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Calusa

Land Trust and Nature Preserve of Pine Island

P.O. Box 216, Bokeelia, Florida 33922

A nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of natural lands

Newsletter

Winter/Spring 1992

1992 ANNUAL MEETING

The Calusa Land Trust and Nature Preserve held its annual meeting on January 18, 1992, at the American Legion hall near St. James City. Over 100 members and interested people attended, a great turnout!!!

Treasurer's Report from Bill Spikowski: 1991 began with a total balance of \$12,760.95. Total income was \$16,554.01, of which \$12,585.26 was direct donations. Total expenses were \$21,622.78, including land acquisition costs of \$16,942.15. The balance at the end of 1991 was \$7692.18. (The complete financial statement is available upon request.)

Membership Report from Alison Ackerman: Our membership list has grown to 225 individuals, families, and businesses. As of January 18, 77 of those members had already paid dues for 1992. (Since then, 52 additional memberships have been sent in, making the current total of active members 129. If you have not yet renewed for 1992, please do so now.)

Land Acquisition Committee Report from Rich Larkin: Calusa Land Trust completed the purchase of the Big Jim Creek Preserve with the third and final 108-acre tract being purchased in July of 1991.

Rich then showed everyone the maps outlining our new project, recently approved by the Board of Directors. It encompasses about 270 acres around St. James Creek that is now owned by the St. Jude Harbor Corporation. This land will be added to the 50 acres turned over to CLT last year in return for payment of back taxes. The total cost for this new parcel will be \$23,000. It includes land on both sides of St. James Creek (located on southeast Pine Island) and runs to Matlacha Pass. About 130 acres are currently protected by a conservation easement, but 140 acres are not.

Rich explained that the cost of one acre in the "St. James Creek Preserve" is \$100. People who buy an acre or more will receive a copy of the deed. Rich also outlined how the Trust will be responsible for making 3 payments over the course of eighteen months. In order to assure that we make these payments, he proposed the creation of the Calusa Land Trust Guardian Angels. If sufficient funds are not raised to make any of the required payments, these angels would agree to loan us money (if they are able to at that time) for a maximum of six months; interest would be paid at the highest CD rate available. Seven people immediately signed up to be in the "Golden Halo" club, offering to loan up to \$3,000 each. Eleven others signed up to be in the "Bronze Halo" club, offering to loan up to \$1,000. It is so gratifying to know that there are so many who will help Calusa Land Trust if such an emergency arrives.

Election of Board Members: The following people were unanimously voted to the Board of Directors for two-year terms: Alison Ackerman, Jim Beever, Kate Fitzgerald, Rick Moore, and Bill Spikowski. The other six Board members, Ellie Boyd, Ed Chapin, Dick Holmes, Rich Larkin, Gloria Sajgo, and Bobbi Shanks will serve the second year of their terms in 1992.

The Board later elected the following officers for 1992:

President:	Rick Moore
Vice-President:	Alison Ackerman
Treasurer:	Bill Spikowski
Secretary:	Gloria Sajgo

Pine Island Eagle Preserve: Lisa Dodd, director of Lee County's Environmental Sciences Division, showed beautiful slides of a proposed Pine Island Eagle Preserve. The 118-acre property is located just south of the St. James Post Office and runs from Stringfellow out to St. James Creek and Matlacha Pass. About 62 acres is pine flatwoods forest and the rest is mangrove wetlands.

In addition to the eagles nesting here, the uplands are habitat to gopher tortoises and a variety of migratory birds. The wetlands help support our fisheries and wading birds.

The owners of the property have taken preliminary steps to develop the site, but have agreed to consider its preservation through the Florida Communities Trust. This program requires a local government to provide half of the funds for acquisition, which is then matched by the state under the "Preservation 2000" initiative.

Lisa Dodd had asked the CLT Board (at an earlier date) if we would be willing to provide management assistance at the site, for instance exotic plant removal, and acquire an option to purchase the land. She said CLT's involvement would help this project gain approval at the state level. The Board wholeheartedly agreed, and since then, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners has also tentatively approved this project! The Florida Communities Trust will evaluate this application in April. This is a unique opportunity to preserve a pristine pine forest and an active eagle nest on Pine Island. Special thanks to Lisa for not only giving us a chance to help, but doing the many hours of paperwork needed for such an application.

-----FLORIDA PANTHER LICENSE PLATE-----

When buying or renewing your license plate this year, consider getting the new Florida Panther license plate. The funds are divided among panther preservation, the Save our State Environmental Education Trust Fund, and the Florida Communities Trust. Remember this last program is the one helping us save eagle habitat on Pine Island.

-----BRAZILIAN PEPPERS MUST GO!!!-----

In order to make room for native trees and plants, we have begun the arduous task of removing Brazilian peppers from the new trail at St. James Creek. While it is a lot of work at first, it is extremely gratifying to see another one of these monsters dug up by the roots! We have been meeting at the trail early on Sundays and working for a couple of hours. If you would like to help PLEASE!), call Rick at 283-1206.

Special thanks to those who have helped: Jan Bailey, Kate Bailey, Rick Moore, Libby Peck, Bob Owens, Rich Little, Bill Carter, Del Sullivan and Bill Webster.

-----SAVE PRESERVATION 2000-----

As mentioned above in the Annual Meeting section, the Preservation 2000 program helps fund the purchase of environmentally sensitive lands all over Florida. It is a 10-year land protection plan that would spend \$300,000,000 a year, or \$3 billion in all, to preserve the best remaining natural lands.

Funding has been provided for only the first two years. Due to severe budgetary problems at the state level, however, there is a very real danger the program will come to a standstill after only two years. Legislators are being lobbied to divert these funds to other programs. We need help right now from as many of you as possible to write in support of this tremendous project.

A copy of a flyer put out by the Nature Conservancy, giving more details about this, is included in this newsletter. The information provided there can be used in your letters. Names and addresses of state legislators can be found on page 2 of the Blue Pages in your Fort Myers White Pages phone book. A list of this year's proposed Preservation 2000 projects in Lee County follows:

Cayo Costa Island----	352 acres	Pine Island Eagle Habitat--	118 acres
Six Mile Cypress-----	225 acres	Cayo Costa Inholdings-----	10 acres
Estero Bay/		Corkscrew Reg.Ecosystem-	50,000 acres
Charlotte Harbor---	4,830 acres	Yucca Pen Creek Preserve---	900 acres

-----ST. JAMES CREEK UPDATE-----

Following the announcement of our contract to buy the remaining land held by the St. Jude Harbor Corporation, many donations have already come in. Of the 129 paid members for 1992, 40 people have already bought an acre or more of what we are calling the St. James Creek Preserve. This is a terrific beginning. Please do what you can to spread the word about what Calusa Land Trust is trying to do so that we can be as successful with the St. James Creek project as we were with the Big Jim Creek tracts. Thanks for your help.

Walking Tour: Following the business portion of the annual meeting, about 50 people drove over to the proposed "St. James Creek Preserve" and shared a wonderful nature walk, exploring and admiring our new project. Everyone talked about the possibilities for managing it and how best to organize a canoe launch area. It was a wonderful way to end the meeting and spread enthusiasm for this most exciting undertaking.

-----"HOEDOWN FOR HABITAT"-----

On November 23, Calusa Land Trust organized a fundraising event with fish dinners, entertainment, door prizes, and a raffle. Even though a rainy day prevented us from having the super success we were hoping for, we not only stayed "in the black" but also let many new people know what Calusa Land Trust is trying to do, and had a fun time doing it! We also learned a lot from the experience so that the next "Hoedown" will be even better.

There are many community members to thank, and many businesses too. Kim Gerz, Frank Conley, Tootsie Barnes, Corbett Levens, and Mike Conley (all of the Organized Fishermen of Florida) caught, cleaned and cooked over 250 pounds of fish. Don and Mary Shontz helped to serve the dinners and again managed our T-shirt sales. Anna Riehm kept the children (and some adults) entertained with games while Orange Blossom Special and then Twenty Stories Down provided live music. Honc Construction provided the stage. Dick and Irene Holmes and Ruth Elliot sold T-shirts and raffle tickets, while George Elliot and Bill Webster welcomed everyone at the door. Other helpers include Rena Doran, Dennis Igoe, John and Ruth Campbell, Brad and Maggie Maguill, Kate Bailey, and Bobbi Shanks.

Local businesses donated prizes that people could win either by random drawing or by buying a chance. A special thanks to all of them: Crabby Ike's, Matlacha Oyster House, Island Shells and Gifts, Snook Harbor Inn, Lob Lolly Restaurant, Friends of the Pine Island Library, Dock Restaurant, Sandy Hook, the Borderline Restaurant, King of Pizza, Mad Hatter's Teas, Pine Island Pizza, Our Place Deli, Loco T'z, Pineland Marina, Sunfighter Canvas, Island Hardware, St. James Marina, Brass Cleat Marina, and Silver Linings Studios. Betty Katz of the Pine Island Living Magazine donated all the tickets and flyers. Thanks again everyone!

-----TRASH BASH '92-----

Calusa Land Trust will again participate in the Annual Trash Bash, to be held this year on Saturday, April 11, at 8:00 a.m. We will concentrate on two different Calusa Land Trust properties, Calusa Island and the new St. James Creek Preserve. The Harbor Hideaway in Bokeelia, at 7920 Barrancas, will be the meeting place for those who live near there. For more information, call Ed Chapin at 283-1167.

In St. James, meet at Lartonda & Stringfellow (just south of the American Legion) also at 8:00. Call Rick Moore at 283-1206 for more information about this group.

The St. James City Kiwanis Club will be cooking lunch for all participants when they deliver the trash to the Greater Pine Island Civic Association's grounds. Many local businesses will be awarding door prizes as well. Last year, Rick won a pizza!

PRESERVATION 2000

AT RISK...

Florida to Lose Premier Investment Plan

Preservation 2000 is Florida's 10-year natural land protection plan. The plan extends the state Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) and Save Our Rivers (SOR) programs. Preservation 2000 will spend \$3 billion to preserve the best remaining natural lands from destruction — \$300 million each year.

P2000 funds are divided among CARL (50%), SOR (30%), Florida Communities Trust (10%), Inholdings and Additions of Parks, Forests, Wildlife areas and Trails (10%).

Florida's natural environment encompasses a rich diversity of plants and animals and at least 81 natural communities. Our water and woods, wetlands and wildlife are irreplaceable — each must be preserved for future generations.

Loss of natural areas has reached a crisis point. Biologists report that only 2% of our most important ecosystems remain intact. By decade's end, few privately-owned natural lands will remain. All natural areas will have been preserved or destroyed.

Public support for land preservation continues to grow in Florida. It is the top issue for many voters and the top second-tier issue for most others. The FIU poll states that voters support increased spending for the environment.

CARL and SOR priority acquisition lists are strategic, statewide plans to buy the most important environmental lands. Protection planning maps display wildlife corridors linking major ecosystems and threatened habitats.

Many natural areas are under threat, requiring an immediate investment of funds to take the best lands out of the path of bulldozers and keep them from being fragmented.

Growth management planning depends on protecting land through acquisition which cannot be protected through regulation — including wetlands, uplands and wildlife habitat.

Fifteen local governments have acquisition programs which depend upon Preservation 2000 partnership funds.

Funding for only the first two years of Preservation 2000 has been provided. Documentary stamp taxes on deeds and debt have been the traditional source of land preservation funding. The payments on P2000 bonds come from this source, as do recurring CARL and SOR funds. An increase in "doc stamps" is the preferred funding source.

Management funding to maintain resources and allow access to Preservation 2000 lands is provided through reserved portions of CARL and SOR funds.

Governor Chiles has pledged his support for Preservation 2000. His investment budget raises "doc stamps" to pay for a \$230 million bond issue. He will veto budgets that do not invest in Florida's future.

Legislative leaders have expressed support for Preservation 2000 but have made funding contingent upon solving the state's budget crisis.

Disruption of the program would undermine negotiations on lands targeted for preservation. A slowdown would blow deals on hundreds of thousands of acres.

WE MUST ACT TODAY BEFORE THE BEST LAND IS GONE!

For more information, contact:

Eric Draper, The Nature Conservancy, 904/222-0199

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MEMBERSHIPS

_____ \$15 Individual	_____ \$100 Contributor
_____ \$25 Family	_____ \$500 Patron or Business Patron
_____ \$50 Donor	_____ \$1000 Benefactor
_____ \$50 Business/ Organization	_____ \$_____ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Date _____

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