

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



Newsletter

www.calusalandtrust.org

December 2005

Special Annual Meeting Planned

By Bud House (283-3493)

The 2006 annual meeting of the Calusa Land Trust and Nature Preserve of Pine Island will be held at 1:00 PM on Sunday, January 15, 2006 at Fritts Park (5 miles north of Pine Island Center).

Besides presenting reports on land acquisitions, land management, canoe trips, and current projects plus electing Board members for the next two years, we will be celebrating our 30th anniversary – we were the first land trust to incorporate in the state of Florida.

As part of this celebration, we have invited all our past Directors to this meeting in order to recognize the contributions they made to this organization over the past 30 years.

At 2:00, immediately following the business meeting, we will have a delicious lunch prepared by J. D. Hollway, of St. James City Waterfront Restaurant fame. The food will be barbequed chicken and pork, baked beans, and cole slaw. Donations will be accepted and appreciated.

To round out this special day, we will adjourn to Jug Creek Marina in Bokeelia and hop aboard a pontoon boat for a short cruise to Calusa Island, the very first acquisition of the land trust. Since Hurricane Charley the vegetation out there has been struggling to come back to its original splendor, but despite this there is much to see and enjoy. We hope that everyone can come along. The cost for the boat ride will be \$5.00 per person.

During the business meeting we will hold elections for the board of directors. The nominating committee has proposed that the following board members be reelected for another two-year term: Alison Ackerman, Brenda Anderson, Harold Bruner, Brian Cotterill, Bill Spikowski, and Rubye Woodhead. Gene Tolman's term is also up but he will not be able to continue serving on the board; he will be sorely missed by all. The by-laws allow up to 15 members to serve on the board, so nominations will be accepted from the floor for this opening. There are eight board members who will continue to serve out their two-year terms during 2006. They are James "Alex" Alexander, Ed Chapin, Joan Culver, Norm Gowan, Bud House, Judy Ott, Donna Venesky, and Ron Wesorick.

Gifts of Real Estate

By Brenda Anderson (283-1878)

The Calusa Land Trust welcomes gifts of real estate. These can be either "preserve quality" lands to be preserved in their natural state, or other properties that you donate to us and we sell, with the proceeds used to preserve and protect other natural areas.

SOME GOOD REASONS TO DONATE YOUR REAL ESTATE TO CALUSA LAND TRUST:

- **To leave a legacy** — Your gift will ensure our natural world will be protected for future generations.
- **To eliminate management responsibilities** — By donating the property, you will no longer have to manage it, market it, or handle the sale of it.
- **To receive immediate tax savings** — By donating appreciated real estate that you have held for more than one year, you avoid the capital gains taxes you would pay if you sold the property. You can also take an income tax deduction for the property's full fair market value when making an outright gift. (Your charitable contribution deduction is limited to 30% of your adjusted gross income in the year of the gift, with the excess carried forward for up to 5 years.)
- **For future tax savings** — The property will be removed from your estate.

PURPOSE OF THE CALUSA LAND TRUST:

"... to acquire, hold, and manage environmentally sensitive lands, archaeological and historic sites, and other natural lands; to encourage education and research in the fields of conservation and preservation; to establish nature preserves or other protected areas to be used for scientific, educational, aesthetic, or passive recreational purposes; to cooperate with other entities having similar or related objectives; and to engage in any other activity relating to the furtherance of the foregoing objectives."

— *From the articles of incorporation
of the Calusa Land Trust (Article II)*

Trailhead Vista Acquisition

By Bill Spikowski (334-8866)

We dedicated our entire November newsletter to our latest land acquisition, an expansion of one of our flagship preserves, the St. James Creek Preserve.

We call this tract “Trailhead Vista” because it consists of the trailhead to the beautiful St. Jude Nature Trail plus 3,750 feet of frontage on Crestwell Court, Stabile Road, and Franzone Road that has always separated this preserve from public streets. The acquisition includes 18 lots in all, with approximately 20 acres of salt marsh, mangrove forest, and pine uplands.

Much of the long stretch of road frontage included in this purchase is smothered with Australian pine trees. Removal of these invasives will afford a beautiful vista overlooking a large portion of this magnificent preserve.

In the past, visitors to the St. Jude Nature Trail have had to use an easement to reach the trail. By owning the trailhead, we will be able to remove the invasive Brazilian peppers and replace them with native plants, extend the trail all the way to the road, post a nice sign, and have a proper entrance to the trail and the entire preserve. The St. Jude Nature Trail is our most visited property – a peaceful path dotted with memorial benches among the flora and fauna, ending with a boardwalk and observation deck onto St. James Creek.

The map below shows the St. James Creek Preserve and its proximity to St. James City.

We have made the initial payment of \$100,000 and have financed the remainder of the \$250,000 purchase price over twelve months. The fundraising campaign announced in the previous newsletter is off to a good start but we have a very long way to go to raise the funds to complete this purchase in the short time remaining. We are counting on an unprecedented outpouring of financial support from members and friends of the land trust to make this possible without hampering our ability to maintain our other preserves and remain alert for additional acquisitions. We are asking all who are able to make a special donation today to help in this endeavor.

Your contribution to this worthy cause is needed now - and is very much appreciated.



St. James Creek Preserve prior to Trailhead Vista acquisition

Ranger/Stewardship Report

by Ed Chapin (392-0090)

Hurricane Clean-Up: We are still working on the damage sustained to our preserves from Hurricanes Charley and Wilma. Most of the devastation from Charley's 145+mph winds was to our preserves in the Bokeelia area; the eye wall went directly across the Kreie and Calusa Island Preserves, with southeasterly winds devastating the red mangrove forest in particular. Wilma had hurricane-force winds from the north which did additional damage to Calusa Island and the Kreie Preserves. As mentioned in previous newsletters, we hired a contractor to help us with the clean-up because the job was way beyond our volunteers' capabilities. B&B Tree Service worked at Fritts Park, Calusa Canal Preserve, Picnic Island, and Calusa Island and they re-opened the canoe trail in Big Jim Creek as well. They also removed the collapsed dome structure debris on Calusa Island filling over two dumpsters. They also took out the invasive exotics on our 12 Cussell Drive lots which opened a beautiful new view of the high salt marsh that was blocked by the Australian pines. As you can imagine, this year has been the most expensive in our 30-year history for land stewardship costs.

Peter Ordway Mangrove Water Tours: The first Peter Ordway Water Tour was held in November. We went out and explored the Kreie Preserve and the Peter Ordway Tropical Hammock with 13 people in 11 boats. We found the red mangroves still quite damaged from Hurricane Charley, but they are beginning to show some signs of recovery. Perched on top of an old tree we saw a huge bald eagle's nest which looked intact, but the best part was spotting an immature eagle near by. Both are hopeful signs that the preserve is surviving.

More tours are planned, so check out the table below for the exact dates and places. These trips are very popular so reservations are required. I will send out notices to anyone on my e-mail list so let me know if you want your name added (Ecalusaed@aol.com). Or you can always page me at (239) 392-0090; just enter your phone number and I will call you back.

Work Parties: Work parties are not usually held in August because many people are on vacation. However, our president Bud House acquired 50 small native slash pines, so we got a group of six volunteers together and planted the trees at Fritts Park, Calusa Canal Preserve, Dobbs Preserve, and the St. Jude Nature Trail. On September 3, five volunteers worked to clear the St. Jude Nature Trail of downed trees and branches left from Wilma. Then on Saturday, October 1, we had a group of seven rangers who went out to Picnic Island and Back Bay Preserve. We were glad to find very little trash this time on Picnic Island. At Back Bay Preserve, we reopened the ridge trail along San Carlos Bay and removed lots of trash there – this is an area we had not visited for over two years. On October 3, we had a Ranger Council Meeting to set our agenda for the next 8 months and then on November 5 our volunteer rangers were back out at the St. Jude trail doing follow-up trail maintenance. On December 3 we again had a small group go to the Peter Ordway Tropical Hammock and do trail clearing and invasive exotic plant control. Most of the invasives there are melaleuca and we are finally getting them under control. It has been an incredible year what with all the hurricane problems we tackled on top of our regular maintenance responsibilities, but I am extremely happy with everything we have accomplished. All the volunteers that have come out and pitched in deserve the credit and I thank you all.

WORK PARTIES

Saturday, January 7	9 to 12	Big Jim Creek, Calusa Canal, and Fritts Park <i>(meet at Fritts Park)</i>
Saturday, February 4	9 to 12	Big Jim Creek and Fritts Park <i>(meet at Fritts Park)</i>
Saturday, March 4	9 to 12	Back Bay, Picnic Island, and Merwin Key <i>(meeting place will be announced via e-mail)</i>
Saturday, April 1	9 to 12	York/Coconut and Long Cut <i>(meet at Hopkins Point)</i>
Saturday, May 6	9 to 12	Dobbs, Eagle Preserve, and St. Jude Trail <i>(meet at St. Jude Trail)</i>
Saturday, June 3	9 to 12	Pine Island Flatwoods and Galt Preserve <i>(meet at Flatwoods Preserve)</i>

PETER ORDWAY CANOE TOURS

Sunday, January 22	Noon to 3:00	Big Jim Creek Preserve
Sunday, February 19	Noon to 3:00	York/Coconut and Long Cut Preserves
Saturday, March 18	9:00 to Noon	Underhill Creek Preserve
Saturday, April 22	Noon to 3:00	St. James Creek Preserve

I have an e-mail list of volunteer Rangers and on the week of each work party I send out reminder notices. If you want to be on that list, let me know.

Great Calusa Blueway: On November 13, the Lee County Board of Directors and the Department of Parks and Recreation held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Matlacha Park for the Great Calusa Blueway paddling trail. Calusa Land Trust was presented with a plaque honoring our efforts in the planning of the second phase of the trail. Our efforts were headed up by Director Brenda Anderson who worked with Lee County staff member Nancy McPhee to include six of our preserves into the Blueway system. They are Shell Cut at the west end of Calusa Island, Fritts Park as a point to launch canoes to Big Jim Creek, Big Jim Creek and Kreie Preserves, the Underhill Creek Preserve across from Tropical Point on the Cape Coral side of Matlacha Pass, the St. Jude Nature Trail and St. James Creek Preserve, and the Back Bay Preserve in St. James City. I know everyone joins me in thanking Brenda and Nancy for their hard work to establish this fantastic system of paddling trails of over 100 miles long! The Calusa Indians would be impressed. For more information you can go to www.greatcalusablueway.com or call the Lee County Parks and Recreation folks at (239) 461-7400.

Upcoming Rummage Sale

By Bud House (283-3493)

Our annual rummage sale will be held from 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM on Saturday, January 21, 2006. It will be at our usual spot, Fritts Park, 5 miles north of Pine Island Center. Items to be donated may be brought to the park from 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM on Friday, January 20. We are sorry but we cannot accept either microwaves or computers. If you would like to volunteer to help out, please call our Chairperson, Mrs. Shirley House, at 283-3493.

Membership Report

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

We currently have 837 members with 449 (54%) current in their dues. If there is an asterisk (*) following your name on the address label of this newsletter, your membership is past due. Please ignore this if you have just recently contributed because our records are about a month behind.

Remember you can choose to use your credit card (M/C or VISA) to make a donation if this is more convenient. Do not worry about your number getting into the wrong hands as we shred all records of card numbers after posting.

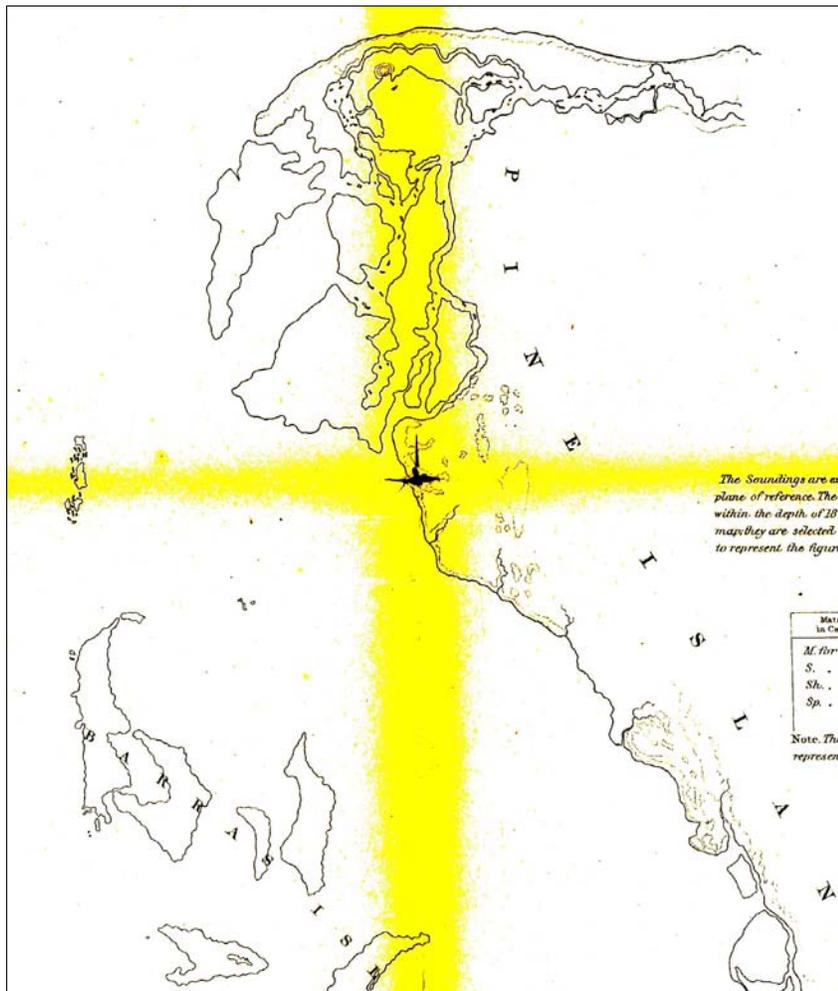
Fund Raising Projects

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

The 13th Annual Poker Run on the water, sponsored by the Pine Island Boat Club, took place on December 4th at the Double Nichol Pub in St. James City. Financial records are incomplete for now but the event was completely sold out! We will announce the details at the annual meeting.

The 8th Annual Rubber Duck Race will be held March 4th also at the Double Nichol Pub. Details to follow at our meeting and in our next newsletter.

Plank carvings are now all caught up! Future memorials will now be done at Fritts Park since the St. Jude Nature Trail now has enough benches.



Northwest Pine Island in 1863 (Pineland in lower right; Big Jim Creek in upper center; Bokeelia at top center; Calusa Island at far upper right)

