



Adventure Coast Group // Florida Chapter

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

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SIERRA CLUB
FLORIDA CHAPTER

The Attack Against Florida State Parks Backs Off!

On Aug. 28th, Governor Ron DeSantis called off his attack on Florida's state parks – marking an absolutely incredible win for our state.

For more than a week, Floridians from all walks of life united in fierce opposition to the Governor's proposal for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to build golf courses, pickleball courts, and luxury resort-style lodging in nine of Florida's state parks.

Outrage erupted far and wide. Our collective outcry not only forced FDEP to postpone its public meetings, but several developers to withdraw from the project altogether. And we weren't done yet.

Sierra Club Florida gathered with hundreds of environmental allies at events across the state to send a loud, clear message to DeSantis and his FDEP: Call off the state parks development plan once and for all.



From the [Tampa Bay Times 8/29/24](#):

DeSantis held a lengthy and unrelated news conference in Winter Haven, during which he and law enforcement officials touted Florida's hardline policies on drugs, policing and immigration. No new policy was announced.

When he was asked about the state park proposals by reporters afterward, DeSantis distanced himself from the plans.

"It was not approved by me, I never saw that," he said. DeSantis said the plans were leaked "to a very left-wing group" while they were still "half-baked."

The Department of Environmental Protection posted the plans on its website as well as on social media, and officials were slated to hold public meetings about them this week before those were canceled.

"We're not going to take away any green space," DeSantis said. "If we do nothing, then that's fine with me."

Nothing more on the plans will happen for the rest of the year, the governor added, saying officials would "go back and listen to folks."

His comments reversed the stance his administration took last week when the blowback first began, and the environmental agency posted justifications for the plans on social media. DeSantis spokesperson Jeremy Redfern on Thursday cited Teddy Roosevelt in a statement that defended the initiative, saying, "It's high time we made public lands more accessible to the public."



A few days earlier, on August 23rd, DeSantis' FDEP announced that all of the previously scheduled public meetings were being postponed due to "overwhelming interest" in their plan. It was actually overwhelming outrage compelling hoards of Floridians to flock to the paltry excuses for meeting spaces and times FDEP had provided to collect public comment.

Then, to our surprise, we learned that a few months earlier, top Florida officials had secretly transferred 324 acres of Withlacoochee State Forest conservation lands in Hernando County to a golf course developer in exchange for lands not designated as conservation lands in Levy County. Read the Tampa Bay Times article [here](#).

Together, we can save our precious state parks from destruction and reminded our leaders that they serve the people - not developers. If and when DeSantis sends the state parks proposal "back to the drawing board," we will be ready.

**SOWW Chassahowitzka Cleanup Sept. 21st
Registration deadline Sept. 7th**



Photo by Bonnie Gross in Florida Rambler

Saturday, Sept. 21, 7:30 to 11:30 – Save Our Waters Week (SOWW) Chassahowitzka Cleanup at 8690 Co Rd 480, Homosassa, FL 34448, USA.

Although not an Adventure Coast Sierra Club Group outing, you are invited to help. Sponsored by the Nature Coast Ramblers. This will be just one of several Citrus Co cleanup locations, and will be a multi-group effort. It is managed by Citrus County who provides supplies and trash disposal. Reservations require a signed waiver in advance. **RSVP and waivers must be complete and submitted by nlt Sept 7th.** Please RSVP with Ben Berauer, bfberauer@aol.com, (c)727-217-5971.

**Adventure Coast Meetup Wed. Sept. 11th
With Kimberleigh Dinkins of 1000 Friends of Florida**



Kimberleigh Dinkins, Policy and Planning Director for 1000 Friends of Florida, will be our guest speaker at the September 11th Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group MeetUp. Attend in person or remotely via Zoom. **The meeting will run from 7—8pm at the South Brooksville Community Center, 601 East Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in Brooksville, FL.** Public welcome!

Kim provides guidance on critical growth and development issues and will help us explore strategies for Citrus and Hernando Counties. She promotes legislation for sound community planning that protects Florida's lands, waters and quality of life at the Florida Legislature. Kim has been directly involved in natural resource policy and management for over 15 years, as senior conservation associate with Save the Manatee Club, senior planner for Marion County, environmental consultant for FL-DEP, water resources coordinator for the Marion County, and an environmental scientist on water pollution. Kim has a bachelor's degree in environmental science from the University of Florida and a master's degree in soil and water science at UF.

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

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUrf-yhqzlpG9ZyAFKmBe71nAfqHtc6TibW>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Sierra Club Pasco Conservation Committee ZOOM Wednesday, September 4th



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 to the **first Wednesday of the month at 8:00PM** at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7674695843> with the Zoom ID: 767 469 58843.

Weekiwachee Preserve Management Plan



Presentation of Weekiwachee draft Management Plan

On August 27th, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) reviewed a draft management plan update for the Weekiwachee Preserve. The 11,206-acre Weekiwachee Preserve is part of a regional system of conservation lands that preserve numerous habitats, including coastal hardwood hammocks, hardwood swamps, freshwater and saltwater marshes, and sandhills. It also provides a protective buffer to several miles of the Weeki Wachee River. Governing Board Member, Robert Stern, introduced agenda item 5.3.

Sierra Club Adventure Coast's Jilan Crowley spoke as a resident of Hernando County and touched on the importance of collaboration and compromise in creating a strong land management plan for the Weekiwachee Preserve. Tom St. Clair, Conservation Chair of Hernando Audubon, pointed to the Preserve being home to over 250 species of birds and reminded us that this plan will be revisited again in 10 years.



Jilan Crowley at SWFWMD Hearing

Chair of the Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group, DeeVon Quirolo, said at the hearing that the draft plan acknowledges most of our requests - including the Black Bear Management Plan, strategy for passive recreation, support to the purchase of additional adjacent lands, and support of the Weeki Wachee River Springs Protection Zone (SPZ). Similarly, President Hernando Native Plant Society, Eugene Kelly, said the only place the draft management plan falls short is in accommodating the SPZ and recommends provisions for working together with other agencies to monitor compliance with the SPZ (e.g. the prohibition of vessels from anchoring, mooring, beaching or grounding).

Chris Reed, Land Management Manager for the Southwest Florida Water Management District, presented an overview of the WWP Land Management Plan, said “comments were much appreciated” and they have made “appropriate edits to address public input.”

Final approval of the 10-year management plan is set for September 24 at the SWFWMD Governing Board meeting in Tampa.

Vote No to Amendment 2 Protect Wildlife and Fish Population



Florida law already recognizes that hunting and fishing are part of Florida’s cultural heritage and

traditions; albeit, in concert with the conservation and protection of those species and their habitats through science-based, hunting and fishing regulations promulgated and updated as needed on an annual basis by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The proposed amendment includes ill-conceived elements that conflict with FWC's constitutional and statutorily mandated role to manage hunting and fishing and threatens the conservation of Florida's fish and wildlife and their habitats.

The Amendment would:

1. Designate hunting as a preferred method of managing wildlife and appears to allow hunting at city parks, county parks, State Parks, and wildlife sanctuaries, undermining the ability of the state to manage Florida's wildlife species through science-based conservation management
2. Create a constitutional right to hunt, appears to allow hunters to trespass on private property to exercise their constitutional right to hunt.
3. Allow "all traditional methods" of hunting appears to allow hunting bears with dogs.
4. Allow "all traditional methods" appear to allow the courts to overrule the existing net ban on the use gill nets and seine nets, and the devastating impacts on the fishing resources.

For these reasons:

[Vote NO on Amendment 2](#)

On the ill-conceived and ambiguously worded constitutional amendment.

How to Get Involved: Email Rhonda Roff at Rhonda.Roff@Florida.SierraClub.org and James Scott at JScottNoto2@gmail.com.

Brianna Green Hernando Student Leader for Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group



Brianna Green

Welcome Brianna! At the July Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group Executive Committee meeting, a vote was taken to nominate Brianna Green to succeed Jasmine Tavares as the Hernando County Student Leader.



Student Leaders Brianna Green and Jasmine Tavares

Jasmine served as the first Adventure Coast Student Leader for two years and has now been graduated as valedictorian at Weeki Wachee High School. She begins college life at Florida State University this semester and has already begun orientation. Jasmine paved the way for this position by attending board meetings, speaking out at public hearings, organizing volunteer teams to table at special events and welcoming new members. She will be missed, but we know Jasmine will succeed at whatever she undertakes. After getting her B.A. in Political Science, Jasmine aspires to attend law school.

We are pleased to approve Brianna Green as our new Hernando Student Leader. Brianna is also a student at Weeki Wachee High School and both she and Jasmine are/were members of the Weeki Wachee High School Environmental Club. Brianna has volunteered for Adventure Coast events and attended past Executive Committee meetings. She was endorsed by Jasmine for the position and agreed to accept her nomination. Thank you, Brianna. We look forward to enjoying, exploring and protecting the planet with you.

Pepper Creek Nature Walk Sept. 29th



Image from TrailLink

Sunday, Sept. 29, 8 to 11:00 – Pepper Creek Nature Walk.

This Adventure Coast Group outing is in support of the Florida Chapter meeting participants, but all are invited. This will be an easy walk mostly on asphalt trail starting at the back of the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Wildlife Park parking lot on US 19. The walk is along the trail going to the Park's main entrance at W. Fishbowl Drive. There will be short walks into the woods to find and identify native flora. Due to the anticipated warm weather this will be a shady easy walk. Please RSVP with Ben Berauer, bfberauer@aol.com, (c)727-217-5971.



The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.5 million members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our

communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit sierraclub.org.

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.

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