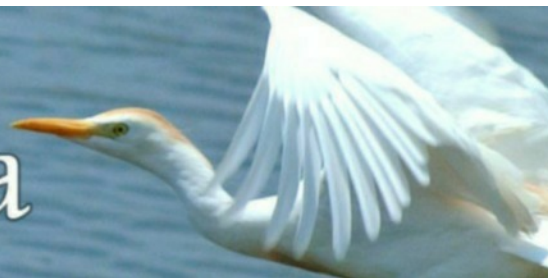




Manatee-Sarasota Group Boca Sierra



Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress

Sept/Oct 2017

Program for September 2017

What: Manatee-Sarasota Group Meeting

When: Thursday, Sept 14th, 2017, 7:00 PM

Where: Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. Of the Arts

Speaker: Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, Organizing Representative, Sierra Club

Merrilee is a Sierra Club staff person for red tide and water quality issues for the Sierra Club Florida. Prior to this employment she has been a dedicated volunteer working to protect the springs, rivers and waters of Florida. Merrilee has served on numerous committees, boards and advisory and consultant groups. As a resident in Florida since 1975, she has resided in many diverse areas including metropolises such as Miami, Tampa, Sarasota, the Everglades, and most recently in north Florida's springs heartland.

As a citizen advocate for a river that had no voice, her first big "win" was helping residents that live and work within the Santa Fe River basin to stop four water bottling plants. Banning fracking in Florida is another big "win" in progress.

At the Group meeting Merrilee will discuss the Sabal Trail gas pipeline. Since 2013, residents in north central Florida have known about Sabal Trail gas transmission pipeline and have attempted every means possible to stop it. Merrilee has been one of the strongest opponents of the fossil fuel infrastructure project that threatens Florida's most vulnerable natural resource found in water. Learn insights on citizen involvement, the FERC, eminent domain, fracking, gas transmission and LNG. She will share invaluable information on her and hundreds of others' efforts that tried unsuccessfully to stop this destructive behemoth.

Merrilee and others tried in vain to tell FERC and Sabal staffers on the complex nature of Florida's watery terrain, such as sinkholes, leaks, wetland and rural land impacts and well water contamination.

Hundreds of demonstrations including arrests and even a fatality arose across Florida to stop construction of the Sabal Trail pipeline in its destructive path: construction of a 36" gas transmission pipeline through rural environmental justice communities, near waterways and under Florida's spring fed rivers.

Join us for this informative meeting and bring a snack to share afterwards.

Program for October 2017

What: Manatee-Sarasota Group Meeting

When: Thursday, Oct 12th, 7 p.m.

Where: Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. Of the Arts

Speaker: Frank Jackalone: Sierra Club's Florida Chapter Director

Mr. Jackalone supervises Sierra Club's campaigns to restore the Everglades and Florida's springs; reduce red tide and algal blooms in Florida's waters; protect Florida's wildlife, habitat, and water resources from development, pollution, and over-consumption; stop open field sugar burning; and replace oil, coal, and natural gas with 100% renewable energy to power Florida's buildings and motor vehicles.

Prior to joining the Sierra Club in 1997, Mr. Jackalone served as the southeast regional director of the consumer advocacy organization Public Citizen where he coordinated work in 7 southeastern states on health care, consumer protection, civil rights, election reform and international trade issues. In the 1980's, Jackalone was executive director and chief lobbyist of the Florida Consumers Federation, a coalition of 160 groups representing 600,000 Floridians. A decade earlier he served as executive director of the National Student Lobby and the founding president of the three million strong United States Student Association.

He will discuss the destructive policies of the Trump White-house and the Sierra Club's conservation and clean energy work in Florida. Join us for this important meeting and bring a snack to share.



Manatee Conservation Committee

Mondays, Sept 11th & Oct 9 th, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Please join us at the Bradenton Central Library, 1301 Barcarrota Blvd. Help us to build sound environmental policy in Manatee County. 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

September and October 2017

There are no meetings scheduled for the Sarasota Conservation Committee for September and October 2017. If you have questions please contact Larry Grossman 941-225-5741 or pdclkg@hotmail.com



Outings:

September/October 2017

Annual Lily Pine Hike

Saturday September 30, 2017 Annual Pine Lilly Hike - 8 to 10 miles across open prairie looking for the lilium catesbaei (pine lily). Trail may be wet. Group size limited Reserve with Bill Lewis 941-355-2156.

Autumn Wildflowers Hike

Saturday October 14 8 to 10 miles across prairies and flatwoods enjoying the fall blooming grasses and flowers. Group size limited Reserve with Bill Lewis 941-355-2156.

Suggested donation for each Outing: \$5

Sierra Outings Leaders Needed

We are making a plea for new outings leaders to join us in our outings program. Nothing is more rewarding and as much fun at the same time as leading outings for the Club. Remember that the first word in Sierra's motto to Explore-Enjoy-Protect is to Explore. If you have a minimum amount of experience with hiking, kayaking, nature observation or walks please consider joining us. It just takes a few hours of training and well worth the effort. Contact Don Kirkley, Outings Chair at [941-493-3085](tel:941-493-3085) or donkirk@gte.net for information.

Webmaster Needed

Webmaster needed to update our Sierra group website. Time commitment approximately 3 hours every other month. Helpful to know Drupal but not necessary as training will be provided. If interested please contact Zen at: zen.kurokawa@gmail.com

2017 Executive Committee

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Boca Sierra Vol. XXI Issue 5

This newsletter is published bi-monthly by the Manatee-Sarasota Group of the Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club. The intent is to inform members and interested individuals of local activities and national environmental issues. Members of the Sierra Club subscribe to Boca Sierra through their annual dues. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$6 annually.

Develop-Backed Amendment Seeks to Dismantle Open-Space and Greenbelt Policies in the Sarasota 2050 Plan

From 1999 to 2001 the Sarasota County 2050 Plan was developed and approved in 2002 as an alternative to the agricultural zoning that previously allowed one unit per five acres east of the Urban Service Boundary. Sarasota County staff logged hundreds of hours and in excess of \$1 million in tax payers' dollars in development of the 2050 Plan. Representatives from public interest and environmental organizations also invested untold hours following and submitting comments on the 50 year-long range plan.

2050 was originally designed as a compromise plan for developers who detested the existing large lot, 1 unit per 5 acre zoning east of I-75 and aggressively lobbied for higher densities. The idea was to create a new urbanist type long range plan rather than continue with the hop scotch sprawl and cookie cutter development that had already consumed vast areas of open space and native habitat in the county.

Fast forward to 2017 and we find many of the core principles of the 2050 plan have been skillfully removed or significantly weakened. Provisions such as town centers and walkability requirements, affordable housing, fiscal neutrality and transfer of development rights to increase open space credits were dismembered on the developers chopping block.

Now they're back, disguised as a "citizens sponsored" comprehensive plan amendment, # 2015-G would result in significant density increases while reducing open space requirements from 50% to 33%. The 500' green belt requirement around villages and hamlets could be reduced down to 200' or an undetermined/whatever the County Commission will approve width.

The amendment would also weaken the limits on uses for Open Space and Greenbelts. Other than lakes, at present any "stormwater facility" counted as Open Space must be "regional". That language is deleted, allowing all swales and canals for instance to count as Open Space.

Additionally concerning, added as allowed Open Space alternatives, are "existing linear facilities that have been enhanced", such as an FPL easement which has been "enhanced" somehow, or a path which has been converted into a road. This loosening of open space uses is very significant to Sierra because the more alternatives that are allowed to count as Open Space, the less a developer may need to preserve native habitat, another and most significant Open Space use.

The amendment's allowable uses within the Greenbelts would also be weakened and it would strike the current important language which states, "New uses are restricted within this Greenbelt to Native Habitats and to low intensity agriculture and wetland mitigation that do not involve the conversion of Native Habitat". While a provision was added in the writing of the Sarasota 2050 Plan to let the County Commission also approve a "golf course using best management practices, regional stormwater facilities and public parks" in Open Space designated as Greenbelt of a development, so long as it is "appropriate" and adjacent to the developed area,". That adjacency requirement would be deleted, and "new plantings, berms and walls" added as approvable Greenbelt uses, as well as all other uses which are allowed in Open Space.

Also, most significantly, the policy that any Greenbelt "preserves Native Habitats, supplements natural vegetation, and protects wildlife within the area" would be modified with the caveat, "with exceptions and alternatives as noted below." This change alone greatly diminishes the incentives, protections and importance of preserving native habitat in Greenbelts as well as the loss of their function and value in the ecosystem.

(Continued on Page 4)

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:

<http://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?SUBED1=FLORIDA-M-S-GROUP-NEWS&A=1>

2. Click on "Subscribe/Unsubscribe."

Continued from Page 3 — Developer Backed Amendment

One principal result of these changes would be to strike the requirement, that any agriculture and wetland mitigation in a Greenbelt, shall not convert any native habitat to those uses. The current wording could be read as allowing the alternative uses only after preserving native habitat and that potential would be lost with the amendment revision.

Most importantly, this amendment would remove the opportunity for the public to have a voice in the process and oppose inappropriate open space/green belt uses and reductions.

The County has revealed no calculation as to how much additional development the amendment could allow by reducing the amount of Open Space and Greenbelts currently required in Sarasota 2050 developments, either for new ones and any previously approved ones. Previously approved developments could come back for these greenway and open space revisions under the weakened standards.

he changes in this amendment could potentially add thousands of acres of increased densities to proposed and existing developments, which equates to a lot more rooftops in the east county than is currently allowed in the 2050 Plan. The county must tell the tax payers how much population increase could occur due to the associated density increases with these proposed open space give away's.

The public interest has already lost far too much of the original 2050 Plan and it's time to draw a line in the sand. Your comments, letters, calls and emails are urgently needed to save the existing and critical open space and green belt policies of the 2050 Plan, as well as our quality of life. The county has put the amendment on hold, but it will be represented at another unspecified date by Planning and Development Services.

Please send your comments today to Vivian Roe, vroe@scgov.org at Sarasota County Planning and Development Services. Questions About Sarasota 2050?

Monday-Friday

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

1 660 Ringling Blvd., 1st Floor,

Sarasota, FL 34236

Email: planner@scgov.net 941-861-5000

TTY 711 or 800-955-8771

By Gayle Reynolds, greynoldsdesign@gmail.com

Let's Make the 2018 Elections a Victory for the 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 the 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 commitment in time is minimal and tasks can be tailored to your skills. For more information please contact Lynn Nilssen at lynnsierra@nilssen.us

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 meetings, member-only adventures and other rewards. To join go to [Join Sierra Club](#) Consider our new Meetup Group! Join Meetup and receive information on all meetings, outings and actions, etc. Visit the website at: [Join Meetup](#)

Proposal to Create Braden River Preserve

It has been almost two years since residents of River Club and Braden Woods learned that a gated subdivision was planned to replace 33 acres of pristine land along the Braden River in the middle of their communities.

Developer Pat Neal and others now own the property (under the name Myarra Property Joint Venture). On August 3, Mr. Neal convinced the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to eliminate a planned road that would have connected Linger Lodge Road to the end of Clubhouse Drive at 99th Street East.



Photo provided by Gary L. Hebert, Friends of Keep Woods, Inc.

Removal of the road paves the way for approval of Neal's proposed gated subdivision of 32 homes. Many residents of River Club and Braden Woods, the communities that surround the property, are very concerned about the proposed development. They say that the new subdivision would destroy a sensitive natural habitat, endanger the river and its ecosystem, and would be incompatible with surrounding home sites that have only one house on a given acre in the open communities. Friends of Keep Woods, Inc., a local environmental group, continues to advocate for preservation of the site.

Mr. Neal publicly stated at the BOCC hearing that he would sell the land if sufficient funding can be obtained. He has been negotiating with the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast for an option for the Foundation to acquire the property for preservation. The question is "who will fund the purchase?"

One possibility is for a private individual to purchase the land and place a conservation easement on most of the property to protect it from development. Because no purchaser has been identified, other options are being explored with Manatee County, including initial funding by the County with reimbursement by affected local communities through a multi-year special assessment.

The County would take possession of the land and create a passive, low-impact, park which residents are already calling the "Braden River Preserve." The county would maintain the preserve/park; surrounding communities and their home owners associations (HOA) would not have any liability or on-going responsibility for maintenance of the preserve. Two Braden Woods HOAs have already declared their support for preservation.

If funding is not obtained, Neal Communities will proceed with the gated development; the developer must obtain special approvals regarding density (4 houses per acre), exceptions for the length of a cul-de-sac road, rules pertaining to development adjacent to a waterway, criteria for building in the Evers Reservoir Watershed, and restrictions germane to a Special Treatment Overlay District.

Volunteers will be needed to help with public education

More information may be obtained from Larry Grossman, Sierra Club Co-Chair, Conservation Committee, at pdclkg@hotmail.com or 941-225- 5741 and from the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast at www.conservationfoundation.com as well as by visiting www.keepwoods.com

Anyone wishing to help preserve this oasis can make a tax-deductible contribution at <https://conservationfoundation.com/forms/keepwoods/> .

Written by Gary L. Hebert, Friends of Keep Woods, Inc.

Ready For 100%



Photo by Rod Millington of Go 11

On July 27, 2017 the Ready for 100 campaign held a celebration at the Reserve in Sarasota. A great time was had by all. The City Manager for Sarasota, Tom Barwin, was there and excited to work with the Ready for 100 team to realize a 100% renewable future.

Controlling Disposable Plastic Bags

On Wednesday March 22, the Florida Senate Bill, 162 Disposable Plastic Bags proposed by Sen. Jose Javier Rodriguez (D-Miami-Dade) received a favorable vote (4 yes, 1 no). The Bill to establish a pilot program to allow coastal communities with less than 100,000 residents to regulate plastic bags, has now been forwarded to Senate Community Affairs CA SJ 243.

Although plastic bags can be recycled into different products such as composite lumber, containers and pipe, only 4 to 7% of collected bags are actually currently recycled. Plastic bags are hard to clean and they clog machinery at recycling plants, making them costly and difficult to recycle, so about 80% of collected bags end up being baled and put into landfills where they can leach into soil and groundwater.

Uncollected bags blow into rivers, lakes and oceans. They clog storm drains, are ingested by marine mammals and entangle birds causing millions of deaths. US Environmental Protection Agency studies reveal a synergistic effect between toxic chemicals and plastic debris. Plastics absorb toxins such as dioxins from water that are transferred to the marine food web and ultimately to human food presenting a risk to humans, domestic pets and wildlife.

You can follow the progress of SB 162 at www.flsenate.gov and help by calling or writing to State Senators to express your support for this bill.

A Message from the Front

Our battle to end the encroachment of Phosphate Mining in Manatee-Sarasota as well as in the rest of the Sunshine State continues. But we need funds to cover our expenses. Volunteerism is inexpensive but it doesn't run cost-free. So, if you can see your way to help out, 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 are not tax deductible. Through these donations you can help fight destructive mining practices as well as gyp stack and slime pond formation. Thanks.

Inconvenient Sequel Truth to Power

On August 6, 2017 Lynn Nilssen, the Manatee-Sarasota Group's Special Projects Chair, attended a screening of the documentary film "An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power" and participated in a discussion and question and answer session after the film.



The film "Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power" follows former Vice President, Al Gore on his world-wide tour where he trains volunteers and climate activists in a quest to influence international policies affecting climate change. The film, which stresses what is at stake and underscores the urgency for reversing the trends toward climate deterioration contains humor and provides a personal touch showing how passionate dedication and inventive application of available resources can overcome one of the world's most formidable challenges.

Lynn, who spearheaded our group's "Ready for 100" participation, discussed "Ready for 100" as well as the Sarasota solar coop, renewable energy and how people can take action to increase the use of solar energy in the state. Thank you, Lynn, for attending the screening and being a part of the discussion and question and answer session.

Rethinking Plastics

Rethinking Plastic Sarasota had their first action meeting at Selby Library on August 15, 2017! Everyone



Photo by Cat Dillard

recognized the need to take action against single-use plastics .You could feel the energy in the room!

A coalition to include members from several groups such as the Sierra Club, Surfrider, Stand Up Fight Back SRQ and more, started the effort in order to make a difference in the Sarasota area and beyond.

The group broke out into smaller action groups and plan to tackle certain areas that they had previously identified. If you'd like to help, please reach out to rethinkingplasticsarasota@googlegroups.com included on their emails and hear about their efforts and when they meet next. Visit them on their Facebook page [rethinkingplasticsarasota](https://www.facebook.com/events/1718251158468469), <https://www.facebook.com/events/1718251158468469>

ManateeSarasota Group
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