September 2020 • Volume 106

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The Happy Paddler

It's Safer Outdoors

paddle florida

Inspiring. Meaningful. Adventure.

Place-based Learning in the Great Outdoors

Paddle Florida welcomes paddlers from all races, genders, and sexual orientations. We will continue to strive to promote diversity among the paddling community and work to create a safe space for all to enjoy our paddling adventures.

2020-21 Season Kicks off on the Suwannee River Next Month

Take a trip down the river on Paddle Florida's Suwannee River Wilderness Trail.

As we embark on our 13th season, as always, we will begin on the Suwanee River Wilderness Trail, October 16 - 21 This is our signature event, as the Suwanee River is where it all began in 2008. All of our lives have been disrupted, and many of us are suffering from 'cabin fever' Please join us next month and get outdoors!

Because of the pandemic we will be adhering to special Covid-19 practices which include the following:

- Social distancing - 6 feet
- Participants will be required to wear masks at campsite and buffs on the water when closer than 6 feet
- Covid-19 safe rescue practices
- Paddlers to distance a paddle length from each other
- Hand sanitizer
- Food will be served so participants will not touch utensils
- Disposable eco-friendly plates

We are following guidance and recommendations of the Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism as well as local counties and the State of Florida. As these change, we will incorporate those changes.

We also wanted to remind our readers of our increased presence on social media, as we are now posting every day on both Facebook and Instagram. Please 'like' and follow us for great photos and stories. Also, we want to encourage everyone to visit Paddle Florida's YouTube channel where you will find 18 videos that illustrate trips we have done over the years and across the Sunshine State. You will also find Grant Peeples show from May, Rod MacDonald's show from June, Katherine Archer's show from July, and Bing Futch's from August. We round out the 2020 Summer Music Series on September 10th, with Tom Shed.

Paddle Florida Summer Music Series
Tom Shed

Date: September 10, 2020
Time: 7 PM

Click here to reach Tom's bio.

To access by computer:

To view the Tom Shed Show click here or use the following URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_WqMcG_vQQ?utm_source=FB. From there you will see The Tom Shed Show #1, click on title to view the show.

You can also subscribe to the Tom Shed Show channel here if you like. You do not have to subscribe to see the Tom Shed Show #1.

For Live Comments, go to Tom's Facebook page here. Participants can comment under the show logo.

If you can't make the show, please consider making a donation to our non-profit organization. There are links in this issue that describe the really cool thank you gifts you will receive for your donation. At the $25 level, you get a Paddle Florida (PF) buff, which can be particularly useful during the time of COVID-19. At the $50 level, you get a PF dry bag, which every paddler/camper can use. At the $75 level, you get a super cool, long-sleeved, white zin-fit PF shirt, which will be great sun protection for the summer. At the $100 level, you will receive a limited edition, water-color print by one of our very talented paddlers, Peggy Perry.

Big Wins for Florida Paddlers

By Ryan Smart

Executive Director, Florida Springs Council

It's rare these days for springs and rivers advocates to get even one win over corporations seeking to exploit Florida's waters. Last month, however, Florida paddlers had two big victories to celebrate. These wins help protect two treasured Florida paddling locations and remind us of the power that we have when we come together to advocate for the waters we love.

First, the Florida Springs Council (FSC) and Rainbow River Conservation (RRC) succeeded in defeating the development of a Westgate Resort along the banks of the Rainbow River in Dunnellon. For nearly three months, RRC and FSC organized opposition to the land-use changes necessary for Westgate, central Florida's largest private company, to build a proposed Hotel & RV Park.

FSC and RRC opposed the Resort because of the negative impacts it would have on the already-struggling Rainbow River. As anyone who was on the Rainbow in August knows, it is suffering from excessive nitrogen pollution and over-pumping. Nitrogen pollution in Rainbow Spring is more than six times the state water quality goal and flows are down more than 20% from historic averages. The current outbreak of algae covering the River bottom is a symptom of these problems. [Read more...]

Florida's algae-tainted waters also pump toxins into the air. Scientists study health risks

By Sarah Loftus, Miami Herald

Photo Credit: Greg Lovett, AP

Last month, the scientists and health experts trying to figure out how to combat Florida's persistent blue-green algae bloom problems discussed how to do a better job of informing the public when toxins are detected in waterways.

One recommendation included posting signs in multiple languages advising against swimming or drinking the water — though green slime on a lake, canal or river is also it's own warning sign.

But keeping people and pets out of the water is only part of the concern about blue-green algae — particles can also waft invisibly into the air, carrying toxins with them. [Read more...]

Why is the governor leaving important environmental posts unfilled?

By Craig Pittman, Florida Phoenix

Photo Credit: Southwest Florida Water Management District

One of the trickiest jobs a governor has is picking the right people to run various state agencies. Ideally, he or she must find people who have a good background in that field who are willing to put in the hours and who will do the kind of job that will serve the public.

A second option is to hand out the jobs to donors and campaign workers regardless of their qualifications, then cross your fingers that none of them screws up in a way that makes headlines. If they do, you can always pretend you never heard of them.

Gov. Ron DeSantis has chosen to go a third way, one that none of his predecessors ever attempted.

Don't fill the jobs at all. [Read more...]

The Floridan aquifer: Why one of our rainiest states is worried about water

By Joe Reegle, National Geographic

Millions of years ago, in the ocean above what is now Florida, a small crustacean dies. It sinks to the seafloor where, in time, it is covered by the skeletons of other fish, shellfish, and coral until it forms part of a thousand-foot layer of limestone rock. Around 30 million years ago, sea levels fall, and Florida emerges from the ocean to form dry land. But Florida never really dries out, and water gradually erodes the porous limestone to form cracks, passages, and vast underground spaces that fill with rain. This is the Floridan aquifer, the natural freshwater reservoir that underpins life in the Sunshine State.

Florida's famous springs are so large that they support entire river ecosystems, such as the Suwanee and Santa Fe, and the underlying aquifer feeding these springs provides most of the 100 to 150 gallons of water Florida residents use every day: Indoors, around 24 percent of a household's water goes to toilets, 20 percent is used for showers, and nearly 19 percent for running faucets for everything from brushing teeth to rinsing plates. Half of all the water taken from the public supply ends up watering private lawns—some 900 million gallons a day. Of the seven billion gallons of freshwater used daily across Florida's agriculture, industry, power plants, and public water sectors, most is taken from the Floridan aquifer. [Read more...]

Flora & Fauna Spotlight

Turtle or tortoise? Knowing the differences between sea turtles and tortoises could save their lives

By Andrea Guerrero and Drew Hill, WINK News

Photo Credit: WINK News

Many people, tourists and locals alike, think they're helping when they put turtles back into the water. But just last week, someone tried to put a gopher tortoise into the water and one viewer sent WINK News a video.

"Honestly these are completely different animals, they do not swim and they can drown and that's the problem we're having," said Timothy Thompson, volunteer at Von Arx Wildlife Hospital of the conservancy of Southwest Florida.

Thompson thinks most people are trying to help, but they actually aren't.

"People with the best intentions will mistake them for sea turtles and in fact think that they're assisting and will take the small gopher tortoise and will put it in the Gulf of Mexico," Thompson said. "And in fact the gopher tortoise does not swim. It will sink and if it inhales enough saltwater, and it has happened before, they will actually die." [Read more...]

2020-21 Paddle Florida Season

Suwanee River Wilderness Trail
October 16-21, 2020
This is our signature session of autumn on its most famous river. The trip spans 65 miles of the scenic Suwanee and a portion of the Withlacoochee. Highlights include: from Madison Blue Spring to Branford. This section features dozens of clear blue springs perfect for swimming and snorkeling.
Register by October 2nd

Ten Thousand Islands Paddling Festival (NEW)
November 12-15, 2020
Southwest Florida's answer to our spring paddling festival, celebrating days of exploring the magic kingdom of the Ten Thousand Islands. Our basecamp for this experience is Collier Seminole State Park, one of the most beautiful parks in the region. It is within driving distance of all the paddling tours we will undertake. This is a first time event in our paddling history. We hope to make the Ten Thousand Islands Paddling Festival an annual event in this paddlers' paradise.
Register by October 30th

Treasure Coast Paddling Adventure (NEW)
December 2-5, 2021
Come explore the Treasure Coast, named for the profusion of shipwrecks and treasure hunters who have sought the riches of silver and other valuable and historic bounty. The trip starts in St. Lucie County at Ft. Pierce Inlet State Park and ends 4 days later 40 miles north through Indian River County, finishing in Sebastian. We'll spend two nights at state parks, two nights at Indian River County Parks and two nights at Indian River County Learning Center. This will be an excellent example of what we try to achieve on every trip: Place-based learning in the Great Outdoors.
Register by November 15th

The Great Calusa Blueway
January 31-Feb. 7, 2021
Back in the history, culture and ecology of southwest Florida as we explore 57 miles of Lee County's rivers, bays, creeks, mangrove tunnels, aquatic preserves, Calusa shell mounds and pristine white-sand barrier islands.
Register by January 2nd

Wild, Wonderful Withlacoochee
February 3-14, 2021
Beginning at Lake Rousseau, paddlers will thread their way through hardwood swamps and tannic streams on a 60-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The adventure includes a side trip to Crystal River Preserve and its world class first magnitude spring.
Register by January 28th

Springtime on the Chipola (NEW)
March 17-23, 2021
This will be our 4th different trip in Florida's panhandle, joining the Ochlockonee, the Choctawhatchee and the Yellow River in ideal conditions. We river will be suitable for all paddlers and paddlecraft. Florida Caverns State Park is the starting point for staging this event last March, which was a hit with participants in the panhandle. This is going to be a great experience!
Register by February 28th

Suwanee River Paddling Festival
April 2-4, 2021
With camping atop the bluff overlooking two beautiful springs, this weekend-long festival takes place at Suwanee River State Park near Live Oak. The weekend will offer supported 5-12 mile paddling options on both the Suwanee and Withlacoochee Rivers, a concert featuring Paddle Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional outdoorsy experts.
Register by March 19th

Note: *Many of Paddle Florida trips have historically sold out before the registration deadline, so to ensure you have a spot, please register early.*

How To: 6 Secrets for a Successful SUP Camping Trip

I've rules for packing and outfitting your board for overnight adventures. [Read more...]

Like us on Facebook

36,505+ followers and counting!

Reconnect with paddling friends and make new ones on Paddle Florida's Facebook page. Our daily feeds provide updates on the news impacting Florida's waterways and wildlife as well as photos posted by friend as your favorite photo depicting paddling in Florida and it might be selected as our 'Picture of the Day!'

Support Paddle Florida

During this challenging time, we are all changing our lives to adapt to mistakes and shorten the impact of this awful virus. To continue our programs of place-based learning in the great outdoors, we are counting on the Paddle Florida family to help get us through this difficult time.

Please consider making a donation to show your support of our mission of connecting people to nature and each other.

In appreciation of your donation, you will receive a special gift.

Make a $25 donation HERE **and receive a Paddle Florida buff that can be worn as a face mask, hat, scarf, or to protect face from the sun.**

Make a $50 donation HERE **and receive a Paddle Florida dry bag.**

Make a $75 donation HERE **and receive a a limited edition Paddle Florida shirt.**

Make a $100 donation HERE **and receive a 11x14 watercolor paper giclée print "A Bevy of Paddlers" painted by one of our own paddlers, Peggy Perry.**

Click on the photo to enlarge.

We are all in this together.

To **donate online** using your debit or credit card, please click the links above.

To **donate by check**, please make your check with your name and address to bill@paddleflorida.org

**The CARES Act allows individuals to deduct up to $300 in charitable donations made in 2020 without itemizing.*

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