



THE RICH HISTORY of CONSERVATION EFFORTS in LAKE COUNTY, FL

1900s through 2020s

Compiled by Nadine Foley

With technical assistance and photos from Peg Urban and Peg Lindsay

Created for Lake County
Conservation Symposium
April 30, 2022



WARNING!

Not every event
Nor every person
Could be mentioned
In this presentation.

Our apologies
For that which was left out.

PRE-1960

1908 – Ocala National Forest (ONF) founded by President T. Roosevelt

1944 – Lake Soil & Water Conservation District (LSWCD) founded, a Federal program under US Department of Agriculture

1953 – Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) created by Florida State Legislature

1953 – Seminole State Forest (SSF) founded

1960s thru 1970s

1964-Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society is formed (OVAS)

1964 approx.-Lake County Conservation Council formed (LCCC)

1970s-Lake County Pollution Control Board (LCPCB)

1972-Clean Water Act (CWA) EPA

1974-Lake Louisa State Park land purchased. Open in 1977

1974-Emeralda Marsh designated National Natural Landmark

1975-Five Water management Districts Established in Florida,

2 in Lake County...Saint Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and SouthWest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)

1979-Establishment of the Green Swamp Area of Critical State concern (GSACSC)

1980s

- **1988-OVAS bought 177 acres, plus a conservation easement on 53 acres, to establish the Trout Lake Nature center**
- **1989-TLNC Long Range Development Plan and incorporation as a 501c (3) non-profit corporation by 1991**
- **1989-LCWA began their Land Preservation**
- **Program**



1990s

1990 – Wekiva River Protection Area established by state law

1990s – LCCC continues active role in conservation & environmental advocacy

1990s -OVAS is active with programs and field trips

1991 – Lake County Comprehensive Plan approved. *The County Commissioners started their Environmental Protection Advisory Board, EPABI in 1997 and these members were full of good ideas.*

1991-1996 – St Johns Water Management District (SJRWMD) buys muck farms at Emerald Marsh first, then Lake Apopka, north shore. Continued....

1990s Continued

1997 – Environmental Protection Advisory Board (EPAB) established

1997 – Lake County Tomorrow envisioning process begins. *It was embraced by the communities where it was held. All around the county there was good attendance by an interested public and there was support for conservation and environmental protection.*

1997 – TLNC completes Environmental Education building

1998 – LSWCD fosters Palatlahaha Environmental Agricultural Reserve (PEAR) Committee

Late 1990s-. Development standards set for Lake Apopka by Lake & Orange Counties and municipalities

2000s Chronology – present (a/o 2022)

2000 – Lake Beautyberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) founded

2001 - LS&WCD continues

2001 – PEAR Advisory Committee shifts from LSWCD to PEAR Association, working with Lake County Division of Parks & Trails

2002 – Environmental Land Management & Acquisition Study Committee

2003 – Public Lands Acquisition Advisory Council (PLAAC) created. Ferndale preserve purchased

2004 – The Florida Legislature enacted the Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act, Chapter 369, Part III, Florida Statutes (F.S.), in order to address the need for an expressway through the Wekiva River Basin by adopting the recommendations of the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force, the SR 429 Working Group, and the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee. The legislation was the culmination of more than 20 years of discussions and various actions taken to complete the Western Beltway around metropolitan Orlando while protecting the fragile Wekiva River Basin and springshed.

2000s Continued...

2004 – Public Lands Referendum approved by 73% of voters ->\$36 million dollars in bonds over 20 years

2004 – 2010 – Local Planning Agency (LPA) re-writes Lake County Comprehensive Plan

2005 – Lake County Public Lands Management Program established

2014 – Green Mountain Scenic Overlook and Scenic Byway created.

-North Shore Loop Trail (Lake and Orange Counties) in cooperation with SJRWMD

2022 – First Annual Lake County Conservation Symposium-see end of slideshow

Mid 1960s Lake County Conservation Council

The Lake County Conservation Council was founded in the mid 60s by a small group of residents working together to establish the Goose Prairie Preserve. One of the early accomplishments was the preservation of Goose Prairie in 1964, located north of Highway 44 and east of the Dura Stress concrete plant.

The later preservation of Emeralda Marsh followed.



Last newsletter by then president, Nadine Foley

LCCC Continued

At that time, Joe Hill was chairman of the Lake County Pollution Control Board. He was committed to stopping the citrus plant and municipal water plant discharges. In the 1970s, LCCC also encouraged stopping pollution runoff into the many lakes of Lake County. LCCC brought about the first legislation in the US to protect lakes from the dumping of industrial and agricultural phosphates. This led to the eventual elimination of phosphorus from detergents benefiting our nations waters.



After a pause in activity, LCCC re-organized after the devastating Orange Grove freeze on Christmas Eve ,1983. In Lake County, about 120,000 acres of orange groves froze that night. Under the leadership of Beth Morris, and with many previous and new members, LCCC was reactivated in 1985. With so much old grove land available, everyone knew there would be a building boom! And there was!

In 2000 LCCC successfully advocated against the development of a golf course in the Wekiva River Protection Area and the Sugarloaf potential development.

In 2004, LCCC urged the Lake County Board of Commissioners to increase the impact fees. They did so, increasing the fees to \$7055 per single-family home, providing funding for roads, libraries, parks, schools as well as other improvements to support the new growth.

This group were go-getters for sure. They served on multiple boards and worked with other organizations, formulating new ideas and projects.

Following in the steps of their predecessors who founded LCCC in the 1960s, the members of the Lake County Conservation Council reorganized in 2021 and 2022

LCCC ...Rails to Trails

There was an extensive, abandoned railroad system in Lake County, a leftover from the many abandoned orange groves and orange packing plants.

In the late 1980s, Audrey Reed led an effort to transform abandoned rails to public trails in Lake County. Lake Rails to Trails also pushed the County to create a recreation department to maintain the trails. Because of these efforts we now enjoy the Van Fleet State Trail in the Green Swamp, Minneola Trail, Leesburg Trail, various equestrian trails and others.



Audrey
Reed

GRAND OPENING!!!

General James A. Van Fleet

State Trail in the Green Swamp

LAKE COUNTY'S FIRST!!!



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1993

SPECIAL THANKS

Lake County Commissioners
Lake County Public Works/Mike Brooks
Cities of Clermont, Groveland, Mascotte
Friends of the Green Swamp
Jean Badley of Eustis, for making the quilt
Clerbrook Resort of Clermont
Sun Cycle Bike Shop, of Tavares
Ken Norquist, of Clermont
SunDor, of Mount Dora
Clermont Junior Women's Club
Shoe Biz, of Lake Square Mall
Beacon Vision Center, of Leesburg Square
Porter's Camera/Gift Shop, of Eustis
Classic Cycles, of Clermont
Fred Sommers/CFT Sports, of Clermont
Steve Monn of CAS Advertising, Leesburg

Celebration Committee - Suzanne K. Reynolds, Chairman
Eloise Fisher, Bob Siefert, Audrey Reed, Hazel Molnar,
Gina Swartz, Donna Shelly, Carol Schneider, Bobbie Keenan,
Robert Bouse, and Jeff Monson.



OVAS Field Trip

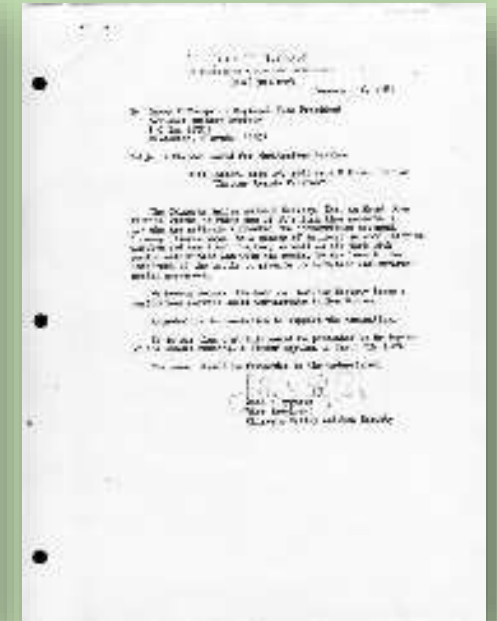
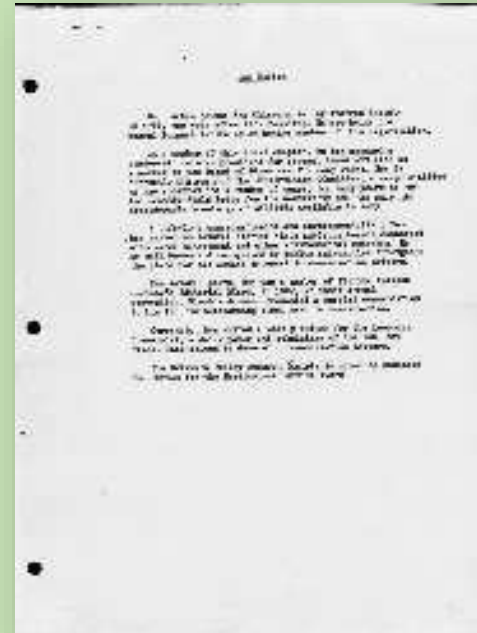
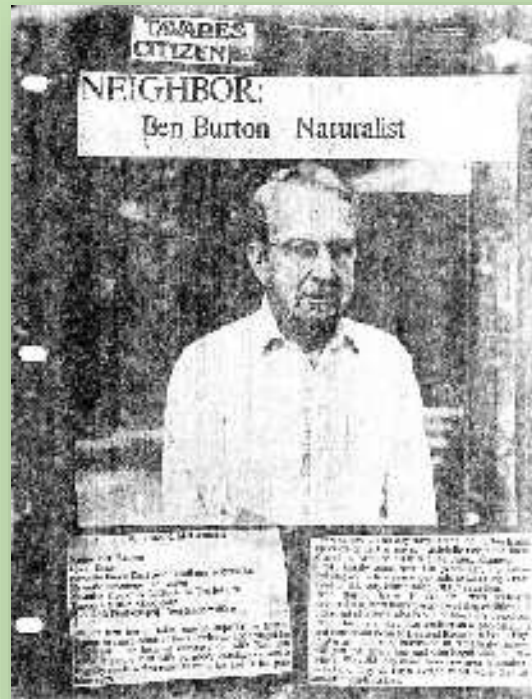


1964 Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society is Founded

Meanwhile, other interested parties way back in 1964 were forming the Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society (OVAS) and the chapter is still going strong! The name (quite a mouthful) was selected, as opposed to something simpler (like Lake County Audubon) because one of the missions of the organization was the restoration of the Oklawaha River via the breaching of the Rodman Dam.



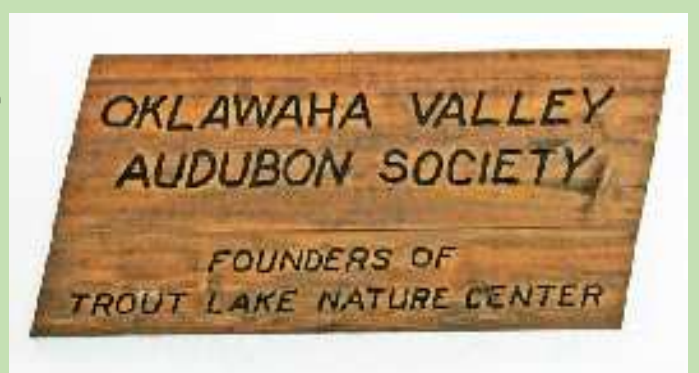
R-Dorothy Clark. She helped to ID native plants at the beginning of Trout lake Nature Center



HISTORY OF THE OKLAWAHA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY (OVAS) The first documented attempt at a bird club in Lake County was in April 1951. The group met at 8:00 pm in the Mt. Dora Community Building and continued to meet on the second Friday of each month. The founding officers were Mr. Barnett - President Pro Temp; Mr. Hendrickson - Vice President; Miss Doleman – Treasurer; Miss Crutcher - Secretary. The stated purpose was to have bird walks and ‘water trips’. There were no dues but members had to be a member of Florida Audubon Society (\$3 at the time); bills were paid by passing a collection plate. For most meetings films were shown and/or members talked about their birding experiences. The first field trip was to Rock Springs and was led by Mr. Merritt Ferrar, Executive Director of the Florida Audubon Society. The group’s name changed to the Lake County Audubon Society and their first annual meeting was held on January 11, 1952. In 1952, Lake County Audubon Society was one of seven chapters statewide. At the March 12, 1954 meeting a quorum was not present and the last minutes were dated January 14, 1955. There is no information in the record to explain why this group ceased to meet. Dorcus Bingham (1897-1986) was the founder of the modern OVAS. At the urging of Russell Mason (CEO of Florida Audubon Society), Miss Bingham started a Lake County chapter: “I put an add in the paper to see if anyone was interested, and much to my amazement 24 people showed up and it has grown steadily since then”. The first meeting of the Lake County Audubon Society was in the lounge of the Federal Savings and Loan Association in Mt. Dora; the speaker at that first meeting was Russell Mason. The minutes began in February 1965. On November 30, 1965 the name was changed to the Mt. Dora Audubon Society. It was incorporated as a Florida non-profit organization on March 29, 1966. The officers were Dorcas Brigham – President, Henry Harford – 1st Vice President, Newcomb Fuller – 2nd Vice President, Ethel Hicks – Secretary, and Neil Ross - Treasurer. The Articles of Incorporation were modified on May 20, 1968 to change the name to Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society, because the membership had extended beyond Lake County lines. OVAS is a recognized chapter of National Audubon and is one of Florida’s oldest chapters. The Trout Lake Nature Center was founded under the aegis of OVAS in 1990. In a joint celebration in 2014, OVAS celebrated their 50th Anniversary and TLNC celebrated their 25th Anniversary. Attached is a list of accomplishments compiled for the 50th Anniversary. Today, OVAS meets on the first Sunday of the month, September-June. The social begins at 1:30 pm and the program – a conservation theme - begins at 2:00 pm. For more information about OVAS current events see <https://oklawaha-valleyaudubon.org> Constructed from the excellent research done by Linda Bystrak, September 2013. Sheryan Epperly Chester 10-29-2017; updated 3-07-2018

OVAS - 50 years of Conservation Issues Who will represent Lake Co. if OVAS is gone? Anti Cross FL barge canal; stop soap suds; Dora Canal dredging and tree cutting; Rock Springs vegetation removal; make Emeralda a sanctuary-1966; boycott alligator products; pro scenic river bill; against Everglades jetport; anti-DDT; stop filling in wetlands; save the forests; oppose Ocklawaha river channelization; Lake Co. comp plan needed; for energy and water conservation; anti- Rodman dam; protect the Green Swamp; endorse EPA; sewage problem in Leesburg effecting lakes; support introduced whooping cranes; fund WMDs; save manatees; anti- Apalachicola dam; coastal zone protection; anti-phosphate mining; endorse purchase of Seminole State Forest; petition to save the Suwanee River; endorse purchase of public land on Lake Harris; endorsed ESA; protect Crystal River for manatee; re-new Clean Air Act; save the panthers; against govt. selling public land; pro bottle bill; anti- acid rain; better rules about breakwaters; Stop development at Wekiva Falls; stop sand mining near Wekiva; endorse beverage container law; stop offshore oil drilling; endorsed Lake Co. tree ordinance; incinerator objections; support wetlands ordinance; pro Big Sugar tax; restore Ocklawaha; protect Artic refuge; do not move parks to Dept. of Ag.; stop cutting Cypress trees at Hickory Point; support CWA; pro bottle bills; support solar energy; pay LCCC dues; stop gill netting; printed Guide to Environmental Helpers; no bird seed tax; anti-gold mining; support Preservation 2000; oppose 4 lanes of Rt. 40 thru Ocala Forest; support Ocala Forest Management Plan; anti- Sugar Loaf development; wrote letter endorsing PEAR as public land; endorsed FL Forever; endorsed creation of FWCC; endorsement letter for Emeralda Wildlife Drive; shoreline protection ord.; gave members handout with legislators contact info; anti- Adena Sp.; Proposition 4; against withdrawing 250mgd from St. Johns; opposed FWC budget cuts; against Niagara; pro springs protection; endorse Apopka NWR and wildlife drive; clean up Trout Lake; oppose new launch pad on Merritt Island; support cleanup of Indian River lagoon; oppose more sand mining in GS; stop Wellness Way; oppose Deseret Ranch land development; support under water dredge spoil disposal at Apopka; stop Pine Meadows peat mining and zoning changes surrounding TLNC; endorse higher water levels and better water quality in Apopka and Harris Chain of Lakes; oppose Goose Prairie peat mining; protect bears; prohibit fracking in Lake Co.; oppose Sabal Trail pipeline in GS; endorse water conservation in CFWI; Climate change education; protect our springs....

1989 OVAS Establishes Trout Lake Nature Center



After about three years of serious fundraising activities, OVAS was able to purchase 177 acres of land from the HASELTON dairy farm people, for founding the Nature Center on Trout Lake at Eustis. OVAS also worked out a conservation easement with the city of Eustis to use an additional 53 acres of land and water along Trout Lake.

This was all accomplished in 1988. By 1989 the Trout Lake Nature Center long range development plan was in effect and the Nature Center was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation by 1991.

The Trout Lake Nature Center Environmental Education Center building was completed in 1997.



OVAS Fundraisers Over the Years for Future Nature Center

8th ANNUAL AUDUBON FLEA MARKET
 FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
TROUT LAKE NATURE CENTER
 FRIDAY - ONE DAY ONLY
MARCH 21, 1997 8:00AM - 3:00PM
TAVARES CIVIC CENTER

BARGAINS

BOOKS • JEWELRY • TOOLS • PLANTS
 COLLECTIBLES • VIDEOS • BAKED GOODS
 BIKES • GAMES • POTS • DISHES
 GARDEN, KITCHEN, SPORTS STUFF
 CLOTHING • MAGAZINES
 GLASSWARE • BASKETS
 SMALL APPLIANCES
 KNICK-KNACKS
 PUZZLES
 TOYS

COFFEE AND HOME MADE GOODIES

AND SO VERY MUCH MORE

ALL PROCEEDS TO THE TROUT LAKE NATURE CENTER

The Oklahoma Valley Audubon Society
 presents
WILLIAM BARTRAM
 AT
TROUT LAKE

Presented by
MICHAEL RUMMAN-KRAWCHAK

William Bartram's Natural Observations of the People and Animals of the Southeast. Includes an Introduction by Michael Ruman-Krawchak. 232 Pages. \$15.00.

Available at
 Trout Lake Nature Center
 520 E. C.R. 44
 Eustis, FL 32116

Bill Johnson presents
DOLLAR A DAY BOYS!
 A MUSICAL HISTORY OF THE
 LIFE OF THE CONSERVATION HEROES

THE DOLLAR A DAY BOYS are a group of young boys who have dedicated their lives to the conservation of the environment. They have written and performed songs about the importance of protecting our planet and the animals that live on it. The songs are simple and easy to learn, and they are perfect for children of all ages. The boys have performed at many schools and community events, and their songs have inspired many people to take action to protect the environment.

Available at
 Trout Lake Nature Center
 520 E. C.R. 44
 Eustis, FL 32116

WILLIAM BARTRAM AT TROUT LAKE

PRESENTED BY
 THE OKLAHOMA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2008
 TIME: 2:00 PM
 PLACE: TROUT LAKE NATURE CENTER
 520 E. C.R. 44
 EUSTIS, FL 32116

\$15.00
 SIGNATURE

ONLY 100
 COPIES AVAILABLE

THE BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE TROUT LAKE NATURE CENTER AND AT THE OKLAHOMA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY'S ONLINE STORE.

OKLAHOMA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
 presents a concert by
The Lake County Ladies Chorus
 Singing a Travelogue of Music

Date: **April 2, 2011**
 Time: **2:00 p.m.**
 Place: **Trout Lake Nature Center**
 520 E. C.R. 44
 Eustis

Complimentary Refreshments
 served at 1:30 p.m.
 Donation: \$10.00

For Tickets Call:
357-8270
 or
589-2837

A FLORIDA TREASURE
 A Musical History of the
 Life of the Conservation Heroes

Available at
 Trout Lake Nature Center
 520 E. C.R. 44
 Eustis, FL 32116

DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2008
 TIME: 2:00 PM
 PLACE: TROUT LAKE NATURE CENTER
 520 E. C.R. 44
 EUSTIS, FL 32116

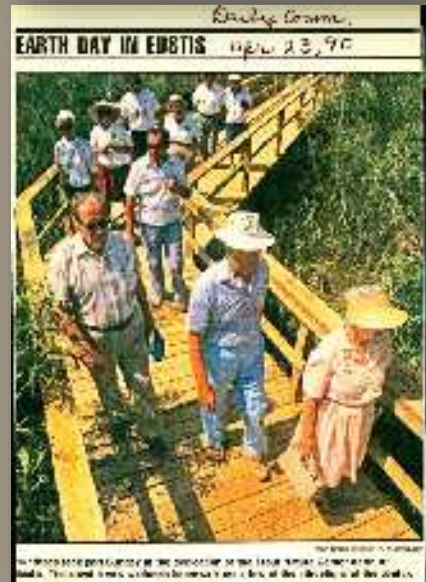
\$15.00
ONLY 100
 COPIES AVAILABLE

THE BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE TROUT LAKE NATURE CENTER AND AT THE OKLAHOMA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY'S ONLINE STORE.

April 23, 1990 Trout Lake Nature Center Dedication



Newell Hall



OVAS was active in the 90s with programs and field trips for the members and the public. Many OVAS members were, and continue to be, volunteers at Trout Lake Nature Center. To name a few of these past active volunteers, we risk missing many other names, but we do want to acknowledge at least these people: Fred and Alyce Michaels, John and Ruth Duesing, Bernie and Fran Yokel, Walt and Jeanne Gunkle, Charles and Ella Newell, Horace and Goldie Thompson, and Bill and Dagny Robins.

1997 Trout Lake Nature center Completes the Environmental Center for Programs and Education



1st Director-Tamara Race



Schoolchildren from Lake County enjoy learning about nature here.



Bernie Yokel educating the public on invertebrates dipped from Trout Lake



Trina Raether -Education volunteer for many years

Lavon Silvernell – Trout Lake Naturalist 2002-2014

She teaches others about nature and its big picture

2022 Trout Lake Nature Center Today

. The Center provides middle-school field trips and open hours for the public. Volunteers provide much of the maintenance and serve as guides. The Center has begun a fundraising effort for a larger environmental education center.



**Eileen Tramontana-
Executive Director 2014 to
present**



**Stan
Napier,
current
TLNC
President**



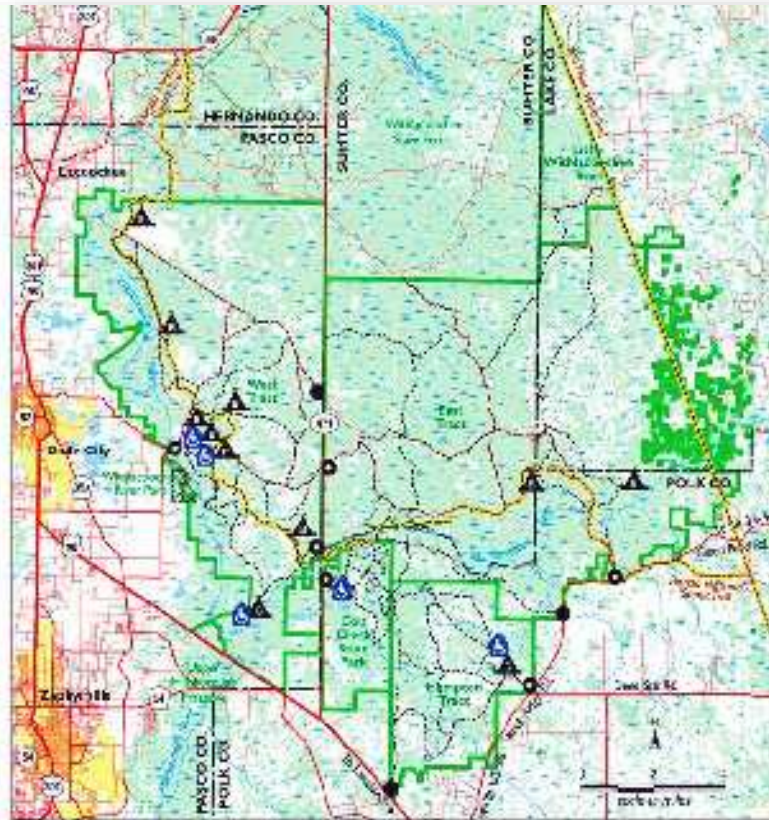
Back to the 70s...1974 Lake Louisa State Park Purchased

The initial acreage for Lake Louisa State Park was purchased by the state of Florida in 1973 and the Park created in 1974. Some of the land at the park had been in orange grove and has been kept that way. In other areas, a restoration process began with the planting of Longleaf Pine on hillside areas and native scrub plants added to enhance the rare Florida scrub ecosystem. Public amenities such as public beaches, trails, cabins and other facilities were added, and the Park was opened to the public in 1977.

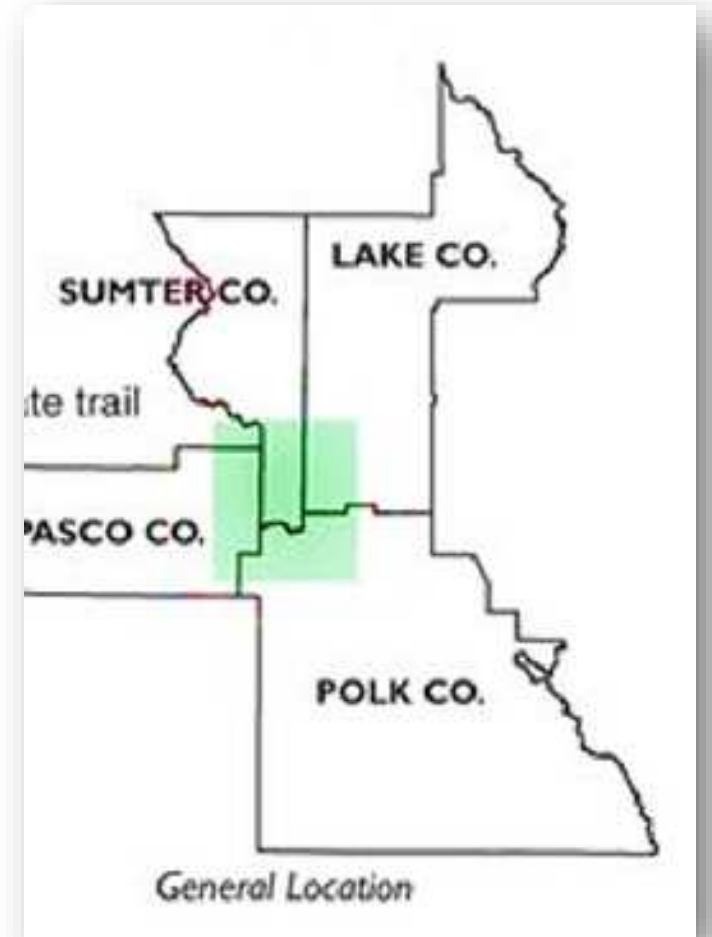


Ovas Field Trip during drought year 2001

1979 Green Swamp designated Area of Critical State Concern



Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve



1974 Emeralda Marsh Designated National Natural Landmark by National Parks Service



1989 Lake County Water Authority Begins Land Preservation

The Lake County water authority was created in 1953 to protect and manage the waters of Lake County's lakes, rivers, springs and connecting waterways plus the adjacent lands and wetlands.



Bugg Springs



Joe Branham

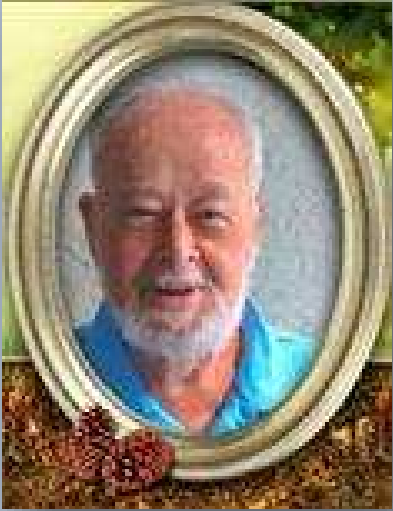


**Margaret
Branham,
right, with
Yvonne Rice**



At this time, the board members were Joe Hill, Gina Swartz, Jim Monica, Joe Branham. Bill Good served on the conservation committee. Ultimately, 6,600 acres were acquired for protection as preserves.

Joe and Margaret Branham need to be thanked for being the guardians of Bugg Spring, keeping that large spring in safe hands as it feeds down Helena Run into big Lake Harris.



Joe Hill was given an award by the EPA in 2000. In the past he was Chairman of the St. Johns River Water Management District Board.

He also served on the Southwest Florida Water Management District governing board. While serving on the Lake County Pollution Control Board, he led efforts to prevent cities and citrus processing plants from dumping sewage effluent into Lake County waters.

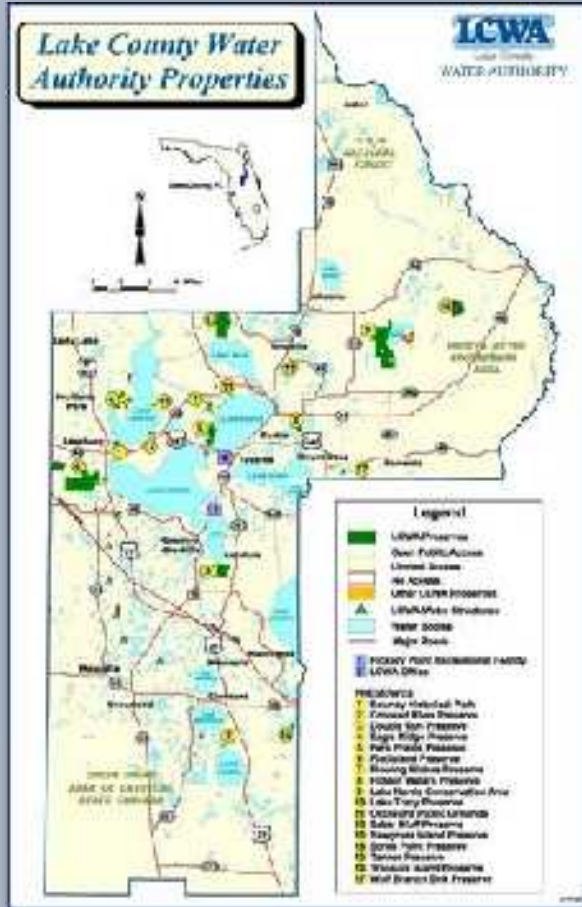
To the credit of dedicated people in Lake County, many measures to protect our waters preceded the federal Clean Water Act in 1972. The federal funding that followed really helped in the cleanup of our waters.

LCWA established “**Blueways**” on the Harris Chain of Lakes for the convenience of kayakers, canoeists and small boat users, marked and mapped.



Linda Bystrak, biologist, longtime water advocate and former LCWA board member. Not to mention, paddler extraordinaire.

LCWA also Acquired Many Beautiful Preserves, and here are a few samples...



Bourley Preserve



Flat Island



Bear Track Preserve

1975 Five Water Management Districts Established in Florida, Two of which are in Lake County

The Lake County Water Authority was created in 1953, well before the five water management districts were established by the state legislature in 1975. Covering most of Lake County, we have the St. Johns River Water Management District, SJRWMD. Covering a portion of southern Lake County, we also have the Southwest Florida Water Management District, SWFWMD, known affectionately as “Swiftmud”. This geographical division is largely based on direction of the water flow. The St. John’s River watershed flows north and east, going out to the Atlantic Ocean via the mighty Saint John’s River. SWFWMD has two watersheds, flowing to the north and west via the Withlacoochee River into Waccasassa Bay and to the south and west via the Hillsboro River into Tampa Bay.



In the late 1990s, in an effort to clean up polluted lake Apopka, the SJRWMD bought the muck farms on the north shore of Lake Apopka. Those farms had been started during WW-II, growing vast acres of vegetable crops to support the war effort. German POWs worked on the farms.



Also in the late 1990s, development standards to control runoff were set for all communities around Lake Apopka, by agreement of Lake and Orange Counties, and all of the municipalities located on Lake Apopka.

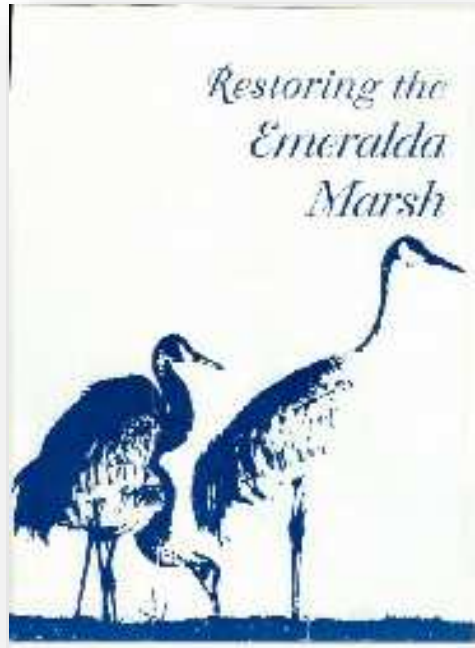
1990 Wekiva River Protection Area Established

The 1990s were an active period for conservation and environmental advocacy. Wekiva River Protection Area was established by state law. Thank you to the Friends of the Wekiva River as well as many more advocates.



1990s OVAS Continues to be Active...

SJRWMD Purchases Muck Farms for Restoration at Emeralda Marsh (1991)



In 2002 OVAS worked with SJWMD to open a Wildlife Drive



Bob Putman, Ruth Duesing, Bob Rogers



Bernie Yokel, Commissioner Catherine Hanson, Marjorie and Bob Rogers, SJWMD rep, Elizabeth Ballard (past OVAS president)



OVAS Conducted Monthly Bird Surveys for SJWMD at Emeralda Marsh for Many Years...



Bird Observation Platform at Emeralda Marsh



Ruth Duesing



Mary Anderson, Peg Lindsay, John Stenberg, Ruth Duesing, Bob Putman



Bob Owens Award presented to Ovas by SJRWMD in Palatka



Back-Bernie Yokel, Peg Lindsay, John Stenberg (with SJRWMD and Emeralda's environmental scientist), Peg Urban
Front-Ruth Duesing, Mrs. Owens, Mary Anderson,

...Christmas Bird Counts...Citizen Science...



L-Peg Urban,
Middle-Susie Ogden, Ruth Duesing, Nadine Foley
Floor-Fran Sellers, Mary Anderson
Back,middle-John Stenberg SJRWMD

Compiling at the
Blue House,
Sunnyhill Farms



Compiler's checklist

Audubon

COASTAL COUNTY WILSON COUNTY
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS
January 4-6, 2014
December 14-16, 2013

LOCATION	YEAR	TOTAL	PERIOD	PERIOD
WILSON COUNTY	2013	18	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2014	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2015	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2016	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2017	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2018	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2019	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2020	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2021	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2022	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2023	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2024	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2025	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2026	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2027	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2028	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2029	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2030	11	1-16	1-16



Coastal County, Wilson County, and Christmas Bird Counts

LOCATION	YEAR	TOTAL	PERIOD	PERIOD
WILSON COUNTY	2013	18	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2014	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2015	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2016	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2017	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2018	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2019	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2020	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2021	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2022	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2023	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2024	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2025	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2026	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2027	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2028	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2029	11	1-16	1-16
WILSON COUNTY	2030	11	1-16	1-16

"American
Birds"
magazine
published CBC
results,
compilers etc.

Peg Lindsey
Barbara Gay
John Stenberg



Jean Morse, Peg
Urban, Mary Bezak,
at Fly n R Ranch



Peg Lindsay and Bob
Putman at Emeralda



Mary Remer

...Fun Field Trips...



Peg, Sherry, Peg



**Jane, Hiro and Susan,
Jane, Michelle, her
mother, Maria, Peg L,
Clyde, Sherry, Alex**



**Bernie Yokel-former
Florida Audubon
President**



Pear Park



**Clyde Stevens-Banana
Boat fundraising trips**



Peg and Peg



Mary and Bob-rare birds



**Mary
Phillips**



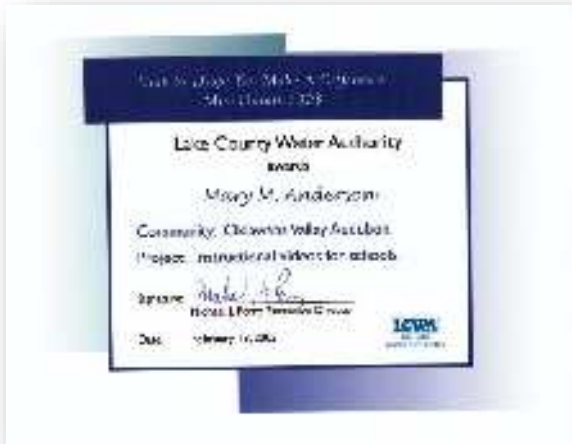
Dennis O'Neil

...OVAS Overnight Trips...



Entomology lesson by Clyde Stevens

OVAS Education



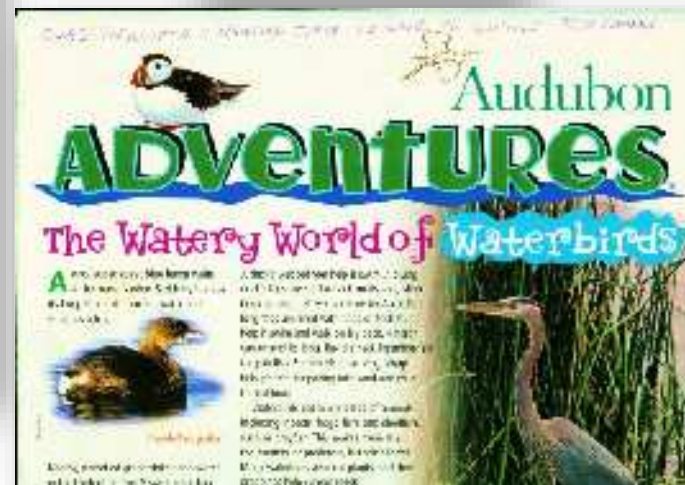
2004 Mary Anderson at Round Lake Elementary School. Mary spearheaded the Audubon Adventures program in Lake County for 5th Grade Students



Article from Florida Audubon's "Naturalist" Magazine



Mary Remer



2022- "Audubon Adventures" name, and a publication for kids, is resurrected by Florida Audubon/ Jay Watch

...OVAS Outreach and Awards...



Programs by Peg and Peg



Nadine receives Conservationist of the Decade from Jerry Bohmann, December 2010

President Jerry Bohmann awards Nadine Foley Conservationist of the Decade Award

Ovas helped to plan, sponsor and participate in Lake County's "Wings and Wildflowers Festival"



"Birds and Bikes" day at Emerald Marsh



Linda, Bob and Mary Wexler at Birdapalooza



Joan Bryant, Linda Bystrak, Peg Lindsay and Bob Putman receive Conservationist of the Year awards. Others received this as well.



2014 50/25 Year Celebration for OVAS and Trout Lake Nature Center



Joan Bryant, President of TLNC, Eagle Scout, Murphy, Commissioner Cadwell, Lavon Silvernell, TLNC Naturalist 2002-2014



Mary Remer, Phyliss and Clyde Stevens, Barb Grigg, Horace Thompson, Peg Urban



2001 Lake Soil and Water Conservation(LSWCD) District Continues...

Lake Soil and Water Conservation District was established in 1947 to promote and encourage the wise use, management and general conservation of the county's soil, water and related natural resources.

Encouraged throughout the United States, the districts in Florida work with Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, with the US Department of Agriculture and with local government. Matching grant opportunities for local agriculture operations can be facilitated by district supervisors or staff personnel if they are lucky to have staff.

In 2005, the District established a **Mobile Irrigation Lab** which provides free on-site evaluation of agricultural irrigation systems. This service is still in effect and greatly benefits growers and decreases water usage. Nadine was one of those who signed the first legislation for this in Lake County.

LSWCD Continued

Over the years , the District sponsors many events for youth and adults, including Lake Regional Envirothon for middle and high school Students who compete in teams.

The District also sponsors Land Judging by teens who are interested in careers in environmental and agricultural management, natural resource conservation, home building, engineering and construction.

Other projects include tree giveaways for the general public, poster and speech contests for school age youth, and the Lake Regional Science and Engineering Fair. These events offer Lake County winners the opportunity to go to state-wide contests.

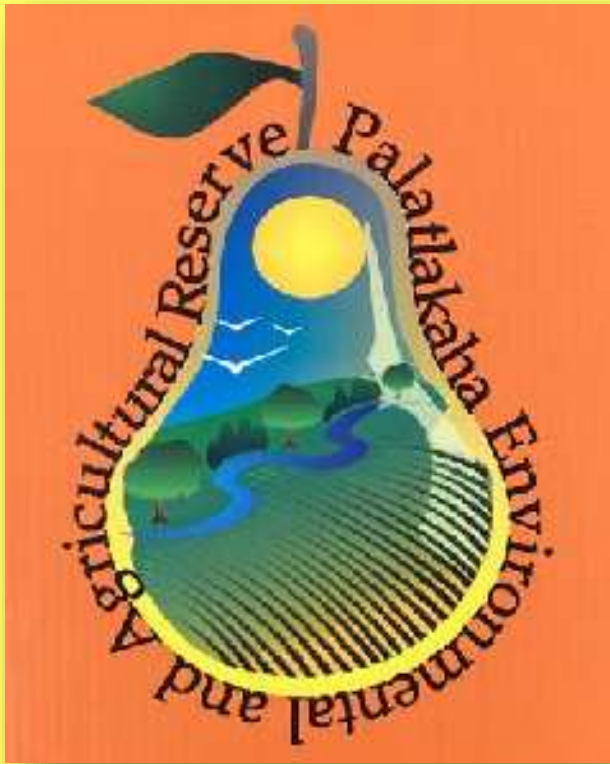


1998 LSWCD Fosters PEAR PARK...

In 1998 the LSWCD fostered a committee to establish the Palatlahaha Environmental and Agricultural Reserve - aka PEAR Park. That committee saved the farmland that had been used by the University of Florida IFAS Research Station for the study of grapes and cucurbits, (melons, cucumbers, watermelon etc.) The station was relocated to a new location near Apopka.

After three years the PEAR committee shifted administrative control to the County, which took on a 50-year lease from the state. The land is now a 267 acre passive park with restoration along the Palatlahaha River.

The PEAR Association continues today with dedicated volunteers who assist Lake County Parks and Trails with land management of the original passive park area. There is also an additional, 50 acre, active Park area acquired by the County along Highway 27, through Florida Forever, that compliments the larger passive, conserved area. Make a visit to Pear Park this spring if you have never been there. It is amazing what volunteers can accomplish!!



Dennis Gray, (in blue shirt), IFAS employee and grape research expert, and Grady Smith (suspenders), whose family sold the “front 50” acres, through “Florida Forever” to Pear, join a Pear Association meeting in 2001. Concerned citizens and environmental group members travelled to Tallahassee to make this happen.



Budd Remer, George Wolf, Gene Bouley, Mary Remer removing for sale sign from front 50, later to be known as the ‘Pear Gateway’

Pear Association

- **Local citizen volunteers**
Including support from OVAS, Lake Beautyberry, Scouts and other environmental groups.
- **Work with endorsement & cooperation from Lake County Parks & Trails**
- **We have developed and put into practice, plans for conservation, restoration and management of the natural resources on the property**
- **Self-funded from membership dues and grants**



Former Parks Director, Bob Stevens, working with Pear Association members.



Current Parks and Trails Director, Bobby Bonilla

**...RIVERTRAIL DEDICATION-
"DR. S. J. (JOE) STEPHANY MEMORIAL
TRAIL"**



**Educational
Trail signs added**

L-Mrs. Joe Stephany, whose husband was a former IFAS employee at PEAR, George Wolfe representing Pear Association

George, Commissioners Catherine Hanson and Stivender Lower Right-Mary Remer and Nadine Foley placing Rivertrail signage. Barb Grigg, botanist and longtime Pear volunteer, helped to ID native plants at Pear



Catherine Benton, former IFAS grape research station employee, who helped to put the wheels into motion to preserve PEAR, and Nadine Foley with LSWCD and the Pear Advisory Committee. They all worked together with the State, County, local citizens and environmental volunteers to make this a reality.

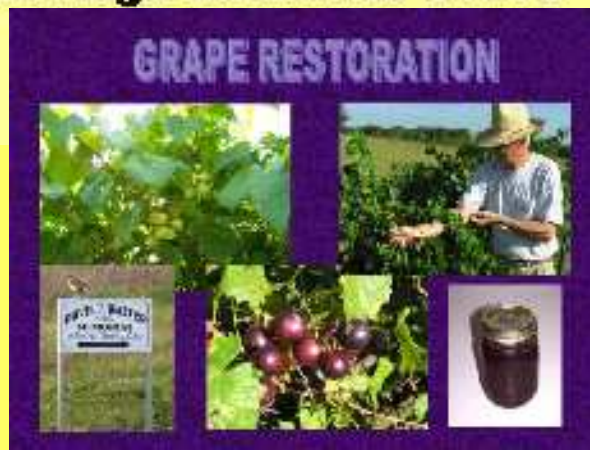
CURRENT & COMPLETED *Pear Association* PROJECTS

- Creation and maintenance of 1.5 mile river-trail
- Restoration of Woodlands and Wetlands
- Creation of Scrub-Sandhill habitat for endangered bird, plant and animal species with demonstration gardens
- Xeriscape Garden (drought tolerant)
- Butterfly Garden
- Meadow Restoration
- Nature, Science Center
- Grape propagation & restoration
- Community Vegetable Gardens
- Bluebird Trail & bird monitoring
- Heritage Memorial Grove

WETLAND RESTORATION



Mary Remer, Peg Urban and George Wolfe, Orville Walter and Peg Lindsay, Jane Weeden and Mary Remer planting baby Pine trees along Rivertrail edge. You should see them now!



Peg Lindsay and Peg Urban planting Sand Live Oaks along road by Memorial Grove. They are all grown up!

XERISCAPE GARDEN

LCWA "Drop by Drop"
Grant received by
PEAR Association 2003



Orville Walter and Parks
Director Bob Stevens

Gary Salzman, Pear Association President
for many years, with Peg and Peg



By Gene Bouley

50 Acre Scrub/Sandhill Restoration



burn



Potters ...



Barb Grigg, our own Botanist

Ron Plakke and Peg Urban, scrub restoration assistant



Planters



TEAM EFFORT



Heavy equipment operator Hal Urban



High tech watering system



Eastern Towhees took up residence

Butterfly Pavilion/Demonstration Gardens



2004



2006 Tuesday Morning Volunteers



We were honored to receive this Award of Excellence for Ecosystem Restoration from FNPS



Tuesday Morning watering bottle lol



Lynn, Barb and Tony 2020



2022-Still going on Tuesday mornings -Russ Sass, Greg Drawbaugh, Carol Duquay, Trevor Honey, (not pictured-Peg Urban and Lynn)



BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Butterfly Garden-Central Florida Women's Club...



Dryland
Native Plant
Butterfly Garden
Developed and Maintained
by
Central Florida Woman's Club
2005



Winter maintenance supervisor



BLUEBIRD TRAIL



Bob Putman and Scouts



The TREES, the BIRDS and the BEES at PEAR PARK. NATIVE PLANT WALK at 9am to see and learn about the best small trees and shrubs for Florida conditions, and for wild-life. NATIVE PLANT SALES all morning. NATURE CENTER OPEN HOUSE. SATURDAY APRIL 27th, 9am-12p



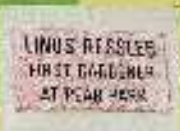
Peter's Meadow

HERITAGE MEMORIAL GROVE

- Honoring loved ones by planting a tree in their memory



Ilene Nichols



Lynn, volunteer brick installer for memorial trees



Annual Native Plant Sales



Hal's Sandhill Plot Restoration

In 2018 and 2019, the Pear Association as a group, and many Pear volunteers, earned the Presidential Volunteer Service Award for achieving over 10,000 hours of service each year. This was a product of the leadership and planning of the Scrub Restoration by Dr Ron Plakke.



Gary Salzman, Pear Association President, accepts the award on behalf of the Pear Association from Commissioner Cadwell



Sally Schulte, Peg Urban, Bernie Yokel, Nancy Griebel, Ron Plakke, Ed Mohberg, Lynn, Peg Lindsay, Mary Remer, Ed Schlachtenhaufen, Linda Ballard, Jean Morse, Bob Putman, Jane Weeden, Irene, Gary Salzman kneeling



Ron and Gary

Volunteers



Tony Grigg

2021 Bob Putman, Mary and Budd Remer, Greg Drawbaugh, Hal Urban, Jean Morse, Peg Lindsay, Russ Sass, Trevor Honey, Janet Babcock. Front-Barb Grigg

2003



Bob and Larry



2009 Scrub/Sandhill volunteers-Ron Plakke, Ed Mohberg, Jean Morse, Sally Schulte, Lynn, Barb Grigg, Guy Konkle, Mary Remer Jane Weeden, Nancy Greibel, Carol Duguay, Tony Grigg, Bobbi Richards, Peg Urban, Barb Plakke



Hal Urban "cleared the way" for restoration plantings



A Hal Urban, PEAK Park with Peg & Peg And the good-looking PEAK volunteers have cleared the way for restoration plantings. The tractor was used to clear the way for the restoration plantings. The tractor was used to clear the way for the restoration plantings. The tractor was used to clear the way for the restoration plantings.



Bobbi Richards, Peg Urban, Barb Plakke

THANK YOU BEAR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUR IDEAS, INSPIRATION, ENERGY & SUPPORT OF THE MANY CONSERVATION, RECREATION, RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN AT PEAK PARK THROUGH THE YEARS. YOUR COMMITMENTS HAVE IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CITIZENS & VISITORS ALIKE & STAND AS AN EXAMPLE TO OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS. LAST COUNTY IS GRATEFUL FOR YOUR DEDICATION & FRIENDSHIP.



Moving along in the 2000s, many projects were already underway: active parks, more trails and community recreation facilities were developed.



In 2002, a large 26-member committee representing all aspects of life in Lake County was named. The committee was to work for just six months and then report to the County Commission, the Environmental Land Management and Acquisition Study Committee, ELMASC. This committee recommended proceeding with public land acquisition to preserve special lands around the county.

In 2003, upon that advice, the commissioners reduced the size of that committee to nine and formed the Public Land Acquisition Advisory Council, PLAAC. Several ELMASC committee members continued on the PLAAC. By 2004, the people of Lake County had the chance to voice their opinion and the Public Lands Referendum was approved by 73%. It provided for up to \$36 million in bonds to be paid off over 20 years to buy land. PLAAC proceeded to identify target land over the next few years.



PLAAC worked diligently to find and propose for purchase, a wonderful assortment of conservation land, all from willing sellers and all meeting the 13-item list of “criteria for purchase”. Today, the people of Lake County own the Ellis Acres Reserve, Lake May Reserve, Neighborhood Lakes Trail and Trailhead, The Pasture Reserve and Pine Meadows Conservation Area.

PLAAC Finds Conservation Lands throughout Lake County for the Public Lands Management Program



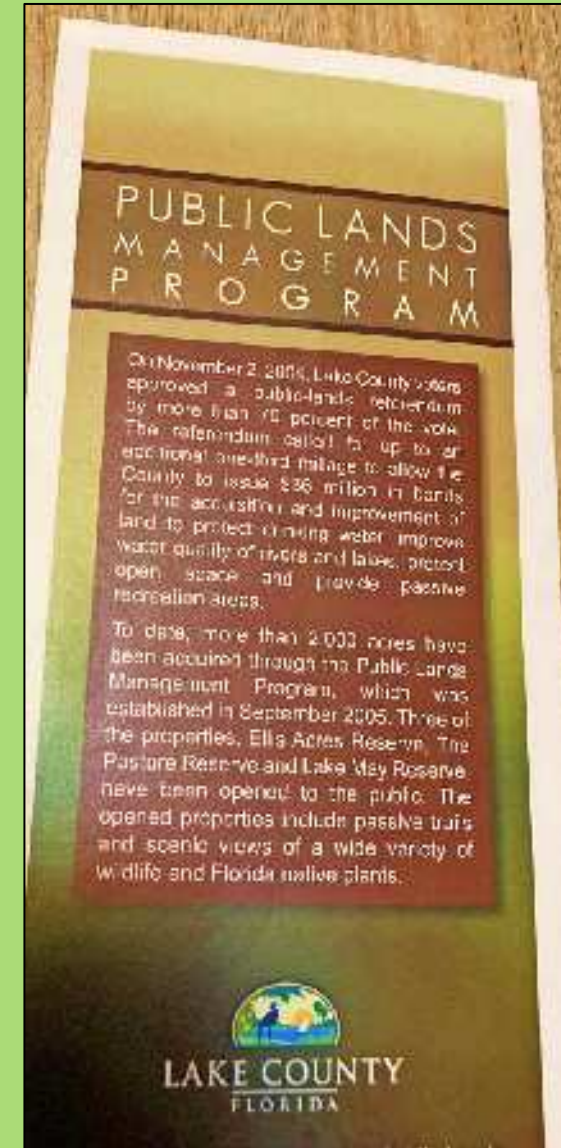
Lake May Preserve



The Pasture



Management with controlled burns



On November 2, 2005, Lake County voters approved a public-lands referendum by more than 70 percent of the vote. The referendum called for up to an additional one-third package to allow the County to issue \$36 million in bonds for the acquisition and improvement of land to protect drinking water, improve water quality of rivers and lakes, protect open space and provide passive recreation areas.

To date, more than 2,000 acres have been acquired through the Public Lands Management Program, which was established in September 2005. Three of the properties, Ellis Acres Reserve, The Pasture Reserve and Lake May Reserve have been opened to the public. The opened properties include passive trails and scenic views of a wide variety of wildlife and Florida native plants.



2000s Parks and Recreation Facilities were Developed



Gallus Quigley and Commissioner Cadwell at Pear Park



Patricia, Nadine, Joan, Gallus, Mary, Linda at Pear Park



Commissioners Conner and Cadwell at dedication of Wildlife Viewing Post



Cute Hognose Snake

2003 Ferndale Preserve

Meanwhile, over on the east side of Lake County and near Lake Apopka, a small group of activists, including Greg Gensheimer, a PLAAC member, were advocating the purchase of land overlooking Lake Apopka on the west shore, that is now known as the Ferndale Preserve.



Greg Gensheimer



2014 Green Mountain Scenic Overlook and Lake Apopka North Shore Loop Trail

At the same time, Glenn Burns was working with SJRWMD staff who had been working on the pesticide cleanup of the Lake Apopka North shore project, which was nearing completion. These folks, interested in the north Lake Apopka Trail, were joined by bicycle enthusiasts, Audubon birding folks and residents from both Lake and Orange Counties. Over the next several years, this group also worked to create the Green Mountain Scenic Overlook, Byway (GMSB), and Lake Apopka Loop Trail.



Greg Gensheimer



Dedication of Green Mountain Scenic Overlook

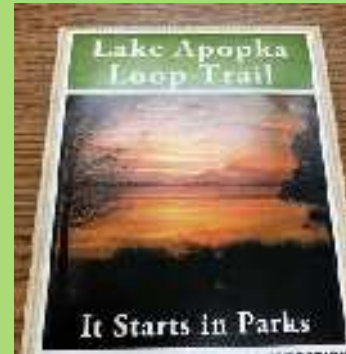
Lake Apopka North Shore Loop Trail from Green Mountain Scenic Overlook to Magnolia Park



Dedication of Lake Apopka Loop Trail with Commissioners Campione, Cadwell and Parks



First group of bikers to use the trail



Clay Island section



We wrap up with the Lake Beautyberry (BB) Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, founded in 2000. At only 22 years old, a mere youngster compared with some of these organizations, shown previously.

The Mission of the Florida Native Plant Society is to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida...

Founded by Nadine Foley



First Outreach at Mount Dora 11-5-2000



Top: Nadine Foley, Barb Grigg. Bottom: Dick Jackson, Dick Henley, Barb and Tony Grigg, Jean Daubenmire

BB Volunteers



The Daubenmires receive the Green Palmetto Award at the Lake County Botanical Society meeting on July 13, 2011. Pictured with Jean are Bob Finley, Chapter President, and Jackie Foley, Chapter Director.

2001 Green Palmetto-Award for Science

Jean Daubenmire

by Jackie Foley, Lake County Botanical Society

Jean Daubenmire earned her Master of Science Degree in Botany at the University of Idaho. She was one of Southeast Florida's first and awarded him in field work and co-authored many papers in plant ecology for the next half century. "You can't always get your side in the field." Their book, *Some Vegetation of Eastern Washington and Western Idaho* (1966) is frequently cited by botanists and is still in print. Jean was a faculty member at the University of Idaho for ten years and for 20 years at Washington State University. When Retired from Washington State University in 1973, the Daubenmires moved to Lake County, Florida. Not only did she still in retirement, the Daubenmire interest in botany in Florida began. I first met Jean when she and her name on the first of many visits to the University of South Florida (USF) to verify the identification of the numerous plants they had collected in Lake County. Many of their specimens are now in the herbaria at USF and the University of Florida and were very useful for the Lake County. Their visits were always welcomed.

Volunteers at Fair Bluff Preserve, an 1,800-acre site about three miles from Leesburg and owned by the Lake County Water Authority, saw the Daubenmire Bill, Jean and Ret did the initial plant survey for the preserve and helped by our the approximately four miles trail located in their honor.

Jean also has been very active in the Master Gardeners. She helped establish Discovery Gardens at Lake County Horticultural Learning Center located at Tavares. Discovery Garden is a 3.5 acre site made up of 19 theme gardens developed as a joint effort of Lake County Board of Commissioners, University of Florida County Extension Service, Friends of the Horticultural Learning Center, and the Master Gardeners of Lake County. Each theme garden demonstrates how-home owners can obtain the type of landscape they wish for their own yards.

Jean Daubenmire is well deserving of this award for her many contributions to ecology globally and for her past 25 years of dedicated study of Florida native plants.

Jean's husband, Richard Daubenmire, was a pioneer in plant ecology whose ideas were overlooked until after he passed away in 1976 for some time back with respect. He had a collection of 30-40 other herbaria in Alton, Plymouth in 1975.



Wendy Poag, Naturalist and BB Chapter Representative, FNPS



2012 Barb Grigg, our chapter botanist and plant propagator, Receives a Green Palmetto Award from the Florida Native Plant Society. She was unable to attend the Conference to receive it.

BB Outreach



Nadine's excellent BB display, complete with native plant bouquets from her yard



BB and Ovas side by side. Nadine, Mary, Lavon and Linda



2013 Wings and Wildflowers



2009 Marjorie and Yvonne Rice at a Pear Native Plant Sale



Neta Villalobos-Bell, current BB President at 2022 Conservation Symposium



2012 Mary Remer and Peg Urban, representing BB Chapter, help to plant a native plant garden at Clermont Elementary School



Discovery Garden Work Days at Beautyberry Chapter's Native Plant Garden

Lavon Continues to coordinate this on the First Tuesday of every month



Discovery Gardens was formed by volunteers who also did fundraising for the Horticultural Learning Center. LCWA created and donated the wetland feature and platform



Discovery Gardens Work Day
by Nadine Foley, Lavon Silvernell, Dorothy Park



2006 installing new pathways



Longtime BB volunteers, Freda Betts, Dennis and Joyce Grey



2014 Dedication Day Peg Urban, Mary Remer, Ron Plakke, Barb and Tony Grigg, Lavon Silvernell, Patricia Burgos

2010 Beautyberry 10th Anniversary



4 past Beautyberry Presidents, Lavon Silvernell, Yvonne Rice, Pat Burgos, Nadine Foley



Mary Anderson, Dorothy Clark, Lavon Silvernell



Lavon, conservation warrior



Back-Nadine Foley, Peg Lindsay, John Pospisil. Front-Lavon Silvernell, Jim Lobb, Joan Bryant, Mary Davis

Declaration of
Annual
Native Plant
Month in
Lake County
September
13, 2016



Former BB member, John Pospisil, spearheaded the formation of a new FNPS chapter in south Lake County

BB Field Trips and Programs



Lavon and Barb Plant Sleuths



Ginny Stibolt Program at Tavares Extension Office



John Benton former BB president at the Carr cabin

2004-Patricia Burgos leads BB at Sawgrass Preserve, LCWA



Serious Peg

Do we look at plants or birds?



Peg Urban's
yard

**So, Plant Natives and, Yes,
we Love Our Trees!!**



Peg Lindsay,
professional
tree hugger

Just check for poison ivy first!

But Wait! We cannot end this program without acknowledging our own longtime Conservation Champion, and Friend, Nadine Foley!!

She is always praising and encouraging others, so now it's our chance to return the favor. Nadine has been fighting for conservation in Lake County for over half a century, starting in 1964 when she joined OVAS. Since then, she has been involved in numerous environmental and conservation committees, both on the local and state levels.



Nadine has been very passionate about preserving the natural areas that Lake County has been blessed with.

We know that it's Nadine's fervent hope that, those who follow in her footsteps, and those of many others, will have that same zeal and passion to accomplish great things for Lake County's "Real Florida, Real Close"

And, maybe with any luck, when she decides to step back and slow down a little, she will still agree to compile her excellent Beautyberry newsletter that we all enjoy reading so much.

We hope you enjoy this photo collage and list of accomplishments by Nadine...



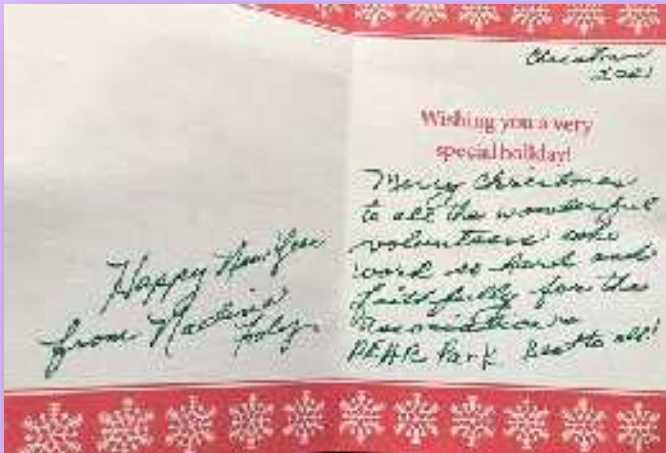
A real go-getter!



...but she stops to smell the Wild Plum blossoms...



...and create our excellent BB Newsletter...



...always takes time to praise and encourage others...



...and to eat!



...she has gone above and beyond...

Committees and Organizations that Nadine was involved with...

1960s-1980s

- Lake County Conservation Committee (LCCC)
- Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society (OVAS)
- Lake County Pollution Control Board (LCPCB)
- TLNC Founding Committee



1990 -

- LCCC
- OVAS
- Environmental Protection Advisory Board (EPAB)
- Lake County Tomorrow Visioning Process
- Lake Soil and Water Conservation District (LSWCD) President and volunteer
- Pear Advisory Committee
- Umatilla 4H Club and Board
- TLNC President and volunteer

2000s

- Founded Lake Beautyberry Chapter, FNPS 2000
- Environmental Land Management
- Environmental Land Management and Acquisition Study Committee (ELMASC)
- Public Land Acquisition Advisory Council (PLAAC)
- Local Planning Agency (LPA) for 6 years



Community Service Awards from Lake County, and Green Palmetto Award from FNPS



Awards for service with LPA(6 years) and PLAAC

Nadine Foley honored for 11 years of service on the Lake Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors

It was a Board meeting scheduled like any other month when Nadine Foley walked in on December 8, 2010 and was greeted by a celebration of current and past Board members, staff, and guests who were there to honor her for eleven years of dedicated service on the Board of Supervisors.

Peggy Reiffner, Board Supervisor, addressed the group with words of appreciation for Nadine's passion and commitment to conservation. She stated, "Nadine is a true inspiration to others."

Nadine Foley was appointed to Seat #1 in August 1999 and completed her term January 2011.



Nadine Foley was nominated by many in the Lake Beautyberry chapter. Her years of service to the Florida Native Plant Society include chapter leadership in many roles including President, outreach event organization and most importantly - an active person in local conservation issues, bringing action items to complete to the chapter and making a difference in the Lake County community.





2010-Gift of a tree and marker, at Pear Park, from a grateful Pear Association for "Conservationist of the Decade" that she was awarded with by OVAS



Silver River State
Park 2021

**Thank You Nadine!! You are really are
Lake County's Conservationist of
the Half Century!!! Plus!**

First Annual Lake County, FL Conservation Symposium

April 30, 2022

DAILY COMMERCIAL

EUSTIS

Trout Lake Nature Center leads conversation about growth, water, conservation at symposium

Paul Ryan For the Daily Commercial

Published 9:35 p.m. ET May 1, 2022

EUSTIS — Trout Lake Nature Center brought area environmentalists together Saturday for a conservation symposium to explore ways to create a better future for Lake County's green spaces and waterways.

The event saw representatives from 15 groups that independently tackle various local environmental issues to discuss current challenges and find ways to work together. Supporters of state parks, the Audubon Society and nature councils were joined by groups less well known for their conservation efforts, such as the Tri-City branch of the NAACP and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

These disparate groups have found many areas of common interest, and that environmental causes in particular can link everyone in often surprising ways.



HOST GROUPS

- All About the Ballots
- Aquatic Preserve Alliance of Central FL
- Citizens for the Preservation of Rural
- FNPS Beautyberry Chapter
- FNPS Passionflower Chapter
- Friends of Lake Louisa State Park
- Friends of the Seminole State Forest
- Friends of the Wekiva River
- Lake County Conservation Council
- League of Environmental Educators in Florida
- Mount Dora Friends of the Environment
- NAACP Tri-City Florida Branch
- Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society
- Trout Lake Nature Center
- Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lake County

Beverly Ward, the event's keynote speaker, addressed that kind of unexpected interconnection. Ward is an anthropologist and former professor at the University of South Florida whose research focused on urban transportation and disadvantaged communities, but she addressed the event as a representative of Earthcare, a Quaker ministry.

Ward discussed environmental justice, which includes designing and enforcing rules while respecting and including disadvantaged communities — which often shoulder a disproportionate burden. Ward showed that Lake County grew twice as fast as the rest of Florida between 2010 and 2020, and that managing that growth — including roads, housing, pollution mitigation and green space — can use improvement.

"We don't always make good decisions on how we build, what we use to build and where we build," said Ward. "Are the people who live in the communities engaged in the process? Are they coming up with the solutions that they're going to have to live with? Quite often, we get a lot of top-down, heavy-handed decision-making rather than going to communities and saying 'What are the issues and how would you like to see them addressed?'"

The symposium also brought three area experts to discuss water and open space issues in Lake County: Ron Hart, former executive director of the Lake County Water Authority, Rick Ault of Keep Clermont Rural and University of Florida professor Mark Hofstetler.

Hart opened with a talk about improving the water quality in the Harris Chain of Lakes, and the effects of runoff and climate change on area waters. He said that increased heat and heavier draws on the aquifer result in shallower — and therefore less healthy — lakes and streams.

He also addressed House Bill 1105, the controversial move to change the Lake County Water Authority from an independent body with elected members to a group under the county commission, who would also appoint the board members. That bill, proposed by State Rep. Keith Trucnow, has passed the legislature and now awaits review from Gov. Ron DeSantis.



Dr. Beverly Ward



Ron Hart, former executive director of the Lake County Water Authority, speaking during a panel discussion on a session on agriculture hosted by The Florida Native Center in Leesville on Saturday, April 23, 2022. Also pictured from left are Rick Ault of Keep Clermont Rural, moderator Cassandra Brown of the Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District and University of Florida professor Mark Hofstetler. (KALL HYPEN / CORRESPONDENT) Paul Ryan / Correspondent

Hart was deeply concerned about the changes and suggested that new scheme could allow for abuses of power if the agency loses independence.

"There has been some very negative legislation that has been introduced to alter, impact the agency," said Hart. "I don't think this is necessarily good for Lake County nor is it good for conservation."

Rick Ault took issue with how growth has been handled, especially in South Lake. He said there is no formal consensus over the meaning of "open space" or "green space," and that developers easily find loopholes to define backyards or subdivision common areas in ways that allow for more even more houses.

Ault also pointed out the absurdity of new bike lanes on roads with no bike racks on parking areas.

"Where I live, Walmart in Clermont is surrounded by a road network that's all newer so it's all got bike lanes on it. They've got three or four big apartment complexes within a quarter mile. There is no bike rack in that store. Give people a way to not have to get into their car," said Ault.

Both Hart and Ault remarked that no politician will say they are against conservation, but it's up to the people to follow the voting records and see who actually stands up for the environment.

Mark Hofstetler addressed a similar issue, known as green washing, when builders and planners market their projects as environmentally sound but do little in the way of action to ensure those claims are well founded.

He emphasized that good planning was important, but without proper construction and management there can't be smart growth. For example, he said, there are incentives in place to create "no mow" retention ponds, which are allowed to act as small spots of wilderness with native vegetation. But if homeowners associations aren't properly informed and monitored, they will mow over the plants and destroy the environmental benefits.

"If you have the public involved, you have the building professionals involved and you have policy makers involved, that's when it works," he said.

That was a key takeaway for many – getting people more engaged can lead to better environmental outcomes. Susan Fetter, of the Lake County Conservation Council, said environmental organizations need to be attracting and educating people.

"Find something happening that touches you," she said. "Its hard to know all of the underlying things going on that make things the way they are, and the more you start learning you will find something to get excited about."

CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM
April 28, 2022

Program

- 11:00 - 11:30 Registration
- 11:30 - 12:00 Lunch and Welcome Remarks by Lake County Commissioner
- 12:00 - 12:30 Welcome Remarks by Mayor, County Commissioner, and Lake County Board of Commissioners
- 12:30 - 1:00 Lake County's 2022 Environmental Policy Update
- 1:00 - 1:30 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 1:30 - 2:00 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 2:00 - 2:30 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 2:30 - 3:00 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 3:00 - 3:30 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 3:30 - 4:00 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 4:00 - 4:30 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds
- 4:30 - 5:00 Panel Discussion: Environmental Issues in Lake County's Watersheds

Program subject to change without notice. For more information, please contact the Lake County Board of Commissioners.

Presenter Information

Ms. Ruth Ann...
Mr. ...
Ms. ...
Mr. ...
Dr. ...
Dr. ...




Artwork displayed at the Nature Center...



Quilt displayed at the Nature Center...

