

## **CORAL REEFS VS. DEVELOPMENT: An Insight Into Beach Dredge And Fill Projects** *By George Cavros, Conservation Chair*



I recently experienced a remarkable undersea paradise. The water was flat and slowly lapping on the shore. The visibility in the water could best be described as snorkeling in a giant aquarium. I came upon a coral reef teeming with marine life. It was a perfectly tuned ecosystem where Elkhorn coral was busily cleaned by Neon Gobys; there was playful

interaction among Rainbow Parrotfish, enormous French Angelfish, brilliant Blue Tang and Atlantic Spadefish; Moray Eels slithered between crevices in the corals and rocks.

Where is this undersea paradise? It can be discovered right off the beach, just north of Commercial Boulevard. While this near shore reef is now a shadow of its former self, it remains the essential habitat for a number of marine species. The coral reef tract in Broward County not only provides marine habitat and protects our shorelines from storm surges, but it generates over \$2 billion per year from scuba diving and recreational fishing related activities.

Yet our reefs are in trouble. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection estimates that coral cover has declined by approximately 90% since 1970.

*continued on page 2*

## **BIG CYPRESS ADDITION LANDS ACTION ALERT!** *By Matthew Schwartz and Brian Scherf*

The National Park Service (NPS) is expanding the scope of its General Management Plan (GMP) process for the Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) 'Addition Lands' and is soliciting public comment. The GMP will determine how the BCNP Addition will be managed over the next 15-20 years.

We need your help now to keep the Addition wild, and protect it from the harmful effects of off-road vehicle (ORV) use, hunting, and excessive facility development.

### **What's At Stake**

The 146,000 acre Addition to BCNP is a national treasure of biodiversity and includes a unique mosaic of cypress swamps, marl prairies, hardwood hammocks, pinelands, and mangroves. It supports an exceptional concentration of endangered and threatened species, including the Florida panther, Florida black bear, red-cockaded woodpecker and the West Indian manatee.

The Florida panther, whose most critical habitat is centered on the original Preserve and the Addition, is in imminent danger of extinction with a population of less than 100 remaining. Twelve panthers have been killed this year alone by motor vehicles in already developed areas surrounding the Preserve. The two major purposes of establishing the Addition were to protect the fresh water supply for the western half of Everglades National Park and to protect the Florida panther.

Plant life is equally diverse with a total of 72 species listed by the State of Florida as either threatened or endangered.

The Big Cypress Addition represents some of the last and most pristine vestiges of Florida's once vast Big Cypress Swamp. In their relatively natural condition, the Addition Lands of BCNP are an excellent

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**The Broward Sierra Group needs a new Program Chair** as Joyce Tarnow will be moving out of the area this summer. If you are interested in filling this important role for the club, call Joyce at 954-942-7278, and she will be glad to tell you what's involved and teach you her easy routine for lining up interesting programs.

## **Broward Sierra Programs**

**July 4th: There will be no general meeting or program during July.**

### **August 1st: Environmental Affairs Social**

Meet your fellow Sierrans. Join us for refreshments, socializing and informal discussions on energy conservation, coral reef and Big Cypress protection, and any environmental issues you'd like to see the club address.



We meet in the Mangrove Hall building at Anne Kolb Nature Center in Hollywood. Take I-95 to the Sheridan Street exit, head East past U.S. 1, over the bridge, and on the left within 1/2 mile, look for the lighted Anne Kolb sign. If you go over the Intracoastal, you missed it. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Committee reports begin at 7:30 and the program begins at 8:00. The meeting is open to the public at no charge. For more information contact Harold Hancock at 561-417-0216.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter. Why not join us right now? Come along on an outing. Get involved, learn about local issues and how they affect you and your community. Just use the membership form on the back cover.



## The Broward Sierra Club Leaders

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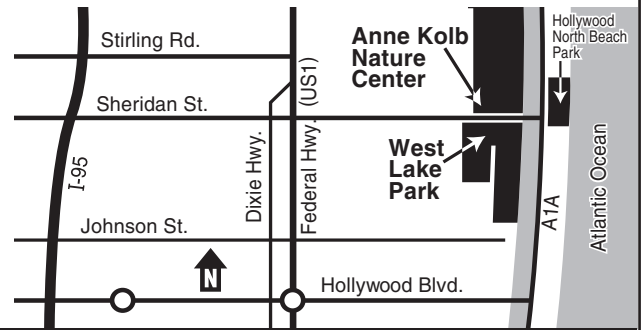
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**Member Services**, 85 Second Street, San Francisco, CA 94105-3441. 415-977-5653 or e-mail <address.changes@sierraclub.org> or <membership.services@sierraclub.org>  
If further assistance is needed, please contact your local Membership Chair, Andrea Hagen 954-475-9399.

## Broward Sierra Club General Meetings

Held on the first Tuesday of every month at Anne Kolb Nature Center (954-926-2480). Outings sign-up starts at 7:00 p.m. and the general meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. The public is welcome!

To get to Anne Kolb Nature Center: Take I-95 to the Sheridan St. exit. Go East past Federal Hwy. The entrance to Anne Kolb Nature Center will be on your left (After the sign for West Lake Park). The Center is before the Intracoastal Bridge.



**There will be no July General Meeting. Our next meeting will be August 1st. See you then.**

## Executive Committee Meetings

Held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00 pm, in room 430a of the Broward County Governmental Center. For details call Harold Hancock at 561-417-0216 or e-mail hdhcpa@yahoo.com.

## FROM THE CHAIR *By Harold Hancock, Executive Committee Chair*

The Sierra Club traditionally functions on the work of a small group of dedicated volunteers. We are truly a grassroots organization relying on the participation of our members. The Broward Group has lost some key members of our activist group over the past few years due to various business and personal reasons. Unfortunately, there has not been an influx of new volunteers from our over 2,500 members.

Now you may think that you did your part by sending \$40 to the National Sierra Club. But, your membership fee pales in comparison to the millions of dollars that major corporations spend on lobbyists, campaign contributions, and greenwashing advertising.

Essentially, the only "hammer" that we have to stamp out pollution, the extermination of endangered species and urban sprawl is activism. Our volunteer activists have worked locally to halt or scale back

construction projects and set aside parks and wilderness areas. However, we need more activists and volunteers to keep the Club going and provide some new energy. We are looking for a new Executive Committee member, Programs Chair, and Outing Leaders. There are various administrative leader positions that are listed as open to the left if you are not inclined to be an activist but want to contribute.

Please call me at 561-417-0216, or our Secretary Louis Serra at 954-442-0880, if you have questions about a particular position or wish to get involved. Come our to our August 1st meeting where we will discuss Environmental Issues in an open social forum.



## *Coral Reefs, continued from page 1*

A recent South East Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI) meeting brought various stakeholders together to determine how best to save what's left of our reefs. The conversation quickly cited beach "renourishment," more aptly described as a "dredge and fill" project, as a clear and present danger to reef survival.

The tax payer-funded process utilizes a large barge that vacuums sand from a borrowed site and deposits the borrowed sand on a receiving beach where the shoreline has receded, threatening coastal development. The most recently completed project took sand from Deerfield Beach and dumped it onto Hollywood Beach to ensure that tourists at the Diplomat Hotel and other coastal developments had a beach upon which to frolic.

## **Problems with Dredge and Fill**

Dr. Harold Wanless, from the University of Miami, presented evidence during the SEFCRI meeting that the quality of the calcium carbonate sand dumped on the beach is smaller and less durable than beach quartz sand, thus the dumped sand predictably slides back into the ocean smothering near shore corals. Also, divers have documented near shore coral damage by the pipes dumping the sand.

Moreover, there was no independent review of dredge and fill projects afterward to determine their impacts, there was little or no comparison of the receiving site before and after the project, and there is no long term monitoring to determine the longer term impacts of dumped sand on the marine ecosystem.

Broward County used the Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company for its most recent dredge and fill project. The company has been repeatedly fined for environmental permit violations. In 2004, the company was fined \$160,000 for over dredging a project in New York. In 2003, the company paid almost \$1 million to mitigate damage caused by one of its barges, when it dragged a dredge pipe 13 miles through the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The consensus at the SEFCRI meeting was that more stringent permit requirements and monitoring should be required for any future projects.

Massive dredge and fill operations have become the common method for combating shoreline retreat. In Broward, beach erosion is accelerated by the Hillsboro Inlet and the Port Everglades Inlet blocking the natural southward movement of sand. How can our few remaining near shore reefs survive against the economic pressure to provide soft sandy beaches for tourists?

*continued on next page*

## BROWARD SIERRA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS *By Sharon Beal*

Thirty years might seem like a long time, but when old friends get together, the years amazingly disappear. After forming our group thirty years ago, the outings program got under way with some challenging and wonderful trips throughout the state of Florida. Faces changed over the years, but a core of members showed up for every trip, and we became close friends as a result. May 19-20 we gathered for a reunion to catch up with each other, and reminisce about the good ole days.

Our weekend started with happy hour on Friday at Islamorada Fishhouse and from there moved to a picnic at West Lake Park on Saturday. It was so good to see everyone. Some have moved to other places, some have retired, some have changed jobs, but the common bonds we forged in the 70's and 80's were still there.

Lucy Turner, one of the club's first presidents, was the instigator of this bash. She now lives in Tallahassee, but back in the early days, she was the true blue member who worked for the environmental issues and showed up for every outing. We laughed a lot this weekend about outings we took and crazy things we had done. We remembered the backpack trip in the Everglades where we were so covered with mosquitoes we had to turn back. As we looked at old photos, we remembered when Don Booth killed a rattlesnake on our Ocala backpack trip. And we couldn't forget the "singles" outing, so named to attract Larry Gore to his first camping trip. He was quite the trooper with his portable battery-operated TV. And there was the 4-day canoe trip over Thanksgiving weekend when we had an entire turkey dinner on the banks of the Peace River.

We sure had some fun times, and we made some good friends, something that even time can't erase. Let's hope that the next thirty years of Broward Sierra Club are just as exciting.



*Rich Pratt, Charles Furnweger, Linda Pratt, George & Lorraine Counts, Sharon Beal, Lucy Turner, Rose Booth, Vicki Silver, Bob Banks (not pictured) Larry Gore and David Caulkett*

*Coral Reefs, continued*

### Solutions

The Broward County Environmental Protection Department should implement "Best Management Practices" including: expeditiously creating sand bypass systems at the Hillsboro and Port Everglades inlets, requiring Broward County beaches to add dune vegetation in order to retain sand and reduce erosion (the USDA has offered free vegetation and labor assistance with dune vegetation projects), discontinuing future beach widening projects, requiring that any such projects already permitted have some credible environmental protection enforcement mechanism, and reinstating Broward County Administrative Code provision that outlaws coastal building outfalls that cause beach erosion.

Such common sense solutions are the single most important step that we can take at the local level that will preserve our underwater near shore paradise for future generations.

## Broward Sierra Group Outings

*To preserve a place, you must believe in it.*

*To believe in it, you must see it.*

**JULY 9, SUN. DAY HIKE TO AN UNUSUAL SECTION OF BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE** Right Off I-75. It's designated for hunting and hiking only, but it's not hunting season so it's a great time to get to know this area. If you've been on any of the Matt's hikes in the 'Addition Lands', you know that we've walked mainly in dense and lush subtropical forest. On this hike we will traverse a lot of open prairie dotted with some of the most beautiful tree hammocks in the Preserve. The scenic vistas are really magnificent. A great way to learn about and protect this wonderful wilderness in our backyard. And it's fun. Rated Moderate. \$5 donation at the site.



Leader: Matt Schwartz (954) 764-2739  
or matthew3222@yahoo.com

**AUG. 12, SAT. BEGINNER KAYAKING CLASS.** West Lake's program leader Rich Newman will hold a special class on basic kayaking skills for the Broward Sierra Club. Rated Leisure to Moderate. Limit 12. *Cost mem. \$18; non-mem. \$20. Lunch included.*



Leader: Judy Kuchta (954) 924-5001 or judykuchta@yahoo.com  
(Contact Judy for info on Rich's other kayaking classes, too.)

**AUG. 12, SAT. CANOEING 101.** Learn the basics of handling the canoe in a safe manner. Fundamental paddling and elementary rescue techniques taught in a one day short course. Rated Moderate.



Limit 16. *Cost mem. \$20; non-mem. \$25. Lunch included.*

For further information, registration and payment contact:  
Jim Gross 305-665-2401 or JMGross3013@aol.com.  
(Miami Group Outing)

**AUG. 19-20, SAT.-SUN. WILDERNESS FIRST AID TRAINING FOR OUTING LEADERS.** This course is mandatory every 3 years for outings leaders who are leading overnight outings in remote areas, and interesting and educational for any outing leaders. T-Y (Topee Keegee Yugnee) Park, 3300 North Park Road, Hollywood, FL. For further info contact Judy Kuchta at (954) 924-5001 or judykuchta@yahoo.com.



**AUG. 26, SAT. WEST LAKE CANOE/KAYAK.** Now that you have the knowledge, let's go!!! Enjoy the beauty and learn about the ecology of this mangrove estuary and saltwater lake. Prerequisite is one of the above classes or previous canoe or kayak experience. Rated Moderate. Limit 18. *Cost mem. \$25; non-mem. \$30. Lunch included.*



Leader: Judy Kuchta (954) 924-5001 or judykuchta@yahoo.com

**Leaders Wanted for Fall Outings.** Outing Leaders get involved, get active, meet new people, have fun, and attend their outings for free. (Assistant Leaders attend for half price.) If you are interested, contact Judy at (954) 924-5001 or judykuchta@yahoo.com

We would like to invite you to come on one of our fine educational outings! If you have any questions about an outing, you can check with the certified Broward Sierra Outing Leader in charge of the outing. Some of the outings need no experience; others require some level of proficiency. All participants in Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate in an outing, contact the leader of the outing.

For Broward Group outings, make your check payable to: Broward Sierra Outings. Include the name and date of the trip on your check. Also include your name, phone number, email and street address. Mail checks to: Judy Kuchta, 4232 North Ocean Drive, Hollywood, FL 33019-4000.

**You may call the Sierra Hotline for updates at 954-567-2841.**  
**LOOK FOR UPDATED INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE:**  
**<<http://florida.sierraclub.org/broward>>**

candidate for future authorization by Congress as a 'Federally designated wilderness area'.

**The Threats**

The NPS appears to be leaning towards permitting ORV use in the Addition in its GMP process. ORV use has already caused adverse impacts on the hydrology, vegetation, wildlife, as well as on the soft, wet and shallow soils, of the original 582,000 acre original Preserve. A study by the University of Georgia documented approximately 23,000 miles of ORV trails and tracks located within the original Preserve that is contiguous with the Addition. The impacts have been so severe that it led two Federal judges to approve an ORV Management Plan that will restrict their usage to a 400 mile designated ORV trail network that is currently under development.

The introduction of ORV use into the Addition where they are currently prohibited and where the NPS has itself documented their destructiveness in their current ORV Management Plan (2000) for the original Preserve would simply be wrong.

**The Solutions**

Since 1996 when the NPS assumed full administrative jurisdiction for this land, it has been off limits to both hunting and off road vehicle use by the general public pending the adoption of a GMP. In October 2005, the NPS developed six preliminary GMP alternatives for public comment. The alternatives ranged from those which would open up the Addition to varying degrees of ORV use, as well as hunting and concessions, to one which would prohibit ORV use. The 'no action alternative' was the only one offered which would have maintained the current restriction on hunting as well as motorized recreation.

Responding to previous public comment and legal requirements, the NPS has expanded the scope of the GMP to include a wilderness study and an ORV Management Plan for those alternatives that permit ORV use. Logic would seem to indicate that the evaluation and assessment of the area as wilderness be completed first, before any consideration of how off road vehicles could be managed, since 'wilderness designation' would prohibit such vehicles. However, the NPS has decided that combining the two

studies will result in "efficiency and cost savings" while still the fulfilling "the legal requirements of the enabling legislation" that mandates a wilderness study be done.

**How You Can Save The Big Cypress Addition**

The Big Cypress National Preserve Addition Lands, just about a one hour drive from downtown Ft. Lauderdale, need your help now! Please send in public comments to the NPS and in your own words urge the NPS to select a preferred alternative that would completely prohibit ORV use, prohibit hunting, restrict facility development, and designate the maximum amount of this irreplaceable and incomparable land as wilderness.

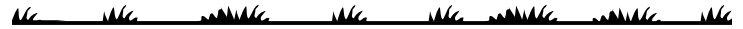
Comments are due by July 14th and can be submitted electronically by going to: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?projectId=11164&documentId=15142>


Or go to the main NPS planning website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>) and follow the links to Big Cypress National Preserve.

You can also submit comments by regular mail to: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Big Cypress Planning Team, 12795 West Alameda Parkway, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287

For additional information go to: [www.bigcypresswilderness.org](http://www.bigcypresswilderness.org) (currently under construction)

If you have any questions please contact Broward Sierra Club members Matthew Schwartz at [matthew3222@yahoo.com](mailto:matthew3222@yahoo.com) or Brian Scherf at [b.scherf@worldnet.att.net](mailto:b.scherf@worldnet.att.net).





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