

www.caloosahatchee.org

Spring 2005

Riverwatch@Caloosahatchee.org

Visit our new and improved web site at <http://crca.caloosahatchee.org>

Action Alert

Centennial Park is a 10.5-acre community park located on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River in downtown Fort Myers. The park offers a variety of activities to accommodate all members of the population, including residents of Lee County and visitors from around the country. Centennial Park is the site of concerts, arts and crafts shows, food-tasting events, weddings, birthday parties and other celebrations.

Centennial Park, one of our most valuable community amenities is at risk of being lost to developers. This park was created with funds from the National Park Service and Lee County. Other areas of the Downtown Waterfront are also threatened, including the historic Exhibition Hall and the Riverwalk. Riverwatch has been involved in many of the hearings and has gone on record opposing many of the projects. River access is too important to sell to private developers. Please email a note opposing the loss of Centennial Park to:

Ms. Edwelyn Dooley-Higgins
edwelyn_dooley-higgins@nps.gov

Cabbage Paddle 2005



Riverwatch President, Scott Perry, enjoying the Cabbage Paddle event on Feb. 26 as part of the LaBelle Swamp Cabbage Festival.

Babcock Ranch preservation effort

The Babcock family no longer wants to retain ownership of its 90,000-acre ranch; they intend to sell the property to developers if the state is unable to pay the price being asked by the family. A few months ago, the family asked for \$450 million, but this past month the state's offer of \$450 million was declined by the Babcock owners, because of rapidly inflating regional land values. The fate of the deal is uncertain. Southwest Florida Community Foundation has established a special fund, called the Babcock Preservation Partnership Fund, for this effort. For more information, contact Liz Donley at info@BabcockRanch.org.

Court Ruling Says DEP is Unscientific

A recent court ruling seeks to restrain Florida government agencies from mixing politics with science when it comes to fixing the water quality problems of the tributaries to Lake Okeechobee, waters that eventually flow into the Caloosahatchee.

Earthjustice a national environment law firm successfully sued the Florida Department of Environmental Protection claiming that DEP's recently released pollution standards did not meet the requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act. Judge David M. Maloney issued the decision on March 24 in Tallahassee. "The evidence placed on the record by petitioners calls into question at every turn the process that the department followed "in drafting the pollution limits, Judge Maloney wrote. "Instead of the examination called for by the scientific method, the department conducted a flawed process. Its after-the-fact attempts to prop up the process were not successful nor could they have been: the evidence demonstrates that the process was flawed from the beginning."

For decades, Florida has placed too much scientific control in the hands of DEP and SFWMD, political agencies that were originally designed to implement policies and enforce regulations, but not designed to judiciously pursue research. It is therefore not surprising that their research results cannot stand up to scrutiny when placed before a court of law.

Hopefully, this court ruling will lead to state and federal action to solve the problem – perhaps moving control of research methods and funds back into the organizations better suited to the mission. While primary control and budgets for research should be given to universities and research agencies, there are several critically important functions that the DEP and SFWMD political/management agencies can perform in facilitating research. They can identify critical problems to be investigated, help push the research process along as quickly as possible (scientists are notoriously slow), and they can look after the legal aspects of research quality control so that the results hold up in court. However, the fundamental processes of experimental design, site selection, methodology, project duration, results publication, and research budget allocations need to be decided and controlled by the science organizations, not the political agencies.

Because so much of the research funds come from budgets allocated to DEP and SFWMD, these agencies have had disproportional control of water quality research projects, which, for Federal budgetary reasons, they refer to as "demonstration projects." The result has been a series of start/stop research projects that follow the political winds, rather than a deliberate scientific process. Research staff currently based in these political agencies might also find greater professional satisfaction if they too were transferred to organizations that are driven more by science than politics. It is well known that many scientists feel "gagged and tied" within these agencies. Perhaps this recent court ruling will start the process of changing how water quality research is controlled in south Florida.

The Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association (CRCA-"Riverwatch") is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of the River and its watershed, through education and promotion of the responsible use and enjoyment for all people.

Report on Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held on March 19. It featured the election of a new board of directors. Officers were elected during the board of directors meeting on April 20. **The newly elected directors and officers are:**

Scott Perry (President), Mary Rawl (Vice President), Paula Bender (Treasurer), John Capece (Secretary), Keith Kibbey, Margaret England, Rae Ann Wessel, Butch Jones, Linda Mattos, Robert Ford, and Paul Samerdyke, Lois James, Scott Cooper, Mary Ruth Prouty, Marti Daltry, Diane Fromm, Rob Andrys, and Ron Zimmerly.

Demise of a Colossus

How do you measure a legacy of the old River Rat's? That's likely what many in the Southwest Florida's environmental community wondered when they learned of Charles Edger Foster's death.

Charles was a man of many colors. The Alva native was so many things in his 91 years: proud cracker, Ivy League graduate, writer, artist, historian, husband, friend, He was also a pioneer member of the CRCA, it's impossible to categorize him, friends say. Above all, he was a teacher, both by vocation and avocation. He will be greatly missed.



Charles E. Foster
1913 - 2005



Red Dot?

If yes, then it is time to renew your Membership

If no red dot, then sign up a friend.

If you count yourself as a member of "RiverWatch" then please take a moment to fill out this form and then return it to us with your contribution. Also, pass this form on to a friend and ask them to join! As you know, the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association ("RiverWatch") needs your continued support to make sure that good things occur on our river. Note: New members receive a Riverwatch T-shirt...so mark you desired size.

You can also register on-line and pay your dues by credit card at <http://crca.caloosahatchee.org>

Name: _____ Street Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

T- Shirt size: XS S M L XL XXL

Check the boxes for the CRCA information you wish to receive and how you wish to receive each:

	Newsletter	Events Announcements	Action Alert	Meeting Notices
E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Membership Level: Student \$5 ____ Individual \$10 ____ **Family \$20** ____

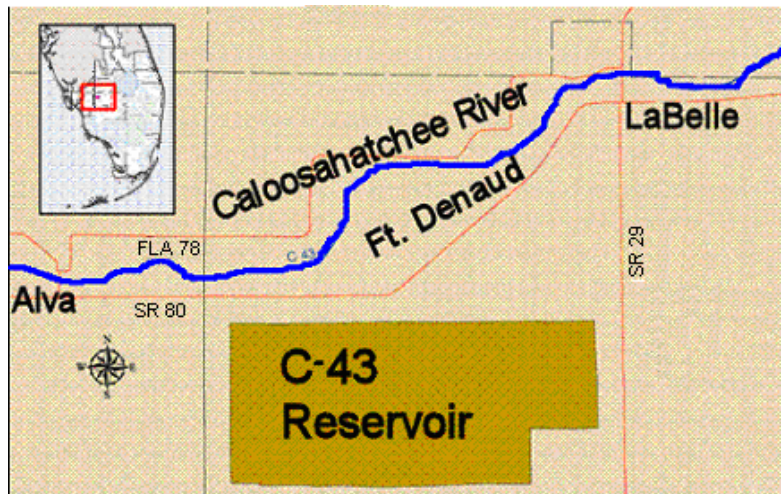
Friend \$50 ____ Guardian \$100 ____ Sponsor/Corporate \$250 ____ Protector \$500 ____ Champion \$1000 ____

Please complete this form and send it with your check to CRCA, P. O. Box 2199, LaBelle FL, 33975.

C- 43 Reservoir Project

The purpose of the project is to reduce wet season water flows to the Caloosahatchee River Estuary to levels below 2800 cfs at the Franklin Lock and to increase dry season flows to above 300 cfs with the objective of reducing the large estuary salinity fluctuations. The unnatural extremes of high and low flows are believed to have contributed to the death of estuary sea grasses during the past decade, devastating the foundation of the estuary ecosystem.

Lee County is of the opinion that C-43 Reservoir project planning does not properly address the estuary water quality issues, hence the need for a follow-up project to solve the excess nutrient problem. Also, the land selected for this project in Hendry County is believed by the previous land manager to be highly permeable and will not hold water. Therefore, the stacking of water 16ft above the ground may cause water to flow back into the river too quickly or worse still, raise the water table and flood adjacent residential areas.



It is important we learn from the past and make adjustment now, before investing over 300 million dollars in this project. Based on reservoir performance projections, the cost of storing water above 2800 cfs and delivering water below 300 cfs for the estuary will cost \$1 per 1000 gallons. This price shows that the cost of environmental water management is now approaching the cost of residential water, which is typically \$1 to \$3 per 1000 gallons.

