

RIVERWATCH

CRCA Info-Line (941) 433-4636 ext. 2722

February, 1999

ANNUAL MEETING & Election of Officers

Join us for our Annual Meeting to be held *Saturday, March 6, 1999* in conjunction with the **Grand Opening of the Caloosahatchee Regional Park!** The official ribbon cutting ceremony begins at 10:00 and our meeting will follow at 11:00am.

This is our annual election of Officers and Board of Directors and a great opportunity to meet, enjoy the Caloosahatchee and discuss current issues concerning the river.

It promises to be a great day! There will be live entertainment, refreshments, bicycle and walking trails, pony rides, booths and demonstrations. Bring your family and come discover our signature park located on the Caloosahatchee at *18500 North River Road* on the north side of the Caloosahatchee in Alva, see map.

If you have not yet visited this 700 acre park, you won't want to miss this chance. A scenic overlook and an oxbow complement the waterfront of the park.

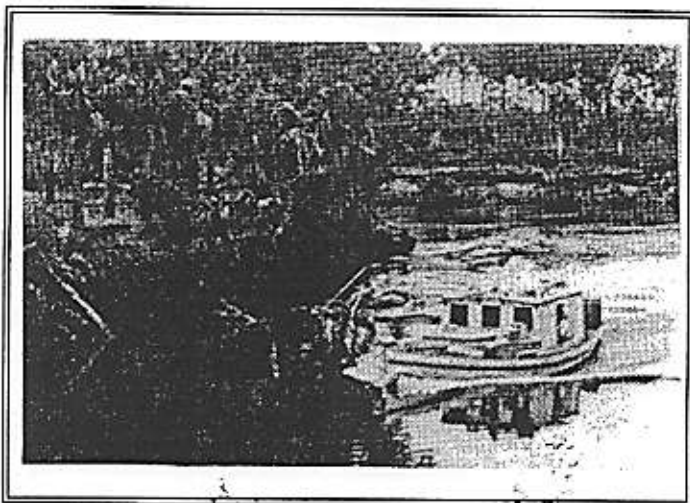
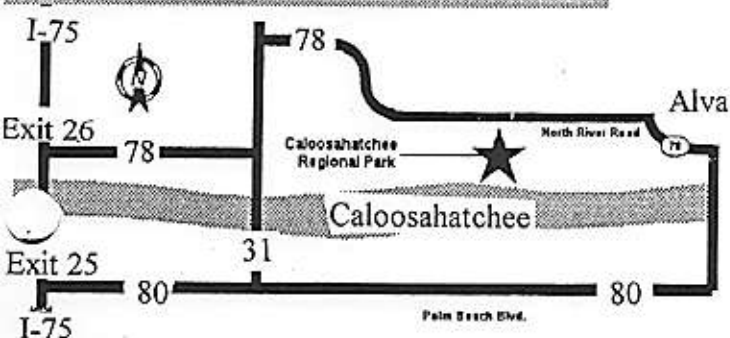
Caloosahatchee Regional Park

18500 N. River Road

Alva, Florida

Saturday, March 6, 1999, 10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

★ Indicates Park Site



OXBOW RESEARCH PROJECT

Phase II begins! We are very excited to announce that our oxbow research effort, started two years ago with assistance from Dr. John Capece of the Univ. of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science - IFAS, has been rewarded with funding by the Florida Center for Environmental Studies and the South Florida Water Management District.

Our study, which documented and characterized 35 oxbows of the Caloosahatchee between Olga and LaBelle, will continue under the professional scientific direction of Dr. Ken Cummins, a Distinguished Scientist working at the Tarpon Bay Environmental Research Lab on Sanibel Island.

This next phase will involve collecting additional field data from selected oxbows with the intent of rehabilitating as many oxbows as possible in order to enhance their quality as aquatic habitat, water filters, water storage areas and functional wetlands.

Volunteers will be needed to assist in the field data collection effort scheduled to begin next month. If you are interested call and leave a message on our Infoline listed in the masthead of this newsletter.

Forum Recap

The Caloosahatchee, its Cities and People

How do we balance growth with the needs of the environment? As we step into the next millenium, will we perpetuate the same patterns of growth that leave our neighborhoods sterile or dangerous? How do we protect the Caloosahatchee from the multitudes of pressures threatening to degrade it further?

Thanks to the dedication and organization of board member **Rob Andrys**, this years Forum Chairperson, these questions were examined with the help of an interesting and diverse collection of experts.

Thanks also to our keynote speaker, Mr. Don Ross who helped to set the tone of the conference by sharing many of his insights from his involvement with the Governors Commission for Sustainable South Florida.

The following are a couple of insightful observations presented at January's forum:

- Agricultural land conversion into urban development is one of the fastest growing threats to sustainable growth and quality of life in south Florida.
- Planners on the East Coast learned the biggest mistake in Miami was not allowing more density in their growth plan. Their growth plan spread people out across the County, which requires a widespread network of streets, utilities, drainage and support services.
- Meaningful change happens when people set the standard for their quality of life and communicate it to their representatives. It is not adequately achieved through additional regulation.

Our thanks go out to each of our generous sponsors: Gulf Citrus Growers, Promised Lands of FAPA, Fran Stallings, the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, Inc. and University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Science -IFAS. Thanks also to the numerous exhibitors and our many volunteers, too numerous to mention, who helped make the day a great success!

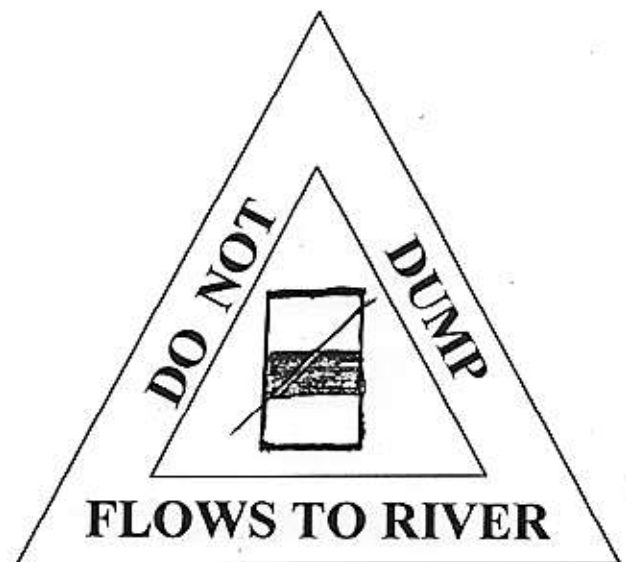
Storm Drain Water Quality

We can't take it for granted

CRCA was recently the recipient of a gift from the local chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). ASCE had worked with the Lee County Natural Resources Division to put on a training seminar about the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). NPDES is an effort to control the level of pollutants entering our surface waters from stormwater runoff. ASCE's seminar was to train local consultants about NPDES and how it would influence engineering and design work in Lee County.

Upon completion of the seminar, ASCE found that fees collected outweighed the cost of the seminar and decided to put that money to good use. Part of the proceeds went to a scholarship fund and the balance, over \$600, was donated to CRCA. CRCA was chosen because our storm drain stenciling program is exactly in line with some of the improvements that NPDES is hoping to implement.

The CRCA Board voted unanimously to accept this generous gift and to use it to enhance our storm drain program. At this point, we are looking to expand the program to new areas and improve the marking techniques. *Thank you to Lee County and ASCE!*



Legacy of the Caloosahatchee

Charles Edgar Foster & Rae Ann Scholle

The features of the Caloosahatchee-basin we know today were formed by Pliocene and Pleistocene sediments deposited by fluctuating sea levels over one million years ago. As sea levels receded, a mainland emerged with a series of lakes connected by wet prairies in a shallow valley which stretched between an inland sea and a gulf. From a tiny lake in the center of the valley a waterfall fed a tortuously crooked river which flowed to the gulf.

Archaeological records indicate that first humans inhabited this region over ten thousand years ago. The lush flora and fauna of the valley provided an ample supply of food, clothing and shelter for the original inhabitants.

The earliest written accounts of this region were supplied by the Spanish explorers who arrived in the early 1500's. They named the inhabitants the Calusa and the Mayaimi; the waterway, River of the Calusa; the inland sea the Mayaimi Lagoon -Big Water; and the peninsula, Florida for the variety of flora found here. Many of their names remain in use today.

The Seminole, who were southeastern Creek Indians, fled to this area from Alabama and Georgia in the mid-1700's. Like the Spanish, the Seminole left a legacy of many place names. The Mayaimi Lagoon became Lake Okeechobee, and the river became the Caloosahatchee. The name Florida survived.

After the Civil War in the 1860's, homestead opportunities attracted many southerners and squatters to Florida. Settlements were built as far south as the Caloosahatchee.

Twenty years later in 1881, Florida Governor William Bloxham persuaded Philadelphia toolmaker and developer, Hamilton Disston, to purchase four million acres of South Florida at twenty five cents per acre for development. The one million dollars the state received from the purchase was used to clear title for the sale of state land.

The historic Caloosahatchee basin with seasonal wet prairies which provided a connection between the lakes in the valley flowing to the Gulf of Mexico.

Capt. R.E. Rose's ROSALIE. Headquarters for Disston's construction crews on Lake Flirt, early 1880's...

Hamilton Disston's first project in southwest Florida was to drain the land around Lake Okeechobee. He enlisted the expertise of cattlemen Jacob Summerlin and Capt. Francis Asbury Hendry to survey a route east from Lake Flirt through wetlands connecting Lakes Lettuce, Bonnett and Hicpochee. At the eastern end of Lake Hicpochee the route followed an existing Paleo or Mayaimi Indian canal to Lake Okeechobee.

In September 1881, Hamilton Disston brought a dredge into downtown Ft. Myers to begin dredging a 48 ft. canal from Ft. Thompson (1 1/4 miles east of LaBelle) to Lake Okeechobee. The first step in the

Legacy of the Caloosahatchee

Charles Edgar Foster & Rae Ann Scholle

The features of the Caloosahatchee basin we know today were formed by Pliocene and Pleistocene sediments deposited by fluctuating sea levels over one million years ago. As sea levels receded, a mainland emerged with a series of lakes connected by wet prairies in a shallow valley which stretched between an inland sea and a gulf. From a tiny lake in the center of the valley a waterfall fed a tortuously crooked river which flowed to the gulf.

Archaeological records indicate that first humans inhabited this region over ten thousand years ago. The lush flora and fauna of the valley provided an ample supply of food, clothing and shelter for the original inhabitants.

The earliest written accounts of this region were supplied by the Spanish explorers who arrived in the early 1500's. They named the inhabitants the Calusa and the Mayaimi; the waterway, River of the Calusa; the inland sea the Mayaimi Lagoon -Big Water; and the peninsula, Florida for the variety of flora found here. Many of their names remain in use today.

The Seminole, who were southeastern Creek Indians, fled to this area from Alabama and Georgia in the mid-1700's. Like the Spanish, the Seminole left a legacy of many place names. The Mayaimi Lagoon became Lake Okeechobee, and the river became the Caloosahatchee. The name Florida survived.

After the Civil War in the 1860's, homestead opportunities attracted many southerners and squatters to Florida. Settlements were built as far south as the Caloosahatchee.

Twenty years later in 1881, Florida Governor William Bloxham persuaded Philadelphia toolmaker and developer, Hamilton Disston, to purchase four million acres of South Florida at twenty five cents per acre for development. The one million dollars the state received from the purchase was used to clear title for the sale of state land.

The historic Caloosahatchee basin with seasonal wet prairies which provided a connection between the lakes in the valley flowing to the Gulf of Mexico.

Capt. R.E. Rose's ROSALIE. Headquarters for Disston's construction crews on Lake Flirt, early 1880's...

Hamilton Disston's first project in southwest Florida was to drain the land around Lake Okeechobee. He enlisted the expertise of cattlemen Jacob Summerlin and Capt. Francis Asbury Hendry to survey a route east from Lake Flirt through wetlands connecting Lakes Lettuce, Bonnett and Hicpochee. At the eastern end of Lake Hicpochee the route followed an existing Paleo or Mayaimi Indian canal to Lake Okeechobee.

In September 1881, Hamilton Disston brought a dredge into downtown Ft. Myers to begin dredging a 48 ft. canal from Ft. Thompson (11/4 miles east of LaBelle) to Lake Okeechobee. The first step in the

Caloosahatchee Riverboat Cruises

Saturday Earth Day April 24
Saturday Mothers Day May 8
10:00 to 2:00

Oxbows & Riverlore

*Cruise leaves 10:00 a.m. from the Franklin Locks off SR 80,
includes Lunch, and walking tour thru an Orange Grove
See Map on Reverse*

Advance Ticket Purchase Required \$28.50 per person

To purchase tickets Mail Check to:

Oxbow Cruise
PO Box 1165
Ft. Myers, fl 33902

**For Information Call
941-731-7559**

*Sponsored by: the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association,
Florida Center for Environmental Studies at Florida Atlantic University,
University of Florida, IFAS & South Florida Water Management District*

Oxbow & Riverlore Cruises

Saturday March 27

Earth Day, Saturday April 24

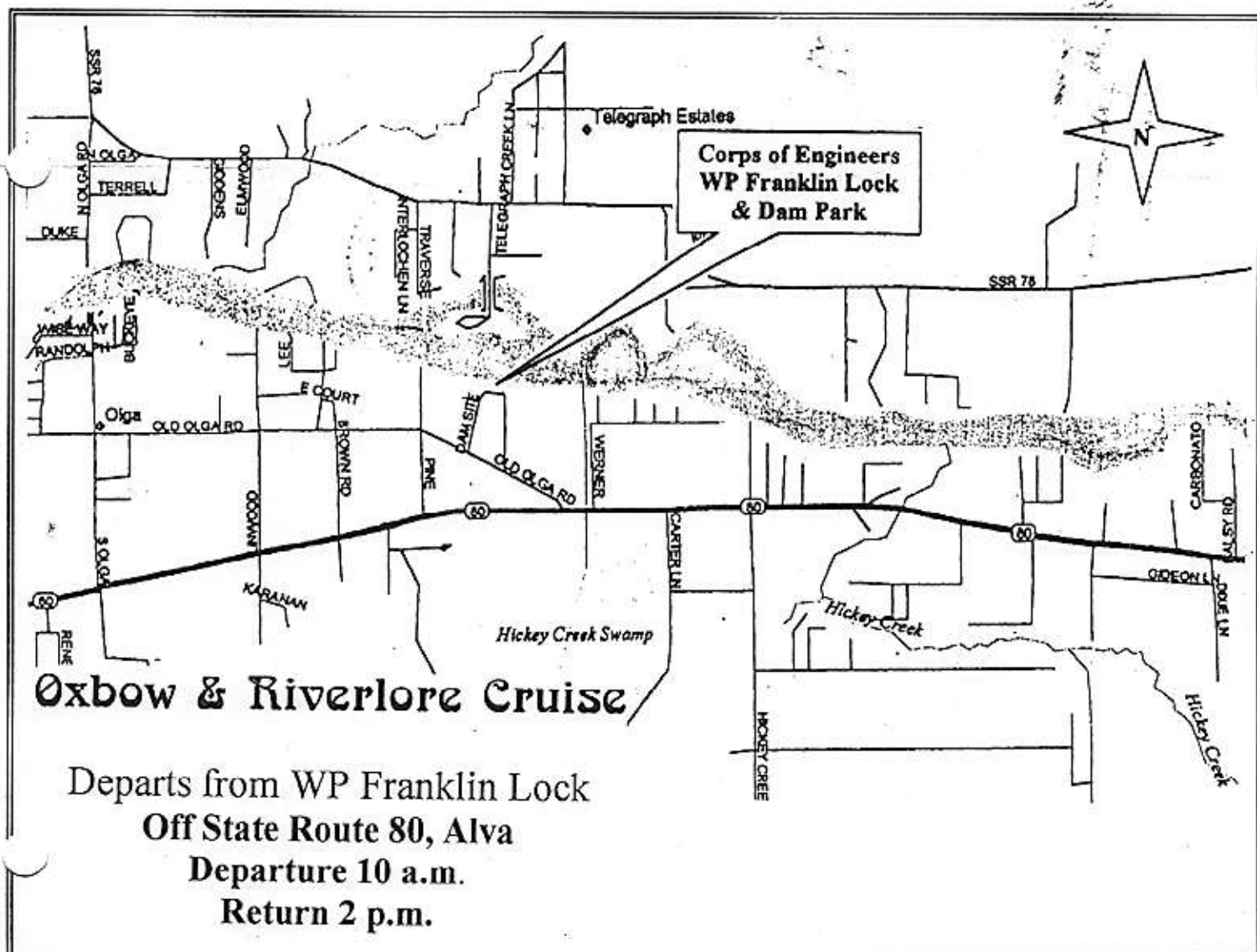
Mothers Day, Saturday May 8

Float back in time through the historic Caloosahatchee oxbows on a relaxing boat tour guided by CRCA, *Riverwatch* President Rae Ann Scholle, river rat historian Charles Edgar Foster and water quality scientist Dr. John Capece.

The four hour luncheon cruise begins by locking through the WP Franklin Lock & Dam in Alva. Experience first hand the picturesque history and folklore of the river, the ecology and water quality of the system which supplies our drinking water, and enjoy a personal guided walking tour through one of the regions oldest orange groves.

Three upcoming trips have been scheduled. Join us on Saturday, March 27, on Earth Day April 24, or Mothers Day, May 8. Trips depart at 10 a.m. from the WP Franklin Lock & Dam park off State Road 80 in Alva and return at 2 p.m. See map below. Space is limited and **advance purchase of tickets is required** to assure a minimum number of passengers for the trips. Tickets are \$28.50 per person.

To reserve your place send a check with your name and phone number to: *Riverwatch Oxbow Cruise*, P.O. Box 1165, Ft. Myers, FL 33902. **Checks must be received one week before the cruise date.** Please write *Oxbow Cruise* on the front of the envelope. For additional information call the Infoline 433-4636 x 2722 and leave a message.



Volunteers Sought for Projects

Riverwatch has several projects that need volunteers and Project Managers. Are you artistic and a *Web* browser? We need a **WebMaster** to coordinate updates and post information on our website in an interesting and timely manner.

Are you a member of a community group, homeowners association, involved with the boy or girl scouts or looking for a community project? Our **Storm Drain Stenciling** project is a great community project. We have the supplies, stencils and program. We'd like one of our members to become the project coordinator. It is a very important component of protecting the water quality of the river.

If you enjoy history, research and writing, please join our effort to document the history of the Caloosahatchee! Our **Legacy of the Caloosahatchee** is an effort to produce a book with a map of the historic sites along the river complete with photos, oral histories of early pioneers and folklore. We need volunteers to interview, research and begin outlining this much sought after information.

If you are interested, please call and leave your name, phone number and message on our Infoline listed in the masthead of the newsletter, 941-433-4636 x 2722

Caloosahatchee River Citizen's Association

Officers

President:	Rae Ann Scholle
Vice President:	Pam Porter
Secretary:	Jim Haggart
Treasurer:	Bill McGrath

Directors

Rob Andrys	Susan Beckman
Steve Boutelle	John Cassani
Win Everham	Peggy Grant
Keith Kibbey	Erick Lindblad
Laura O'Brien	T.C. Porter

Committee Chairs

Technical:	John Cassani / John Capece
Newsletter:	Susan Beckman
Membership:	Steve Boutelle
Projects:	Rob Andrys
Legacy:	Rae Ann Scholle

*Riverwatch wishes our dedicated Treasurer,
Bill McGrath, a full & speedy recovery.*



**CALOOSAHATCHEE
RIVER**
Citizens Association

P.O. Box 1165
Fort Myers, FL 33902

Rob Andrys
23031 Tuckahoe Road
Alva, FL 33920

Change of Address? Let us Know!