



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

Our **Welcome Back Luncheon picnic is set for Saturday, December 16**. We will be celebrating the Friends 25th Anniversary. In November our members will receive a special bulletin to purchase their tickets for the luncheon and to pre-order our special 25th Anniversary Edition hats and T-shirts. The event will be in the Park under the pole barn.

Facebook scam. It was brought to our attention that a scammer is offering clothing with the FOF logo for sale; this is a scam. The scammer simply photoshopped the FOF logo on a sweatshirt. We blocked the scammer from posting on the FOF Facebook, but as you know scammers find ways to change their identity so this scam may resurface. Wiggins State Park reports they have also been scammed. It's easy to verify before you buy, just call the office at 239-495-1023 or email at FOF_90@hotmail.com.

As per Article XI of the Friends By-Laws, we are informing our members that changes to the By-Laws will be on the Board of Director's October 15 meeting agenda. Members may request a copy of the By-Laws via e-mail at FOF_90@hotmail.com.

We close our letter with a message of appreciation to everyone who responded to our call to help with the Friends Tours program. We are encouraged with your support that promises another successful Tour season.

*Cordially,
Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens*



Save the Date!



Save Saturday, December 16 for the Annual Welcome Back Luncheon picnic. This year we are celebrating the Friends 25th Anniversary! Members will receive a special bulletin in November with more details about the event. The event will be in the Park under the pole barn.

Tickets now on sale for 2023-2024 Tours

Thanks to our fabulous Volunteers, the Friends Tours program is scheduled. To view the complete schedule of all tours October through mid-April 2024 – and to purchase tickets – please visit this link to reach the FOF Eventbrite page: <https://tinyurl.com/FOFtours>.

You can also go directly to the FOF Eventbrite page for each tour by using the link for each tour. Remember! Tickets go fast – and they make terrific gifts!



The season begins with the first Night Sky Tour on Saturday, October 7 – <https://tinyurl.com/night-sky-tour>. Photo by Elizabeth Williams.



The first Moonlit Tram Tour will be on Saturday, October 28 – <https://tinyurl.com/moonlit-tram>. Photo by Glen Stacell.



Friday Morning Tram Tours begin on December 1 – <https://tinyurl.com/tram-tour> Photo by Francine Stevens.



Advance Swamp Walk Saturday Tours start January 20 – <https://tinyurl.com/swamp-walk> Photo by Andy Skok.

Fishing in the Fakahatchee

by FOF member Chris Duerksen

With permission, we are sharing Chris' article about fishing in the Fakahatchee, which was published in the Florida Sportsman magazine. To read more of this great article go to <https://tinyurl.com/fishing-the-fak>.

“The Fakahatchee Strand Preserve offers a trifecta of freshwater lakes, brackish canals and ponds, and saltwater tidal creeks with a smorgasbord of fish ranging from lunker largemouth and peacock bass, to snook and tarpon, not to mention outsized oscars and hard-fighting redfish”.



News from the Strand

Fakahatchee Strand Bio Blitz 2023/2024

Come out to the beautiful Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and help gather vital data on wildlife trends. This year the Bio Blitz will be held from November through May of 2024. This is a great opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and learn more about the abundant wildlife that calls Fakahatchee Strand home. **The data you collect is important to ongoing research and conservation efforts.**

The dates will be:

- November 15th
- December 13th
- January 10th
- February 7th
- March 13th
- April 10th
- May 8th

We will meet at the Park office (past the gate beside the visitor center) by 7:45am. Data collection starts at 8:30am. Sites are indicated by distance in miles north of Gate 1 (water treatment facility). The volunteer at each site will document the following for observed animals:

- Date
- Time
- Animal observed
- Direction of animal's travel
- Observer comments (Life stage, size, health, Male/Female etc.)

If you are interested – or if you have questions – contact Fakahatchee Strand Volunteer Coordinator Alex Gobel by e-mailing alex.gobel@floridadep.gov or by calling the office phone at 239-961-1925.

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

Wealth requires discipline

Aretha Franklin's (Michigan) will – found in a spiral notebook stuffed in a couch – would have never seen the light of day let alone a courtroom in Florida. It is state law that governs our property rights with strict rules about what is a Will and what is not. Witness attestation is a must in Florida. The obvious lesson, a DIY last Will and Testament is recipe for disaster.

And so, too with the Internal Revenue Code when it comes to getting the tax benefit from making a gift from our IRA to Friends. Here are the rules:

- You must be over 70 ½.
- Only IRAs are eligible, not 401(k)s or the like.
- The funds must be fully taxable income to qualify.
- The funds must go directly to the charity. No stopping along the way in your checking account.
- The maximum you can contribute is \$100,000 per year.
- The charity must provide a written confirmation of the gift confirming the source is your IRA.

With this in mind, you can be assured of a good result. As discussed here, the transaction is called a Qualified Charitable Distribution or QCD. And with less than 10% of taxpayers itemizing (I suspect a much higher percentage for those over 70 ½), it makes sense to discuss with your tax advisor.

And please, see an estate planning attorney to avoid having a judge decide who gets what.

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 financial matters, 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!

Welcome new members: Jason Brookes, Matthew & Amber Shields, Carol Spagnolo & Norma Gordon.

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:
[#fakahatcheestrans](#), [#friendsoffakahatchee](#),
[#fakahatcheestranspreservestatepark](#)

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

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 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