

# The Everglades Reporter

A publication of  
**Friends of the Everglades**  
 Founded in 1969 by Marjory Stoneman Douglas

## IN THE NEWS

# Friends is down, but not out

After a tough year, Friends is regrouping and rebuilding.

By **Bob Janiskee**  
 CONTRIBUTOR

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Friends of the Everglades, a National Park Service partner of 40 years standing, is going through some tough times and must now regroup and rebuild. There'll be tough sledding ahead for the venerable NGO, but nobody's ready to panic.

When conservationist superstar Marjory Stoneman Douglas founded Friends of the Everglades back in 1969, a main purpose being to fight a proposed jetport that threatened the sanctity of Everglades National Park, environmental activists rallied to the cause and swelled the organization's ranks. The Kissimmee/Okeechobee/Everglades ecosystem was clearly under assault from a wide variety of serious threats, and Friends of the Everglades was seen as just the sort of instrument needed to defend and restore it.

Things worked out pretty well for Friends in its first 30 years or so of



**RICH HABITAT:** An osprey perched at Everglades National Park. Photo/John Magnus

existence. It deservedly drew plenty of praise and lots of national attention for defeating the jetport proposal and helping to fend off threats to the Everglades ecosystem and Lake Okeechobee posed by water diversion, agricultural runoff and other pollutants, the westward sprawl of greater Miami, and related activities. Though Friends has strongly criticized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (on grounds that it fails to adequately address many critical needs), it endorses the CERP's broadly stated goal of restoring the Everglades ecosystem to something approximating natural functioning.

As anybody familiar with the organization's hard-fought battles with the South Florida Water Management District and federal agencies can tell you, this NGO hasn't shrunk from doing legal battle and has become very good at it. In the last decade Friends has filed or joined in at least ten lawsuits against the Federal government alone.

While the organization is best known for its legal actions in behalf of the Everglades, it has made important contributions of many types. Encouraging public awareness and participation in environmental

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## GOOD FRIENDS

# Greene a mix of fearlessness, grace, smarts



**NATURAL DEFENDER:** John S. Knight presents Juanita Greene with a public service award in 1963. Photo/Bob East

Juanita Greene's years-long diligence helped to preserve Florida's natural wonders.

By **Shannon Estenez**  
 FRIENDS MEMBER

In 2003 I was the National Co-Chair of the Everglades Coalition and my state counterpart was the indomitable Juanita Greene, a legendary figure in the Everglades movement and one of my personal heroes. That year, Juanita and I had the privilege of presiding over the inaugural inductions of the Everglades Coalition's newly established Hall of Fame. The Coalition honored its three most venerable that evening,

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Art Marshall and Johnny Jones. It was an easy call to delegate to Juanita the responsibility of inducting Marjory – they had been friends and partners in advocacy and leadership not only of the Everglades movement but also of that most storied group of advocates, Friends of the Everglades.

Seven years later, in January 2010 as the Coalition celebrated its 25th anniversary, I had the honor of inducting Juanita Greene herself into the Hall of Fame. Even though I am not shy by nature and I was among old friends and colleagues, I admit that I was a nervous wreck. I felt it

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## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

The past year has been one of great change for Friends of the Everglades. In September 2009, president David Reiner resigned and the board asked me to step in as Interim President. We thank Dave for his years of service to both FE and the Everglades system we strive to protect. Please take the time to read Bob Janiskee's article (to the left of this column) that explains our current situation. In his article, I expressed confidence that Friends will regroup and rebuild—but possibly not quickly or easily.



By **Connie Washburn**

I'm happy to report that after five months of hard work and stringent thrift, we're making great strides. As part of our downsizing, we closed our office at 7800 Red Road; board members and staff are now working from home. We are preparing for our 41st Annual meeting on Sunday, April 11. Our board recently participated in the groundbreaking of the future Tamiami Bridge as well as the 25th Annual Everglades Coalition event where our former president, Juanita Greene, was honored as a Hall of Fame inductee. For the 13th year, our student outreach organization, Young Friends of the Everglades, was awarded a DERM grant. Young Friends has educated more than 85,000 children and adults about the Everglades.

Today it is even more important for Friends to fulfill our mission as a local, grassroots group with no state or national parent organization. Today more than ever before, numerous essential projects have begun or are in progress and Friends intends to be there to encourage and support these long awaited efforts.

To ensure growth of our membership support, please consider using the enclosed envelope or go to [www.everglades.org](http://www.everglades.org) and renew your membership and/or donate to Friends of the Everglades. Your support is greatly appreciated. ➤

## The Everglades Reporter

Spring 2010 Edition

Published by



**Our Mission is to preserve, protect, and restore the only Everglades in the world.**

Our Goals:

- Compel government agencies to comply with existing environmental laws, and resist any efforts to weaken such laws.
- Encourage politicians to recognize the long term consequences of their actions.
- Spread awareness of the importance to the South Florida ecosystem.

in conjunction with



**Our Mission is to preserve and protect the Everglades, not just for us, but for future generations through education and children's awareness.**

### MEMBER NOTICE

#### Board of Directors Nominees 2010-2011

The following is the slate of nominees to Friends of the Everglades 2010-2011 Board of Directors.

Toby Davidow  
Alan Farago  
Sheila Gaby  
Jim Kushlan  
Nancy Lee  
Karen Mashburn  
Samantha Riepe  
Albert Slap  
Milda Vaivada  
Connie Washburn

**The Friends membership will vote on the nominees at the 41st Annual Meeting on April 11, 2010.**

Please see back page for meeting invitation.

### HAPPENINGS

# Restorative bridge breaks ground

Twenty years in the works, structure will help increase natural water flow.

By Reporter Staff

Following 20 years of planning, haggling, lawsuits and lobbying for federal funding, construction of a vital bridge along Tamiami Trail began on Friday, December 4th, 2009 with a groundbreaking ceremony.

The bridge is considered a crucial part of a preliminary Everglades restoration project dubbed 'Modified Waters.' It will allow water to flow more naturally in wide sheets that will replenish Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. In attendance at the groundbreaking: Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, representatives of the National Parks Conservation Association and Army Corps of Engineers, members of Friends of the Everglades, Sierra Club, and South Florida Audubon Society, Everglades National Park Superintendent Dan Kimball, and Miami-Dade Coun-



**HAPPY VICTORY:** Friends Board Members Connie Washburn, Commissioner Sorenson's aide Sean McCrackin, Alan Farago, Commissioner Katy Sorenson and Milda Vaivado. Photo/Friends of the Everglades

ty Commissioner and Everglades champion, Katy Sorenson.

"We applaud the efforts of the federal government for starting the process of bridging Tamiami Trail," said Sara Fain of the Conservation Association. "However, this is only the beginning and we can't stop here.

Ten miles of road continues to block water from reaching the park, which is the lifeblood of the Everglades."

The group believes the only way to meaningfully restore the park habitat is a series of bridges along 11 miles of Tamiami Trail that cuts through Northeast Shark River Slough. ➤

### JUANITA GREENE

# Her words shaped public opinions, actions

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was so important that everyone in that room of hundreds of people, young and old, veterans of and newcomers to the movement, understood the indispensable role Juanita has played in the effort to protect the Everglades and Biscayne Bay. Her most widely celebrated contributions came during her tenure as a writer for *The Miami Herald*, when the politics of the day threatened to place an entirely new city and industrial seaport on the shores of Biscayne Bay. Juanita's coverage of these issues helped shape public opinion as well as the opinions of the *Herald* itself. In less than a decade a small group of citizens had turned the tide for Biscayne Bay and Juanita, Lloyd Miller, Polly Redford and others celebrated the new Biscayne National Monument, which was signed into existence in 1968 by President Lyndon Johnson. The Monument would become the beloved national park that is today, an integral part of the culture, identity and economy of south Florida. Is there a current resident of Miami or a visitor to Biscayne National Park who could possibly imagine the land-



**NOW:** Juanita currently lives in Tallahassee, near her family. Photo/PBS

scape had Juanita and her compatriots given up or lost their battle? All the clichés about leaving a legacy to future generations are made real by this single battle won.

Juanita is humble by nature, and impeccably understated about her contributions. She is not prone to (or particularly impressed by) lengthy speeches or showy celebrations of achievement. She's too focused for that; too wise in the ways of the world to rest on her own or anyone else's laurels.

Juanita assumed leadership roles in the Everglades movement for decades. As Conservation Chair and President of Friends of the Ever-

glades and as the Florida Co-Chair of the Everglades Coalition, Juanita has been a tireless champion of restoring water quality in the Glades and of water management in the Everglades Agricultural Area. Juanita has been the ever-present conscience of government and the environmental community, pushing all to work harder and do better by the Everglades. She is a woman of high intellect, grace, and steely nerve. There are not many people who can speak truth to power, particularly politically difficult truth, yet Juanita does it all the time with grace, strength, intellect, and absolutely no fear.

As Juanita's small frame approached the podium in January, it was poignant to consider that we stand on her shoulders and on the shoulders of her fellow inductees. That evening she was chosen by her peers to take her place along side Marjory, Art, Johnny, George Barley, Nat Reed and Senator Bob Graham as a giant of the Everglades movement. I am sure that others will join them in the future, but I daresay not many. After all, the bar is high for heroes. Juanita Greene soared over that bar long ago. ➤

## CONSERVATION

## Middle of Big Cypress may become new place to ride

It was a gamble what time to leave Coral Gables. I would either make the meeting on the other side of the state or waste the day missing it.

A hundred miles away in Naples, Collier County commissioners scheduled a 9:00 AM public hearing on its growth management plan. Included, an item brought forward by Miami-Dade County commissioners: whether or not to amend their comprehensive growth map to create a recreational area for off road vehicles in the middle of the Everglades in land owned mostly by Miami-Dade County but on the border with Collier County and designated within the federal boundaries of the Big Cypress National Preserve.

For decades, groups like Sierra Club have fought a simmering, low intensity war with regulators to control the access and destruction of delicate, fragile resources in the 700,000 plus acre preserve. It will cost taxpayers twenty billion and counting to keep its beating heart alive. And in the middle—that's where local elected officials see nothing wrong with inserting a 1,680 acre park with off road vehicles; controlled, it is claimed, by a visitor's center.

I arrive, at ten thirty, just as the issue is about to be heard. Five commissioners seated behind their microphones and the quotidian exercise of municipal authority. Stenographer and the county attorney to one side. Planners and staff at the other side. Two lecterns for speakers, supplicants, and applicants.

A Miami Dade parks official gives a twenty minute presentation on the plan. Well rehearsed, fully briefed. Collier County planning staff has objected to the plan clearly and succinctly in its own written comments, ignored by Miami-Dade's representative.

So far, I've invested hours and days in conversations and review-



**By Alan Farago**  
CONSERVATION  
CHAIR

ing documents. I have only three minutes to make my comments. It is eleven thirty. I won't return home until late afternoon. Three minutes.

I use two minutes to explain how forty years ago the disposition of this land embroiled the nation in one of the signature battles to protect and preserve America's fabled natural heritage. Marjory Stoneman Douglas, who received the highest presidential medal for her work for the Everglades, founded the organization where I serve: Friends of the Everglades.

I take a minute to be sincere and convincing when I state that on a scale of one to ten, that the objection to this plan is more or less, a ten.

As I speak, I look into the eyes of officials I am addressing, for any sign of life. From the audience, or the view of a television camera, the local commissioners appear to be listening. That is a different matter from hearing.

Now, as I look into the eyes of the county commissioners behind the dais, I can tell that each is as indifferent to what I am saying as someone navigating around an empty shopping cart trying to find their car in a Walmart parking lot. The first step toward putting an off-road vehicle park in the middle of the Everglades passes by a vote of 4-0. ☘

**Please help Friends of the Everglades, with your dollars and your time, to fight the Miami-Dade Parks and Collier County plan to put off-road vehicles in the Everglades. Write or call Governor Charlie Crist today. Let him know that as a Friend of the Everglades, he must help stop this reckless use of lands already fought for and won for all the public, Floridians and Americans.**

#### Contact information:

Office of Governor Charlie Crist  
State of Florida  
PL-05 The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001  
(850) 488-7146  
Charlie.Crist@MyFlorida.com

## DOWN, BUT NOT OUT

## Friends still fighting Glades legal battles

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issues is an important aspect of the Friends mission, and promoting environmental education in the Dade County public school system has been a pet cause. The organization's Young Friends of the Everglades program is well run and very effective.

When Marjory Stoneman Douglas stepped down, she turned the Friends reins over to very capable leaders. One who played an especially vital role was Miami Herald environmental reporter Juanita Greene, who took over as Friends president and later served as conservation chair. (If you watched Ken Burns' national parks documentary, you may recall that Ms. Greene not only championed Everglades causes, but also played an instrumental role in getting Biscayne National Park established.)

In its heyday, Friends of the Everglades attracted a lot of people and a lot of money. The NGO's paid membership eventually topped out at about 4,000 and it had an operating budget of around \$100,000. That's a support base that many friends organizations would love to have. By 1994, Friends was operating out of an office in Miami, had two part-time employees (an administrator and a clerk), and seemed

## FUNDING

## Young Friends wins DERM grant

By Reporter Staff

For the 13th consecutive year, the Young Friends of the Everglades outreach program, which teaches environmental awareness, protection of the Everglades and water conservation, has been awarded an environmental education grant from Miami-Dade County. The grant is from the county's Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), the Water and Sewer Department and the Solid Waste Management Department. During the last 12 years, Young Friends has educated over 85,000 students and adults in the classroom as well as in Everglades National Park and at community events.

Young Friends celebrates its 16th anniversary this year. The organization was founded in 1994 by Connie Washburn and Marta Whitehouse,

fated for bigger and better things.

But things have not been going well for Friends lately. Tough economic times have badly eroded the organization's base of support. Paid membership has declined precipitously, reportedly to around 500. Revenues have fallen sharply as well, even though legal expenses and other costs create ever more pressing financial needs. The Miami office was recently closed, and the paid staff is down to one part-time clerk. To make things even worse, Juanita Greene recently retired and moved to Tallahassee to be nearer to her daughter, vacating her key position as Conservation Chair/First Vice President.

The organization is left with no choice but to regroup and rebuild. Acting president Connie Washburn has expressed confidence that this can be done well, albeit not quickly and easily. Good leadership is a vital component of the process, so it's good to see that Juanita Greene's replacement as conservation chair is Alan Farago, a lifelong activist with a strong environmental track record and a good feel for the South Florida political and environmental scenes. He and the other members of the Board of Directors can be expected to work very hard (and hopefully very effectively) to expand membership and boost the revenue stream.

Time will tell whether Friends of the Everglades can restore the membership levels and revenue stream that it enjoyed in its heyday. If you believe in this organization's mission, you should fervently hope so. ☘



**LEARN GREEN:** Educator Jim McMaster leads a Young Friends session.

who were then teachers at Howard Drive Elementary. Connie continues to work as an environmental educator and activist in South Florida and presently serves as Interim President of Friends of the Everglades.

Please visit [www.everglades.org](http://www.everglades.org) and click the Young Friends tab to learn more, including how to reserve a program for your child's school. ☘



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# *Friends of the Everglades* 41st Annual Meeting

**Join us Sunday, April 11th at 2 p.m.**

in the Garden Room at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden  
10901 Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables, FL 33156

Light refreshments, fundraiser raffle and music by Silver Nightingale

**Free admission to the Garden for Friends members**

RSVP to [eglades@bellsouth.net](mailto:eglades@bellsouth.net) or 305.669.0858

## **GUEST SPEAKER** **Matthew Schwartz**

'Back to the Jetport' and other  
Big Cypress National Preserve issues

Originally from Brooklyn, NY, Matt Schwartz has lived in Florida since the mid-nineties. Matt is the Everglades Chair and Political Chair of the Broward Group of the Sierra Club. He also serves on the Florida Sierra Everglades Committee and the National Sierra Club's Wildlands Committee

where he is Chair of the Sub-Committee on National Parks and Wilderness. Matt has been heavily involved in the protection of the nearby Big Cypress National Preserve and has introduced thousands to the Big Cypress through writings, talks and popular 'swampwalks'.



## **HONOREE** **Shannon Estenoz**

Marjory Stoneman Douglas  
Defender of the Everglades Award

Since 1996, Shannon has worked in the NGO sector for Everglades restoration. She began her Everglades career as Executive Director of the Environmental & Land Use Law Center. From 1997 to 2007, she worked as Everglades Program Director for World Wildlife Fund and then as Director of the Sun Coast Region for the National Parks Conservation Association. In April of 2007, Governor Charlie Crist appointed Shannon to the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District, and recently reappointed her for a subsequent term through 2014. She also serves on the Water Resources Advisory Commission and the South Florida Ecosystem Task Force.

