



The 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

More Volunteers are needed to guide the Friends Tram tours.

One of the Friends' significant sources of revenue to support the Park is the Friends Tours Program that is already celebrating 10 years of success. In order to continue our success into the next decade we will need more guides for the Tram Tours.

In recent years John Kaiser has been the principal guide for the tram tours. Last tour season John guided 98% of the tours. It stands to reason John should not be expected to continue guiding tours at the rate he has since the winter of 2021 – over two years ago!

A Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science is **not required** to guide the Tram Tour. The Tram Tours' objective is to raise awareness and educate our guests about the Fakahatchee and the Friends mission to support the Park in a relaxed atmosphere; it is not a science class. Basic skills such as engaging communication, organization, punctuality, enjoying interaction with the public – along with a sense of humor and patience – will get you off to a good start.

And what about all the information a Guide needs to know? This fall an interpretive handbook derived from John Kaiser's narrative will be available along with a few training sessions. Interested individuals will also join Tram Tours as observers and/or assistants to the Guide until they are comfortable to take the lead – on the job training at its best!

Friday Morning Tram Tour season begins in December 2023 and runs thru mid-April 2024.

For more information contact Francine Stevens at 239-695-1023 or e-mail FOF_90@hotmail.com

*Cordially,
Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens*



News from the Strand



Park Biologist Mike Owen's Legacy

by Virginia Palmer Skok

FOF Vice President Virginia Palmer Skok penned a wonderful article which was recently published by the Coastal Breeze News about the career of Fakahatchee Biologist Mike Owen. An excerpt follows:

"It felt like I won the lottery," states Mike Owen when he recounts getting a job at the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. He recently retired this summer after thirty years of serving as Park Biologist for Florida's biggest state park by land size.

Owen is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable and gladly shares his knowledge and passion with all that are interested. I had the unique pleasure of working for Mike on endangered Ghost Orchids and vascular plant research in the Everglades since 2019. "That's where the fun is, out in the swamp where all the tropical epiphytes hang out, working on conservation collaboration," said Owen. "Most of the good, rare, interesting stuff is located far away from easy. As it is in life, to get to the good stuff it takes effort and time to get to the intellectual rewards, feeling of well-being and making a contribution."

While at the Preserve, Owen worked on many conservation projects including the collection of wildlife surveys. He worked on endangered plant monitoring, bird counts, hydrology projects, invasive plant projects, prescribed burns and other biology projects. He provided swamp walks and even traveled to Cuba for the Preserve as part of a conservation effort on orchid research funded by Friends of the Fakahatchee.

Read the rest of the the article in the Coastal Breeze here. <https://tinyurl.com/mikeowens>

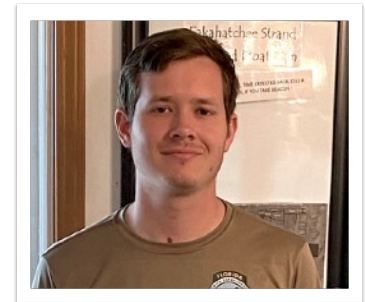
Calling all Volunteers!



Alex Gobel is ready and waiting for your call or e-mail regarding volunteer opportunities to assist Park Staff working in the Park. There are opportunities for many kinds of help! Work such as greeting and orienting visitors – and in the near future volunteering at the new Boardwalk site – are needed and can be enjoyed by anyone who prefers less strenuous tasks. Projects such as clearing trails, wildlife and plant surveys, equipment maintenance and more are always in need of volunteers. Park Staff will provide you with the training to conduct surveys and/or operate equipment safely to work in the field.

**You can contact Alex by e-mail at
Alex.gobel@floridadep.gov**

or you can phone him at 239-359-4927.



Donation Strategies by Chris Fair

Myths that surround charitable gifting

The Internal Revenue Service offers several publications that provide guidance on all aspects of what we call “The Code” (referring to the Internal Revenue Code). It’s the written law of the land. Here, we’re going to discuss myths, with one being that The Code is 70,000 pages long. While complicated beyond reason, The Code is in fact some 2,600 pages in length: quite enough thank you very much.

IRS Publication number 526 (only 74 pages!) outlines in some detail the complexities of charitable gifting. For those willing to tackle it (online) you’ll see it’s actually informative and well written. From it, and with the help of tax professionals who deal with this daily, we can dispel myths about your support of Friends of the Fakahatchee. Here they are:

Myth 1 – My charitable gift will always reduce my taxes. No, not even close. Only 10% of us itemize our deductions that reduces our taxable income. BUT, if we give from our IRA Required Annual Distributions, we do reduce our taxable income regardless of whether or not we itemize.

Myth 2 – I have no say in where my donation goes. That’s between you and the charity. You can work with your charity to direct your gift for a specific purpose or simply make it “unrestricted” so the management of the charity decides. At Friends, if you have something in mind, let’s talk.

Myth 3 – So much of my donation goes to “administrative expenses and fund raising.” As a donor or potential donor, you’re entitled to know all the numbers. At Friends, I know you will be pleased to see that we are careful, frugal, and experienced about putting your dollars to the best of use.

Myth 4 – It’s always best to give cash. Again, no. If you have appreciated stocks, an IRA, insurance policies or mutual funds, it may to your advantage to give anything but cash. The answer is specific to your tax situation and the folks at Friends working with your tax advisor will provide the best answer.

I hope this helps. From all of us at Friends, we cannot say thank you enough for your support. It is no myth that the Fakahatchee Strand offers us all one of Nature’s most magnificent gifts..

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

Members make a difference!

No New Members.

We have 364 members.

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



Visit the Fakahatchee via
FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Follow us!

<https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>
<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:
[#fakahatcheestrand](#), [#friendsoffakahatchee](#),
[#fakahatcheestrandpreservestatepark](#)

Board Members

President – Glen Stacell
Vice Pres. – Virginia Palmer Skok
Secretary – Tom Trotta
Treasurer – Phil McGuire

Wally Baldwin
Rudi Ettrich
Eric Foht
John Kaiser
Debra Tayler

Ex-Officio

Bruce Bunch
Dennis Giardina
Tom Maish

Executive Director

Francine Stevens

Board of Directors meeting schedule

Sept 17, 2023
Oct 15, 2023
Nov 19, 2023
Dec 16, 2023

Meetings are scheduled
for 10:30 AM

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

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/>.

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