

# Along the WaterFront

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Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc.

February, 2021

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 and Happy 2021 to all Santa Fe Lake Lovers!

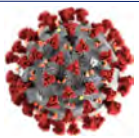
A whole year has passed since we at SFLDA were able to come together, sharing our annual chili supper and news of our lake area. We are hopeful that you and yours have made it through these incredibly difficult months in wellness, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. How lucky we are to have the healing powers of nature around us, when all else in our "normal" lives has been so challenging. Progress on controlling the virus is moving forward, but the danger is far from over. (see article below)

Although life seems to have come to a stop in so many ways, the threats to Lake Santa Fe have not. Those of you on our email list recently received an alert about a pending borrow pit permit in Bradford County near the lake. Your Association spoke with commissioners and officials before sending a letter of concern (see a copy of the letter on page 8) and board members were present at the meeting to make sure our concerns were heard and a part of the record - see Tom Germano's summary on page 3. Thanks to all of you who contacted the county commission to voice your opinion.

2020 brought some positive news for Lake Santa Fe in the form of a conservation acquisition we have long sought as a means to protect our water quality. In June the Alachua County Forever program closed on the Johnson/Black Lake property on the south end of the big lake, and plans for public access are underway. We will keep you posted on the timeline for that access, as well as continuing to advocate for further conservation projects that are being considered. Stay tuned!

We have tried to fill this newsletter with a variety of articles both informative and entertaining, bringing you the kind of news that we had hoped to share in person. Better days are ahead and we look forward to seeing you all at a meeting before too long.

Please stay safe and well, and continue to support your lake association! - Jill McGuire, President



## COVID-19 in our Communities

As we have headed into winter, our communities have been hit harder with COVID-19. We have had several deaths in the area, and others with what is now being termed "long COVID" (a/k/a "long-haulers" with debilitating problems which last for months or may result in a permanent deficit).

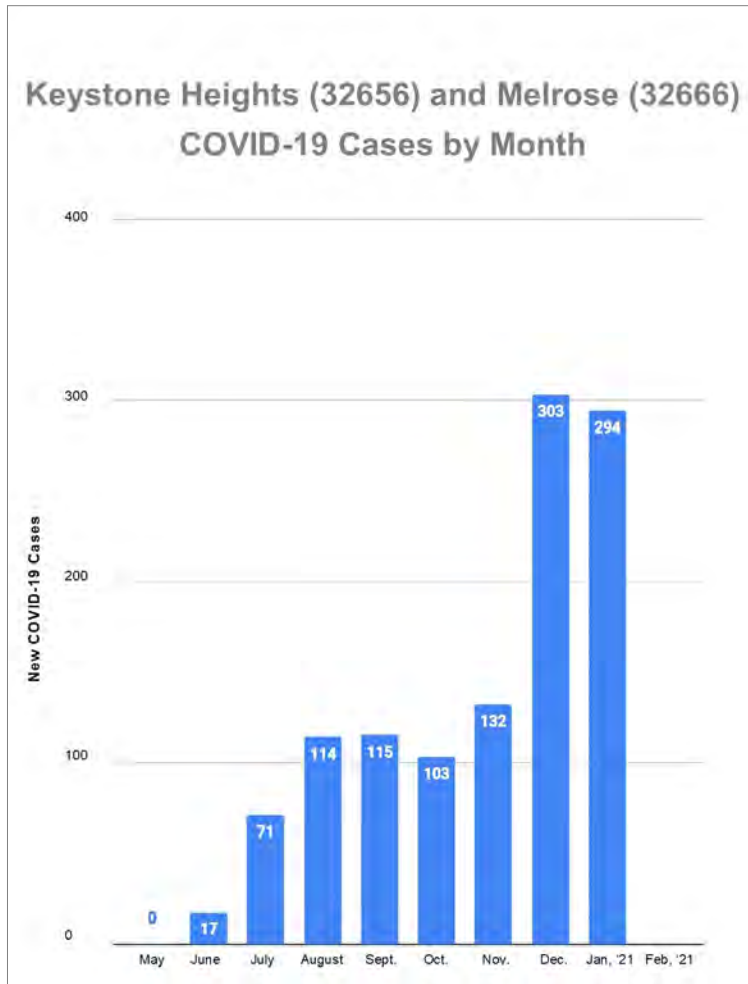
Melrose, Keystone Heights, and Earleton have witnessed an increase in the numbers of cases reported over these winter months.

The vaccine offers considerable hope. Each county has

its own system for vaccinating residents 65 years and over, and your county health department will provide a good source of information for how to register or get an appointment for the vaccine. In addition, one can be alert to other opportunities, such as the clinic held in Melrose the second week of February, and organized by the Melrose Center. As of February 3, 879 cases have been reported in Keystone Heights (32656), 273 in Melrose (32666), and 24 in Earleton (32631).



## COVID-19 in our Communities, continued from page 1



The vaccine is in short supply, so patience is needed. The Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines are very similar in terms of side effects and effectiveness. Other vaccines are likely to be approved and available in the coming months, some of which will be single dose.

The new variants are of concern. The UK, the South African, and the Brazilian variants have all been found in the United States in 2021 and are considered more contagious than the predominant strain circulating in the US in 2020. These variants are expected to spread, and more variants are expected to arise, particularly as the virus continues to circulate at relatively high levels in the population.

Our lake continues to provide a wonderful refuge for all of us as we go through this winter. Sailboats are sighted frequently, and there is renewed interest in a Sailing Club to be spearheaded by SFLDA. (See article in this newsletter). Kayaks and canoes, fishing boats, ski boats, pontoon boats and other boats are all making good use of the opportunities afforded by our lake. We are enjoying the birds, the turtles and all the wildlife of the lake. Occasional bears and bobcats have even been spotted (or captured on a trail camera).

Enjoy the lake and let's work together to reduce the spread of this virus in our community.

- Ruth Berkelman  
US Public Health Service (retired)



## SOS! Save Our School!

The Putnam County School Board has a proposal that would close Melrose Elementary at the end of the school year ([putnamschools.org/page/revitalize-pcsd-facilities](http://putnamschools.org/page/revitalize-pcsd-facilities)). The Friends of Melrose Elementary Arts and Sciences Council ([friendsofmes.com](http://friendsofmes.com)) is raising awareness and funds and pledges in the struggle to keep our community school open. They have put forward an alternate proposal: Expand the school from K-5th grade to include three classes of 6th graders as well, which should fix the under-utilization argument.

Be informed and speak out!

Email Superintendent Rick Surrency: [rsurrency@myputnamschools.org](mailto:rsurrency@myputnamschools.org). You can also email individual school board members to let them know how important Melrose Elementary and MYSA are to our community.

Important date:

The board expects to vote on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February.

School Board meeting on the 16th is at 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., 200 Reid Street in Palatka.

Streaming live at: [youtube.putnamschools.org](http://youtube.putnamschools.org)

The Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association announces support for ...

## Sailboat races and regattas on the lake.

There appears to be renewed interest in organizing sailing activities on the lake. This past fall, a few local sailors had discussions about establishing some group sailing activities. Several ideas were exchanged by e-mail and we are still looking for additional ideas and people interested in them.

For group races, we would need to pick a day and time. Thursdays at 4 p.m., Saturdays and/or Sundays at 2 p.m. were suggested as possibilities. The winds are often best in the mid-to late afternoon, but that is when thunderstorms are most likely during the summer. So we might have a variable schedule depending on the time of year and weather. Labor Day, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July might be good dates for a sailing Regatta. Maybe, while the parade is going on around the perimeter of the lake, we could have a race up and down the center of the lake through the pass to the far end of the little lake and back to see if we can do it faster than the power boats in the parade. First boat back to Melrose bay is the winner, sailboat or powerboat.

An alternative to requiring all of the boats to be at the starting line at the same point in time, we could have **an asynchronous race**, where any boat on any given day can sail to the starting line, let's say the line of three "No Wake Zone" signs at the entrance to Melrose Bay. Take a selfie of you and your boat crossing the starting line with your mobile phone. There will be a timestamp on that photo. Sail to the midpoint (the fishing buoy) and take a photo as you round the buoy. And then back to the Latchstring "No Wake Zone" signs, where are you shoot a selfie as you cross the finish line. The photos will record your starting and ending times. Submit your photos, and every month we can declare a winner from the fastest photos.

Alternatively, there is a free app for smartphones, called RaceQs, that was recommended by Howard Jelks. Sail the course, then upload results to a website where all can see a replay of the regatta. He also suggests **Fungattas**: All boats start on a line and sail to a known mark. When the first boat makes the mark and turns, all boats turn and race to the start/finish line, naturally handicapping the faster boats. There are two winners: 1) for first to the mark and 2) first to finish line. He would like to see Fungattas as a regular weekly event (e.g., Thursdays at 4 p.m. with a start line at fishing buoy near Melrose Bay and mark at the pass).

And we need a "Sailing Club" for youngsters of all ages; teaching sailing to beginners. We might use Melrose Bay Beach Park and boat ramp.

## Borrow Pit Special Exemption

by Tom Germano

Bradford County Commissioners approved (5-0) a special exemption to allow a borrow pit to be dug next to an existing pit at the corner of SE 8<sup>th</sup> Ave and SE 31<sup>st</sup> St. The owners of the property, Rayonier, requested the exemption on over 400 acres of property that runs along SR21B from Big Lake Santa Fe to an area past the Boat Ramp on Little Lake Santa Fe.

The Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, represented by Tom Germano, Nancy Germano and Gary Faircloth, attended the meeting held on January 19<sup>th</sup>. There were also several members of the community in attendance. Tom Germano explained the SFLDA concerns regarding local groundwater drawdowns, traffic, and future habitat degradation issues related to further development of the Rayonier property. Of particular concern was the extent of dewatering of the site, quality and fate of discharged waters, lack of any plans to measure turbidity and environmental compatibility of fill materials and final reclamation of the site.

It was determined that the existing pit would be used to dewater the new pit and particles would settle into the old pit before the water is discharged. The old pit will eventually be excavated using the new pit to settle the discharge. Turbidity measurements

will be taken at various intervals during the project and made available to the public.

It is still unclear why the entire 400+ acres needed to be exempt, but Randy Andrews, the County Director of Zoning, stated that only 14.7 acres would be affected. Any future projects or excavation would need to go back before the board for a new special permit.

The SFLDA will be watching this project closely.

## Bradford County Soil and Water Conservation District

by Tom Germano

After over a year of no activity, the former Supervisors of the Bradford County Soil and Water Conservation District all decided not to run again or have resigned. A new board took office on Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>. The new Supervisors are Tom Germano (Chair) District 1; Paul Still (Secretary-Treasurer) District 5; Janice Morton, District 2 and Amy Morie, District 3. There is one open Supervisor's position, if you or you know anyone that might be interested in joining the board, please contact Tom Germano @ 904-382-3890.

Soil and water conservation districts were created by the Florida legislature (Chapter 582, Florida Statutes, Section 582.02) to promote the efficient use of soil and water resources by protecting water quality and preventing floodwater and sediment damage.

Contact Joe Rush ([email: JoeRushMD@iCloud.com](mailto:JoeRushMD@iCloud.com)) for more information.

# Snowbirds of Lake Santa Fe

They arrive from the north, but these snowbirds are all wearing feathered flight suits: the true snowbirds.

If you've been on the big lake one crisp winter evening perhaps you've seen birds floating by the thousands, roosting in big rafts. They are here to avoid the severe winters of the north. But who are they, and where do they come from?



Small Raft of Gulls, Photo by Mark Staples

Through the Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways, they come from Canada and northern U.S., from prairie potholes and other habitats, and make their way to our lakes, rivers, marshes and ponds. Some find Lake Santa Fe and decide it's a good place to spend the winter.

Most are from the groups: ducks, gulls, grebes, and loons.

The majority of the huge rafts is made up of gulls: Bonaparte's Gulls, Laughing Gulls, Herring Gulls and, by a large margin, Ring-billed Gulls.

If you see 1000, 2000 or 3000 white-and-gray birds on the lake, probably 95% of them are Ring-billed Gulls. A black ring around their bill gives them their name.



Ring-Billed Gull, Photo by Mark Staples

These omnivores spend their days off the lake looking for any available source of nutrition, like fish, earthworms, rodents, garbage, and often can be found in grocery store and fast-food parking lots. They fly to Lake Santa Fe and nearby Newnan's Lake for their evening's rest or roost.

The petite Bonaparte's Gull has a black ear spot that contrasts with its white head. They are buoyant and seem to rest higher in the water than other gulls. Laughing Gulls are on the lake in small numbers; they, like the Herring Gulls, are mostly coastal gulls. Herring Gulls are large (25" long with a 58" wingspan) and few in number on our lake.

Forster's Terns look like small racy gulls, and are often seen hovering, then plunging headfirst when diving for fish near shore. They are streamlined and fork-tailed. They may also like to perch on your dock.

Ducks in large groups are most likely Ring-necked Ducks or Ruddy Ducks.

(Wood Ducks and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks aren't snowbirds; they summer and raise their young here.)

Ring-necked Ducks may seem inappropriately named, as the prominent ring bill is more visible, while the neck ring is not easily seen. They also have a "tall" head.

Small and chunky, Ruddy Ducks are one of the stiff-tailed duck species, the tail being long and often raised. Males have a large white cheek patch; females have dark line across their cheek.

Small groups of ducks (mostly diving for food) may be Bufflehead, Hooded Mergansers, or Red-breasted Mergansers. They are not on the lake in large numbers, but they are regulars every winter.

Male Hooded Mergansers have dark heads and sport a large white crest that can be raised; Red-breasted Mergansers have a large, bushy, reddish crest. Mergansers have thin bills with sawtooth edges all the better for catching and holding fish.

Buffleheads weigh less than a pound, smallest of N. American waterfowl. Look for a small duck with a dark head and white oval patch on side of its head.

We get two species of small grebes, Pied-billed and Horned. Some Pied-billed Grebes (aka "Helldivers") stay and nest here for the summer, but many are winter migrants.

All Horned Grebes are snowbirds and are usually seen in Little Lake Santa Fe.



Common Loon, Photo by Mark Staples

White neck and dark top of their head makes them easy to identify.

Finally, the loons – we rarely hear them make their iconic cry here, and we don't see many either, but the Common Loon is a regular visitor on Lake Santa Fe in winter. They are not found elsewhere regularly in inland Florida, but Lake Santa Fe has the depth of water they require. You may see them swimming in long lines, as if on parade.

Many of these migratory birds will not survive the annual migration. When they arrive, they are spent and must work hard to renourish and bulk up for fuel for the flight back north to breed. So, while charging into a raft of these birds and making them fly may be thrilling for us, it could deplete their energy stores and may cost some of these birds their very lives.



Hooded Mergansers, Photo by Sallie Carlock

Better to sit quietly in the flock and let these birds go about their business of living near you, experiencing the peace and tranquility that being part of nature provides.

Want to learn more? Binoculars and patience will help you see more. Want to learn more? **The Sibley Guide to Birds** is a comprehensive guide; David Sibley's **Guide to Birds of Eastern North America** is a smaller book;

[www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) is full of photos, sounds, and information.

- Laura Berkelman and Joyce King

# NOT ALL WATER SNAKES ARE POISONOUS!

Richard (Dick) Franz

Retired herpetologist, Florida Museum of Natural History, UF faculty, and snake hunter for 65 years.

So, what kinds of snakes could you potentially encounter around your homes in the Lake area? Part of the answer lies in the remnants of nature habitats available in your neighborhood. You can expect aquatic or semiaquatic snakes in or near your lake edge. They tend to congregate in the shallows, with muddy bottoms, fringing cypress trees, and patches of emergent and floating plants. These unique wetlands enable these aquatic specialists to forage on a palette of aquatic insects, crayfishes, frogs, tadpoles, fish, and sometimes carrion. Upslope from the water's edge, you are more likely to encounter more arid-adapted snakes, which are often associated with oak hammocks and dry pinelands.

Many of them, burrow in the soil, congregate under wood, and climb trees. But, just remember any of these snakes, from either group, can show up in your favorite flower beds and on your side-porch. Any day now, you could discover a banded water snake or a black racer lurking under your Easter lilies! That's the price we pay for living in rural Florida.

## LAKE AREA SNAKE FAUNA.

Florida has 48 native species of snakes, six of them are venomous. The venomous species includes the water moccasin, three kinds of rattlesnakes, copperhead, and coral snake). In the Lake Area, we have 10 aquatic (plus semi-aquatic) and 23 terrestrial species, of which five are potentially dangerous. Copperheads do not occur here, but are restricted to the

panhandle of the state. As I talk to people in the Melrose area about snakes, they often inquire about moccasins, many believing that they encountered them in Lake Santa Fe. This is a real possibility! But, upon further questioning, I find that what they probably saw were harmless banded water snakes. People often report that their

except maybe in Fall and early Spring (not sure why).

To identifying your aquatic friend, my suggestion is to compare it to the accompanying photographs! Go online for additional photographs. What differences do you see... First, both banded water



Harmless Banded water snake, photo courtesy of Ken Dodd

“moccasins” were aggressive, but in fact both harmless and venomous aquatic snakes can have feisty attitudes when disturbed.

## SO WHAT MAKES A WATERSNAKE DIFFERENT FROM A WATER MOCCASIN?

Non-venomous water snakes are members of the Family NATRICIDAE. The poisonous Cottonmouths, and their pit-viper relatives, in the Lake area belong to the Family VIPERIDAE (or vipers); the red-yellow-black coral snakes are very different and related to Neotropical elapids (Family ELAPIDAE). Coral snakes are a burrowing upland species, seldom found on the surface,

snakes and moccasins are banded.

Harmless water snakes have a more slender build; their heads, more rounded in profile; their eyes, with rounded pupils. Moccasins, in contrast, are very robust, having vertical pupils, large, more angular heads, and a pair of infrared-sensitive pits, one on each side of the snout. Both snakes have similar keeled dorsal body scales, giving them both a roughened, dull (never shiny) look. But, notice, though, the difference in the shapes, positions, and colors in their body bands. Moccasins also have a very pronounced brown stripe on each side of the head that is outlined with distinctive cream-colored lines. Juvenile moccasins look similar to the adults, except that their color patterns are bold. One peculiar trait of juvenile moccasins is their bright yellow tail-tip, appearing worm-like, that they wave around to lure frog prey.

## WANDERING BANDED WATERSNAKES.

A couple of years ago, sitting at the lake's



Harmless Banded water snake

## NOT ALL WATER SNAKES ARE POISONOUS!

Continued from page 5...

edge near the Melrose Bay swimming area, I watched a large banded water snake emerge from the lake water, move uphill. It crawled under my lawn chair and kept on going towards the parking area. Since then, Melanie and I have seen similar movements with banded water snakes at our house on Putnam Prairie. I, then, became curious...

Mel and I had seen banded water snakes around the house on numerous occasions. She and I were able to recognize individuals by their distinctive color patterns. At first, it didn't make sense to me that water-adapted snakes that feed on aquatic prey would deliberately spend time in the uplands. We watched a peculiarly colorful individual around the house over a several week period; it visited our compost piles, moved through the tortoise pen, then back again to the house. A couple of weeks later I saw this same snake moving back into Wall Lake.

So, what is causing these water snakes to move around in our yard, particularly in October and November. First, it is Fall. Animals are transitioning from Summer activities into Winter patterns. Most of the summer frog choruses had quit. The incessant clicking of local cricket frogs had ceased a little later than the rest in mid-September. The winter species, particularly leopard frogs, have not announced themselves yet out in the marsh.

Our dogs, Maya and Jenny, and I began checking out the yard for movement. As usual, the dogs find things to chase, squirrels, crows, and what appeared to be hopping crickets. Once that I focused on what has the dogs' attentions, I found that the hopping crickets suddenly morphed into small brown leaping frogs...Southern cricket frogs. They had apparently moved from their water's edge habitats into the uplands. Some of them had moved more than 500 feet to the top of our drive. At this point, it dawned on me... Duh! the banded water snakes were up in the yard eating cricket frogs, and maybe an occasional small southern toad or spadefoot

frog...a logical reason for the water snakes leaving their aqueous homes.

### SNAKE FACT CHECK.

Snakes are legless reptiles, related to lizards, turtles, crocodilians, dinosaurs, and birds. Fossil snakes first appeared during the Age of Reptiles, about 167 million years ago. Snakes are carnivorous, none eat plants. They lack external ear openings and eye



Venomous young Cottonmouth moccasin. Notice the brown eye band. - Photo courtesy of Ken Dodd

lids. Snakes periodically molt their external skins in order to grow. Snakes grow throughout their entire life times, slowing down after they mature. Larger native snake species may live 25 years or more in the wild. The snake's ecological contribution to ecosystems is its role as both a predator and potential prey in terrestrial and aquatic food webs and, therefore, an integral part of our natural world.

Sexes are separate. They have internal fertilization. Some species lay shelled eggs, while others give birth to live young. Snakes often engage in courting behaviors prior and during mating episodes. Male snakes have paired copulatory organs (each called a hemipenis). A male will protrude one of its penis-like hemipenis from his anal-vent and inserts it into the female's body through her anal-vent. The released sperm fertilizes the eggs in the oviduct of the female. The vent openings in both sexes are located on the undersides of their bodies, where they mark the end of the snake's body and the beginning of the tail. One other point... males have longer tails than females, probably allowing them more purchase during copulation.

## Functions of Your Septic Tank

Most people don't really like to talk about, or deal with, their septic tank as long as it works - out of sight out of mind. Yes it is a very unpleasant thing especially when you have problems. Surely the following information will help you to understand the importance our septic systems contribute to making our living conditions comfortable.

There are three things our homes need: electricity, water, and since we do not have city sewage in our area, septic systems. The following information will hopefully help keep you from having problems in the future with your Septic Tank.

Septic Tanks are buried sealed tanks, usually concrete or fiberglass, designed to hold wastewater long enough to allow the solids to settle out forming a sludge on the bottom that decomposes. Oil and grease float to the top and the liquid below that flows to the drain field. As the water flows into the drain field it percolates through the holes in the drain pipe and then slowly leaches back through the soil, filtering itself as it goes. The bacteria that is in the tank continues to break down the organic waste matter until it is slowly dissolved. It is important to be cautious when using bleach and house whole cleaners with abrasive chemicals as these will kill the bacteria in the tank. This can also cause your septic system to weaken causing the sludge to become thicker and block the drain pipe going to the drain field.

Periodic pumping of the septic tank approximately every 5 years is a good practice. The drain field should be located in a dry part of the property (A Permit should determine the location). A drain field that is not properly installed could probably cause a backup into your home or business. This of course would result in expensive repairs along with a new drain field being installed.

Please make sure your septic tank is installed with a Permit from the Health Dept. by a Licensed and Insured Contractor. The Health Dept. will send an Inspector who will sign off on the installation, giving you peace of mind knowing that you have a working system.

For maintenance you may wish to put a large box of baking soda in your refrigerator to absorb any odors and then after a month pour it down the sink drain, this helps dissolve grease buildup!

Less expensive than drain cleaners.

- Gary Faircloth,  
Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association  
Board Member

# Protecting Our Jewel

by Wiley Dixon

A quick internet search of Lake Santa Fe yields the following partial description:

Lake Santa Fe is a 5,850-acre lake that is fed by seepage

From the Florida Aquifer in Northeast Alachua County...

Lake Santa Fe is the third most stable of 120 lakes studied in Florida, as well as one of the clearest. It is designated by the State of Florida as an Outstanding Florida Water. It is supported by water flowing in at the southern extremity of the intermediate aquifer that outcrops in the lake bottom. Also, it is a rather deep example of a karstic lake, with several spots that are 30 feet or more.

While this rather clinical description of Lake Santa Fe may be accurate, those of us who enjoy the lake know it is so much more. It is very likely the best all-around lake in Florida, great for fishing, boating, skiing, swimming, birding and any other sport that can

be enjoyed on the water. Santa Fe is the home to a wide variety of water fowl that thrive on its shoreline. It supports a healthy fish population including game fish like bass, blue gill, and crappie (or as we Floridians call them, speckled perch). It is probably no exaggeration to say that the communities of Melrose and Earleton would not exist without Lake Santa Fe.

Santa Fe is often referred to as the "Jewel of North Central Florida". While it is a fitting moniker, it is a jewel that must be protected. Santa Fe has been threatened in the past by peat mining and landfills.

Probably the most immediate threat is over-development of areas around the lake.

The recent development of the large R.V. park immediately adjacent to the Santa Fe swamp will have detrimental effects on the lake

and water that flow from the swamp, i.e. the Santa Fe River.

Using money that we received from the dues and contributions that our members have provided over the years, Santa Fe Lake Dwellers hired environmental consultants and lawyers to try to stop the R.V. park from being developed. While we were able to delay the park for over two years, we ultimately lost the battle. Only time will tell how the R.V. park will impact the lake and surrounding areas.

Santa Fe Lake Dwellers will continue to do everything possible to protect our lake. To do that we need the financial resources and political clout that is provided by a large membership. Please help us protect Lake Santa Fe by joining or renewing your membership now.

Help us protect our "JEWEL"!

## Yes, I/we accept this invitation to support the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association in 2021

**Please check:**  \$35  \$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: \_\_\_\_\_

Address changes if any: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make your tax-deductible payment payable to SFLDA, Inc.,*

*or mail to Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, P.O. Box 1268, Melrose, FL 32666 [www.lakesantafe.org](http://www.lakesantafe.org)*

*The Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) organization and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

**Along the WaterFront** is a publication of the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc.

**February 2021 Newsletter contributors:** Laura Berkelman, Dick Franz, Wiley Dixon, Jill McGuire, Ruth Berkelman, Gary Faircloth, Joyce King, Tom Germano, Joe Rush, Jim Reid, Ken Dodd, Mark Staples, and Sallie Carlock.

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



Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc.  
Post Office Box 1268  
Melrose, Florida 32666-1268

See also:

## **"The Wader"**

Alachua County Water Resources  
Quarterly Newsletter  
published by  
Alachua County Environmental  
Protection Department

Please follow the link below to check out  
this informative resource and request to  
join their email list.

Community Newsletters  
(alachuacounty.us)

### **The Winter Edition**

discusses the following topics:

Winter Lawn Care  
Turf Swap Rebate Program  
"Driving" Water Awareness  
Zero Waste Week  
New UF/IFAS Extension Building in  
Newberry  
Upcoming Events

Contact Hollie Greer at  
hgreer@alachuacounty.us  
ACPED Water Resources

### **Open Letter To: The Bradford County Board of Commissioners**

The Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association (SFLDA) respectfully provides the following comments regarding the SU 20-04 (Rayonier Forest Resources LP) -Special Permits from Bradford County for "Fill Borrow or Borrow Pits" on 25+ acre tract in Bradford County.

This property is near 21B and across from homes on the northeast side of Big Lake Santa Fe. There is a potential threat to the water quantity and quality of Lake Santa Fe, an Outstanding Florida Water, from an expanding industrial site in the neighborhood. It's location, and the Rayonier parcel 06047-0-00000, is also close to the Hansen Preserve conservation property which protects our bird rookery just south of the Bradford County boat ramp. Much of the Rayonier property remains on the "wish list" of our existing Lake Santa Fe Florida Forever project, having been included for the very purpose of protecting our Outstanding Florida Water from harmful development. Unfortunately, the funding for Florida Forever was so drastically reduced in recent years, this property has not been purchased.

The SFLDA expresses concerns regarding local groundwater drawdowns, traffic, and future habitat degradation issues related to further development of the Rayonier property,

especially for parcel 06047-0-00000. Of particular concern is the extent of dewatering of the site, quality and fate of discharged waters, type and environmental compatibility of fill materials and final reclamation of the site. Due to the environmental significance of the property to Lake Santa Fe, the SFLDA would like to be informed of any future projects proposed for the parcel.

We request that Bradford County:

- 1) Limit the scope of the Special Permit to the acreage designated in the detailed plans for the expanded borrow pits, not for the entire 450+ acres as identified in SU 20-04 on page 8.
- 2) Follow the engineer's recommended condition (page 7) to periodically measure turbidity on the site. Schedule reports of turbidity measurements to Bradford County as oversight.
- 3) We request to be informed of permit compliance and operational activities related to this project.

Thanking you for your consideration and service,

The Board of Directors of the SFLDA

### **FWC Meetings on Black Crappie Management Plan**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is hosting a virtual meeting to gather stakeholder input on black crappie regulations in Lake Santa Fe as well as statewide. Tom Prevost, avid fisherman and Florida Lakewatch sampler for Lake Santa Fe, has agreed to attend as a key stakeholder and to provide info back to the SFLDA. The FWC meeting for Lake Santa Fe will begin at 6:00 p.m. on March 4, 2021. There will be several meetings across the state with each meeting focusing on state-wide opinions, as well as resource specific regulations. Go to <https://myfwc.com/crappiemanagement> for the full list of meetings. The meetings will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. In order to participate, each person will need a computer with Microsoft Teams installed, a camera, and internet access, OR a smartphone/tablet with the Microsoft Teams App downloaded. Although they have a limited number of spaces, if any avid crappie fishermen on Lake Santa Fe or nearby lakes are interested in providing input, please email [crappie@myfwc.com](mailto:crappie@myfwc.com), and you will receive a link to the meeting. FWC is also handing out crappie surveys during angler interviews on the lake this spring. If you would like to complete a survey instead of attending the virtual meeting or have any other questions, contact FWC Biologist Steve Beck at [Steven.Beck@myfwc.com](mailto:Steven.Beck@myfwc.com)