



The Ghost Writer

Newsletter of the Friends of Fakahatchee
Visit our website at www.orchidswamp.org
Email the Friends at Office@FOFinc.org

The Ghost Writer – March-April 2025

Questions before visiting the park?
Call the park office at 239-961-1925 and check the Park's website.
<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park>

Annual Meeting Lines up 2025 FOF Leadership

The Friends Annual Organizational meeting took place as scheduled on March 29th at the Park office. The Officers elected by the Board are Glen Stacell as President, Debra Taylor as Vice President, Carol Spagnolo as Secretary and Phil McGuire as Treasurer. Directors serving on the Board are Kevin Cunniff, Rudi Ettrich, Deborah Jansen, Maria Sentmanat, Virginia Palmer Skok and Tom Trotta. The Board appointed Bruce Bunch and Tom Maish as Ex-officio members of the Board.

From left to right, on the picture:

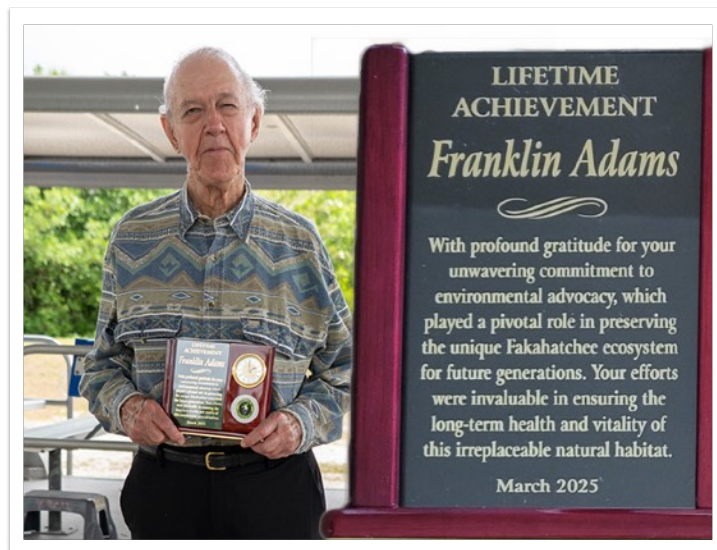
Phil McGuire, Maria Sentmanat, Deborah Jansen, Tom Trotta, Glen Stacell, Virginia Palmer Skok, Debra Taylor, and Carol Spagnolo. Not shown, Kevin Cunniff and Rudi Ettrich.



Special Recognition Awards.

Lifetime Achievement Award to Franklin Adams

Glen Stacell, President of the Friends Board of Directors, presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Franklin Adams in recognition of his dedication to saving the Fakahatchee from imminent destruction for real estate development.



In the 1960s, due to his profound understanding of the Fakahatchee, Franklin became instrumental in Mel Finn's efforts to prevent its destruction. Following Mel Finn's sudden death in 1971, Franklin assumed leadership and successfully convinced Nathaniel Reed, then Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, to preserve the Fakahatchee. The state made its first purchase of land to establish the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park in June 1974.



The Friends Board of Directors, along with Park Manager Joe Berger (above), followed the suggestion of former Board member Jim Woodward to permanently recognize Franklin's achievement. Park Manager Joe Berger announced that the Gate 2 hiking trail will be named for Adams and Reed this year, accompanied by the installation of a small kiosk.

Former Board Member Jim Woodward assists Franklin during his address to the Friends Group.



Franklin thanks his wife Kathy for her support through the years. Grandson Michael, daughter Heather and fiancé Bob.

Excellence Award to Marya Repko

Former Board President Patty Huff and Executive Director Francine Stevens presented the Excellence Award to membership Secretary Marya Repko at her residence. In the 2003 newsletter President Patty Huff announced "one of our new members this year, Marya Repko, has agreed to become our new membership chairperson and will take over the duties that Karrie Chobot and Patty Huff have been doing in the past year. Marya has very good organizational skills and is very effective in getting the work done."

Marya will retire from her membership responsibilities this summer, making this award a timely gesture to recognize 22 years of dedication.



Friends Annual Organization Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation picnic



Everyone is comfortable under the pole barn.



Carol Spognolo and Debra Taylor help with the food service.

Tickets available for the end of the season

Last Moonlit tour on April 12



To take the last Moonlit Tram Tours April 12, 2025 visit <https://tinyurl.com/FOFmoonlit-tram>. Photo by Glen Stacell.

Last Night Sky tour on April 26



The Night Sky sessions offer limited access to the Fakahatchee after park hours to observe interesting formation of planets and stars. Night Sky sessions were offered monthly through April 2025. For tickets, go to <https://tinyurl.com/night-sky-Fak>. Photo by Elizabeth William.

News from the Strand

The Facts on the Fakahatchee

The annual 'Park Facts' is prepared by the Florida State Parks Foundation. To access all State Parks Facts visit <https://floridastateparksfoundation.org/impact/park-impact-sheets/>.



Work is Play for Friends of Fakahatchee Volunteers



Gordon Saager (left in blue shirt) leads the Introduction to Swamp Walk for the Naples Womens Club. Photo courtesy of Naples Woman's Club.



Tom and Debbie Trotta representing the Friends at Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge Day.



Gordon Saager and Debra Taylor teamed up to develop a docent program that will enhance the boardwalk visitor experience.

Seen in the Strand

March 1 Night Sky Delights



A beautiful sunset sets the stage for nightfall. All photos by Phil McGuire.



Andy Padla sets up a telescope.



The March night sky reveals its wonders.

Volunteer to assist Park Staff

April 16th Last 2024/2025 Fakahatchee Strand Bio Blitz

Join us out in the beautiful Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and help gather vital data on wildlife trends.

Volunteers will meet Alex Gobel at the Park office (past the gate beside the visitor center) by 7:45am. Data collection starts at 8:30am.

Observation sites will be indicated by distance in miles north of Gate 1 (water treatment facility). Each site will document the following:

- Date & Time
- Animal observed
- Direction of animal's travel
- Observer comments about the wildlife (life stage, size, health, male/female etc.)

We recommend you bring a chair, compass, binoculars, and a camera. You will be at your station for 2 hours, so bring plenty of water and snacks. 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 are important to ongoing research and conservation efforts.



Park staff also need your help to clear trails, tend the butterfly garden, help with repairs and general maintenance, and much more.

Individuals interested in helping Park staff should contact Alex Gobel, Fakahatchee Volunteer Coordinator.
Email: alex.gobel@floridadep.gov or Call: (239)-961-1925

Volunteering for Friends takes many forms

Do you love the Fakahatchee? Do you enjoy talking with people? Whether you prefer mornings, afternoons, or evenings, there are many ways to help. Even a few hours each week can benefit the Friends (and benefit you, too). For more information regarding the Friends volunteer opportunities, please contact Francine Stevens at 239-695-1023 or e-mail at Office@FOFinc.org.

Guides for the Friends Tour Program

Swamp Walk guides. Swamp Walks require guides with specific skills and knowledge to accommodate the demand we receive for Swamp Walks.

Volunteer at the renovated Visitor Center off Janes Scenic Drive

Volunteer to process the sale of Friends merchandise to raise funds to support the park. The Friends will train volunteers on how to operate the credit card point sales device. Additionally, volunteers will welcome and provide visitors with information to better experience their visit to the park.

Friends of Fakahatchee Representatives at the Boardwalk

For this volunteer opportunity our main objective is to have a Friends of Fakahatchee presence at the new Boardwalk site. The Friends presence will help promote membership, donations, and volunteerism. Without our presence what the Friends organization does for the park is a secret. The Friends will provide training.

- Volunteers can be stationed at a table to welcome visitors.
- Volunteer to guide tours on the Boardwalk.
- Volunteer to roam the Boardwalk, answer questions, point out interesting things to visitors.

For more information regarding the Friends volunteer opportunities, please contact Francine Stevens at 239-695-1023 or e-mail at Office@FOFinc.org.

History Corner: Sixth Installment

By Francine Stevens, Executive Director, Friends of Fakahatchee

In the summer of 2023 Franklin Adams gave me two boxes of fragile historical documents: his documents and Mel Finn's documents.

Newspaper and magazine articles along with correspondence dating back to 1959 detail their pursuit to save the Fakahatchee from real estate development. Jane Parks also turned over documents she had kept since the 1960's when she too was involved in saving the Fakahatchee.

Over 800 documents were scanned by Andrew Tyler and myself. These are now saved in the Friends' "Cloud" archives for safe keeping. This is the fifth installment of sharing the most interesting documents recording their efforts, set backs, and progress.

1964 was a very active year in the efforts to save to save the Fakahatchee. It was also the summer when Mrs. Jane Parks of Naples "dropped in" to Mel Finn's office to introduce herself.

Document 13 – May 29 1964 – Mrs. Parks Appointed Co-Chair of Fakahatchee Strand Committee

Mel Finn responds to Mrs. Parks in May 1964, announcing her appointment as Co-Chair of the Fakahatchee Strand Committee of Nature Conservancy.

May 29, 1964

Mrs. Ben Parks
140 Second Avenue, South
Naples, Florida

Dear Mrs. Parks:

The day I talked to you, I sent you about 500 copies of the Fakahatchee pamphlets.

This letter confirms your appointment as Co-Chairman of the Fakahatchee Strand Committee of Nature Conservancy. I am extremely gratified that you are taking the initiative in promoting support of the Fakahatchee Strand project.

Several newspapers have published articles on the Fakahatchee recently. Alex D. Hawkes, distinguished botanist and editor of the Tropic magazine, in an editorial to be published soon, writes, "Fakahatchee ... is the home of weirdly beautiful Pond-Apple thickets where almost all of Florida's one hundred native orchids, eighteen native bromeliads and one hundred fifty kinds of native ferns grow. A considerable portion of these can be found no where else in the United States...". Dr. Leonard J. Brass, authoritative botanist, describes the Fakahatchee as an oasis, where West Indian, Central American and Temperate flora intermingle, protected from fires in a watery environment, resulting in great variety and concentration of species like no where else in North America.

My wife and I plan to be in Naples Friday, June 12th. If you would like to call a meeting anytime during that weekend of the Fakahatchee Strand Committee, perhaps to meet at the Big Cypress Nature Center, I think it would be fine.

Enclosed is a list of those people who have contributed to the Fakahatchee Strand fund.

Sincerely,

Melvin Finn
South Florida Director
Florida Nature Conservancy

MF/ma
Enclosure

Document 14 - October 1964 - Mel Finn Describes meeting Mrs. Parks

Mel Finn recounts in a letter dated 8th of October about the first time he met Mrs. Parks. He writes, "Jane Parks, with her energy and enthusiasm, and I will succeed in preservation of the Fakahatchee. Of this I, feel certain."

FLORIDA NATURE CONSERVANCY
310 BISCAYNE BLDG., MIAMI 32, FLA.

October 8, 1964

Mr. Paul Bruce Dowling
3505 Cameron Hills Road
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Bruce:

I was happy to hear from you after so long. Good luck in your change of position.

No longer am I the president of the Florida chapter of the Nature Conservancy, but I seem to be doing as much as ever with all my activity concentrated on the Fakahatchee project. Jim Neville is the president of the Florida Nature Conservancy. I hope he turns out to be a good one.

When Dick Poe was at the annual meeting at Estero last April, he suggested that I approach the Sec. Udall about a possible national monument status for the Fakahatchee. Rather than a direct approach to him, I decided on an indirect approach through our senators and two key representatives. Senators Smathers and Holland and Reps. Fessell and Rogers, responded immediately with vigor. Subsequently Sec. Udall instructed the National Park Service to undertake a study of the area and report within 60 days. During August 19-22, I participated in the field study with Robert Squire and Ernie Schultz out of the Richmond office.

We are really moving now. Pushing hard for a FANKAHATCHEE STRAND WILDERNESS PARK under the Florida Outdoor Recreation Act passed last November 10, 1963, and also pushing hard for a FANKAHATCHEE STRAND WILDERNESS NATIONAL MONUMENT under the Interior Dept.. we are unrelenting in our efforts. My guess is that over 100 news releases have been printed on the Fakahatchee, not the least of which appeared in the New York Times dated September, 27, 1964.

One day last summer right after our Estero meeting, a lovely looking lady from Naples, Florida, dropped into my office to inquire about "conservation" and particularly about the Fakahatchee, which she had read about in my pamphlet. She turned out to be the most energetic and influential person on this project that I could possibly hope for. Her name is --

Mrs. Ben (Jane) Parks
865 Fifth Avenue South
Naples, Florida

Her husband is a well regarded attorney in Naples and she runs an office engaged in real estate in downtown Naples, known as Gulf Realty Co. I tell you this, because she is a dream come true, both beautiful to look at and beautiful in spirit. She has organized the Women's clubs, Jr. Clubs, really organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc., in a mass support of "saving the Fakahatchee". You and Dick can do no better than to write to her on conservation matters especially with regard to the Fakahatchee project.

Jane Parks, with her energy and enthusiasm, and I, will succeed in preservation of the Fakahatchee. Of this I, feel certain.

If you are not up-to-date, Florida enacted its outdoor recreation act last November, known as the Florida Outdoor Recreation Landrum Director.

This is headed by a planning committee headed by Roy C. Landrum, Director.

Florida Outdoor Recreational Planning Committee

Roster

Roy C. Landrum, Director
Tallahassee, Florida 32304

Hon. Ferris Bryant, Governor
Chairman

Hon. Doyle Conner, Commissioner of Agriculture
Vice Chairman

Hon. Randolph Hodges, Director, Fla. Board of Conservation

Mr. Wendell Jarrard, Chairman, Fla. Development Commission

Mrs. G. T. Smith, Chairman, Board of Parks & Historic Memorials
Route 5, Box 202, Ocala, Fla.

Mr. John Phillips, Chairman, State Road Department

Mr. Harous Rauls, President, Fla. Board of Forestry
P. O. Box 4910, Jacksonville, Fla.

Mr. Ed Nadill, Chairman, Fla. Game & Fish Comm.
401 North 7th Street, Dade City, Fla.

Note: All addresses are Tallahassee, Fla. unless otherwise indicated.

Since natural area acquisition is part of the outdoor program, 700,000 acres, mentioned in the publication, Florida Outdoor Recreation At The Crossroads, it would be appropriate if you and Dick would pitch in whenever you can to propagandize the planning committee.

I had been planning to write Dick Pough for some time. Perhaps you will permit me to send him a copy of this letter.

Sincerely
Melvin Finn
MELVIN FINN

P. S. You and Dick Poe are both on the Fakahatchee Strand Committee, in any capacity that you like to serve.

Membership News

Members make a difference!

Welcome new members: Marsha Dunvaly and Charles Tatroe.

We have 338 members.

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



Visit the Fakahatchee via FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

<https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>

[https://www.instagram.com/
friendsoffakahatchee/](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



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/>

Officers

Glen Stacell, President
Debra Taylor, Vice President
Carol Spagnolo, Secretary
Phil McGuire, Treasurer

Directors

Kevin Cunniff
Rudi Ettrich
Deborah Jansen
Maria Sentmanat
Virginia Palmer Skok
Tom Trotta
Bruce Bunch, Ex-Officio
Tom Maish, Ex-Officio
Francine Stevens, Executive Director

Board of Directors meeting schedule

April 27, 2025*
May 18, 2025
June 15, 2025
No meeting in July
August 17, 2025
September 21, 2025
October 19, 2025
November 16, 2025
December 20, 2025
*Date change

Meetings are scheduled
for 10:30 AM

Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at
office@fofinc.org 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](http://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.

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 or write to us at Office@FOFinc.org.