



President and Executive Director's Letter



Sadly we announce the passing of Mrs. Jane Parks on the 3rd of November. In our last newsletter we shared with you Mrs. Parks' visit to the Fakahatchee with her sons Randy and Ben. Little did we know it would be Mrs. Parks last visit to Fakahatchee. She is remembered for her campaign in the 1960s to 'Save the Fakahatchee' in her role as the State of Florida Conservation Chairman of the Junior Women's Club.

Our Annual Fund Appeal letters were mailed to the membership at the start of November. We are thrilled that the State of Florida is investing seven million dollars for the Boardwalk Expansion Project. However, renovations needed to reopen our small Visitor Center on Janes Scenic Drive cannot be funded by the state. We hope you will be generous and help us renovate our current Visitor Center. Visit our Support Page to read more about the President's Annual Fund Appeal and to donate. <https://orchidswamp.org/support/>

Congratulations to Phil McGuire for his success with the new Night Sky Experience Program. November and December sold out in a week and January, February, and March were added to the program. Aside from those who came on the 6th of November to practice astrophotography, we were surprised to discover that some of our members jumped at the opportunity to simply enjoy the Fakahatchee after park closing hours. They cozied up in lawn chairs and were quite content to watch the sunset and eventually see millions of stars reveal themselves as the sky got darker and darker.

We owe a special thank you to Master Naturalist Dave Boesche for his 'Tour de Force' on November 12. Dave not only conducted a tour for a group of friends from Estero, he followed that with an afternoon Boardwalk tour for the same group. Dave was at the Park with assistant Ted Lock at 8:30 AM and texted he was back home at 5:30 PM – a very long day. To guide a 3 hour tram tour requires concentration and energy; to add a Boardwalk tour on the same day is quite impressive. *Bravo, Dave!*

– Tom Maish and Francine Stevens



(Left to right) Mrs. Jane Parks, her son Randy Parks (FOF Life Member), President Tom Maish, and Secretary Glen Stacell. This poster, which includes Mrs. Parks' significance to the Park, will be installed on the kiosk next to the small visitor center on Janes Scenic Drive next month.

Tickets for Tours are on sale now

The new Dark Sky Experience Program generated a tremendous response; we added more dates for January, February, and March.

[Get your Dark Sky tickets here. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fakahatchee-night-sky-experience-tickets-192502729847?](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fakahatchee-night-sky-experience-tickets-192502729847?aff=ebdsoporgprofile)

[aff=ebdsoporgprofile](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fakahatchee-night-sky-experience-tickets-192502729847?aff=ebdsoporgprofile). Saturday Swamp Walks are also now scheduled through February. Visit our Adventures web page to find out more about all tour adventures. <https://orchidswamp.org/adventures/>

Remember, they make great gifts for many occasions!



New dates have been added for the popular new Dark Sky Experience Program.



Phil McGuire readies this group for their Dark Sky Experience.



With baby back ribs, chicken, pork and all the fixings!



Saturday, December 18
12:30 to 3:30 pm
In the Park by Lake Gloria
\$20 per person
Visit www.orchidswamp.org
Click Tours and Events for tickets

Questions? Call Francine Stevens
239.695.1023
or email FOF_90@hotmail.com



News from the Strand

Exciting Construction Progress



This labeled photo shows progress on the construction, with the Visitor's Pavilion in the foreground, Restrooms building in the middle, and the Parking Lot in the background.



The Restrooms building is in the foreground with walls added. The Visitor's Pavilion in the background shows additional progress as well.



This long view from beyond the Parking Lot. All photos by Jay Staton.

Terrific Birding in the Fakahatchee



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: [Check the State Park Website](#) for hours, closures, and other announcements.

CAUTION

Alligators are lurking in the Everglades and can be dangerous. Do not swim or wade in the water. Do not feed alligators. Do not touch alligators. Do not enter the water if you are alone. Do not enter the water if you are not a trained professional. Do not enter the water if you are not a trained professional. Do not enter the water if you are not a trained professional.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

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On East Main trail near the historic cabin, alligators demonstrating aggressive behavior had to be removed by a licensed contractor paid by Fish And Wildlife Conservation. Such behavior indicates that they have been fed by visitors. Park staff installed a sign to remind visitors it is illegal to feed wildlife.

Membership News

More Meaningful Memberships

From education to preservation, networking to artworks, donations of time or funding, there are a myriad of ways to support the mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee. To discover all the different ways to support our mission [visit the Support page of our website](https://orchidswamp.org/support/). <https://orchidswamp.org/support/>

From the President: Annual Fund Drive

Dear Friend,

As a Friend of Fakahatchee, you are part of the community that is preserving one of the most biologically rich places in North America.

Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park lies centrally within the Florida Panther National Refuge, the Big Cypress Area of Critical State Concern, the Greater Everglades Ecosystem, and the mangrove estuaries of the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Your protection of the park safeguards its hydrologically critical wetlands, rivers, lakes, mangroves, swamps, and marshes; and provides critical habitat to 71 imperiled plant species and 44 imperiled wildlife and bird species, including giant air plants, the rare ghost and cigar orchids, panthers, manatees, mangrove fox squirrels, everglades minks, wood storks and roseate spoonbills. Thank you sincerely for your partnership and activism.

This year, in the work of restoring, preserving, and supporting the wildlands and waterways of the Park, the need is great. \$100,000 is needed for our support initiatives. Please take a moment to review the Friends of Fakahatchee funding needs for 2022 and please consider making a large gift this year. Together we are making impressive gains for the preservation of Florida's natural ecosystems.

If you have any questions about Friends of Fakahatchee or its projects, please contact me at 239-992-5963 or Francine Stevens, FOF Executive Director at 239-695-1023.

Sincerely,

Tom Maish
President



Renovation of Janes Scenic Drive Visitor's Center

Renovation of Janes Memorial Scenic Drive Visitor's Center: This Visitor's Center is the first stop for many Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park visitors along the historic Janes Memorial Scenic Drive - an old logging tram road that cuts through the heart of the Fakahatchee strand for approximately 11 miles. The truly wild Florida experience on Janes Memorial Scenic Drive affords its visitors with the chance to encounter some of the imperiled plants and animals that call the park home, as well as enjoy the many recreational activities the park offers. The Visitor's Center provides a critical starting point where guests can meet, learn about the park's wildlife and beauty, and plan for the various adventures possible in the Fakahatchee. Today it remains closed until the Friends can finance the necessary renovation work required to re-open. This work is outside of the State's budget.



Boardwalk Expansion Project

The Friends have been instrumental in working with Florida legislators to secure funds and resources to expand The Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk all the way out to Lake Heron, which will include additional miles of trails and boardwalk, observation points and a new Visitor's Interpretive Educational Pavilion. The Friends are working with local artists to create and fund the educational video, Fakahatchee: Window on the Everglades, which will play in the new Visitor Pavilion. The video will educate visitors about Fakahatchee's importance in the Everglades ecosystem.



If you haven't yet opened your free AmazonSmile account, please take a few minutes to do so. Go to smile.amazon.com, then choose the Friends of Fakahatchee as your charity to receive the donations from your purchases. This works for your shopping all year round, and when more FOF members join in the donation parade, we'll see more money for our Park. Thank you!

Does your employer have a "Matching Gift" program?

Several of our members have taken advantage of their employer's matching program (General Electric, Exxon Mobil) for donations to not-for-profit organizations by sending us the "matching" form. We do the rest – it's that easy! We have revised our Membership Form with a reminder. See <https://tinyurl.com/chbpw75r>



FIDELITY CharitableSM

You can now donate to FOF via your Fidelity Investment account with a Charitable program called the Fidelity Giving Marketplace, the following link will provide you with more information. <https://www.fidelitycharitable.org/>

Charitable Remainder Trust

On January 1, 2020, the SECURE ACT (Setting Communities Up for Retirement Enhancement) became law. The law had an immediate and direct impact on estate planning for IRA's. The ability for the owner of a traditional IRA to stretch the taxable payments of their IRA over the lives of family members is no longer available. The SECURE ACT mandates that an IRA must be fully distributed by December 31 of the tenth year following the owners death. Attorneys and estate planners have been offering techniques to help their clients deal with this, resulting in the idea of naming a charitable remainder trust (CRT) as the beneficiary of some or all their IRA.

The tax savings of this technique are compelling. As CRTs are considered a qualified charity (just like Friends the Fakahatchee) for tax purposes, any amounts received by a CRT from an IRA are free of tax. This means you can take a tax deferred IRA dollar and have it become a forever tax free dollar and still provide an income to your family. To learn more, it is important to consult your Attorney or CPA to see if this technique makes sense for you.



Stay up to date with what's seen in the Strand on our FOF Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>



The Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation Citizen Support Organization, provides financial and volunteer support to preserve the unique ecology and cultural heritage of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and to educate the public about its importance. The Fakahatchee is the largest cypress strand in the world and the deepest slough in the greater Everglades.

The Ghost Writer, named after the endangered Ghost Orchid which blooms in the Preserve, is currently edited by Next Steps Collective, LLC, which also manages the Orchidswamp.org website. Contributions to Ghost Writer that relate directly to the

business and purpose of the Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc. are welcome. Please write news@orchidswamp.org, subject line: Ghostwriter.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR THE FRIENDS OF FAKAHATCHEE, A FLORIDA-BASED NONPROFIT CORPORATION (REGISTRATION NO. CH9223), MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE OR VISITING THEIR WEBSITE HERE (<https://csapp.800helpfla.com/>)

Miss an issue of the Ghostwriter? Visit the archives at <http://orchidswamp.org/about-fof/the-ghost-writer-archives/>.

Members make a difference.

Welcome to new members!

Sandra Bowyer, Southwest Ranches FL; Tricia Falk, Naples FL; Donald Tilton, Newaygo MI.

Membership total is 374.

Continued thanks to our

Lifetime Members:

Lifetime Preservers

Bruce & Janet Bunch

Lifetime Protectors

Kit & La Raw Maran

Lifetime Family

Members

Jan Bachrach

Richard & Sue Jagels

John and Pauly Kaiser

Tom & Judy Maish

Noel Nation

Jim & Peggy Phillips

Van & Jane Sayler

Glen & Laura Stacell

Lifetime Individual Members

Karen J. Berkley

Rita Bleasdale

Warner Blow

Elsie Caldwell

John Elting

Carolyn Ginther

Peter Haffenreffer

Don Harmon

Susan Hauze

Terry Heaps

Patty Huff

James Nici

Randy Parks

Mark Perro

Wendy Becker Payton

Ken Shapiro

John Spengler

Carol Vartanian

Become a Friend of the Fakahatchee

Visit <http://orchidswamp.org/support/memberships/>

Board Members

President – Tom Maish

Vice President – John Kaiser

Treasurer – Phil McGuire

Secretary – Glen Stacell

Tom DesFosses

Eric Foht

Richard Grannis

Zach Lombardo

Virginia Palmer Skok

Mark Perro

BOD meeting schedule

December 18, 2021

2022

January 16, 2022

February 20, 2022

March 19, 2022

Meetings are scheduled for 10:30 AM

Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at

FOF_90@hotmail.com or call

239-695-1023.

Ex-Officio

Bruce Bunch

John Elting

Dennis Giardina

Glen Stacell

Andrew Tyler

Francine Stevens

(Executive Director)

Our mailing address is:

Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.

PO Box 35, Everglades City, FL 34139