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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD. A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR. – By Ina Oost Topper, Broward Sierra Excom Chair

Dear Broward Sierrans,

Wishing you all a Happy and most healthy New Year from your Broward Sierra Excom. Of all things, health is what's most important. Hopefully, we all got through the Holiday season in decent shape. Perhaps we added a few pounds, but a couple of weeks of salads & veggies will take care of that. Although the Sierra Club does not promote only vegetarianism/veganism, growing veggies takes a LOT less planetary space (and money) than raising cattle for beef consumption!



Broward Sierra 2015 Holiday party

Our past year has seen some very good environmental advances, but also some things that would make one's environmentalist blood curdle.....

Here are some of the highlights:

• **The fracking issue.** We're getting there, we think. Although every time we thought we made progress, out of nowhere some devious pro-fracking entity sticks up its ugly head trying to prevent whatever progress our anti-fracking forces were able to accomplish. The biggest hard-won success is that these days there is hardly a soul in the land who does NOT know what fracking means, or how destructive it is! Truly a big win this year. This year Broward County approved a fracking ban resolution, joining many county and city governments nationwide. We're on the right track in this regard, having learned that what doesn't work on a national level could very well work on the state and local levels.

• **The Keystone pipeline.** Ah, here we're going in the right direction as well. Again, the fight isn't over, but now even previously pro-pipeline groups have come around, actually for the same reason as the fracking issue – it's slowly dawning on even the most aggressive "let's dig/drill/bore everywhere" people that, alas, it may also destroy THEIR backyards, not to mention ruin their property values....

• On the state level, the **black bear hunt** took us quite a few steps backwards. Enough said about this sad issue - all we can do is keep up the fight.

• Also on the state level, is the **solar energy debacle** whereby the Big Energy Business suddenly sees its Big Profits disappearing on our sunny Florida horizon. Their efforts in trying to promote some form of fees to be levied against solar panel users is abominable. On December 21st there was a major article in the Miami Herald regarding the solar power campaign which states sadly, that this effort (i.e. preventing big energy companies to levy fees on panel users) is fizzling out due to financial disputes among opposing groups. The money is just not there to obtain the additional 400,000 signatures before December 31st, the deadline to get the amendment on the ballot for this coming election year.



The Sierra Club satirizes FPL "vampires" at the 2015 King Mango Strut in Coconut Grove.

• On the local level, **preserving and restoring our coral reefs** has been a tiresome battle, but some progress is being made now that the University of Miami is successfully able to actually grow healthy coral stalks in their labs. This sounds promising, although way too much coral is still being damaged. Just this week there was a segment on the national evening news about the failed tire-experiment to create artificial reefs. Thousands of tires have become an environmental hazard instead of a boon to reef preservation.

Continued on next page

Broward Sierra Club's General Meetings - Each month we have an educational program on conservation or environmental issues.

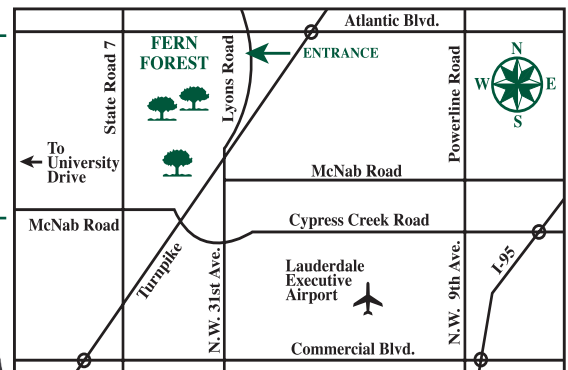
DIRECTIONS: The Fern Forest Nature Center, 201 Lyons Road South, Coconut Creek is just south of Atlantic Blvd. on the west side of the street. (From the south, NW 31 Ave. becomes NW 46 Ave., and then Lyons Rd. as you pass under the turnpike.) Committee reports begin at 7:30, and the program begins at 8:00. The meeting is open to the public at no charge.

Thursday, Jan. 14 (7-9 pm): We will not be meeting at Fern Forest in January.



Instead we will have a joint meeting with the Audubon Society at the **Long Key Nature Center**, 3501 SW 130th Ave., Davie, FL 33330. The featured speaker will be **James Currie** of TV's "Birding Adventures."

Thursday, Feb. 4: Back at Fern Forest Nature Center, our speaker will be **Broward County Commissioner Beam Furr**, who will be speaking about environmental issues, including the steps that the Broward County Commission is taking to **ban fracking in Broward County.**



Local Sierra Club Outings & Events

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



JAN. 16, SAT. CANOE/KAYAK THE SNOOK ISLAND WETLANDS AREA, LAKE WORTH. Leisurely morning paddling in the newly created Snook Islands wetlands area north of the Lake Worth Bridge. Boat rentals available. For more details about the area see www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/erm/lakes/estuarine/snook/. Limit 10. Rated moderate. Suggested donation: \$3 members, \$5 non-members. Leader: Ron Haines, 561-315-0528, RonaldHaines@bellsouth.net.



JAN. 23, SAT. SHARK VALLEY FULL MOON BICYCLE RIDE AND FIRE TOWER VISIT If you've not done this before, you'll marvel at the beauty of the Everglades' open space and myriads of birds. You will see the sun set and the moon rise. We'll start at 6pm. Cost \$10 and for your own safety please bring your own snacks at the lookout tower. Rated moderate. Leader: Judy Kuchta 305-308-8913 judyk@earthlink.net. **CANCELLED
RESCHEDULED FOR
MAY 21, 2016**



JAN. 23-24, SAT.-SUN. OUTINGS LEADER TRAINING AND BASIC FIRST AID CERTIFICATION IN GREENACRES, FL. Do you love the outdoors? Would you like to share your love of it with others? We can teach you how and provide all the equipment you need to do it! Join us for Leader Training and Basic First Aid certification and become a certified leader for adults or youth and start sharing the outdoors with others. Class size is limited. To register, contact Sheila Calderon, 561-968-4166, shecal@bellsouth.net or Chas Hunt, 561-739-3171, loxoutings@gmail.com.



JAN. 30, SAT. BIKING AT RIVERBEND PARK IN JUPITER. Leisurely morning bicycling in the woods at Riverbend Park. Rentals available. www.pbcgov.com/parks/locations/riverbend.htm#.VkoqOspm0bE. Bicycle helmets are REQUIRED on all Sierra Club bicycle outings. Limit 10. Rated moderate. Suggested donation: \$3 members, \$5 non-members. Leader: Ron Haines, 561-315-0528, RonaldHaines@bellsouth.net.



FEB. 20, SAT. CANOE/KAYAK THE WINDING WATERS NATURAL AREA IN WEST PALM BEACH. Leisurely morning paddling in this newly opened area. See it at www.pbcgov.com/erm/natural/natural-areas/winding-waters/. Limit 10. Rated moderate. Suggested donation: \$3 members, \$5 non-members. Leader: Ron Haines, 561-315-0528, RonaldHaines@bellsouth.net.



FEB. 27, SAT. HIKE BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE. We'll hike approx. 6-8 miles on a wilderness trail, off a section of the Florida National Scenic Trail, north of Alligator Alley (about an hour from downtown Ft. Lauderdale). You'll learn the difference a few inches of elevation makes to the local flora, as you trek through cypress forests, hammocks and prairies. We'll walk at a leisurely pace, allowing for identification of birds, wildflowers, plants and butterflies. Bring your own lunch to eat on the trail. Rated moderate, due to distance and uneven footing. This is a MOSTLY dry hike. Suggested donation: \$5 members, \$7 non-members. Leader: Jackie Fisher, 954-434-2855 jfsf812@bellsouth.net.



MAR. 5, SAT. OKEECHOBEE RIM BIKE RIDE. A 15 to 25 mile ride on a paved trail on top of the Okeechobee Lake Dam. The outing will start at a designated area on the dam and end at the same location near Port Mayacca. You will need a cruiser or mountain bike, a spare inner tube, appropriate tool to remove tire, plenty of water and a snack lunch. It is suggested that you wear a large brimmed hat for sun protection. Wildlife will consist mostly of various kinds of birds and alligators. We will see the renovations being made to the dam which will cost an estimated 1.5 billion dollars. Afterwards the participants may want to share beverages at a local spot and even go to dinner at a nearby restaurant. This outing could take most of the day. Suggested donation: \$5. Leader: Darryl Rutz, 954-892-1740 dmrtz2@msn.com.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

– By Barbara Ruge, Broward Sierra Excom Vice-Chair



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Thank you to all of you Broward Sierra members who returned your ballots to vote for your 2016 Executive Committee. All the candidates, Ina, Stan, Darryl and Barbara, were re-elected to serve again on your ExCom. Thank you for your participation in the election process.

Please contact any member of your executive committee and let us know what we did well this past year. We like compliments. And, let us know what you feel we can do better. Any particular

subjects or issues you want to hear about at our program meetings? Any environmental experts you know who we could book to speak to our group? Any suggestions for new exploratory outings you desire?

We are here to provide enjoyment of our native lands and wildlife. We encourage political actions to protect these natural resources and it is essential that our members support these efforts. Please join one of our committees. These are Conservation, Political, Membership, Fundraising, and various actions campaigns: Water Quality, Anti-Fracking, Clean Power Plan. 2016 will be a big year for environmental politics. We must be diligent. ExCom is looking forward to hearing from you. Contact Barbara (954-328-2165, b-realtor@att.net) or Ina (954-722-9944, irtopper2000@cs.com)

Looking Ahead, continued from previous page

- Also on the local level, we must continue to work to preserve our dwindling **endangered panther habitat** and preventing further mangrove destruction. In the year ahead, we'll surely revisit these issues.
- This year we made great strides, but must do even more to further the increase of recyclable bag usage and to **reduce the use of plastic bags**. We thank our many Broward retailers who have been supplying (some very beautiful) multiple use shopping bags!
- **Thank you also, Broward Sierrans, for being a great support in preserving our beautiful natural surroundings, and for joining our monthly general meetings at Fern Forest.**

We at ExCom hope to see you all at our first big meeting of the new year, the joint Sierra/Audubon get-together!

Please bring your family, friends, neighbors, etc., as we're also going to brief you on some of our upcoming events for 2016.