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

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

Message from the President

Another Successful Season!

As we begin our summer in the Fakahatchee I would like to start by expressing my sincere appreciation to our volunteers who once again made the 12th year of our Interpretive Tour Program a success. From October 2025 through mid-April 2026 our volunteers guided 38 tours and welcomed 365 people who might not have visited the park's Janes Scenic area in the absence of our tour program.

The tour program generated a revenue of $21,000 to support the Friends mission. As usual our volunteers were presented with some challenges – by mid-January the slough was already drying up, and a few Florida "cold fronts" kept the temperatures in the low 40's well into mid-February. We cancelled a few tours because of the weather, prioritizing the well-being of our volunteers and ensuring that visitors have a positive experience.

Phil McGuire kicked off the season in October 2025 with the first of his monthly *Night Sky* session and ended the season in late April with a special Night Sky session for a Digital Photography Club from Sarasota.

Carol Spagnolo guided the *Moonlit Tram Tours* and *Friday Tram Tours* assisted by Norma Gordon.

Ted DeGroot and Gordon Saager also guided *Friday Tram Tours* assisted by Ted Lock, Charlie Egli and Glen Stacell.

Gordon Saager guided a *Swamp Walk* for the Naples Men Alliance Club assisted by Debra Taylor.

Park Biologist Cole Luttrell guided the *Advanced Swamp Walks* assisted by Maria Sentmanat, Debra Taylor and Jacqueline Bayliss.

I would also like to acknowledge Glen Stacell, who launched the Interpretive Tour Program twelve years ago as well as mentoring our guides, and Bruce Bunch for promoting the tours with his press releases to the local newspapers.

Throughout the season, I focused on mentoring volunteers, greeting visitors and guiding walks at the Interpretive Pavilion and Boardwalk which received up to 400 visitors daily.

Visitors coming from the local area, across the U.S. and abroad appreciated the warm friendly welcome and informed guidance they received from the Friends volunteers. There is no doubt that their experience of 'The Fak' was greatly enriched as a result.

"Fun" – "…Love interacting with people" – "I've learned so much" are some of the comments expressed by the nine volunteers who, along with me, actively spent 330 hours representing the Friends and The Fak at the Interpretive Pavilion and Boardwalks.

Outstanding job everyone!

Jeanette Atkinson – Tuesdays tabling at the Pavilion.

Doug DeJarnatt – Boardwalk presence answering questions.

Michelle Dalton – Boardwalk presence, assisted guided walk, Visitor Center presence.

Judy Henzler – Boardwalk presence answering questions.

Andrew Tyler – Tabling at the Pavilion, assisted guided walk.

Glen Stacell – Tuesdays tabling at the Pavilion.

Martin Strasmore – Boardwalk.

Gordan Saager – Assisted guided walk.

Tom and Judy Maish – Wednesdays tabling at the Pavilion.

Our dedicated volunteers are essential to fulfilling our mission. We encourage everyone with a variety of talents, interests and backgrounds to join our Friends volunteer team. Volunteers this past season were supported with training and

mentoring regardless of what they chose to volunteer for. This included a formal Interpretive Techniques and Programs session delivered by Big Cypress National Preserve.

Looking forward to next season, we will be ramping up the Interpretive Tours Program schedule in October and organizing a season's kick-off orientation for all.

Please look below at 'Volunteering for the Friends programs takes many forms' and contact us to talk about opportunities that may interest you.

Enjoy the summer and the wonderful Fak!

Debra Taylor

President, Friends of Fakahatchee

News from the Strand

Welcome new Park Manager David Baniak

Congratulations to David Baniak for his promotion to the Fakahatchee Park Manager's position. David began his career in the Florida Park Service in 2020 as a Ranger at the Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park. Within the first year David was promoted to Park Service Specialist and focused on Volunteer Management.

Soon after accepting his role David was awarded the District 4 Ranger of the Year for his actions for completing 350' of boardwalk with volunteers. He also received the Valor Award for rescuing a visitor caught in a riptide. Over the span of 2 years David honed his leadership skills working with volunteers and working with park management.

In his third year he was promoted to Assistant Park Manager at Collier-Seminole State Park. Off the beach and in the woody swamps, David learned prescribed fire, different natural communities, and how a camping park operates.

One of his achievements at Collier-Seminole was the design and build-out of a Mobile Ranger Station and Administration Office. David was nominated and awarded the Secretary's Award of Distinction for 2025 for the success of this project and saving the Division hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Prior to the Florida Park Service, David served in the United States Army with two deployments to Iraq. After the military, he held retail management positions and owned and operated his own electrical business. His background in maintenance played a crucial role after two hurricanes made landfall in SWFL, which affected State Parks.

New Chickee Hut at Gate 12/East Main trail ready

Photo of Glen Stacell at the Chickee Hut taken by Francine Stevens.

Beyond providing a welcoming spot for our visitors, the Chickee Hut is already offering a much-needed shelter for Park staff and our dedicated volunteers as they carry out their important work in the field. ***A very special thank you to our members who responded to our Annual Appeal to make the Chickee Hut project a reality.***

Preservation – Capturing a Remarkable Encounter

by Debra Taylor

Truly wild Florida depends upon a connected habitat that gives wildlife room to roam. ‘The Fak’ joined the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation in 2024 to become part of the statewide network of connected lands supporting wildlife. Just after the entrance arch on Janes Scenic drive, we can see the Florida Wildlife Corridor marker, the first in the state, showing that you are entering protected lands that are part of the corridor.

The Fak’s 125 square miles or so of preserved land is surrounded by large natural areas which when combined, create the habitat and land area that the charismatic Florida panther needs for its ‘room to roam’. A female panther’s territory is about 75 sq. miles and a male’s is close to 225 sq. miles. Our preserve can accommodate about two females and one to two males moving through.

While in The Fak, it is one thing to know they are there, but it is an entirely different feeling to see one. Few have had the life-changing experience of observing one of these special beings in the wild.

We thank Ester Mellinger for sharing her experience with us in her own words here with a beautiful photo.

Panther sighting

by Ester Mellinger

"Today is the day... today I'm going to find a panther," I told my husband as I walked out the door yesterday morning in the dark.

I've spent months learning the signs, scrapes in the dirt, tracks pressed into soft sand, the smell of something wild passing through. Trading notes with fellow photographers, following clues that feel almost like a language. All of it matters. It builds your chances. But out there, it still comes down to one thing in the end; luck.

Yesterday, something was different, instead of taking my bike like I always do, I drove in. And instead of my usual routine of biking and then hiking, I walked the entire trail. When I got to my intended trail turnoff, something told me to keep going straight for a little while longer. Every tiny change, every small decision... it all lined up.

Because if I had been even a minute later, I would have missed her. She stepped into view like something out of a dream. Silent. Solid. Taller and darker than what I was scanning for and much closer.

And then she just stood there.

For a full minute, we looked at each other. I didn't move. I barely breathed. I took photo after photo, every frame nearly identical, because neither of us dared to break the moment. I was mesmerized by this beautiful cat staring back at me.

And then, she jumped onto the trail, trotted off and melted back into the forest, silently.

Gone.

I stood there afterwards, trying to process what had just happened. After all the searching, all the early mornings, all the near misses... it finally happened. And I'll be honest; I got a little emotional out there on that trail.

Sometimes, everything aligns. And for one quiet minute in the wild, you find exactly what you've been looking for. Yesterday was the day!

Follow along for the moment you can't plan... only hope to witness.

Special Night Sky session a success

On the 24th of April Phil McGuire scheduled a special Night Sky session in the Fakahatchee for the Lakewood Ranch Digital Photography Club. A special thank you to Pam Truitt for reaching out to us to make this possible for her club members.

Time lapse photo by Gunilla Imshaug.

Colorful photo by Lynette Beecher.

Seen in the Strand

Unusual visitor

Sergio Rodriguez caught a rare glimpse of a coyote in the Fakahatchee at the southernmost edge of its Florida range.

Volunteer Opportunities for the Friends of Fakahatchee

Do you love the Fakahatchee? Do you enjoy interacting with people? Whether you prefer mornings or afternoons there are many ways to help. Even a few hours each week can benefit the Friends (and benefit you, too).

Guides for the Friends Tour program

Swamp Walk Guides. Swamp Walks require guides with specific skills and knowledge to meet the public's demand.

Interpretive Tram Tour. We need guides for our popular Tram Tour. Guides and drivers for the Interpretive Tram Tour, extraordinary skills are not required, training will be provided.

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.

Volunteer 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 and answer visitors' questions.
- 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.

Volunteer to Assist Park Staff

Park Specialist Steven Bass is the Volunteer Coordinator

Steven Bass is also a "Burn Boss." He is a certified professional who plans, organizes and oversees prescribed burns.

Projects managed by Park Specialist Steven Bass, the Park Volunteer Coordinator, present various volunteer opportunities to work with and assist Park Staff, such as clearing trails, tending the butterfly garden, helping with repairs and general maintenance, and much more.

Steven will train volunteers to ensure safe operation of park equipment for trail clearing and maintenance projects. Additionally, lighter work is available on the Boardwalk to maintain its condition for our visitors.

If you are interested in volunteering to help Park Staff, you can e-mail Steven at: steven.bass@floridadep.gov or call him at (239) 253 6374.

History Corner

Tenth Installment

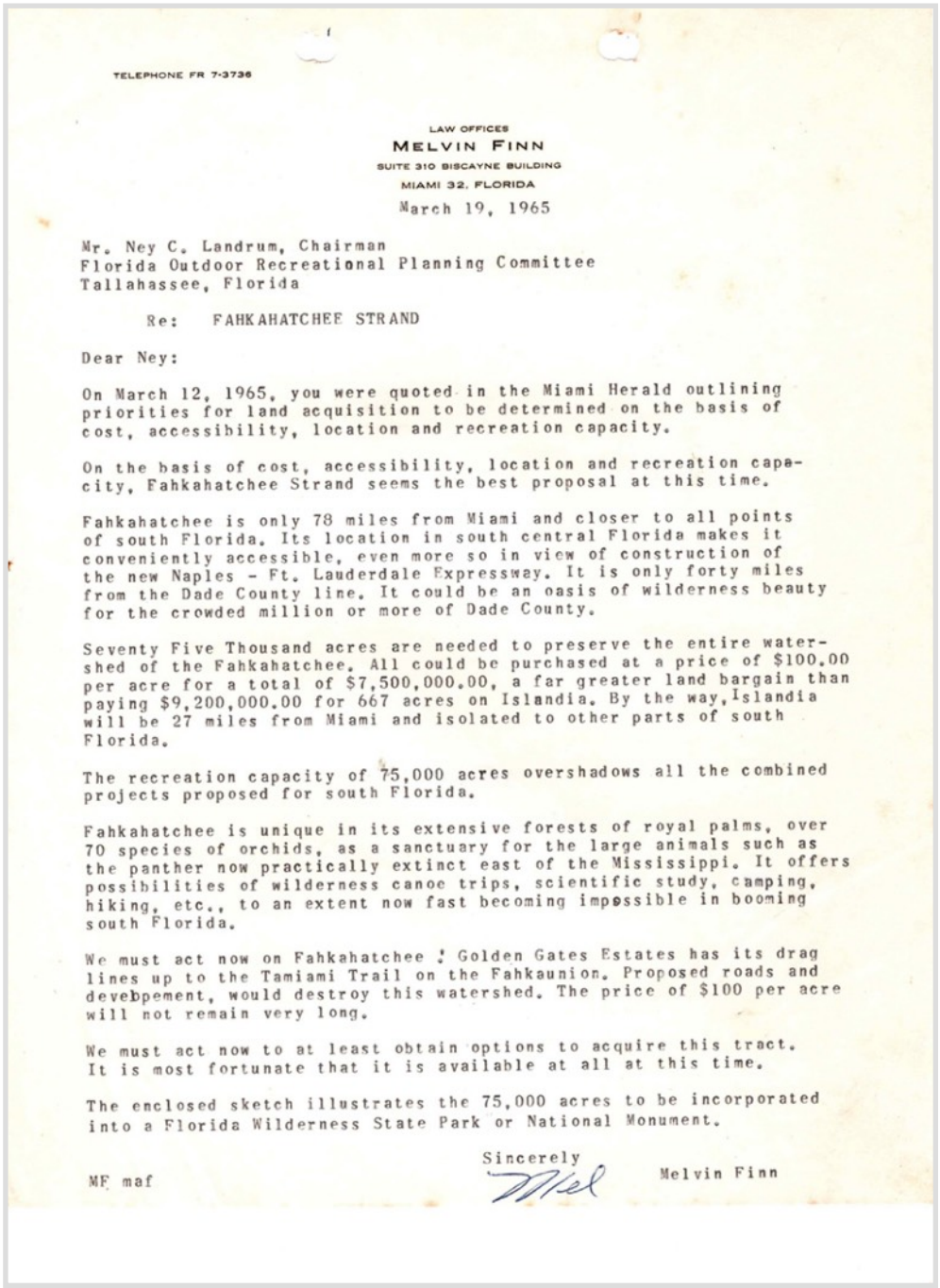
By Francine Stevens, Executive Director, Friends of Fakahatchee

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. We are sharing the most interesting documents recording their efforts, set backs, and progress.

In 1965, **Ney Landrum** was a prominent figure in Florida environmental and recreational planning, serving as the director of the Outdoor Recreational Planning Committee (ORPC). As Director of the ORPC, Landrum was involved in identifying land for state parks and recreational areas.

Document 23 – March 19, 1965 – Mel Finn writes to Ney Landrum, a FL State Official who was responsible for identifying land to acquire for state parks.



TELEPHONE FR 7-3736

LAW OFFICES
MELVIN FINN
SUITE 310 BISCAYNE BUILDING
MIAMI 32, FLORIDA

March 19, 1965

Mr. Ney C. Landrum, Chairman
Florida Outdoor Recreational Planning Committee
Tallahassee, Florida

Re: FAHKAHATCHEE STRAND

Dear Ney:

On March 12, 1965, you were quoted in the Miami Herald outlining priorities for land acquisition to be determined on the basis of cost, accessibility, location and recreation capacity.

On the basis of cost, accessibility, location and recreation capacity, Fahkahatchee Strand seems the best proposal at this time.

Fahkahatchee is only 78 miles from Miami and closer to all points of south Florida. Its location in south central Florida makes it conveniently accessible, even more so in view of construction of the new Naples - Ft. Lauderdale Expressway. It is only forty miles from the Dade County line. It could be an oasis of wilderness beauty for the crowded million or more of Dade County.

Seventy Five Thousand acres are needed to preserve the entire watershed of the Fahkahatchee. All could be purchased at a price of $100.00 per acre for a total of $7,500,000.00, a far greater land bargain than paying $9,200,000.00 for 667 acres on Islandia. By the way, Islandia will be 27 miles from Miami and isolated to other parts of south Florida.

The recreation capacity of 75,000 acres overshadows all the combined projects proposed for south Florida.

Fahkahatchee is unique in its extensive forests of royal palms, over 70 species of orchids, as a sanctuary for the large animals such as the panther now practically extinct east of the Mississippi. It offers possibilities of wilderness canoe trips, scientific study, camping, hiking, etc., to an extent now fast becoming impossible in booming south Florida.

We must act now on Fahkahatchee ! Golden Gates Estates has its drag lines up to the Tamiami Trail on the Fahkaunion. Proposed roads and devebpement, would destroy this watershed. The price of $100 per acre will not remain very long.

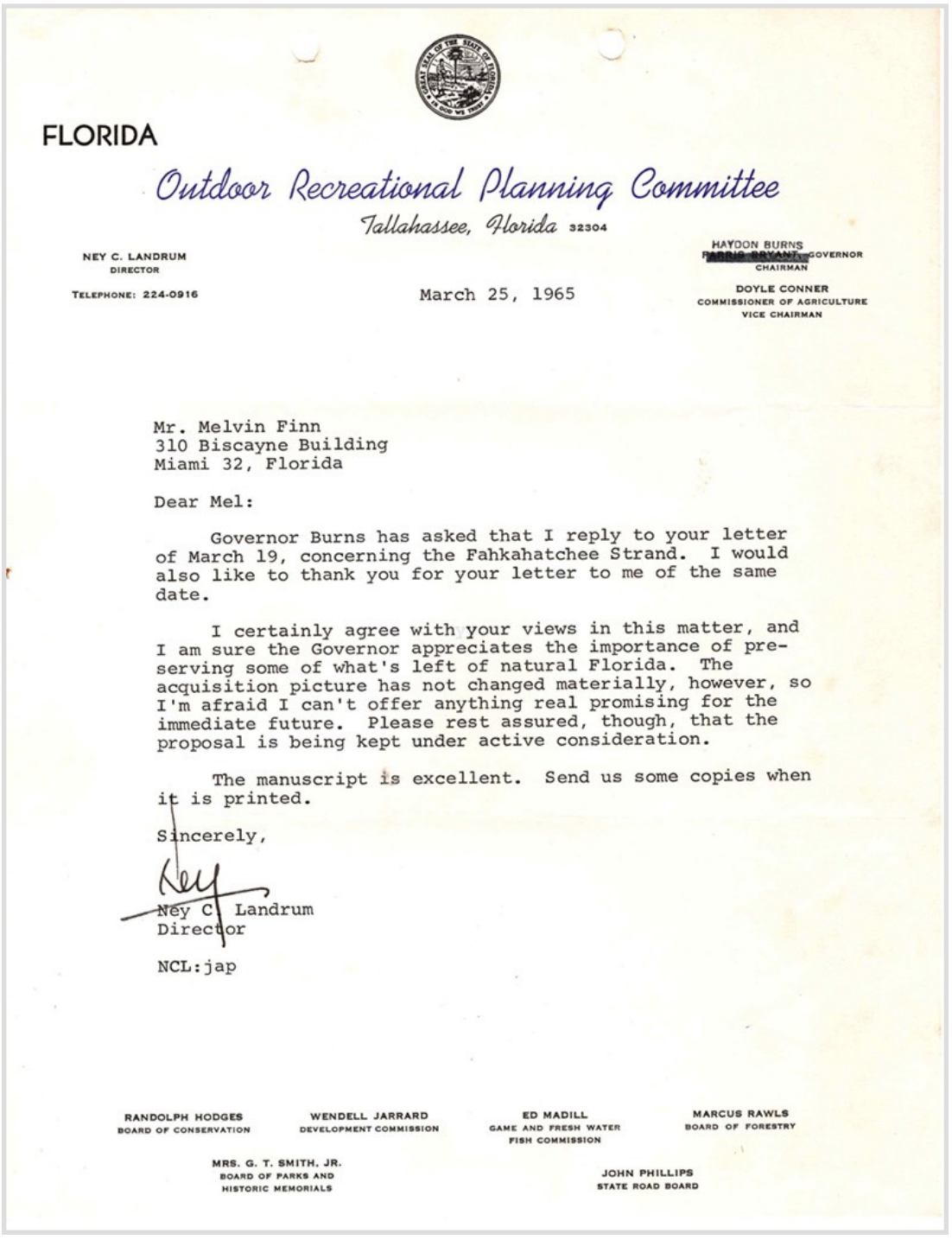
We must act now to at least obtain options to acquire this tract. It is most fortunate that it is available at all at this time.

The enclosed sketch illustrates the 75,000 acres to be incorporated into a Florida Wilderness State Park or National Monument.

Sincerely
Mel
Melvin Finn

MF maf

Document 24 – March 25, 1965 – Ney Landrum responds to Mel Finn.



FLORIDA

Outdoor Recreational Planning Committee

Tallahassee, Florida 32304

NEY C. LANDRUM
DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE: 224-0916

March 25, 1965

HAYDON BURNS
FARRIS BRYANT, GOVERNOR
CHAIRMAN

DOYLE CONNER
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE
VICE CHAIRMAN

Mr. Melvin Finn
310 Biscayne Building
Miami 32, Florida

Dear Mel:

Governor Burns has asked that I reply to your letter of March 19, concerning the Fahkahatchee Strand. I would also like to thank you for your letter to me of the same date.

I certainly agree with your views in this matter, and I am sure the Governor appreciates the importance of preserving some of what's left of natural Florida. The acquisition picture has not changed materially, however, so I'm afraid I can't offer anything real promising for the immediate future. Please rest assured, though, that the proposal is being kept under active consideration.

The manuscript is excellent. Send us some copies when it is printed.

Sincerely,

Ney C. Landrum
Director

NCL:jap

RANDOLPH HODGES
BOARD OF CONSERVATION

WENDELL JARRARD
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

ED MADILL
GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

MARCUS RAWLS
BOARD OF FORESTRY

MRS. G. T. SMITH, JR.
BOARD OF PARKS AND HISTORIC MEMORIALS

JOHN PHILLIPS
STATE ROAD BOARD

Document 25 – July, 1965 – Article written by Finn published in the Naturalist.

NATURALIST

VOLUME 38 JULY 1965 NUMBER 3

FOR FAHKAHATCHEE STRAND...THE TIME IS NOW!

By MELVIN A. FINN

Rain clouds forming over the prairie, Fahkahatchee Strand, October 17, 1964.

Fahkahatchee Strand—to those who know her—is an enchanting paradise, a wilderness of magic and mystery; yet a friendly place where orchids and alligators, palms and panthers, live together, wild, shy and free.

For uncounted thousands of years, Fahkahatchee was dominated by giant centuries-old bald cypresses thriving in favorite habitat. A swampy watershed, her clear waters move slowly southerly from an area in central Collier County out to the Gulf of Mexico near Everglades City, Florida.

Fahkahatchee shelters the largest stand of wild native royal palms in the world, some towering 150 feet or more; clusters of rare, burlap-barked, slender paurotis palms; over seventy species of orchids; rare ferns and bromeliads; hammocks of temperate hardwoods—oak, holly, ash and maple-intermingled with the subtropical West Indian gumbo limbo, tamarind, cabbage palm and fig.

There the shy, elusive panther, hovering on the verge of extinction, makes his last stand east of the Mississippi. There, alligator and otter, bear and bobcat, 'coon and 'possum, muskrat and mink, deer and turkey, fox and squirrel—all find living room and home in a sheltering environment ideal for their survival.

Fahkahatchee conjures up to those who love her, the vast sweep of open prairie where larks complete their nesting before the inundating summer rains. Fahkahatchee is fingers or strands of pond cypress in the wet places. At slightly higher elevations, it is the hammocks of mixed hardwoods. Where subject to periodic burn, it is the open pineland. It is at places, quaking bogs where orchids grow, lettuce ponds, lakes and hidden pools with water clear and pure. Fahkahatchee is the quiet broken by the splash of an alligator disturbed, the songs of cardinals, vireos, wrens and warblers, the hammering of the Pileated Woodpecker, the hooting of the Barred Owl, the haunting cry of the Limpkin, the croaking of a community of frogs, the busy rookery or roost of herons, egrets and storks.

Above all, Fahkahatchee is a hospitable and friendly wilderness, a sanctuary for countless living species of animals and plants which everywhere are inexorably being crowded out of existence.

Before the twenties, few had witnessed the wonders of Fahkahatchee. In those days, one could travel southward by canoe for over fifty miles in the cool half-light under the towering canopy of cypress giants, down through a maze of watercourses, pools, ponds and lakes out to the Gulf of Mexico. Protected from above by the kingly cypresses, one could wander amidst rings of huge gnarled and grotesque pond apple and pop ash trees circling the deeper water of pools, ponds and lakes. In such "cypress heads," covering the branches, were orchids, bromeliads and ferns in unbelievable lushness and profusion—a phenomenon, unique in North America. The sight was of eerie wonder and majesty, as awesome and enveloping as a glimpse of a Yellowstone or a Grand Canyon. Nowhere else in the world could such display of nature's living grandeur be surpassed.

Thoughts of preserving the Fahkahatchee could have been born in the hearts of those few who first experienced her hidden wonders. Before the Tamiami Trail was built during the early twenties, Henry Ford was reported interested in buying the Big Cypress Swamp to give to the State of Florida as a park, but the State was not able to accept the financial responsibilities involved. In 1932, David Graham Copeland, general manager of the Collier Properties, and member of the Everglades Park Commission, supported the idea of a park, as did the president of the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company, who owned the area.

Typical scene with Pop Ash and Pond Apple trees covered with orchids, ferns and bromeliads, Fahkahatchee Strand.

VOLUME 38 JULY 1965 NUMBER 3

But the early attempts to establish the Fahkahatchee as a park failed. Later, roads and canals constructed during the twenties and thirties blocked off and drained the water courses, greatly disturbing the delicate ecology of the watershed.

Then following World War II, came the holocaust. Demand and high prices for durable cypress prompted the lumbering invasion of this quiet, hidden fastness by man, machines and a hastily constructed railroad network. With the buzz of chain saw and clank of steam engine, down in thundering crashes came the ageless patriarchs. The cypresses, having been living long before Columbus discovered America, were no more.

Dan Beard and Ray Vinten of the National Park Service, riding one of the trains over the logging railroad while lumbering was in progress, described the sight as a "green hell" where a million years of natural miracle was being systematically and unmercifully destroyed. They "counted" over 10,000 royal Palms amidst the man-wrought devastation. When the cypresses fell, into the water plunged the crowns of orchids, some specimens so large as to require the room of an entire car to carry one.

Exploring the watercourses of the central drainage axis, showing orchids, bromeliads and ferns on Pond Apple trees, Fahkahatchee Strand.

Alas, war had belatedly stricken the Fahkahatchee. She suffered a grevious loss, but was not dead. Today, sheltered by willow thickets and dense undergrowth, little cypress seedlings, which if allowed to live over the passing centuries, will again someday become lords of their domain. Fahkahatchee changed, still lives on, wild and mysterious and free, but her days seem numbered as new pressures from drainage, roads, urbanization and industrialization close in.

In the early nineteen sixties, a real estate development company purchased a large area of the Big Cypress Swamp west of Fahkahatchee and began draining the area by construction of an elaborate system of drainage canals. The natural fresh water reservoirs are now being drained into the sea without regard to the deleterious consequencies. Here, the 100 million dollar lessons learned seventy miles east by the Corps

Branches heavy with orchids, ferns and bromeliads in Fahkahatchee Strand, with *Epidendrum cochleatum* in bloom.

of Engineers in the Central and Southern Flood Control District, are being disregarded. The early and costly mistakes of draining away fresh water to the sea in the east coast counties, are being repeated in Collier County. In early 1964, the same real estate company began dredging operations at the mouth of the Fakaunion. Their draglines are advancing northward from the Gulf, threatening the entire Fahkahatchee watershed from the west.

Then in the late 1964, the Florida State Road Department began construction of the controversial Fort Lauderdale-Naples toll highway. Dubbed "Alligator Alley" by critics because of its being thrust across a virgin swampy wilderness. This expressway will cut off the northern region of Fahkahatchee. The effects of these man-made "improvements" have sealed the fate of the Fahkahatchee. Unless prompt and effective action can be taken to insure her survival, her doom is certain.

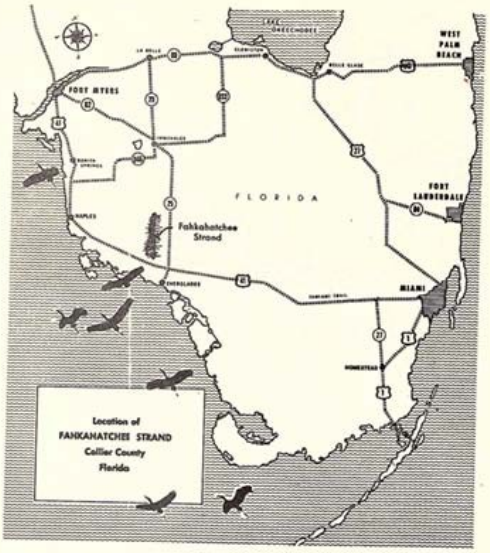
Recognizing the urgency in 1962, the Fahkahatchee Strand Committee was organized to spearhead a drive to have the Fahkahatchee acquired for preservation as a unique sample of natural America. The present owners are favorable. The Florida Nature Conservancy and Florida Audubon Society, other conservation societies, women's clubs, garden clubs, jaycees, cham-

Rare club moss, *Lycopodium dichotomum*, Fahkahatchee Strand.

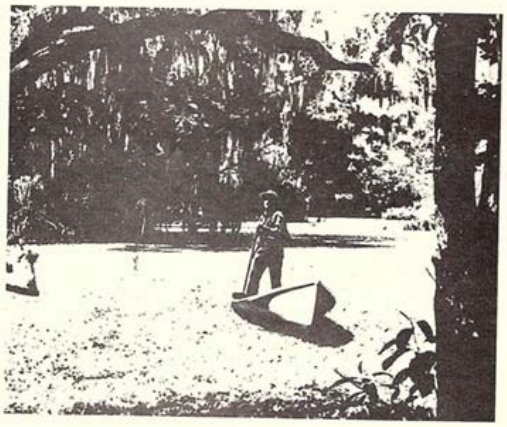
ers of commerce, boy and girl scouts and many other civic clubs, organizations and individuals—are joining in a last ditch effort, demanding positive action.

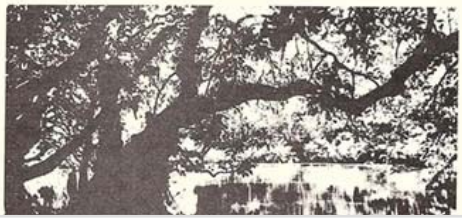
In November, 1963, Florida passed the milestone FLORIDA RECREATION AND CONSERVATION ACT, which now offers a practical vehicle for acquisition of Fahkahatchee by the state. Then in September, 1964, the U. S. 88th "Conservation" Congress passed the great conservation legislation known as the WILDERNESS ACT and LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ACT. These three state and federal acts have at last given legislative recognition of the need of wilderness preservation as well as a practical means of acquisition of the Fahkahatchee. One encouraging spark has been ignited. During the summer of 1964, at the request of Senators Holland and Smathers, Representatives Fascell and Rogers, the Secretary of Interior undertook a study of the possibility of establishing a Fahkahatchee Strand Wilderness National Monument. What remains now is the effort to acquire and preserve the Fahkahatchee under the spirit and provisions of these acts.

Those who understand the delicate and fragile world of orchids know more than most how desirable and worthy is the cause of Fahkahatchee, which embodies hope for the world's first wild orchid sanctuary. Maybe other countries will take similar measures to preserve some of the vanishing treasures of unique flora and fauna, before all are lost. But to us, our one challenge—our great opportunity—is to save the Fahkahatchee. Here's to the Fahkahatchee — enchanting paradise, a wilderness of magic and mystery —may it remain forever wild!



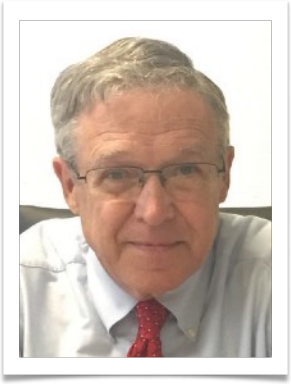
Those who desire more information may write to the Fahkahatchee Strand Committee with headquarters in Miami and Naples, Florida: c/o Mrs. Ben Parks, 865 Fifth Ave., So., Naples, Florida; c/o M. A. Finn, Esq., 310 Biscayne Building, 19 West Flagler Street, Miami, Florida.





Donation Strategies by Chris Gair

We've been through a lot…



First let me say what an absolute privilege it is to contribute to the mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee (FOF). I have known and worked with these good folks for several years and have seen just how successful they are. Not every foundation can claim such a great track record.

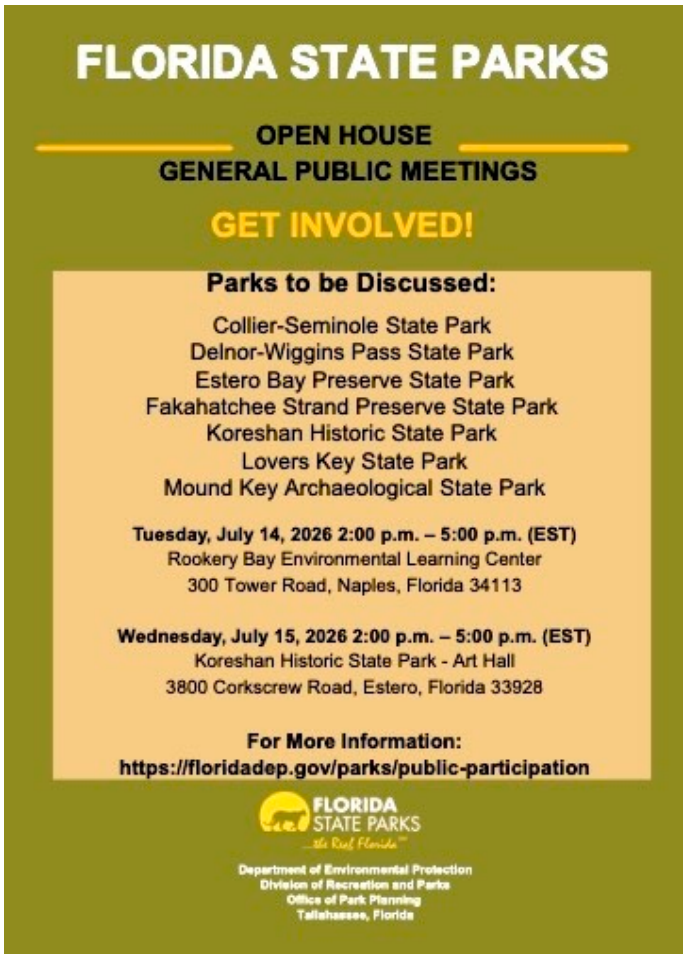
From COVID to IAN to the financial market's uncertainty – and the absolute unknown of state budgets – FOF has not only endured in its mission, but it has also thrived. Ghost Writer has shown donors and prospects alike the ongoing success of how FOF has come through it all to create a truly world-class visitor experience.

The importance of the Friends' success cannot be overstated as it gives us all a true sense of confidence that our donations and volunteer commitments will get results. I will continue to provide thoughts and ideas on how to best help FOF while getting a tax result that fits your situation.

Whatever comes, together we will weather it all to help preserve this unique and magnificent gift of nature.

Mr. Chris Gair of Fort Myers has been sharing valuable insights with the Friends regarding charitable giving in today's evolving landscape. After retiring as a Trust Officer in Southwest Florida following 48 years of service, Mr. Gair offers extensive expertise, particularly in donation strategies designed to benefit both the Friends and their donors.

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



Public Meetings on Management Plan

The 10-Year Unit Management Plan for the Fakahatchee including all the parks listed on the invitation will be presented twice to the public at the locations and time specified on the invitation.

For more information regarding the Fakahatchee, please visit https://floridadep.gov/parks/public-participation or call the park office at 239 961 1925

FIDELITY Charitable℠

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/

Membership News

Members make a difference!

Thanks to Karen Sendik for converting to a Life Membership.

We have 294 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/

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

Officers
Debra Taylor, President
Carol Spagnolo, Vice President
Phil McGuire, Treasurer
Maria Sentmanat, Secretary

Directors
Kevin Cunniff
Rudi Ettrich
Deborah Jansen
Glen Stacell
Tom Trotta
Bruce Bunch, Ex-Officio
Tom Maish, Ex-Officio
Francine Stevens, Executive Director

2026 BOD meeting schedule
June 21
August 16
September 20
October 18
November 15
December 12

Meetings are scheduled for 10:30 AM

Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at office@fofinc.org or call 239-695-1023.

Platinum Transparency 2026
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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.

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

Please note our new mailing address at: Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc., PO Box 54, Bonita Springs FL 34133 or write to us at Office@FOFinc.org.