

Special Events:

- December 7—Holiday Party, LaBelle (see article below)
- December 10—Friends of Billy Creek Cleanup, Ft Myers
- January 8—River Roots Ruts Run, Alva
- January 27-29—Lake O Birding Festival, Moore Haven
- January 28—Discovery Day, Manatee Park, Ft Myers
- February 26-27—Swamp Cabbage Festival, LaBelle
- March TBA—Annual Members Meeting/Elections—LaBelle



Please check for updates and additional meetings at crca.caloosahatchee.org

Also, online membership services available, too.

Letters from new members...

The Meeting last night impressed and moved me very intensely. I can't fully express in words what wonderful feelings observing your association's commitment. The area is fortunate to have you all.

*Caroline Comings, Ft Myers
Friend of Billy Creek*

We would like to thank the Riverwatch organization for all the support that we received in putting together the "Restore our Waters" Forum on November 10 on Sanibel. We look forward to working with you in the future.

*Maureen & Michael Valiquette,
Sanibel Island*

The Caloosahatchee River: A Year in Review

Message from Mary Rawl, President

If one person can make a difference, then this organization can accomplish more than we can imagine.

There is no doubt that our River is in crisis. In fact, the organization feels so strongly on this point that we have chosen to nominate the River as one of America's Top Ten "Endangered Rivers" for 2006. While it is not a ranking that we desire, it will provide national attention to our plight and hopefully move decisions in a more positive direction.

If there was one issue that was fairly dominant in the local media this past year, it was water quality. A day did not go by without a story about blue-green algae, red tide, dead zones in the Gulf, sewage discharges into the River, pesticides found in the River, releases from Lake Okeechobee, or other issues. The coverage of the local media has been awesome and we wish to thank them publicly for their coverage.

We have much to do. Stormwater utilities are lacking, educational programs such as Florida Yards and Neighborhoods are under-funded, land use changes are approved a rapid pace without adequate diligence, and shortages of professional staff on all levels are apparent.



Canoeists enjoy the newly-restored Ft Denaud Oxbow, Hendry

Riverwatch intends to mount a campaign in the coming year to highlight the issues that are threatening our River. Some you have heard about, some you have not. Some are of large magnitude, some are minor, but all are important.

We plan to put our top priorities on a list, task the appropriate parties with their action items, and keep a running list of the progress that is printed for all to see. We do not want to hear the phrase "We can't do that because...". We want time frames and we want those schedules kept. Our leaders at all levels need to be held accountable for their decisions that affect the health of our River.

The River is important to our economy and our environment. We cannot continue to abuse this important resource in Southwest Florida.

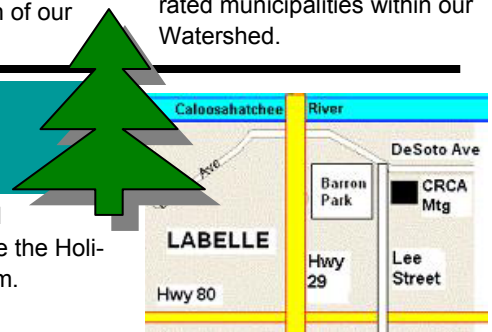
This organization would not succeed if it were not for the dedication of our officers, Board of Directors, and dedicated volunteers who attend countless meetings and work at public outreach events.

At our Annual Meeting in March 2006, we will be looking for more of you to step forth and serve on our Board. We need citizens from Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties and the incorporated municipalities within our Watershed.

Holiday Party December 7, 2005 Barron House, LaBelle

Please join us for this event for all CRCA members and guests. Affiliated organizations are also invited to share the Holiday Spirit. Dinner will be served. Party starts at 6:30pm.

Please RSVP to maryrawl@caloosahatchee.org



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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.

Friends of Billy Creek

Established in October 2005 as an offshoot of CRCA, this committee was established in response to residents of the City of Ft Myers who wanted a cleanup of this urban Creek . Billy Creek is a tributary of the Caloosahatchee, with the mouth in Downtown Ft Myers just west of Riverside Community Center. The Watershed encompasses 13 square miles in both the City and unincorporated Lee County.

The group got off to a quick start with many meetings to attend, as the funding for water quality projects and state appropriations was in full-swing. This creek was prioritized as the number one project for the Caloosahatchee Partners for Restora-



View from a kayak on Billy Creek
Local residents are working to cleanup the urban creek and add creek side amenities in conjunction with Shady Oaks Park in Ft Myers.

tion (CPR) by the South Florida Water Management District's initiative for projects in the Caloosahatchee Basin. Additional funding sources have been identified through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

For more information on the "Friends of Billy Creek" (FOB) steering committee, please contact us at the Riverwatch phone number or e-mail address.

A Creek Cleanup is planned for Saturday, December 10, 9am-12noon at the canoe launch at Shady Oaks Park. The City of Ft Myers Public Works Department is assisting with the logistics

Other Ongoing Projects

LaBelle Nature Park—Coalition for Eco-Recreation: Riverwatch is one of the Partners in this group that meets monthly to assist the City of LaBelle (on SFWMD-leased land) with this beautiful oxbow park due east of the Capt. Hendry House. Workdays at the Park are ongoing and many community groups are participating to enhance this effort. View the website at www.labellenaturepark.org to see the possibilities for this park and future Nature Center. Thanks to the following groups that participated in the Oct 1 Park Cleanup: LaBelle High School, Future Business Leaders, National Honor Society, Key Club, Labelle Middle School, Future Business Leaders, Daisy Girl Scout Troop 468, Girl Scout Troop 566, Cub Scout Bear Troop 9, Boy Scout Troop 9, members of Kiwanis, Rotary, and VFW.

Oxbow Restoration—Ft Denaud Oxbow Grand Opening!: In mid-November, the water flowed through a new oxbow in west Hendry County. The project funded by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), restored the historic oxbow to allow restoration of flows and habitat. The project was also a field trip for Hendry and Glades County schoolchildren, developed by Project Engineer John Capece and Hendry County Media Specialist Margaret England, both of whom are CRCA Officers. The day after the project was completed, fish were jumping and birds were sighted in the oxbow, according to Margaret. "To me, kayaking to the oxbow island is just as exciting as going to a National Park". A formal ribbon-cutting ceremony and press conference are scheduled for early December.