



Old Boardwalk is Closed!

Know before you go. Visit the State Park's website.

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park>

Have a question before you visit the park?

The Park Office has a new phone number: 239-961-1925

President and Executive Director letter

This year, on Saturday March 11th, Florida's State Park District 4 is sponsoring a Volunteer Appreciation Picnic at Koreshan State Park in Estero

(<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/koreshan-state-park>). *Reservations are required.*

We will not host the Fakahatchee volunteer picnic this year, because this celebration is so close to our usual volunteer picnic date. Instead, **we are encouraging all FOF volunteers to attend the District 4 event.** It will offer many unique attractions and the chance to meet and share ideas with volunteers from other parks.

The District 4 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic will begin at 10AM and end at 3PM. The schedule includes these opportunities:

10AM to 1PM – historic building tours, kayaking, musical performances on an 1885 Steinway piano, blacksmith and machinery demonstrations.

1PM to 3PM – catered lunch and award ceremony.

Reservations are required. If you did not receive your volunteer appreciation invitation, sent a couple of weeks ago, please e-mail Executive Director Francine Stevens at FOF_90@hotmail.com. We look forward to seeing you at Koreshan State Park.

Cordially,

Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens



Election 2023 Members Annual Meeting

The slate of nominees will be e-mailed to the membership to cast their votes the first week of March. The Members Annual Meeting to announce the result of the Election will be held at the park office on Saturday, March 18 at 11AM.

If you plan to attend, please e-mail Executive Director Francine Stevens at FOF_90@hotmail.com no later than the March 16th. The result of the election will be published on the March newsletter.

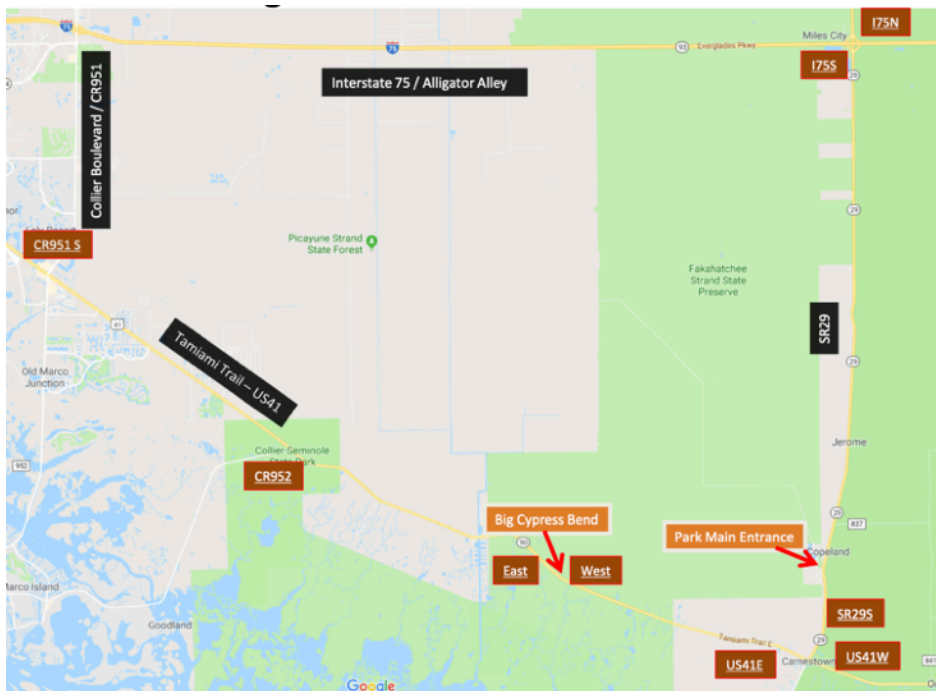
News from the Strand

Signs here – signs there – signs everywhere!

Finally anyone who wishes to visit the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park – coming from any direction – will be guided by signs, thanks to the Florida Department of Transportation. Prior to the placement of these signs, there were only three small signs giving directions to the main entrance of the Park Office via Janes Scenic Drive. Park Managers have long wished for good directional signage to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk and Janes Scenic Drive.



Two of the new signs. Visit <https://orchidswamp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/New-Road-Signs-Jan-2023.pdf> to view photos of all the signs at their locations.



Map showing the placement of the 11 new large signs.

In 2022 this project became a Friends formal Citizen's Support Organization (CSO) goal. Andrew Tyler drafted proposed signs with wording and specific locations to be used as a reference. Park Manager Allen Murray approved the verbiage and locations.

Tom Maish then initiated a calling campaign to get FDOT Officials interested and involved. Tom's prior experience in requesting the deceleration lane on US 41 for the new Boardwalk entrance led to a call to L.K. Nandam, District Secretary of District One. Director Nandam had his Director of Transportation Operations, Keith Slater, contact Tom and the conversation about the importance of directional signs to the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park (Florida's largest) commenced.

District Traffic Engineers Mark Mathis, Walter Breuggerman, and Troy Norwood met with Allen, Andrew, and Tom for a Zoom meeting to discuss various locations, what was needed, and how to conform to US Department of Transportation regulations required for Federal Highways.

This meeting led Troy Norwood and his Team of Engineering Technicians Jason Allen, Jonah Johnson, and Daniel Vasquez to design each sign meeting FOF's request of content, distance, and locations while complying to the various regulations mandated.

After many meetings to iron out verbiage and locations the result: Directional signs in almost every location the Friends requested! *Our sincere thanks to the FDOT Team!*

Seen in the Strand

February Night Sky event observes Green Comet

Phil Mc Guire's February Night Sky event to observe the Green Comet was a great success. Everyone was thrilled to witness Comet C 2022 E3. The Green Comet was discovered in March 2022 by astronomers using the Zwicky Transient Facility's wide-field survey camera at the Palomar Observatory in San Diego County, California. It was last visible in the night sky during the late Stone Age — about 50,000 years ago – and will not be seen again for another 50,000 years! *All photos by Phil McGuire.*



Phil McGuire welcomes all to the Green Comet Night Sky event.



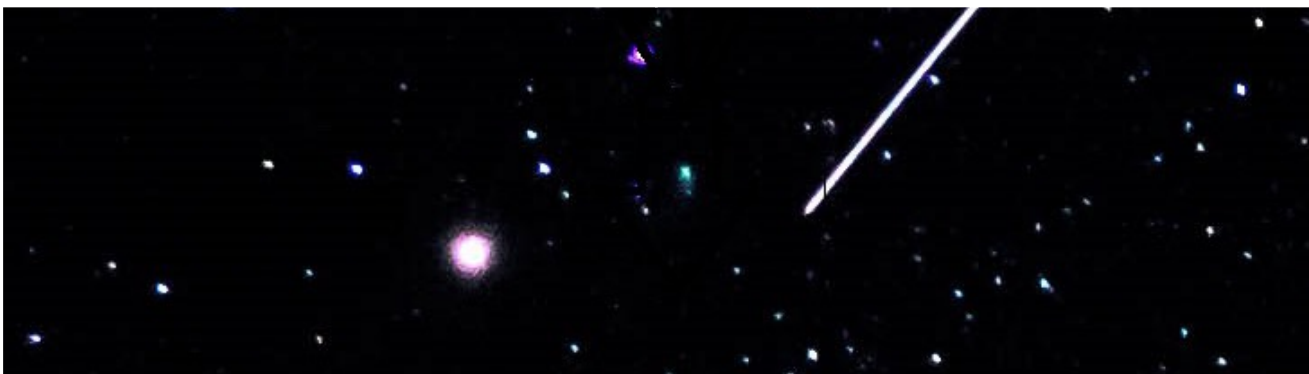
David Strong kindly shared his high-tech equipment with everyone.



Attendees all waited with excited anticipation.



Beautiful sunset before the Green Comet show.



The Green Comet is visible in the center of this photo.

Tickets still available for rest of the season

The Friend's fabulous Tours tickets are still available, thanks to our fabulous volunteers.

You can purchase tickets on Eventbrite at

<https://tinyurl.com/4dh6ycms>

- Sign up for monthly **Night Sky Experience** tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/5h9t5c9z>.
- A few tickets are still available for the **April Moonlit Tour**. <https://tinyurl.com/2s8fryxb>
- **Morning Tram Tours** are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/r6eauerj>
- Click below for tickets to the **Introduction to Swamp Walks at Six Pipe Slough**. <https://tinyurl.com/ykm3tupd>

We applaud our fabulous Volunteers for the generosity of their time, expertise, camaraderie and good cheer, they are the reason for our continued success!



The Night Sky Experiences are not exclusively for photographers. The evening is open to everyone who just wants to spend an evening under the Fakahatchee's starry night sky. Select your date and purchase tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/5h9t5c9z>.

Gordon Saager leads Swamp Walk with Ruth Brooks

FoF Guide Gordon Saager recently led local naturalist Ruth Brooks on a swamp walk. Ruth is known on Sanibel for advocating increased use of Florida native plants in landscaping. Rita Bauer photographed these high points of the Swamp Walk.



A beautiful day for a Swamp Walk.



Ruth and Gordon pose with a Dingy Star orchid in bloom.



It's always a good time to join the FOF Tours Team. Are you interested in guiding or assisting FOF Tours, but wonder what's involved?

To learn, you can join our tours as a guest and shadow a Guide or Assistant until you feel comfortable taking the lead.

For more information call Francine at 239-695-1023, or visit our Volunteer page at <https://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>.

Donation Strategies by Chris Gair

In spite of ongoing legislative gridlock in Congress – and with little hope of any progress – there is one matter where we see bipartisan agreement. America's ability to fund the retirement costs of future generations is a critical issue.

This is the first of two offerings on the new **SECURE 2.0** law which attempts to create saving opportunities for the offspring of the baby boomers. For our donors it is important to know that this new law continues to offer one the very best ways to fund your gifts. Whether from your annual required distributions or through your estate plan, Qualified Charitable Distributions remain hard to beat.

Here are some highlights of **SECURE 2.0**, which was signed into law December 26, 2022:

Mandatory IRA distributions now start at age 73 for participants turning 73 between 2023 and 2035. Certain trusts may have a charitable beneficiary (read the Friends). In previous articles we've discussed Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs) for family members. SECURE 2.0 allows a trust to be created for a "disabled or chronically ill" person and still name a charity as the ultimate beneficiary. This is an important but complex provision of the new law that offers many benefits but requires expert guidance.

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs). Starting this year, people age 70 ½ and older may elect as part of their Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) a one-time gift of up to \$50,000 to a charitable remainder trust. This amount will be adjusted annually for inflation. This offers some great opportunities for families to achieve both current benefits for children and to meet their charitable goals.

Complex and confusing? You bet, but the message is clear – **SECURE 2.0** offers opportunities to make the very most of tax efficient gifting to the Friends. It's worth learning more from your tax advisor.

Mr. Chris Gair of Fort Myers is providing the FOF with thoughts and ideas in the ever-changing world of charitable giving. Mr. Gair is retired after 48 years as a Trust Officer in Southwest Florida and is a member of the FOF Fundraising Committee.

As with all matters financial, always consult with your attorney or tax advisor.

"Matching Gift" programs

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!



You can now donate to FOF via your Fidelity Investment account with a Charitable program called the Fidelity Giving Marketplace. Follow this link for more information: <https://www.fidelitycharitable.org/>

**To Donate via the Friend's website,
visit www.Orchidswamp.org**

Membership News

Board Members

President – Glen Stacell
Vice President – John Kaiser
Treasurer – Phil McGuire
Secretary – Virginia Palmer Skok

Eric Foht
Zach Lombardo
Mark Perro
Tom Trotta

Ex-Officio

Bruce Bunch
John Elting
Dennis Giardina
Andrew Tyler

Francine Stevens
(Executive Director)

Board of Directors meeting schedule

March 18, 2023
April 16, 2023
May 21, 2023

Meetings are scheduled
for 10:30 AM

Contact the Friends of
Fakahatchee at
FOF_90@hotmail.com or
call 239-695-1023.

Our mailing address is:
Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.
PO Box 35
Everglades City, FL 34139

Members make a difference!

Welcome new members: Marilyn Brooks, Scott Olle, and Gregory Shifflett.

We are grateful for our 372 members.

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

Become a Friend of the Fakahatchee!
<https://orchidswamp.org/support/memberships/>



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<https://www.instagram.com/friendsoffakahatchee/>

***Share your pictures and stories about your
visit to the Fakahatchee.***

E-mail your shots to connect@orchidswamp.org

Add hashtags to show up in existing collections:
#fakahatcheestrland, #friendsoffakahatchee,
#fakahatcheestrlandpreservestatepark



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/>)

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.