%20the%20cost%20of%20coal%20(1)%20.
(3) http://www.ucsusa.org/publications/catalyst/clean-energy-takes-hold#:~:text=Today%2C%20energy%20companies%20are%20developing%20solar%20PV%20projects%20that%20can%20deliver%20energy%20at%20half%20the%20cost%20of%20coal%20(1)%20.
(4) http://www.thesolarfoundation.org/national/

Help Sierra save money!

Want to help save local Sierra dollars, ease the burden on volunteers, conserve trees, and receive the newsletter faster and in color? Just follow the steps below to be switched from the paper copy mailing list to the electronic mailing list.
1. Type this address into your browser:
2. Click on “Subscribe/Unsubscribe.”
2) Grassroots Movement: The refusal of Washington D.C. to deal with the biggest threat to our planet has angered and motivated citizens, non-profits, businesses and local and state governments to take matters into their own hands. Across the United States they are committing to or are already using 100% renewable energy to power their homes, businesses, organizations, cities and states.

Locally our Sarasota Ready for 100 team has already made a lot of progress in bringing together local stakeholders to move the city of Sarasota to a 100% clean renewable energy future. On June 5th our coalition presented a Ready for 100 resolution to the City of Sarasota Commission for approval. As of this writing I am pleased to say that the City of Sarasota is now second in the state of Florida to pass a Ready for 100 Clean Energy Resolution. The Commissioners have shown leadership in their commitment to the clean energy revolution. Highlights of the resolution include: all municipal buildings will be powered by 100% clean renewable energy by 2030 and the rest of the city will be powered by 100% clean renewable energy by 2045.

It may sound ironic but I have never felt more optimistic that our efforts will make a measurable difference to help slow global warming. The grassroots effort and the clean disruption of the energy sector will together reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the result being a habitable planet for future generations.

We do indeed live in very exciting times. To learn more about the Ready for 100 campaign and get involved please contact me at lynnsierra@nilssen.us. Lynn Nilssen, Sarasota Ready for 100 Campaign.

SOLAR CO-OPS COMING TO MANATEE

Manatee League of Women Voters is spearheading the Solar Co-op campaign with FLSUN, following the May 9, 2017 roll out of a Solar Energy Contact-A-Thon which will run through Oct. 17, when the names winner will be drawn. Approximately, on Jan. 2, 2018 the FLSUN website becomes active. This will allow individuals to register to join the Manatee Solar Co-op.

Since we have closed out the Sarasota Co-op successfully, we are very happy to support the newly forming group, for our Manatee members. We will let you know the fresh details of how and where the Press Conference and roll-out will be around the 9th-11th of January 2018. For additional information call Gerry Stormstedt, Chair, 941-366-9596

Not a Member? See Membership Form On Page 8

Act now and become a member of the Sierra Club! By joining you’ll support vital environmental advocacy, receive three publications, and gain access to local outings, member-only adventures and other rewards. For more details go to http://www.sierraclub.org/. Consider joining the Manatee-Sarasota Club’s newer Meetup Group and receive information on all meetings, outings, and actions, etc. Check it out by visiting https://www.meetup.com/Manatee-Sarasota-Sierra-Club-Group/
ICO KIDS MAKE AN EARTH-DAY CONTRIBUTION

Sierra Club’s ICO group (Inspiring Connections Outdoors) brought students from Samoset Elementary School in Bradenton to the April 22 Earth Day celebration at Oscar Scherer State Park. They participated in a service project where the students lent their efforts to others, in this case, by helping to clear the banks of the onsite lake to make space for future benches. Students were handed rakes, clippers and other supplies and instructed on what needed to go and what should stay. They worked really hard, creating several large piles of debris for later pick up.

After that, students roamed the festival, participating in the many Earth Day related events. This trip is always one of the favorites for all the different experiences they are able to have. Letting them see how so many different organizations are all working to help the make the Earth a better place is very inspirational. From spinning the wheel in the Peace Corp booth thus finding Guatemala on a map, to beading scallop necklaces while they heard a story about scallops, the children all had a great time. Highlights were definitely the Mote Touch Tank and the lake.

As always, we welcome adult involvement in our trips. If you are interested in future trips, please contact Sarah Mitchell at mitchell8manatee@yahoo.com

ONGOING SAGA—CELERY FIELDS

The Board of Sarasota County Commissioners has set a special full-day meeting to consider a proposal to put a large, unenclosed waste processing facility on public land in the immediate vicinity of a serene preserve and eco-tourist resort. The meeting will be held on August 23, 2017 starting at 9:00 AM.

Due to the large and intense resistance to this proposal, the Board has set aside the entire day of August 23 for this meeting. More information is available at:

http://sarasotavision2050.blogspot.com/2017/01/tale-of-timeline-how-to-plan-trainwreck.html?m=1
UPDATE ON THE PHOSPHATE BATTLE

This on June 17 the Phosphate Consortium met with an outstanding attendance of about 30 stakeholders, from Sarasota and Polk Counties, including people from DeSoto and Hardy Counties. There were a good dozen who have not been involved with the consortium before. A group of five folks from River View were there to tell the group of the number of people affected by the polluted air from the Gyp stacks. Water activists who attended the meeting spoke about the polluted water channels affecting them.

The photo below is a shot of the sinkhole that formed atop of a Gypsum Waste disposal mound, aka a “gyp Stack” on September 27, 2016. According to the Tampa Bay Times(1), some 215 million gallons of contaminated water drained into the groundwater lying beneath the sinkhole. It’s no stretch of the imagination that these incidents, attributable to phosphate mining, need to be stopped. The best preventive measure is the cessation of phosphate mining in Florida.

Opposition is booming! Protestors are expanding, not giving up. Andy Melee has done a great job in planning the meetings and involving more concerned and affected people.

Here in Sarasota and Manatee Counties we have had a very strong response, in particular the great number who turned out for the Manatee Commission marathon meetings this spring. With all of this, our M/S Sierra group has exhausted our funds for fighting this plague upon our head waters of our drinking watershed.

I know I have been hit with many pleas for money from across the spectrum of political issues, but this one is close to home. I hope there are a few of you who can respond to this appeal for funds for this battle. If you can, mail a check to M/S Group Sierra Club, P.O. Box 3485, Sarasota Fl 34236-3485. On the check’s note line please write, “Phosphate Fund”. Donations to this fund are not tax deductible. These funds will be devoted to fighting the destructive mining process and more importantly the accumulating residue of gyp stacks and slime ponds! Thanks for your support, whatever you are able to contribute, time wise or monetarily.

Gerry Swormstedt


MARCH FOR SCIENCE — APRIL 22, 2017

Hamel Park, with it's wonderful trees made a lovely ending for the March for Science! Information tables, some speeches and great music made for a pleasant and informative event. The Sierra Club’s Table was staffed by Andy Mele, Gerry Swormstedt and Gail Swanson, who spoke to the many people who stopped by the table for information on the Solar Co-ops, the Ready for 100% Campaign and to hear our positions on Long Bar Point and Phosphate mining! We handed out about 100 newsletters!