



July 2016

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Conservation 20/20 2
- Slough Clearing 3
- Slough Programs 4
- Wet in the Slough? 4
- Membership News 5
- Camp Scholarships 5
- Volunteer of the Year 5
- President's Notes 6
- Along the Boardwalk 6
- Join Friends Today 7



WET WALK DATES ANNOUNCED AT SIX MILE CYPRESS SLOUGH PRESERVE

The Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve are again hosting off the boardwalk strolls along the wet walk trail usually closed to the public. The invigorating, beautiful path is immersed in the watery heart of the Slough. Group size is limited to 16. You must be at least 10 years old to participate because of the length of the trail and the possible water depth.

A reservation is required. Please email a reservation request to Charles O'Connor at roc77@embarqmail.com Include the date and time requested and a phone number where you can be reached in case of a weather emergency affecting the walk.

This year there are two types of walks. The 10 a.m. is a two hour walk along the big loop as in previous years and more strenuous. The 1 p.m. walk is a 1 ½ hour medium walk to the big cypress tree and back the same route and not as strenuous. If you have trouble walking or have poor balance, do not attempt either wet walk. The wet walk trail is not for folks who need assistance, or have trouble with knees, ankles or balance. A person with normal balance and gait will have no problems.

Saturday, August 6, 20, 27	10 a.m. and 1 p.m.
Saturday, September 10	1 p.m.
Saturday September 17	10 a.m. and 1 p.m.
Saturday, October 1	10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Suggested attire includes long pants and secure shoes that won't pull off (e.g., no Crocs, flip-flops, flimsy shoes). Folks with improper shoes will not be allowed on the trail, per preserve safety rules. We'll be encountering a lot of submerged roots and occasional cypress knees, so you'll want to be protected.

The walk is in fresh, clean rainwater, perhaps up to the waist. Walkers will get wet, but not muddy. There is a hose to rinse off and changing rooms for use after the walk. There is usually no need for insect repellent. The slough water is constantly flowing and mosquitoes need stagnant water to breed.

Waterproof cameras are best. You should expect everything to get wet. We will meet under the parking lot pavilion and walk unless a lightning storm is occurring. Rain is not a problem. Tropical storms or harsher weather will cancel the walk. Florida weather is quite changeable.

Please allow time to visit the amazing Interpretive Center on site. Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. There is a wonderful display of photo contest winning images, a gift shop with unique items, and the interpretive exhibits are top quality.

A \$10 donation to the Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough is suggested. Donations are used by the Friends for displays at the Interpretive Center, to sponsor summer camp scholarships, educational supplies, Lee County student slough field trips, and to support educational programs. If you are not able to make a donation, others will make up the difference. If you would like to donate more, please do. A collection jar will be available.



Portions of the Slough have been cleared to replicate Mother Nature's natural burns. See Page Three.

Continuation of Conservation 20/20 in Hands of Voters

By Janet Bunch

Those of us who spend time in the Slough understand the value of the Conservation 20/20 program. After all, 40% of the Slough was purchased through the program over the years. This November, voters will be asked whether they wish to continue Conservation 20/20.

Since 2013-14, Conservation 20/20 funding has come from the Lee County General Fund. Because the ballot proposal continues that funding mechanism, voting FOR the continuation of the program will not necessarily increase tax bills, and voting AGAINST the program will not necessarily reduce taxes. Voting YES instructs commissioners to dedicate funds to the program, and voting NO will mean that no additional conservation lands will be acquired.

Some facts to consider:

- Conservation 20/20 has acquired 24,930 acres of conservation in Lee County since the program began in 1996.
- Lee County still ranks only 39 out of 67 Florida counties in total conservation land and one of the lowest in acres per person conserved at 61st of 67 counties.
- Conservation 20/20 lands help reduce Lee County flood insurance rates, since so much of the high hazard areas in the county are in conservation.
- Proximity to conservation lands has been documented to increase property values.
- A clean, unspoiled environment is considered one of the top 5 reasons tourists choose to come to Lee County, bringing 2.29 billion dollars of economic impact with them.
- A University of Miami study found that every 2.6 acres of conservation lands in Lee County was responsible for or associated with a full-time job caused by tourist spending.
- Conservation 20/20 is needed to balance continued growth with natural resource protection. Lee County population could double by the year 2040.
- Conservation lands provide quality of life, environmental and economic benefits.

Yes on Conservation 20/20, a non-partisan political action committee, has been formed to educate voters and encourage approval of Conservation 20/20 in November. Visit the Facebook page at YesonConservation20/20 and the website at www.YesOnConservation2020.org

Make sure you vote on this important issue in November!



Limpkins at Billy Creek Preserve, a Conservation 20/20 preserve in the urban area of Fort Myers



Telegraph Creek near Alva, a Conservation 20/20 preserve in rural Lee County



Hikers enjoy the boardwalk at the Caloosahatchee Creeks Preserve 20/20 property.



Man Helps Mother Nature Maintain The Slough

By Robert Repenning

An area of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, about a mile north of the entrance, appears to have been mowed. Is there danger of more development? The answer to that is a resounding no. This activity is part of the management of the little patches of pine flatwoods that occur in the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. These little patches get overgrown and develop into oak hammocks resulting in the loss of the open pine flatwoods that were the most common upland habitat type. In nature these are maintained by fire. The plants and animals found in these communities are unique. Without the regular fires to keep the habitat open, the areas convert to a different habitat with a different set of plants and animals. In 1991 Lee County burned this area. It burned as expected but smoldered for a week making the cool night air foggy over the highway. No burning of this area has been attempted since. To keep the habitat semi-natural it is mowed periodically. This may bring back some of the birds that inhabit the pine flatwoods like the bobwhite, bluebird and red-headed woodpecker.

Additional land clearing has occurred in the woods adjacent to Six Mile Cypress Parkway to create paths for the hog trapper to control the hog populations. There are now new gates and fences along the road. Many of these areas were old woods roads that had overgrown.



Section before the clearing



Section after the clearing



Slash pine trees remain after clearing



Saw palmettos remain after clearing

2016 SUMMER SLOUGH PROGRAMS

Friends of the Slough Sponsored Wet Walks—See Page One for information.

Guided Walk Procedures

Visitors planning to join the daily and twice daily guided walks will need to arrive early. To enhance the visitors' experience, guided walks are limited to the first 20 people to check in, first come, first served (no groups of six or more). Check in for guided walk begins 30 minutes prior to the start at the entrance to the boardwalk. The entire party must be present at the Trail Host Station to sign up. Each guided walk lasts about 90 minutes and will cover three-quarters of a mile on a raised, fully-accessible boardwalk trail. Public guided walks are free with paid parking of \$1 per hour per vehicle. Organized groups of six or more people should arrange for a group tour by calling 239-533-7555 at least two weeks in advance.

Guided Walk Schedule

April, November and December: Daily - 9:30 a.m.

January-March: Daily - 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

May-October: Wednesdays only - 9:30 a.m.

WAS JANUARY 2016 AT THE SLOUGH WETTER THAN PREVIOUS JANUARYS?



JANUARY 2013



JANUARY 2014



JANUARY 2015



JANUARY 2016

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Renewing Members: Thank you for your continued support!

Bill Black C
Eleanor Blitzer
Jason Boeckman
Lin Brandis
Susan Crawford and Jeff Rosemann
Gail Evors
Shirley Fox C
Eileen Gottwalt
Bill Hammond C
Carol Hampton
Jean Landon
Matt McNeil
Corinne Murphy
Vicki Norton
Mary and Frank Porter
Arnie Rosen
Neil Scheffler
Dorit Solomon

“ C “ - Charter Member, persons who were first year members of the Friends.

Welcome New Members

Ricky Kreeger
Carl and Patricia Price

Additional Donations Gratefully Received From:

Ellen Gottwalt
Hearts of Miromar
Frank and Mary Porter

Twenty Two Camp Scholarships Awarded by Friends

For the seventh year, the Friends of the Slough offered the opportunity for campers to obtain a scholarship to pay for the slough summer camping fee. This year twenty-two scholarships were awarded to applicants that submitted a paragraph explaining why they wanted to go to camp at the slough.

This year a new camping opportunity called Slough Secrets is offered for eight and nine year olds. Again this year there is the Summer Naturalists camp for ten to twelve year olds and the Wilderness Explorers for twelve to sixteen year olds. Many of the campers are returning campers at the slough.

The campers are taught the importance of the slough and how it relates to the rest of the world around them. They learn skills that would be useful in the wild and in the rest of the world. They are taught skills that require cooperation and problem solving.

All of these important skills are learned and applied without the help of electronic devices.

The scholarship funding is just part of the support that is provided to the slough and the staff by the members and donors of the Friends and the slough.

Thank you again to all of the Friends members and donors. The Friends cannot do this without your support.

Jeff Montgomery named Volunteer of the Year at the Slough

Friends member Jeff Montgomery was named the 2016 Volunteer of the Year at the annual recognition meeting for volunteers at the slough.

Jeff wears many hats at the slough and as a member of the Friends including mentoring new volunteers, leading guided walks and roving all months of the year, leading meanders for fellow volunteers and wet walks for summer campers.

As a member of Friends Jeff has been a volunteer driver for all of the Friends field trips since the beginning of the program. He has also been a contributor to the newsletter, Connections. His articles on topics from season changes and leaf drop to water ferns to caterpillars are informative and educational and always about something current at the slough.

Not only is the honor greatly coveted—so is the specially designated parking spot and name plate that comes with the award.

Congratulations to Jeff.



Jeff Montgomery receives his volunteer of the year award at the spring recognition banquet at the slough.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Hi all—

Just this past week I was standing in waist deep water in the cathedral area of the slough with 20 campers and four other adults. All you can hear are the cicadas and the blue jays. The campers had been



excited and anxious to get started on their final day of camp. Questions like, "I'm the smallest, will the alligator eat me first?" "Will the bugs bite me?" One of the campers is an old timer at wet walking and is proud to say so. But in the majestic area we call the cathedral the campers are just as awed into quiet and inspired as us real old timers.

It is so much fun and so rewarding to be able to take these kids on a wet walk into the slough. I was so impressed with their knowledge of the slough after their week at camp. The lead counselor, Ashlyn, and all of the slough adult volunteers take their jobs very seriously and it shows. It makes my job as the wet walk leader very easy. The campers already know so much we can just take a walk in the woods and a wade in the stream, watching the spiders and birds, marvel at the color of the water and its movement and watch for snakes and gators. I can't wait to do it again next week. We are even taking some campers from other camps in Lee County this year. I hope they are as well prepared for the adventure. I might have to work a little harder to fill them in on the wonders of the slough and the wetlands.

The regular visitors at the slough have been a little upset that their favorite place to visit has been on lock down while all of the needed maintenance and repair is happening. But Mother Nature has her own schedule of weather and all cannot be done in the storms. So if you are one of the "regulars" please be patient. The boardwalk should be open by now, scheduled to open on July 2nd.

Have a nice quiet remainder of the summer.

See you in the Slough. CB

ALONG THE BOARDWALK SUMMER 2016 ...nurture and maturity by Dotty Brown

GOOD NEWS: In the closing days of the dry season (May) a female gator has been observed building her nest for eggs to hatch in August. The warmth and rain of the wet season along with the decomposition of decaying vegetation incubate the eggs.

Fledglings from the many reported nests of great egrets and anhingas at the rookery are being nurtured in flight under watchful eyes. The white ibis young in molting brown to white plumage are seen practicing dabbling in the shallow ponds with their flock. Flowers come to bloom. They attract their pollinators, butterflies, bees, and insects with scents and color. Species prepare for new generations in many wondrous ways.

Come **CHECK IT OUT** at the slough!



Mama gator watches
her newest nest at the slough.



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FOLLOW FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

FRIENDS OF SIX MILE CYPRESS SLOUGH PRESERVE



TWEET WITH FRIENDS

@FriendsofSixMil



JOIN FRIENDS TODAY!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____

Phone _____

In addition I would like to contribute

\$ _____ additional for the Friends use at the Slough.

TOTAL\$ _____

Membership Level (Please Check One)

- Student (\$10)
- Individual (\$20)
- Contributing (\$50)
- Supporting (\$100)
- Associate (\$250) - 1
- Sustaining (\$500) – 1, 2
- Corporate Sponsor (\$500) – 1, 2
- Patron (\$1,000) – 1, 2, 3

1- includes parking sticker for 18 Lee Co. Facilities.

2 - includes choice of wet walk or moon walk for ten guests.

3 - includes table or rocking chair naming opportunity

**HOW CAN YOU HELP WITH YOUR TIME?
I AM INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH:**

Mail to Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough, 7791 Penzance Blvd, Fort Myers. FL 33966

Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Corp. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public charity. Registration Number CH13822 Florida Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Friends web site: www.sloughpreserve.org Phone 239-533-7557 Online store: friendscorner.qbstores.com

Newsletter email: sloughconnections@gmail.com

Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is a not-for-profit advocacy and support organization committed to preserving, protecting and promoting Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve for future generations through education and community partnerships, working together with Lee County and South Florida Water Management District. The Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is a critical wetland system having positive value in inspiring and educating its visitors about wetlands and their roles in preserving the environment and local quality of life. Friends' vision is to maintain the Preserve's positive community influence in perpetuity.

**We Know Who You Are :)
Friends renewing their membership need only send a check noted for membership. Please include a note if there is a change in your email address. It is not necessary to fill out a new membership form. Thank you for all of your support.**

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, REQUESTS TO
sloughconnections@gmail.com

Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve
7791 Penzance Blvd.
Fort Myers, Florida 33966