

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



Newsletter

www.calusalandtrust.org

December 2006

2007 Annual Meeting on January 21

By Joan Culver

The 2007 annual meeting of the Calusa Land Trust and Nature Preserve of Pine Island will be held at 1:00 PM on Sunday, January 21. It will be held outdoors at Fritts Park (five miles north of Pine Island Center, then left at Daisy Lane, immediately south of the Pink Citrus Trailer Park). Bring a neighbor or a friend!

Following on the popularity of last year's delicious buffet, lunch will again be served after the business meeting. The folks at J.D. Hollway's Waterfront Restaurant in St. James City will provide the fare; donations will be accepted and appreciated. Live music will be provided to round out a festive afternoon. Join us afterwards for a walk along the St. Jude Nature Trail.

Committee chairs will present reports on membership, land acquisition, land management, canoe trips, and current projects. If you know someone who may be interested in learning how land trusts work, this is a great opportunity to introduce them. Bring your questions and comments!

The nominating committee has proposed that the following board members be re-elected for another two years: James "Alex" Alexander, Ed Chapin, Joan Culver, Norm Gowan, Bud House, Judy Ott, Donna Venesky, and Ron Wesorick. Additional nominations will be taken from the floor during the annual meeting. There are seven members who will continue their two-year term during 2007. They are Alison Ackerman, Brenda Anderson, Harold Bruner, Brian Cotterill, Liz Donnelly, Bill Spikowski, and Rubye Woodhead. Elections for board membership will be held at the end of the business meeting.

Hope to see you there! In case of rain, look for signs at the crossroads at Pine Island Center directing you to the alternate meeting location, the Fishers of Men Lutheran Church located at 10360 Stringfellow Road, ¼ mile south of Pine Island Road.

Lee County to Preserve Cayo Pelau By Bill Spikowski (334-8866)

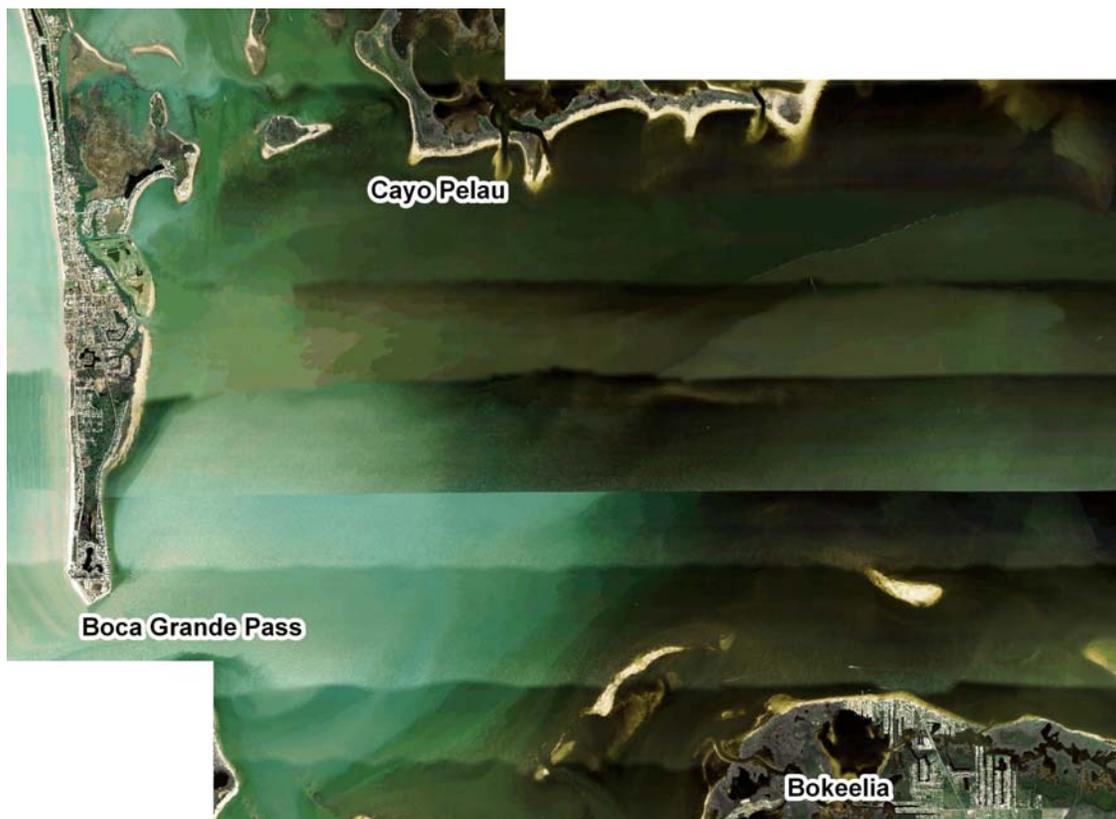
On December 12, the Lee County Commission voted unanimously to purchase Cayo Pelau, a 126-acre island in Charlotte Harbor between Gasparilla Island and Bull Bay (see map below). The island will be acquired with funds from the highly successful Conservation 20/20 land preservation program, which has acquired nearly 18,000 acres of sensitive land since its inception in 1997.

Cayo Pelau is home to diverse plant communities including mangrove forests and tropical hardwood hammocks. It also has sandy beaches, a rarity in Charlotte Harbor, which make the island easily accessible to boaters without costly docks. Cayo Pelau has been the subject of absurd tales of buried treasure, which has led to unnecessary physical damage over the years. In truth, the island has been home to Native Americans, Cuban fishermen, and Columbus B. McCloud, a 19th century Audubon warden.

Acquisition of Cayo Pelau had immense community support, including financial pledges from the Calusa Land Trust (\$20,000) and the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association (\$10,000).

CLT President Bud House, optimistic about favorable action, appeared before the county commission moments before the vote and presented each commissioner with a certificate of appreciation that included photographs of Cayo Pelau.

Most surrounding islands are already in public ownership. Cayo Pelau has been offered to public agencies before, but an acceptable price had never been reached. The final price of \$2,500,000 was about 5% above county appraisals, but this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance for the public to acquire this valuable and unique island. Closing is expected within 90 days.



Monofilament Madness

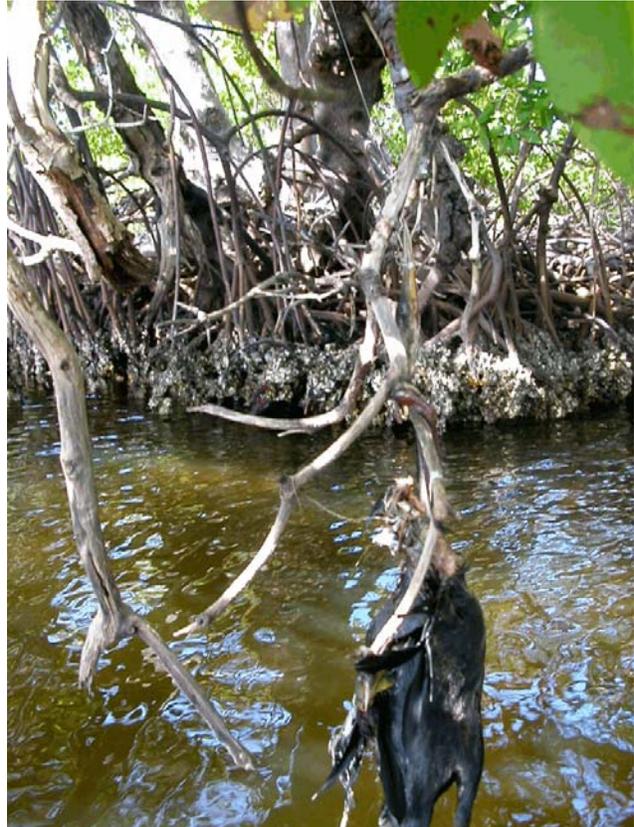
By Brenda Anderson (283-1878)

The Waterfront Restaurant was the gathering place on Sunday, October 29, for Pine Island participants in Monofilament Madness, sponsored by Keep Lee County Beautiful. The marine cleanup is an annual event during which volunteers go out in boats, kayaks, canoes, jet skis, and anything else that floats, to remove monofilament fishing line and other harmful debris from the mangrove areas of Lee County.

Members of the Southwest Florida Paddling Club joined local paddlers making a total of thirteen kayakers who paddled to the Calusa Land Trust's Back Bay Preserve on the southeast corner of Pine Island to clean up that area.

In addition to fishing line, all kinds of trash was pulled out of the mangroves by the kayakers including buckets, ropes, chunks of styrofoam, a fire extinguisher, a plastic garbage bin, and an entire old monofilament gill net. This trash was all precariously balanced on the small crafts for the mile-and-a-half trip back. Two tangled dead birds were seen as well, examples of why the cleanup is so necessary.

After the cleanup Rib City Grill catered a BBQ chicken lunch at the Waterfront Restaurant for the volunteers. Great music was provided by Lonnie Hendrix. The kayakers, along with the many other volunteers, collected approximately 1,400 pounds of trash from the mangroves around St James City.



Bird carcass in mangrove tree



Don McCumber cleaning the mangroves of monofilament

Ranger/Stewardship Report

by Ed Chapin (392-0090)

National Land Trust Rally - October 12-15, Nashville, Tennessee

It was another record turnout for the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) national rally, held this year in Nashville. Over 2,000 people attended, representing the 1,665 conservation land trusts in the US.

Rand Wentworth, LTA President, presented the Vermont Land Trust a new award called the Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award. This award was named after Kingsbury Browne, a distinguished tax lawyer whose vision, wisdom, and counsel is credited as being the bedrock of today's Land Trust Alliance.

Bill McKibben, noted environmental author, was the keynote speaker. His 1989 book, *The End of Nature*, sounded an early warning of the dangers of global warming. While initially controversial, global warming has become well accepted within the scientific community. McKibben stressed the importance of preserving and reforesting our remaining rain forests and pointed out the necessity of partnering with elected officials to bring about sustained change.

A session called "300 Years Lost" was presented by the Land Trust for the Mississippi Plain. They reported the effects of Hurricane Katrina. Their lands were in the high surge zone and suffered the loss of hundreds of heritage live oaks that were 300 years old. Some of the trees did survive through their efforts, which involved bringing in large amount of dirt to replace the soil washed away from tree roots. Even though this land trust had their records secured in two places, both structures were lost along with all their records. They recommend keeping *three* sets of records! This very informative session discussed many of the thorny disaster-related issues that we Floridians know all too well.

Janisse Ray, a naturalist and community activist, spoke about her most recent book, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*. Her book tells about growing up in the ruined long leaf pine ecosystem of the southeast U.S. and stresses the restoration of wholeness to fragmented sections of our lands.

Another session described the LTA's 12 standards and 88 recommended practices, which are undergoing testing that will culminate in accreditation being offered to qualifying land trusts to recognize those that function most effectively on legal, financial, ethical, and policy matters.

Steven Small, a noted tax adviser to landowners and land trusts, spoke about recent changes to federal tax laws, primarily on new IRS rules on easements for years 2007 and 2008. New rules increase the deductibility of conservation and agricultural easements. The new laws specify that appraisers must have stronger credentials. Conservation easements must be in perpetuity or they are not tax-deductible.

The speakers at "Partnering with Government Agencies" emphasized the enormous value of partnering with government agencies and other groups as a way to form productive communities out of fragmented groups and separate political parties.

The Rally finished up with the "Lighter Side of Conservation." Long-time LTA members told of their most hilarious and embarrassing moments in the pursuit of conservation. In all, the Rally was informative and energized everyone to continue on with the important work of land trusts. And since the Rally was in Nashville this year, the beer and music were pretty good too!

Rummage Sale – January 27, 2007

By Bud House (283-3493)

The 2007 Rummage Sale for Calusa Land Trust will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2007, from 8 AM until 12 Noon. It will be held at our usual spot, Fritts Park (five miles north of Pine Island Center, then left at Daisy Lane, immediately south of the Pink Citrus Trailer Park).

Items to be donated may be brought to the park from 8 AM until 12 noon on Friday, January 26. We are sorry but we cannot accept either microwaves or computers this year.

If you would like to volunteer to help out, or have any questions, or have any larger items to be picked up, feel free to call the chairperson, Mrs. Shirley House, at 283-3493. SEE YOU ALL THERE!

Charlotte Supports Conservation

By Bill Spikowski (334-8866)

Charlotte County voters approved a special tax to purchase conservation lands this past November.

The passage of the land preservation tax, in a time when new taxes are practically taboo, is another signal of Charlotte County's pro-environment status and its continuing recovery from Hurricane Charley in 2004.

One of the largest conservation purchases in recent history has taken place in Charlotte County, where the state is purchasing much of the Babcock Ranch. However, that purchase was made possible only because county officials agreed to allow a new city to be built on part of the ranch. With revenue from the new land tax, county officials can protect habitat without directing growth into the very lands they are seeking to protect.

IRS's Limited Time Offer

By Brenda Anderson (283-1878)

As a part of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, up to \$100,000 of an individual's (aged 70½ or older) IRA balance can be donated to charities in 2006 and again in 2007 with no reportable income and no deduction to muddy the waters.

This is a great opportunity to avoid tax on the minimum required distributions that must be made with respect to an IRA after the owner reaches age 70½. It could also be helpful to some individuals by decreasing or eliminating the tax on their Social Security benefits. In addition, it could help those who are not able to itemize deductions to still be able to receive a tax benefit for a gift to charity.

It is a limited time offer, so an IRA owner may want take immediate action before the end of 2006 to top-off the distribution in each year and take full advantage of the \$200,000 maximum donation over the course of the two tax years.

Please consult your tax advisor as soon as possible to determine how you might be able to take advantage of this opportunity.

CALUSA LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS:

_____ \$ 15	Individual Member	_____ \$ ____	for Trailhead Vista Acquisition!
_____ \$ 25	Family Member	_____ \$ ____	Endowment Fund
_____ \$ 50	Donor or Organization	_____ \$ ____	_____
_____ \$100	Contributor	_____ \$ 50	Plunk-a-Plank (fill in lettering below)

CREDIT CARD #: _____ **EXPIRATION DATE:** _____

SIGNATURE (for credit card only): _____

Your Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Today's Date _____

Second Address? _____

Second City, State, Zip? _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____

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