

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



Newsletter

August 2000

President's Message

by Richard M. Little

There is just one word that comes to my mind about the Calusa Land Trust community of souls: gratitude. Over the Trust's life, a momentum of environmental preservation has been steadily building, fueled by the growing awareness and generosity of our concerned and increasing membership. This momentum is demonstrated in many ways:

- over a thousand acres of mangrove forests, islands and waterways, now protected forever;
- a growing relationship with Lee County to acquire and preserve upland native plant and wildlife habitat on Pine Island;
- a unique native Calusa archeological preserve;
- an active land stewardship program;
- an education outreach program; and
- fantastic waterways and trails for passive recreation, wildlife viewing, and solitude!

This has all come about because of you, the members of the Calusa Land Trust. You have shown your commitment to the environment over and over by giving your time, energy, generous donations, and most important — your will to preserve the *nature* of Pine Island. For that we can all be grateful and proud.

Land Acquisition Committee

by Phil Buchanan

It took us a year, but we did it! We are finally ready to go to closing on the pristine mangrove area west of St. James City surrounding Long Cut. Closing is scheduled for August 30.

In July 1999, the Calusa Land Trust (CLT) and the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) jointly paid an investment trust \$5,000 for a one-year option to purchase Long Cut for \$130,000. The CLT then set about on a year-long campaign to raise its 50% share, or \$65,000. Practically every family on Pine Island became involved in the effort at one time or another.

The CLT fundraising committee under Norm Gowan's leadership conducted an extremely successful series of fundraising events, including a joint St. Patrick's Day Party with the Elks at their lodge, a joint Great Pine Island Rubber Duck Race with the Elks at the Double Nichol Pub, a roast beef dinner party at the Eisenberg residence (catered by the Double Nichol Pub and entirely paid for by a generous member), and a Poker Run at the Waterfront Restaurant. Each of these events netted from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Sales of *The Nature Lover's Guide to Pine Island* brought about \$10,000 towards the cause. A special thanks to the merchants who sold the guides at no profit for themselves. Dr. Watson's Liquors alone sold 185 copies at \$20 each. Other big sellers were Island Hardware and Marine, Museum of the Islands, Island Shells and Gifts, Island Mail, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Pine Islanders were also very generous with direct donations. The kids at Pine Island Elementary raised nearly \$500 of mostly pennies and nickels. Donations from Cherry Estates and Trailer Haven residents (located directly east of the new preserve) averaged about \$100 per family, and donations from the Galt Island area, north of the preserve, were even higher. Last week, when we had \$58,508.45 in our Long Cut account, a generous St. James City resident (who prefers to remain anonymous) wrote a check for the remaining \$6,500, allowing us to exercise the option.

The Long Cut Preserve is named after the waterway that cuts through its center. It is a beautiful 130-acre series of mangrove fringe and islands, with limited uplands along the eastern edge. It lies north of York and Coconut Islands (which we jointly purchased with SCCF in 1998), east of Pine Island Sound, west of Cherry Estates Canal, and south of "Jungle Cut," the Galt Island Calusa mounds, and the DEP Buffer Preserve. It constitutes a perfect getaway for those who love nature because it has secretive natural waterways suitable for canoes, kayaks, or skiffs, and it serves as home to a tremendous variety of endangered and threatened species, particularly wading birds. Large boat mooring and fishing (mainly sheepshead) along the cut is excellent, as is shallow water fishing (snook and redfish) along the western side. The preserve also serves as a filter for the waters of St. James City, a regional nursery for fish production, and a wind and tidal surge break against hurricanes from the south and west. Prior to purchase and preservation by the CLT/SCCF, part of this property had been proposed for residential housing.

This purchase is especially important because it means that we have drawn a protective "U" of environmental preserves around the southern end of Pine Island. The 322-acre St. James Creek Preserve runs from San Carlos Bay north to the Post Office and protects the eastern flank of St. James City, while York, Coconut, Long Cut, and the DEP Buffer Preserves run from San Carlos Bay north to Regla Island and protect our western flank. This purchase thus assures that the essential character of St. James City, as a small town surrounded by lush subtropical habitat, will never change. Thank you members. We are all proud of this achievement!

In other acquisition committee news, we are presently involved in 16 (yes, sixteen!) different Conservation 2020 purchase actions on and around Pine Island, plus three conservation easements, several direct purchases, and a lease.

Two 2020 purchases have been completed and are now going into the management plan stage—they are the 158-acre mangrove Edison Community College tract in Bokeelia, and the 80-acre mangrove and salt flat tract east of Regla Island. Another purchase has been approved—the Jessy-Chris portion of the Pineland archaeological complex, although the discovery of buried gasoline tanks on the property may delay the scheduled September 25 closing. Five purchases are in the negotiation stage—they are the proposed Pine Island Center Preserve (237-acre Shiffman property, across from Winn-Dixie), the 338-acre Kelly Property (across from Tropical Homesites—negotiations are now on hold because another purchaser has offered a larger sum to build a golf course community), the 60-acre Thompkins property (north of the Kelly property), Part Island (western portion only, 140 acres, authority to enter negotiations was given by the County Commissioners on July 11), and the last remaining unprotected portion of the Cape Coral mangrove fringe, just east of our McCardle Island Preserve.

Two of our most recent nominations were approved by the 2020 Advisory Committee on July 27 and will go before the County Commissioners sometime in August for authority to begin negotiations. These parcels are the two southernmost portions of the proposed Indian Lake Preserve (166 acres, including the lake at the corner of Galt Island Avenue and York Road). Two nominations are still before the 2020 Advisory Committee: the Bristol Property (161 acres of mangroves west of Alden Pines) and the Real Value property (166 acres of mangroves, surrounded on three sides by the St. James Creek Preserve). Both properties involve excessive asking prices and will probably be rejected if the prices are not reduced. We have four more nominations currently in advanced stages of preparation, two in the St. James City area and two in the Bokeelia area, all of which we hope to be able to announce soon.

As to conservation easements, we have written three over the past few months but none have yet been signed. All are in Pineland or Bokeelia. We will give you updates as they occur.

As to direct purchases, we made an offer to purchase Merwin Island (off the southeast coast of St. James City) from the current owner, the Children's Home Society of Florida. Their Board of Directors met at the end of July and we hope for a formal response in August. We also made a purchase offer to the Packard family for their mangrove fringe tract west of Pine Island Village and their lot on Upper Captiva. We also attempted to purchase the uplands parcel on Barrancas Avenue just east of Aura Lane in Bokeelia at an auction on June 1, but our money ran out before the auction was over. Things ended well, however, when the successful bidder joined the Trust and announced his intention to preserve most of the property. As to other acquisitions, Bud House of our archeological committee will report on recent Calusa Canal actions (below).

We have proposed to the state of Florida that we arrange a lease through which CLT would become the manager of Picnic Island. Picnic is a beautiful subtropical island off St. James City (a few feet south of the intracoastal waterway) and perhaps the most popular boating/picnicking destination in our region.

Who said things are slow on Pine Island in the summer?

Calusa Canal, Phase II

by Bud House

The Calusa Canal Project, Phase II, is complete! Contributions from many sources made it all possible: James and Suzanne Long, and the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc. each contributed \$1,000 for the cause. Forty-five generous Calusa Land Trust members and friends put our fund drive over the top. The deed has now been transferred to the Calusa Land Trust. Thank you all so much.

The “canal maintenance committee,” under Ed Chapin’s leadership, has been quite active this summer. Thousands of small melaleuca trees and over twenty large ones have been cut down and treated for the first time. He thinks he got them all but there will be much to do for many years to keep them under control.

We have been working with the national Archaeological Conservancy for additional canal acquisitions, but at the present time there is no news to report. We will attempt to keep the momentum going and will let you know if our attempts are successful.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP NOW STANDS AT NEARLY 800 — If you noticed a significant drop in this number, it is because we have reduced our membership roster, removing those who are no longer interested or able to support us. We still list 792 faithful members with 543 (69%) current in their annual dues. Look at the address label on this newsletter and if that darn little bug (*) appears after your name, it means that it has been more than a year since you last contributed. You, our members, are the life-blood of this group.

FUND RAISING EVENTS

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

LONG CUT PRESERVE CELEBRATION — As Phil Buchanan detailed above, we raised the \$65,000 for our share of the purchase price plus an additional \$6,500 (10%) for our land management fund. As fundraising chairman, THANK YOU for your generosity! The actual legal closing is expected to take place in late August but we are planning a victory celebration when most of you have a chance to be here, on Saturday November 4th, at the Waterfront Restaurant in St. James City at 1:00 PM. After a round of victory and congratulatory speeches, there will be a no-host luncheon presented by J.D. and Kriston at the restaurant. We hope that all of you will be able to share in this victory celebration.

PROJECT “X” — It has been our custom for the last couple of years to designate contributions of \$100 or more, not otherwise designated, to Project “X.” This has been defined as our next land acquisition not yet determined. It gives us a real leg up on a new project without starting from scratch on a new fundraising campaign.

PLUNK-A-PLANK — The boardwalk on the St. Jude Nature Trail has 510 names carved in the planks. We now have two “Memorial Benches” on the trail with a third about to be erected. If you haven’t visited the boardwalk yet, grab your bug spray and take this most enjoyable walk down the trail. If you would like to have a name preserved with the others, just send us a note along with a \$50 donation.

RUMMAGE SALE — Plans are proceeding for the Calusa Land Trust's 2000 Rummage Sale, to be held at Fritts Park on Saturday, November 25. The sale will begin at 8:00 AM and go until noon. Start putting your unwanted treasures aside. Volunteers will be needed to work on this project so please call Cari Caudill at 283-9710 or Shirley House at 283-3493 to sign up. They can also answer any questions you may have. See you there!

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS — Mark your calendars for the ninth annual Poker Run on December 3 and the next Rubber Duck Race on March 10.

Ranger/Steward Report

by Ed Chapin

On August 5, Calusa Rangers planted native vegetation at the Dobbs Preserve. Over 75 trees and shrubs were installed! It was hot but we wanted to get everything into the ground before the rainy season ended. Native plants were provided by the Pine Breeze Nursery (which is located next to our Fritts Park near Bokeelia). Two of our new Junior Rangers also participated in this work day.

Our next ranger meeting will be on Monday, September 11 at 6:30 PM at the Blue Crab Key community building. The next ranger/steward work parties are (tentatively) set as follows:

September 8	8:00 A.M.	St. James Creek (eagle preserve)
October 7	8:00 A.M.	St. Jude Nature Trail

We have plenty of other volunteer opportunities, especially now during the summer when many of our volunteers are not available. If you can help, we would greatly appreciate it. Leave your phone number on my digital pager, dial 277-6807.

Mango Mania 2000

by Pat Williams

The Calusa Land Trust participated in Mango Mania this year with a canopied area displaying our preservation projects. We also had all our promotional items: T-shirts, caps, visors, tote bags, and our *Nature Lover's Guide to Pine Island*. This community event was well attended and we got our story across to many interested people. The T-shirts and the nature guide were popular sellers. After expenses, we were able to generate \$543. Thank you to all the volunteers who worked and kept the booth open for those two very rainy and hot July days.

Florida Land Trust Network

by Bill Spikowski

The next meeting of the Florida Land Trust Network will be held on September 23 at Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales from 10:00 to 3:00, followed by a tour of the gardens and a carillon concert. This network provides an opportunity for volunteers, board members, and land trust staff from around the state to share ideas and creative solutions for protecting land. Please contact me at 334-8866 for further information. Also, mark your calendar for the annual Florida Land Trust Conference, which will be held next June 9 and 10 in Naples.

CALUSA LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS:

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|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| _____ \$ 15 | Individual Member | _____ \$__ | Calusa canal purchase |
| _____ \$ 25 | Family Member | _____ \$ 23 | Nature Lover's Guide to P.I. |
| _____ \$ 50 | Donor or Organization | _____ \$____ | for _____ |
| _____ \$100 | Contributor | _____ \$ 50 | Plunk-a-Plank
<i>(fill in lettering below)</i> |
| _____ \$250 | Angel | | _____ |

Sponsor's Name *(optional)*: _____

Your Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Second Address? _____

Second City, State, Zip? _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____ Today's Date _____

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