

# Along the WaterFront

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Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc.

August, 2018

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 Lake Lovers and Friends,

It's almost the end of yet another summer, and once again time for our **ANNUAL MEETING** on **Friday, August 17th**, from 7 to 9 pm. Mark your calendars and plan to join us as we convene at our usual meeting space, the Yerkes' Parish Hall at the Episcopal Church in Melrose, when we will elect our Board of Directors for another year.

There are many issues affecting our area that will be on the agenda including: RV Park and Phosphate Mine permits and legal actions; status of the proposed Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) being developed for Lakes Santa Fe (LSF); continuing monitoring of LSF water quality; upcoming primary and mid-term elections in our area and state; bear and other wildlife encounters; and hurricanes and high water. Please read through our newsletter, where many of these issues are addressed in detail, then come and join the discussion, meet your neighbors, and get involved!

This is also the occasion for SFLDA to honor this year's recipient of the **Tom and Peggy Prevost Lake Stewardship Award**. Our honoree this year is **Fritzi Olson**, long-time lake resident and Executive Director of Current Problems, overseeing the

Adopt-a-River and Restore-a-Shore programs. Many of you will remember her as the founder and driving force behind the Santa Fe Lake Clean-Up and LakeFest, a fun event on Melrose Bay designed to learn about our lake environment and how to protect it. It was through these annual gatherings, as we removed trash and invasive exotic plants from our lakefronts, that Fritzi taught us the true meaning of Lake Stewardship. For many years Fritzi's passion for restoring and protecting Florida's waters extended far beyond the shores of Lake Santa Fe, and she received many awards for that work. Now it's our opportunity to honor her for her innovation and commitment to our beloved lake.

Our speaker for the evening will be **Charlie Houser, Director of Parks and Conservation Lands** for Alachua County, who will inform us about two very exciting projects involving LSF and our area.

- We will hear about some natural areas on LSF which are being evaluated as possible **conservation acquisitions**. These parcels were identified years ago, through Alachua County Forever and Florida Forever, as crucially important to the long term protection of LSF's water quality and overall ecological health. But the funding for such purchases dried up, and

active work on our projects was delayed. That situation has changed, and Mr. Houser will tell us about why there is reason for hope.

- Another project being developed is an upgrade to the Alachua County **Boat Ramp and Park** on SR26 just west of Melrose. Long in need of improvements, this local park will benefit from funding created by the Wild Spaces Public Places voter initiative. We'll get an overview of this project, which will appeal to all residents from our area, and hear of plans for public meetings in the fall to gather local input.

Thank you for speaking up for the protection of Lake Santa Fe and supporting the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association as your advocate on regional environmental issues. **Your membership dues and additional donations are especially needed at this time** for both legal and expert witness costs. The companies seeking permits for the RV Park and Phosphate Mine have teams of lawyers and experts to represent them. We must also be professionally represented to have a voice in protecting our vulnerable natural and water resources, and we need your help to do so!

- Jill McGuire, President

### IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES and INFORMATION

**August 28 Primary Election** for county and state offices! Typically about 25% of eligible voters turn out.

Some of our best candidates are eliminated in the primary elections, both locally and statewide!

**September 20 Candidates' Forum** Mossman Hall, 301 State Road 26, Melrose sponsored by Melrose Business and Community Assoc.

**November 6 Mid-term Election Day**

The non-partisan League of Women's Voters explains the complicated amendments on the ballot at <https://www.lwvfl.org/amendments/>

News from

## Florida LAKEWATCH

July 2018

We continue to characterize our current trophic water quality as cautious. Our water counts are continuing in the eutrophic state (more nutrients), especially as we continue to experience higher than normal levels. We reported last year that rain conditions in June and July brought lake levels up over 2 feet to the 140 foot mark, leaving little reserve for Hurricane Irma (September 11) to not inflict terrible damage on our properties as she dumped excessive rain with horrific wind and waves. Our boat-house floors and dock built 71 years ago, had never been inundated previously. The gauge that the Suwannee River Water Management District used for our lakes was destroyed in the storm. A new one was installed on March 28 but has not yet been calibrated. Lake levels receded from October, 2017 to March, 2018 by approximately 24 inches (not official), but began to rise again totaling approximately 8 inches (not official) beginning in April and continuing to current date. By our count, the lakes' level is approximately 7 inches higher now than it was preceding Irma.

Our Secchi disk depth readings followed the typical pattern of more visibility in decreasing water levels and less visibility in rising levels. Following Irma until March, 2018, we could see 5 feet in Melrose Bay and Lake Santa Fe and mid 3 to 4 feet in Little Santa Fe. With the onset of spring

and summer rains, visibility declined generally 1 to 2 feet in each area from May to July, with some improvement in June and July. In May, algae blooms were suspected and the chlorophyll lab counts spiked to 60 micrograms per liter in Little Santa Fe. This event was also reflected in Secchi readings of 2 feet. Lab results for June and July are not yet completed, but Secchi readings of 3+ feet in Little Santa Fe would suggest that the bloom has dissipated. This is consistent with the principle that rise in water level increases the color of the lakes which is usually sufficient to moderate algae growth by decreasing light available for photosynthesis.

In the summers of 2005 and 2006, we sampled our lake system for bacterial contamination. Fortunately, no human waste was detected in the E. coli samples. Recently, SFLDA urged Florida LAKEWATCH to consider re-sampling our system and Director Mark Hoyer graciously granted our request. He has set up a project to take separate sets of samples in each of 5 months beginning in May and concluding in September. He will then compile a report comparing the new data with the baselines established in 2005 and 2006.

- Tom and Peggy Prevost  
Your LAKEWATCH Volunteers

## RV Park Update

The Good News: Still No RV Park.

The Bad News: The Suwannee River Water Management District granted the developers their wastewater permit in July.

Meanwhile, we are still in the courts with our most recent filing of a writ of certiorari in the district court of appeals.

The No RV Park Movement and SFLDA have no problem with RV parks, rather it is this LOCATION that we find extremely problematic. Not only do our adjacent property owners and expert witnesses say that the 75 acres are wetlands that must be protected; the sheriff's department informed the citizens that the corner of 21B and SR 100 was the 3rd most deadly intersection in the county! Imagine that intersection with RV'ers in tow trying to move on/off SR 100? Scary!

Informed citizens even coordinated a meeting with developer Vincent Esson and the North Florida Land Trust. NFLT was interested in purchasing the property for conservation due to its strategic location in the Osceola to Ocala wildlife corridor, but the developer would not consider this option. So we will continue to fight in this election year, aiming to elect leaders who consider the protection of our precious water resources a TOP priority.

- Stasia Rudolph

### FLORIDA SPRINGS RESTORATION SUMMIT: November 2 - 4 in Ocala

The Florida Springs Council is hosting a two-day conference open to the public to report on the status of springs health in Florida and to develop a roadmap for springs restoration and protection. The desired outcome for the 2018 conference is a highly-informed audience of decision makers, scientists, advocates, and laypersons who can work together to recognize the threats to Florida's springs and follow through on implementing meaningful springs restoration and protection actions.

The mission of the Florida Springs Council is to ensure the restoration, preservation, and protection for future generations of Florida's springs and the Floridan Aquifer that sustains those springs and provides our drinking water. For more info, please visit [www.FloridaSpringsCouncil.org](http://www.FloridaSpringsCouncil.org) or <https://www.springsrestorationsummit.org/>

## Why is our lake stable?

Santa Fe Lake is largely sealed off from the principal aquifer, the Ocala limestone, by Pleistocene clayey sands and relatively impervious sediments of the Hawthorne formation. Sufficient rain water from the pine-palmetto flatlands, swamps, and marshes slowly drains and seeps into the lake to largely offset losses from evaporation, transpiration, and seepage even during drought periods. In addition to discharge by seepage in an eastward direction through surficial sands, overflow into the swamp north of the lake occurs at times of unusually high water. This has produced a wonderful wildlife, recreational, and environmental asset, recognized by the legislature as an "Outstanding Florida Water."

What is the **Ordinary High Water Line (OHWL)**?

In 1845, when Florida gained statehood, the federal government conveyed to Florida ownership of all

lands lying beneath the navigable waters in the state, up to the ordinary high water line (OHWL), which is 141' on Lake Santa Fe. The state Constitution provides that navigable waters in the state must be held in public trust for the people of Florida. Santa Fe meets this definition.

"Ordinary High Water Line" or "OHWL," for the regulatory purposes of Chapter 62-330, Florida Administrative Code, means that point on the slope or bank where the surface water from the water body ceases to exert a dominant influence on the character of the surrounding vegetation and soils. This line, the OHWL, defines the division between private riparian property rights and public "sovereign" state lands.

**Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL's)?**

MFL's, not to be confused with the OHWL, are required to be set by

Florida law (Chapter 373.042), and the water management districts or FDEP establish them. Minimum levels are set for lakes, wetlands and aquifers.

MFLs are used to determine the need for recovery, prevention, or implementing strategies to prevent flows or levels from falling below established MFLs, preventing significant harm, something the OHWL does not do.

Proposed Santa Fe MFL's have recently been determined by the Suwannee River Water Management District staff. Santa Fe Lake Dwellers has participated in this process, making sure that our lake is protected. We are currently waiting to evaluate the MFL Study Proposal when it returns from independent scientific peer review. The final proposed MFL will go before the Board for adoption sometime in 2019, probably late in the year.

- Terry Brant

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## Along the WaterFront

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P.O. Box 1268, Melrose, FL  
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**[www.lakesantafe.org](http://www.lakesantafe.org)**

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## Phosphate Mine Update

### Union County

The County Commissioners continue their orderly process of updating the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations (LDRs), modeled after Alachua County's, with a goal of finishing the process by the end of the year. The mining company, HPS II, considers Union County to be placing unreasonable road blocks

in their way, and slapped them with lawsuits demanding they accept a permit application now, and accusing them of violating the Sunshine Law because they left out one phone call in their records. Although expensive, these lawsuits are likely to be simply a waste of time and taxpayer money. There is a hearing scheduled for August 31st.

Citizens Against Phosphate Mining has filed a Notice of Violations of Federal Law against the Dept of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Water Management Districts (WMDs), and the Army Corp of Engineers because they have not stopped unpermitted activity in some specific areas of Union County. This is a detailed and meticulously researched documentation of wells drilled in the wrong place and wetlands drained for the wrong reasons. The filing alleges that the Shadd property known as



## Phosphate Mine Update continued from page 3

Fern Pond was unlawfully drained and altered so that wetlands protections would not apply to it when mining begins. Also, exploratory wells were drilled on property adjacent to potential mining on the Beasley Tract. This will become a lawsuit if the accusations remain unanswered. Citizens took this step because local WMDs were ready to close their cases on these two violations.

### Bradford County

Finally, some good scientific information! Dennis Price, a geologist who has worked for phosphate mines, a WMD, and DEP, wrote a report for the Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Group, evaluating the Bradford County permit application for HPS' mining activities. He finds that the standard dragline method of mining will not work at the New River location; that the aquifer recharge required of them through the proposed reclamation process will not be accomplished, causing flooding in wet times and drought during dry times; it will adversely affect the Floridan Aquifer, and in some areas, the mine will

extend deeper than the New River, inadvertently draining water away from the river.

The Bradford County Commission hired Onsite Environmental Consultants (OEC) to evaluate the HPS II permit application, and in June 2018 OEC met with county staff and HPS to begin their work. The public was specifically excluded from these meetings, although local activists have been granted permission to attend "some" meetings, just not the initial ones. Staff meetings are not subject to the Sunshine Law. HPS has agreed to pay for this evaluation, and was allowed to change the scope of the work plan. Citizens continue to push their county to stop shutting out the public, by rejecting the permit application and updating their regulations like Union County is doing.

With zero fanfare, HPS filed a new permit application in April, which the county accepted, and which substantially raises the stakes for us. Citizens now demand that Bradford County simply follow its own LDRs, which specify that mining permits be considered after they have been approved by DEP and all other agencies. HPS has not received the first agency permit, and continues to delay/ignore DEP's Requests for Additional Information, required by the permit process.

--Kate Ellison



You are invited to attend the  
**Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association's**

Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Assoc., Inc.  
 P.O. Box 1268 Melrose, FL 32666  
[www.lakesantafe.org](http://www.lakesantafe.org)

## Annual Meeting

7:00 to 900 pm Friday, August 17th

Trinity Parish Hall on S.R. 26, Melrose

The Program will feature

### Charlie Houser, Director

**Parks and Conservation Lands for Alachua County**  
 discussing the latest information on proposed conservation  
 acquisitions benefitting the lakes and potential improvements  
 to Alachua County's  
 Santa Fe Lake Park and Boat Ramp.



*Santa Fe  
 Lake Dwellers*  
 Association, Inc.

“...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.”



## Who Speaks for the Lake?

Down in South Florida, a state of emergency has been declared as the Army Corps of Engineers was forced to release billions of gallons of polluted water from Lake Okeechobee to ensure that the dikes surrounding the lake remain sound. A swarm of green algae was poured into the St. Lucie River running to the east coast and the Caloosahatchee River running to the west coast. Not only is the green goop fouling the largest lake in Florida as well as two major rivers, it will eventually do major damage to estuaries on both coasts. Thirty years ago, who could have imagined such a major environmental catastrophe in Florida? Certainly not the folks living on the coasts, hundreds of miles from Okeechobee. Probably not the people enjoying the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers. But now, this disaster is at their back doors.

This reality is thankfully far away from North Central Florida and our beautiful Lake Santa Fe. We are still able to enjoy one of the cleanest, finest lakes in the state. However, we cannot assume that it will stay a pristine Outstanding Florida Waterway in the future. It has been threatened in the past, and threats continue today.

What might Lake Santa Fe be like today if The Georgia Pacific Company had been allowed to mine peat from the Santa Fe Swamp in the early 1970's? How clean would our water be if Alachua County had put in a nearby landfill in the 1990's? Each time these threats to our lake arose, The Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association (SFLDA) successfully led the fights to protect the lake.

The SFLDA continues to be the leading advocate for Lake Santa Fe. We are currently taking legal action to try to stop a proposed 700-site recreational vehicle park that developers are trying to build in the wetlands of the Santa Fe Swamp. We have also allied our organization with other conservation organizations to oppose phosphate mining in Union and Bradford Counties. The RV park could have immediate negative effects on the lake, while phosphate mining would have dramatic and long term negative effects not only on our water, but to our entire quality of life in North Central Florida.

Who speaks for the lake? Santa Fe Lake Dwellers has and will continue to be the lake's greatest advocate. However, our only real power comes from the number of people we can rally to support the continued health of our lake. We need all of the people who appreciate and love Lake Santa Fe to join the organization so that we may continue to be successful advocates for the lake. In order to use our limited resources in the most efficient manner possible, we will have to limit the distribution of this newsletter to those who are active members of our organization.

Won't you please join our organization and attend our August 17 meeting so that we all can continue to enjoy the wonderful lifestyle that our precious lake provides us?

Lake Santa Fe needs you! Join or renew now!

- Wiley Dixon

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### 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 e-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](http://www.lakesantafe.org)*  
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