# The Ghost Writer

Newsletter of the Friends of Fakahatchee

*Patrick Higgins and Glen Stacell display the Certificate of Excellence.*

TripAdvisor®, the world's largest travel site, has named Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park a 2016 Certificate of Excellence award recipient. This is the second consecutive year Fakahatchee Strand has earned the worldwide award, which recognizes attractions listed on TripAdvisor that consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews.

To qualify for the award, an attraction must maintain an overall TripAdvisor "bubble" rating of at least four out of five, have a minimum number of reviews, and must have been listed on TripAdvisor for at least 12 months.

Francine Stevens, president of the Friends of Fakahatchee, said: "Earning our second TripAdvisor certificate of excellence is a tribute to our volunteers and park staff members who reveal this hidden jewel of the Everglades to visitors. We will work hard this season to maintain our high TripAdvisor rating."

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## Repko retires from Ghostwriter

This is the first edition of the Ghost Writer not edited by Marya Repko since 2005. The versatile and tireless FOF volunteer has produced about 100 issues of the publication since becoming a co-editor more than a decade ago.

"Marya has wanted to retire as editor for some time and it is with great appreciation we are granting her wish," said FOF President Francine Stevens. "All FOF members owe her a debt of gratitude for her hard work in producing such an outstanding publication over the years."

*This transitional September edition is being edited by Francine Stevens and Bruce Bunch. Future Ghost Writers will be produced with the assistance of the Next Steps Collective, the firm that designed and manages www.orchidswamp.org.*



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## President's Report

*by Francine Stevens*

I reluctantly bring some disappointing news concerning the expansion of the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. My last letter in May was full of joy with news that construction of the new parking site was beginning this summer. Unfortunately we have suffered another setback involving the permitting for the construction of the new Boardwalk that would connect the parking site to the old Boardwalk. The construction of the parking site is on hold until these permitting issues are resolved.

While summer should be exiting Southwest Florida, it is not cooling down. On the contrary, September has been the hottest and the most humid month. Hermine's recent trajectory in the Gulf of Mexico was powerful enough to produce more rain than we've had all summer. As a result, mother nature is pushing the boundaries that humans created in the Fakahatchee Preserve. The trails and Janes Scenic are flooding giving the Preserve a period of rejuvenation and tranquility. It is at this time when one can most appreciate the majestic beauty of the Preserve and understand how important it is to protect it from excessive human intrusion. I hope that with the expansion of the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk we will one day be able to impress on thousands of visitors that by limiting their footprints to the Boardwalk they are protecting the Preserve.

One thing that has not been delayed has been the approach of our 2016-2017 season. Patrick and Glen have been busy recruiting volunteers for all of our adventures. More volunteers are needed if we are to offer our full schedule of swamp walks and tram tours. Please email Patrick Higgins at patrick@tropicbirdsailing.com if you can help!

I look forward to greeting our snowbird members as they return and working with them to make the coming year our most successful ever.

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## Fak featured in Higgins Sept. 22 talk at Goldengate Library

"Life in a high rise--Fakahathchee's epiphytic community" will be FOF vice-president Patrick Higgins' topic when he speaks at the Goldengate Library at 2432 Lucerne Road on Thursday, Sept. 22. His illustrated presentation is from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

To build awareness of the Fak, feel free to invite your friends to this informative talk.

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