

Along the WaterFront

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Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc.

August, 2017

Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association Inc. is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to the protection of Lake Santa Fe as designated by the State of Florida as an Outstanding Florida Water

Letter from our President

Greetings to all Lake Dwellers and Friends,

August is a time for summer fun, as well as the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers' **Annual Membership Meeting**. Please join us at our usual meeting place, **Trinity Episcopal** Parish Hall, 208 SR 26, Melrose, **August 11th from 7 to 9 p.m.** for our annual elections and a review of current issues of interest. Light refreshments will be served.

Our speaker this year is **Jim Gross**, Executive Director of the **Florida Defenders of the Environment**. After years as a top geologist at St. Johns Water Management District, Jim has an insider's knowledge of how water policy works in Florida. His talk, "**Water: Fact or Fiction?**", will inform us about the state of Florida's water, and about the agencies and politics that control this most basic resource.

As we dodge almost daily rain showers and rejoice in some of the highest water levels in years, some of us are also dealing with septic and standing water problems.....and mosquitoes! In searching for solutions to these problems, we must all take precautions that our actions do not affect our lake and neighbors in a negative way. After all, a healthy lake with clean water is a long-term goal we all share.

We hope you will read and enjoy your newsletter, as we bring you up to date on some of the many issues

your association is monitoring. Most of you, especially Bradford County residents, are aware of the proposed **400-site RV Park** seeking approval to develop 75 acres adjacent to the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area. We believe this site poses a direct threat to the Swamp and Little Lake Santa Fe, as well as the entire lake and Santa Fe rivershed. Working with the **Protect our Swamp and Lakes** group, a coalition of dedicated local residents who have spearheaded this effort, as well as legal council, Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association (SFLDA) is opposing the permit application. Please see related article on page 2 for more details.

Another issue of great concern is the **huge phosphate mine** being proposed on the New River, very close to the confluence with the Santa Fe River. You may wonder how this mine could have an impact on our area, but a project of this size has the potential to draw down and pollute aquifers and rivers, and to change our North Florida natural areas into an industrial wasteland. If you doubt the long range effects of mining, consider the devastation in Central Florida, as well as the low water levels in Keystone and other area lakes exacerbated by the local sand and mineral mines. Your association is working with Citizens Against Phosphate Mining, Our Santa Fe River, and legal council, to protect our part of Old Florida from the environmental devastation that is

phosphate mining. See more details on page 3.

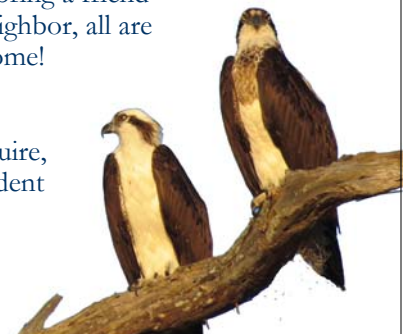
Throughout SFLDA's 40-year history, we have always been able to count on our members' support when challenges arise. The potential harm and degradation to our lake and area's natural resources that could result from either of these projects is an urgent call to action.

Your association needs your support as we work to find the legal council and scientific experts needed to counter these threats. Experience has shown that legal aid and expert witnesses are necessary when challenging the might of developers and corporations whose ultimate goals are profit, no matter the environmental consequences. **Please consider a generous donation** to help us mount a strong defense of our beloved Santa Fe Lakes, Swamp and River.

See you on August 11th. Come early to get more info and to visit with neighbors, also to view a special exhibit of art focusing on our lake and river.

And bring a friend or neighbor, all are welcome!

Jill
McGuire,
President



News from Florida LAKEWATCH

We continue to characterize our current trophic water quality as cautious. It's no secret that our counts are migrating to the eutrophic state (more nutrients), especially as we experience higher than normal levels. Our records reflect near normal lake levels (140-141 ft. above sea level) for most of 2016. Towards the end of 2016 and continuing into the spring of 2017, drought conditions persisted, which resulted in a 3 foot drop in lake



Photo courtesy of Alison Blakeslee

level. Starting in May, rain conditions finally evolved and are somewhat relentlessly continuing in June and July, returning lake levels to the 140 foot mark so far.

Unfortunately, during the recent

drought in April, Little Lake Santa Fe had tremendous algae blooms in one sample site taking chlorophyll values as high as 100 micrograms per liter when the long-term average is approximately 30. Along with the drought came extremely warm and calm spring weather making it ideal for algae growth. The decrease in water inputs also lowered the color of the lake, which was usually sufficient to moderate algae growth by decreasing light available for photosynthesis. Thus, with sufficient nutrients and perfect growing conditions, an algae bloom occurred. Good news is that with the ensuing rain events beginning in May, the bloom dissipated.

Given the current state of rising water conditions, we need to be more careful and responsible lake homeowners by not introducing fertilizers and pesticides to exacerbate our sensitive situation. It's also time to ensure our septic systems are fully functioning safely and efficiently. Please be on watch for exotic plants like torpedo grass, water lettuce and the like that can easily spread out of control in this water environment.

- Tom and Peggy Prevost
Your LAKEWATCH Volunteers

No RV Park! Movement....

Back in late April, one vigilant citizen went door to door passing out flyers concerning an upcoming Bradford County Zoning Meeting. Concerned citizens reacted to the irresponsible proposed development on sensitive wetlands adjacent to our precious Santa Fe Swamp.

Citizens in numbers of 80+ attended the Bradford zoning hearing and told the board (same men that sit as commissioners) that this development project made no sense for Bradford County Citizens. The special exception application was "turned down" by zoning board 4 to 1.

The Orlando developers had 30 days to appeal this decision which they did but concerned citizens were ready to object. We did NOT want 73 acres of sacred wetlands to be paved over for a 400 unit RV park. Many issues were not addressed by the Orlando group yet they felt that they were entitled to have their park no matter what the cost to our eco-system (RE: water).

Citizens organized and a campaign was born. We hired an attorney, had meetings, developed a Facebook page and the Orlando group withdrew their appeal.

The Orlando group (Lake Mary) will be back with a new plan and lots of lawyers and money.

We will be there on October 2nd to tell them: NO! Please e-mail Bradford County commissioners and tell them you do not want a 73-acre RV park on precious wetlands. We still have a few lawn signs if you want one. Money can be donated for the legal fight c/o

Middleton Law Office
303 SR 26 Melrose FL 32666

Call Stasia for details (786) 371-6689

Melrose Historic District Committee Update

As many of you know in June of 2016, the Putnam County Board of County Commissioners recognized the Melrose Historic District Committee as the "go to" resource for historic preservation in the Putnam County section of Melrose.

Our board members trudged through a lot of "process work" but ultimately we did prevail. In 2017, the committee added five historic structures to the Putnam County Historic Register:

- * Mossman Hall (old Free Church)

- * Mossman Home
- * Bonnie Mount
- * Melrose Woman's Club
- * Melrose Inn

(Mooring Funeral Home)

The work continues as we start the process of adding four more buildings to the Putnam Historic Register. We are the only committee of this kind in Putnam County making much of the work truly "pioneering" yet we carry on. Our goal is to protect the charming historic character of our little town.

Thank you for your support.

Massive Phosphate Mine Proposed in Bradford and Union Counties

HPS II Enterprises (a partnership of Hazen, Howard, Pritchett, and Shadd families) submitted a permit application proposing to mine 7,000 acres on both sides of the New River in Bradford and Union counties. The New River feeds directly into the Santa Fe River and many of our springs are located along this river. The land this enterprise has proposed to mine is directly above several aquifers including the main Floridan aquifer.

Waste products left behind can and do run into the ground water, at times rendering the local drinking water unfit for consumption. Parts of the proposed mine area are wetlands, which are supposed to be treated with respect, and not drained for convenience. Noxious chemicals are released into the air, causing a variety of chronic diseases. Wildlife and the ecosystems are never completely restored. Sinkholes have been a common issue arising after these

rules will apply to the proposed phosphate mine. Bradford County could do this too, if citizens speak up, to convince them we need it too!



"GypStack" by
Harvey Henkelmann

The proposed mine would:

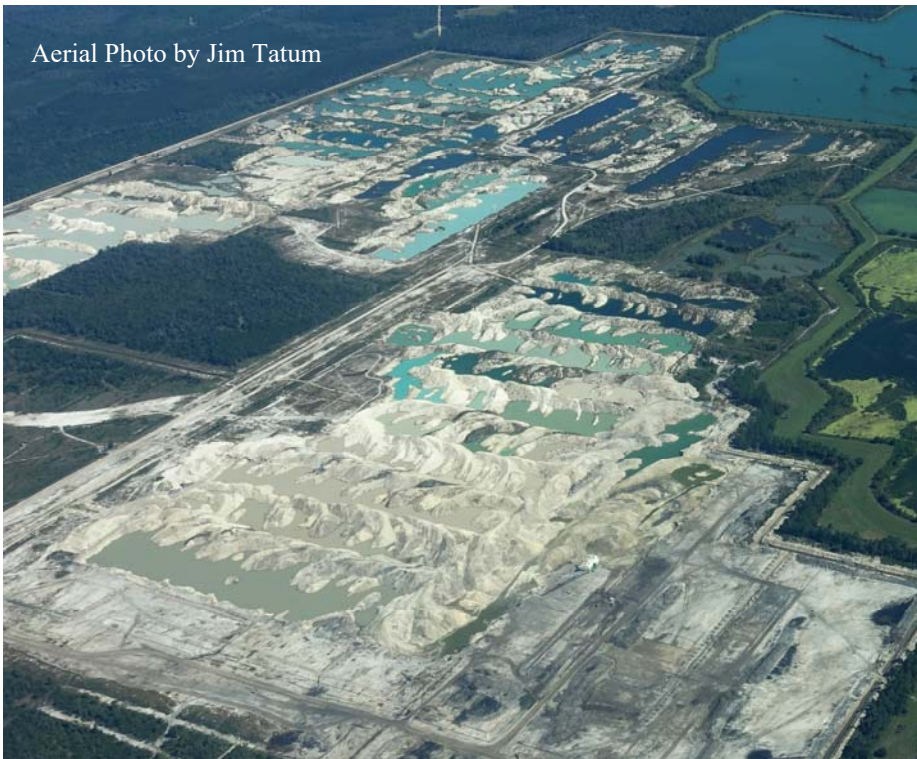
- run 20 hours/day, 6 days/week, destroying our peace and quiet
- create only about 15 full-time jobs in each county
- reduce property values, destroying wealth.

We could have real growth with modern industry and eco-tourism – but not with a mine like this. Mining in Florida has a long history of catastrophes that degrade water and air quality, degrade human health, and kill wildlife. Naturally occurring sediment is disturbed and replaced by artificial mounds of "spoil" which are eventually smoothed into sloping land and pools of waste water. The result of all this disruption is mainly on the hydrogeological characteristics, as the flow of water is substantially changed in the area.

Phosphate mining concentrates and then releases radon and other toxins into the air and water, harming current (and future) residents. HPS II plans to use a new experimental process that is not yet proven and needs major venture capital.

The information in this article was supplied by the Citizens Against Phosphate Mining. Their website

citizensagainstphosphatemin.org has more details, photos, and a link to their facebook page. Come early to talk to some members of this dedicated grassroots organization



Aerial Photo by Jim Tatum

Our waterways, land, ecosystems and public health are all at risk. Phosphate mining releases radioactive chemicals into the air, especially radon. Mining towns in Central Florida have increased rates of lung cancer, respiratory decline and various other health conditions that come from living in close proximity to these mines.

companies strip the land and abandon it.

The Bone Valley and the Peace River areas are prime examples of what happens to mining communities. Please educate yourselves!

Bradford and Union counties are engaged in updating Land Development Regulations. Union County has a mining moratorium in place so the new

From the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers mission statement:

"...the defense, protection, and preservation of lakes, swamps, wetlands, rivers, water recharge areas, and all natural resources and wildlife from ecological and environmental pollution, deterioration, damage, or exploitation."

Letter to the Editor from Marihelen Wheeler

If you have not traveled east toward Jacksonville lately, you may be as surprised as I was seeing the road work that is quickly transforming the land and Hwy 301 between Waldo and I-10. The lines are becoming startlingly clear as construction begins to connect the dots of gas pipelines, Department of Transportation expansions across virgin lands and private properties, expanded rail service from New Orleans to Jacksonville and the dredging of the St. Johns River to accommodate larger cargo ships. The imaginary lines drawn across the Florida map as our legislators open Florida for business are becoming alarmingly real to astonished locals as the construction actually begins.

A very small notice recently appeared in the back pages of the Gainesville Sun announcing that President Trump has approved \$17.5 million for the US Army Corps of Engineers' project to deepen the port of Jacksonville for cargo ships. This will enable blasting the bottom of the St. Johns River. Those of us who have been watching water management for the last several years are rightfully concerned that heavy metals that have been dumped into the river will be shot back into the flow from this blasting. As minimum flows and levels are lowered in rivers and streams feeding the St. Johns, the danger of metals, along with salt water intrusion, will further imperil our shrinking aquifer.

It's becoming clear that what is left of wild Florida in our northern communities is being transformed to accommodate big businesses. We endanger our way of life by not paying close enough attention until the damage is done. This is not entirely the fault of residents. Generally, they are unaware of corporate land abuse, because these businesses dodge

honest communication so that locals are not fully informed of the rights of all parties. Often information is misleading or not forthcoming to allow informed discussion or opposition. The prospect of jobs feeds hopes of a better life for locals when often the sad reality is that workers are brought in from outside the state, and even the country, to fill positions that were promised to job hopefuls. "Corporate bait and switch" is not the way we do business locally and so some are often duped into agreements that leave our local economies at a great disadvantage.

We need to be diligent. We need to keep our eyes and ears open, speak with our neighbors about what is happening in our area so that we are not caught off guard when things happen that effect our community and other parts of North Florida. We must make our voices heard regarding decisions that affect the places we call home and find ways to defend those places when necessary.



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Special Contribution by
Citizens Against Phosphate Mining

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Gainesville SUN File Photo

Fourth of July Boat Parade

The annual boat parade on the Fourth of July is a treasured tradition for passengers on adorned boats of all sizes, viewers on decorated docks, and swimming and flag-waving

spectators. The love of country, of our community, of the lake, and of nature is palpable and exuberant. As is the custom, true parade 'floats' gather in Melrose Bay and the south end of the big lake near the county boat ramp to queue up for an almost-single-file counterclockwise circumnavigation of both lakes that starts at 11:00 a.m. Last month's parade included nearly four dozen boats and some number of innertubes! Whether afloat or ashore, all received enthusiastic cheers.



Gainesville SUN File Photo

“...the defense, protection, and preservation of lakes, swamps, wetlands, rivers, water recharge areas, and all natural resources and wildlife from ecological and environmental pollution, deterioration, damage, or exploitation.”



To all friends of Lake Santa Fe and the Lake Region:

We are the fortunate beneficiaries of having an “Outstanding Florida Water” at our heart. The natural health of the Lake Santa Fe system and our area’s lakes and wetlands is critical to what makes our area special recreationally, financially, and socially.

Whether we thrive in a unique area community or closely-knit neighborhood, or fish, or ski, or appreciate natural beauty, or enjoy peaceful lifestyles, or trade with local friends and businesses - it all depends on the natural wonders at our core.

For almost forty years, the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association has been a diligent and tireless advocate for our area and for the protection of our natural systems.

By keeping you and your neighbors informed, there have been many successes over the years, including the conversion of sensitive lands to public ownership, and the protection of fragile areas from reckless development including strip mining and sewage treatment facilities at water’s edge.

However, the challenges to safeguarding our common interests are great: over-pumping of our aquifer, intensive development in our watershed, loss of natural habitat, harmful nutrient accumulations in our waters, misguided legislative initiatives, exotic plant invasion... the list is long and ever-growing! These challenges are magnified by the fact that there are as many governmental departments and regulatory agencies that impact our area as there are problems to solve.

Help us to keep you informed by sharing how to reach you, and please consider a tax-deductible contribution.

Your support helps safeguard our property values, preserve our recreational activities and distinctive lifestyles, and protect our shared natural treasures and the ‘Natural Gem of North Central Florida’.

Yes, I accept this invitation to support the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association

Please check: \$25 \$50 \$100 Additional contribution What I can contribute: \$ _____

I would like to become a New Member I am a member renewing my membership Contribution Only Add me to the mailing list

My /Our Interests: Political Action Social Water Quality Board Member Newsletter Website Please Contact me

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

*Please make your tax-deductible payment payable to SFLDA, Inc., and bring with you to the Annual Meeting, or mail to Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Assoc. P.O. Box 1268, Melrose, FL 32666 www.lakesantafe.org
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