

Upcoming Events – Celebrating Eight Years of Grass Roots Conservation

SAVE THE DATE!

April 12, 2014 **Annual PLC Fundraiser**

See page 3 for details.

February 6-9, 2014

Earth Skills Weekend at Little Orange Creek Nature Park

The Putnam Land Conservancy and the Little Orange Creek Nature Park are proud to host the 2014 Florida Earthskills Gathering (FLESG) February 6th thru 9th. FLESG is one of the largest gatherings of its kind in the Southeastern US. The focus of FLESG is to teach traditional skills that help people to live more harmoniously and sustainably on the Earth and with each other. The collection of folks who grace this gathering cultivate

traditional earth-based skills, appropriate technology, supportive community, music, games for all ages, support for families, appreciation of elders, honoring of the Earth, and encouragement for bringing out the gifts and abilities in each other.

The event attracts a blend of resident and visiting earthskills enthusiasts from all parts of the country. The following is a list of some of the workshops offered: woods lore, animal husbandry, primitive archery, basketry, edible wild plants, tracking, natural building, bicycle maintenance, buckskin sewing, fire by friction, yoga, tai chi, flint knapping, native nutrition, herbal healing, hide tanning, hunting/trapping, kids activities, black-smithing, native wisdom, ecology, permaculture, primitive

pottery, survival/thrival skills, weaving, and woodworking.

A typical FLESG day includes morning and afternoon skills demonstrations and workshops. There is time in between for informal networking and discussions. Many mornings begin with yoga, other fitness activities, or taking in the predawn bird chorus. Evening events feature storytelling, music, drumming, and a “barn dance” with live acoustic old-time music and caller. We encourage you to participate in this life changing event.

To register and for more information go to:

www.FloridaEarthSkills.org or 2014 Florida Earthskills Event Details on Facebook.

February 22, 2014

The Second Annual Bartram Days at Little Orange Creek Nature Park

The Putnam Land Conservancy will co-sponsor the Second Annual Bartram Days at LOCNP February 22, 2014. The planned event includes live music provided by local musicians, experts giving talks on William Bartram, food of the time period (Lochloosa catfish, grits, hushpuppies), local artists painting throughout the day and displaying their work, earth skills folks demonstrating period crafts, and informational tables from local community groups.



Opportunities to learn new skills like plant identification and ethnobotany.

Continued on page 3

FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR EXPEDITION



Photos credit: Carlton Ward, Jr.

On October 30, 2013 the Putnam Land Conservancy, the Legacy Institute for Nature and culture, the Putnam County Environmental Council, Ravine Gardens State Park and with generous funding from the Florida Humanities Council brought an evening of discussion and education surrounding the Florida Wildlife Corridor vision to Palatka.

In 2012, four explorers traveled 1000 miles in 100 days, from the Everglades to Okefenokee Swamp in southern Georgia. Their goal: to raise awareness of the real possibility to protect and restore connected landscapes throughout the Florida Peninsula and create a viable corridor from the Everglades to Georgia. Bear biologist Joe Guthrie, conservationist Mallory Lykes Dimmitt, photojournalist Carlton Ward Jr., and award-winning cinematographer Elam Stoltzfus, traversed the wildlife habitats, watersheds and participating working farms and ranches, which comprise the Florida Wildlife Corridor opportunity area.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor expands on decades of work by numerous conservation organizations and a scientific foundation provided by the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN), spearheaded by Larry Harris and Reed Noss. The Corridor vision combines all of the FEGN Critical Linkages from the Everglades to Okefenokee to highlight the importance of protecting a functional network of public and private conservation lands to protect our native biodiversity, essential

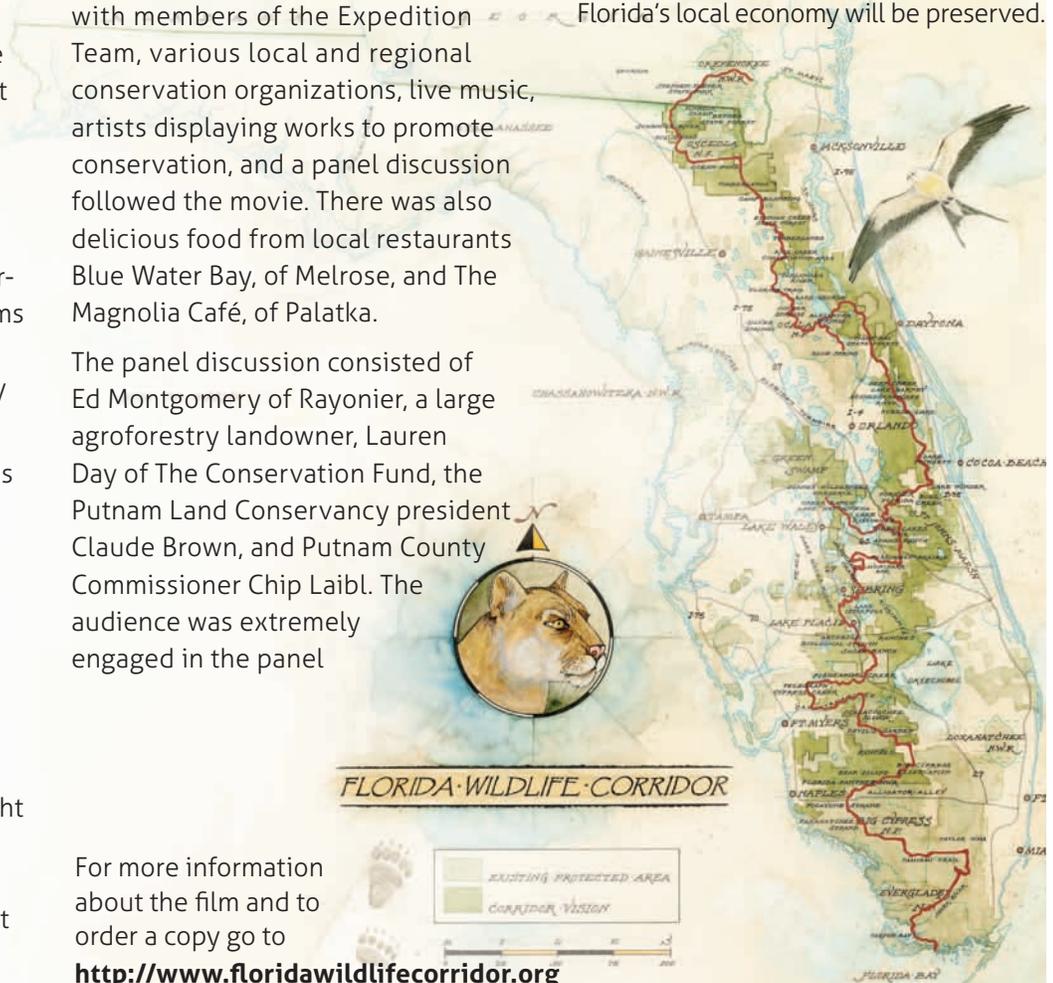
ecosystem services, and the rural natural heritage that is so unique to Florida. Corridors necessary for wildlife migration are also working landscapes important to Florida agriculture, ranching, timber production, and a way of life.

This event was the fifth premiere in a series of ten Corridor Conversation Series events. The evening was centered around a screening of the film documenting the Expedition Team's journey, "The Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition: Everglades to Okefenokee," by Elam Stoltzfus. The evening also included a reception with members of the Expedition Team, various local and regional conservation organizations, live music, artists displaying works to promote conservation, and a panel discussion followed the movie. There was also delicious food from local restaurants Blue Water Bay, of Melrose, and The Magnolia Café, of Palatka.

The panel discussion consisted of Ed Montgomery of Rayonier, a large agroforestry landowner, Lauren Day of The Conservation Fund, the Putnam Land Conservancy president Claude Brown, and Putnam County Commissioner Chip Laibl. The audience was extremely engaged in the panel

discussion and it was refreshing to hear from Chip about how committed he and Putnam County are to protecting its natural resources. It was an honor to host the film in Putnam County as we are a critical link in the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

The expedition traversed a mosaic of public and privately owned lands critical to making this corridor dream a reality. Many of the privately owned lands are large family ranches that protect wildlife and are also important in Florida's agricultural economy. By protecting these lands, conservation interests and an important segment of Florida's local economy will be preserved.



For more information about the film and to order a copy go to

<http://www.floridawildlifecorridor.org>

According to William Bartram's journal, *Travels*, he walked through our area on his way to the Alachua Savanna - which is present day Paynes Prairie. An excerpt from his book provides a description of Little Orange Creek flowing into Little Orange lake as he leaves "Halfway Pond" (Cowpen Lake): *We gently descend again over sand ridges, cross a rapid brook, rippling over the gravelly bed, hurrying the transparent waters into a vast and beautiful lake, through a fine fruitful Orange grove; which magnificently adorns the banks of the lake to a great distance on each side of the capes of the creek. This is a fine situation for a capital town. These waters are tributary to St. Juan's.*

Please check the Facebook page for Little Orange Creek Nature Park for details of this and other events.

April 12, 2014

Annual PLC Fund-raiser

Save the Date – April 12, 2014, to attend the annual Putnam Land Conservancy Fund-raiser. Come join us in celebrating our eighth year and shared efforts in land and water conservation in Putnam County at Luther Springs on the shores of beautiful Lake Vause. This is a great opportunity to support land conservation, learn about projects PLC is working on and a chance to talk to the board members about your local land conservancy. The venue is catered and will have live music and a silent auction. Visit our website at the first of the year for details, directions, and a list of silent auction items of interest.



Dancing to Cajun Beat at first fundraiser

Land Donation Program: Saving Land, Saving Taxes

The main focus of the Land Donation Program (LDP) is to create Nature Parks and wildlife sanctuaries through the donation of land. PLC's Land Donation Program is a win, win, win (for land conservation, the donors, and the county). PLC's Land Donation Program solicits donations of land from willing donors to protect land and donors receive an income tax deduction. So far the LDP has allowed donors about \$1.2 million in income tax deductions. Since many of the donated parcels are in undeveloped or sparsely developed subdivisions it helps save the county money on services they must provide to in these remote areas. It also helps the county by "redesigning these poorly planned subdivisions, creating dedicated nature parks and green space that did not exist in the original plats. So far PLC has received over 425 parcels for a total of over 320 acres in 8 counties. This meticulous work has been a primary focus during the recent lean funding times and has allowed for the protection of land equivalent to 10% of our larger State funded acquisition projects in the past.

This year PLC is expanding the program to include solicitations of properties outside Putnam County that include areas in need of protection like around Rainbow Springs, the Ocala National Forest, a bat cave in Marion County, endangered scrub habitat in Marion Oaks subdivision, and the Brevard Coastal Scrub in Brevard County, and a black bear corridor in Flagler County.

Highlights of the Land Donation Program

Van Mierop Neighborhood Nature Park, 24 acres, located near Little Lake McMeekin in western Putnam County. This park is the first of PLC's Neighborhood Nature Parks opened to the public and includes a ¾ mile hiking trail. The Nature Conservancy's Northeast Florida Ecosystem Restoration Team is assisting PLC in restoring the sandhill community there. The park is accessible by pedestrians only.

Mondex, 80 acres in Putnam County. Mondex is an undeveloped subdivision south of Palatka and adjacent to the Cross Florida Greenway. This was PLC's first targeted area and so far, after four years, PLC has acquired 7.5% of the 1,072 acres through donations. The Florida Trail travels through this subdivision and PLC is working to ensure a protected route for it through Mondex.

The Alfred Fujarski Nature Park, 5.7 acres in Putnam County. This property donated by the Alfred A. Fujarski Trust will become a nature park in Downtown Welaka. It is next to a community

ballpark and playground. This land is a mix of pine flatwoods and cypress swamp and will be a great addition as a nature park in the middle of the town of Welaka.



Crescent Lake access in Putnam County. PLC acquired a defunct community association's lake access lot with boat launch. PLC plans to maintain this property to allow community access to the lake. This property with its ancient oak and cypress trees offers a picturesque view of the lake.

George's Lake shoreline in Putnam County. This small 8/10 acre parcel on the undeveloped shoreline of the lake will protect some of the floodplain forest.

Continued on page 6

PLC's Land Management Cooperative Efforts



Above: Long distance marathon runner Winston Fletcher practices at 9-mile.



Above: Off road bicycling trails are being established at 9-mile.

Nine-mile Swamp

PLC has mapped out a system of trails at the Nine Mile Swamp Park that is owned by Putnam County. PLC initiated and assisted in the acquisition of the 1200 acres. The trail network will be a series of loop trails starting with a short 3/4 mile loop from the parking area. The longer trails will be developed in stages. About ten miles of trails have been mapped covering variety of terrains, from high and dry to seasonally wet (living up to the park's name) for those wanting a cool refreshing hike in the heat of the summer. These seasonally wet trails have firm footing even in the wet conditions. Initial trail development has begun and the next step is to develop the parking area and entrance. The trail network will encompass the wide range of ecotones on the property and will be made available for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding. We plan is to have the first trails open in the next few months.

Van Meirop Nature Park

The Nature Conservancy's Northeast Florida Ecosystem Restoration Team has partnered with PLC to assist in the on-going efforts to restore the 24 acre van Mierop Nature Park to its historic sandhill community. Sandhill is one of the most imperiled habitats in the state. The predominant tree species in sandhill are long leaf pine and turkey oak and the predominant groundcover is wiregrass. In its restored condition the forest will be open with a multitude of grasses and other groundcover, few midstory shrubs, and an overstory of large stately long leaf pines. Last July TNC's very knowledgeable and experienced



Above, left to right: Lisa Modola, Janis Brown-Stallings, Timothy Keyser, Mike Stallings, Elizabeth Van Meirop, and Claude Brown.

team conducted a controlled burn on the property. It was a collaborative effort of the Nature Conservancy's burn team and the University of Florida's Ordway Swisher Biological Research Station's burn team. To add to the collaborative effort the Alachua Conservation Trust loaned a vehicle and water-tank trailer to for backup water needs. Prescribed burning will be an ongoing land management tool used at the van Mierop Nature Park. To maintain and improve the health of the sandhill habitat it needs to be burned at least every three years. This first burn went very well and



Right: Sandhill before control burn

PLC's Land Management Cooperative Efforts



Top left to right: Sandhill during control burn
Above: Sandhill after control burn

was conducted in wet conditions so the fire was not very intense. Weeks after the burn the wiregrass responded really well by putting on a flush of new green growth and will hopefully produce seed this fall. The TNC team is also assisting in land management by removing weedy tree species to open up the canopy so the grasses and other groundcover plants can make a come back. They're also clearing a perimeter trail around the park that will serve as a hiking trail, fire break and equipment access during controlled burns. PLC is extremely grateful for assistance the TNC's team is providing at the park! Please come to the park and experience the restoration work in progress.

Little Orange Creek Nature Park

PLC renewed our management contract with the City of Hawthorne (COH) through May 2015 as we work with COH and Friends of Little Orange Creek (FLOC) to complete the last laps in the race to get LOCNP open as a community resource and environmental nature center.

Activity at LOCNP has been ongoing. Volunteers have donated over 1,200 hours to park related activities. On a rainy April Saturday, property



Continued on page 6

Young park supporters from Hornet 4-H club plant seedlings at LOCNP

PLC's Land Management Cooperative Efforts

manager Mike Stallings and City Staff supervised the Hornet 4-H Club and the Hawthorne Sports group in planting 250 longleaf pine seedlings on the property.

In June, a foundation for a new conservation partnership was established. PLC

currently manages the 1,100 acres of LOCNP on the north side of SR20. Alachua Conservation Trust and Conservation Trust of Florida, through grants, have been able to purchase large tracts of land adjacent to the park. This will form a contiguous parcel that is more than 2,000 acres

in size. A "Little Orange Creek Partners" group has been formed to bring together the groups/organizations with vested interest in LOCNP and to provide guidance in the management of the wild places using the expertise and experience of seasoned partners. The first meeting was held June 12, 2013 with representatives of the City of Hawthorne, Putnam Land Conservancy, The Conservation Trust of Florida and Alachua Conservation Trust.

In August, an outdoor "show and tell" event was hosted for 70 local teachers to introduce them to the many resources available at LOCNP as a classroom without walls.

A grant was received on behalf of the City of Hawthorne for a wildflower planting at the Park in October. Prior to the event, Janis and Mike turned the non-native Bahia grass to demark and prepare areas for native seeds. Three dozen volunteers including members of the local 4-H club helped to rake the ground and plant seed under the direction of Janis Brown-Stallings.



Holiday in the park for ELI students from UF.

The English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Florida scheduled two workdays at LOCNP assisting in clearing undesirable vegetation and making paths in our ongoing effort to restore the historic Morrison's Cemetery, located on the east side of the Park. The ELI have committed to making the Park an annual community volunteer site for their organization. The PLC and City of Hawthorne sponsored the ELI's annual family Thanksgiving at the Park on November 23, 2013.

There are about 12 different invasive species on the entire park that require removal in order to maintain a native habitat. This has been accomplished entirely by hand removal and very limited herbicide treatment. There is still much to do. If you are interested in helping with the ongoing restoration and general park ground works, we are interested in you. Primary contact for PLC with regards to LOCNP: Property Manager- Mike Stallings or Secretary Janis Brown-Stallings.

continued - Land Donation Program

Palatka to Lake Butler Rail Trail in Putnam County. A parcel donated next to the trail will help protect the scenic beauty of the trail.

Interlachen Community Garden, Putnam County. A small parcel adjacent to Interlachen's downtown Jenkins Park will be dedicated as the Smith-Brush Community Garden. This garden will be planted with native butterfly plants and a community vegetable garden.

Dunn's Creek 5 acres, Putnam County. Five acres of Dunn's Creek floodplain forest was donated. It is located along the east side of the Highway 17 bridge over Dunn's Creek.

Marion Oaks, 15 acres in Marion County. Properties donated in this Marion County subdivision will help protect rare and endangered plant and animal species in the scrub community. Some notable species are scrub jays, gopher tortoises and longspurred mint which is federally endangered and endemic to parts of Marion and Sumter Counties.

Aquifer recharge (Sandhills), 75 acres in Putnam and Marion Counties. The Sandhills play a critical role in recharging Florida's aquifers. Sandhills are also one of the most imperiled habitats in Florida because of development pressure and suppression of fire. It is host to many rare plants and animals.

Flagler Estates, 13 acres in Flagler County. The Flagler County portion of Flagler Estates subdivision is completely undeveloped and lies in a known black bear corridor. The County has policies in its comprehensive plan to "prevent sprawling development form occurring in the Flagler Estates area." PLC's land donations will help ensure this subdivision is never developed.



Opportunities Abound for Volunteering with PLC



From left to right: Lupine, Coral Bean, Rain-lilies, Pine-lily

(Photos by Dick Franz)

The Putnam Land Conservancy provides many opportunities for volunteers to get involved in local conservation efforts: ranging from assisting in developing and managing lands, trail design and maintenance, fund-raising, public and educational outreach programs, and clerical work. We welcome community participation in support of our mission to conserve land and water for people and wildlife by protecting the natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources in and around Putnam County. Join us and put your talents and skills to work for a great cause within our community.

Committee Participation

Project committee volunteers assist in identifying new opportunities around the community for conservation efforts, assist in development and implementation of management plans for PLC properties.

Fund-raising Committee volunteers assist in planning, networking, promoting and implementation of event related activities. Volunteers may work with musicians, vendors, local business sponsors, or other contacts within the community.

Finance Committee volunteers provide good fiscal direction and advice as to how best to manage the organizations limited financial resources for the long-term operation of the organization and its acquired resources.

Trails and Land Management Committee

Plans and oversees trail building and maintenance and land management on PLC properties.

Volunteer Outreach

Volunteers are an important link between our organization and the public by manning a table at various local events, such as: arts festivals, education days, and farmer's markets. Volunteers should be dedicated to learning about PLC's mission, history, and current projects.

Stewardship Work

Volunteers will work on GPS mapping of acquired properties, forest management, trail design and construction, scientific data collection, educational programs and outings. Additional opportunities include light outdoor carpentry for footbridges and kiosks, painting and signage placement.

Historical Research

Volunteers will use libraries, local archives, and the internet to construct local histories of PLC properties and the County. Research the rail line, witness trees, tourism, local logging, turpentine, agricultural and fisheries practices. Volunteers will also work to obtain high-resolution copies of old photos, in addition to printed and digital copies of relevant documents.

Ecological Monitoring

Volunteers will gather data related to the presence and location of onsite native and invasive species to facilitate management goals. Documentation of rare and endangered flora and fauna, ecological zones, and assess management practices.

Trail Maintenance

Volunteers will help create, install, and maintain appropriate signage and monitor trails for public safety concerns such as: leaning trees, downed trees, or anything out of the ordinary. They will pick up trash and clear light debris such as fallen limbs from trails, and trim back over hanging debris as needed.

Web and Data Management

Volunteers will help create, install, and maintain relevant articles and information related to PLC activities. May assist in various aspects of digital record keeping and reconciling of all supporting documents related to PLC policies and resolutions.



web: putnamlandconservancy.org
(386) 336-5400

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Who We Are - Putnam Land Conservancy (PLC) is a regional, nonprofit Florida land trust dedicated to working cooperatively with land owners and public and private conservation partners to preserve for future generations our important natural areas and open spaces. These include wetlands and waters, forests and farmlands, and all environmentally significant habitats. PLC also promotes stewardship of land through action and education, both to restore and maintain ecosystem integrity.

PLC focuses on Putnam County, but our range of activity includes connection lands in adjacent counties. We secure land through gifts and bequests, direct purchase and bargain sale, and conservation easements. By these means PLC aims to enable land owners to safeguard in perpetuity the places that define the special character of our region, contributing to its environmental and economic vitality.

PLC is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit charity created in 2006. PLC receives no government grants for general operating support and relies on contributions from private individuals, corporations, and foundations. Donations are tax deductible.



Putnam Land Conservancy

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