

GCHSC GROUP NEWS

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Spring 2015



Thank you to all who sent in ballots, electing the following people to serve on your EXCOM::

Hugh Havlik: Group Chairperson

Carol Peterson: Group Treasurer

Martha Hoover: Group Secretary

Andrea Story: Newsletter Editor

Rick Fried: EXCOM Member at Large



We bid a fond farewell to Walt Piotrowski , our Program Chair, as he and his family move to their new home. If you can help us schedule General Meetings, training is available for this fun job. We have other openings, too! Please consider giving a little bit of your time ; the rewards include great times and new friendships, priceless ! Call 941-380-0740



You are Invited! We are putting on our party hats to welcome new members! Come join us at our Meet and Greet Party! Good food and fellowship guaranteed! Gen. Mtg. follows at 7pm, Speaker: CHEC's Tom Hecker !

When: Tuesday, April 21, 2015 6pm

Where: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

1532 Forrest Nelson Blvd

Port Charlotte, Florida

SEE YOU THERE!

2015 UPDATE

GCH SIERRA GROUP FILES SUIT TO SAVE SMARTCHARLOTTE 2050

September 23, 2014 :Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners [CCBOCC] voted to adopt a massive amendment to our comprehensive plan SmartCharlotte 2050. Your Greater Charlotte Harbor Sierra Group [GCHSG] strenuously objected to the massive gutting of natural resource protection regarding wetlands, floodplains, wildlife corridors and buffers. Other harmful land use policy amendments abound. Key words and principles like “sprawl”, “sustainable” and “Smart Growth” are completely stricken.

October 23, 2014: your Conservation Chair and the Greater Charlotte Harbor Sierra Group (as Sierra Club, Inc.) filed a petition against Charlotte County for a formal administrative hearing opposing the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments. A week later, the judge consolidated our case with a 2nd filing from the Friends of Cape Haze, Inc. a homeowners group in West County. Most all of our issues of concern are parallel to FOCH.

Late **January 2015:** two land use attorneys from Cape Haze Peninsula intervened supporting Charlotte County. Initial hearing dates are now set for July 2015.

WAIT THERE'S MORE ! **A SECOND COMP PLAN AMENDMENT PROPOSES LOOSENING MINING RESTRICTIONS IN THE WATERSHED OF PUNTA GORDA'S ONLY DRINKING WATER SUPPLY!**

January 27, 2015 : CCBOCC voted to approve another amendment to Smart Charlotte 2050. Petition would allow for the renewal of expired/inactive mine permits and allow for the extension of expiring permits for mines located within the ½ mile protection overlay of Shell and Prairie Creeks. The CCBOCC voted to loosen restrictions over the objections of Punta Gorda City Mayor Carolyn Freeman, The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, your GSHSG and other active citizens.

We join the City of Punta Gorda in its fight to protect its only water supply from adverse impacts of mining. This proposed amendment also removes public input from the process. The City has delivered a 4-page letter to state agencies and the CCBOCC detailing their position. State agencies review and comment on large scale comp plan amendments. Stay tuned !.

Lastly your kind donation to our litigation is still needed. A “Monster Thank You!” to those of you who have already helped. You are making a difference right here in Charlotte County!

- Make checks out to “The Sierra Club Foundation.”
- On the information line please write “Account of GCHG-Florida Chapter.”
- Mail checks to Greater Charlotte Harbor Sierra Group, P.O. Box 38, Placida, FL.

Your gift is tax deductible. Every dollar goes directly to this litigation to protect our natural resources and neighborhoods.

Debbie Highsmith, Conservation Chair

Good News.. And Not so Good News



Have you seen the April 2015 “Green Issue” of **Harborstyle** Magazine yet? After reporters attended our February General Meeting , at which one of our Master Naturalist Outings Leaders spoke on “Shell Creek through the Seasons”, they followed up by interviewing Rick Fried at his Shell Creek home and did a feature article that includes some wonderful “PR” for the Greater Charlotte Harbor Sierra Club Group. Check it out!

If you are unable to find the magazine , published by Sun Newspapers and available at venues such as restaurants, you can use your computer , www.harborstyle.com. to read and enjoy this article. There are still some wonderful paddles and hikes on the Outings schedule: see our website for details.

Thank you, Rick, and all the outings leaders, for all you do!

Did you know?



- 46,000 acres of sugar industry land south of Lake Okeechobee COULD be purchased by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) IF the State uses its option to purchase before it expires in October. The State has held this option since 2009, but to date, none of the preliminary actions necessary to implement it have been taken.
- The SFWMD Board members, appointed by Gov. Rick Scott, have seemingly turned a “deaf ear” to citizens, environmentalists and scientists who urge the purchase of the land.
- Pollutants in Lake Okeechobee currently spill over into nearby rivers and estuaries. IF SFWMD purchases the sugar land, it COULD be used to both store and filter the water before it is redirected into the Everglades, providing a much needed freshwater supply to the Everglades.
- Florida voters passed Amendment I, the Land Legacy Act, clearly indicating their desire for the protection and preservation of our water, wildlife habitat , natural areas and parks. We need to ask our legislators to heed the will of the people and effect the purchase of the Big Sugar land tract.



Partnering To Ensure South Florida's Future

Pick up the phone today and call: speak up for the preservation of a national treasure, the Everglades! Thank You !

State Sen. Bill Galvano: 941-741-3401

State Sen. Lizbeth Benacquisto : 239-338-2570

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- Election Results
- Update on SmartCharlotte 2050 Legal Actions
- Invitation to a Party
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- Local positive PR for our Group



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