

Greetings to all our members and others interested in land conservation. Since our last detailed newsletter, much has happened. At our annual meeting last month, those able to attend were brought up to date on events during the past year. This newsletter contains an account of the discussions at that meeting, along with a new membership proposal from Norm Gowan (our current president and long-time membership chairman), followed by announcements about current projects and upcoming activities.

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

President Norm Gowan opened the annual meeting at 2:00 on January 21. About 45 people turned out on a beautiful Pine Island Saturday. This year's meeting was again held at the American Legion Hall in St. James City. Afterwards several members went on a short nature outing.

#### *Membership Report*

As of the annual meeting, the Calusa Land Trust has 392 names on the mailing list, of which 177 are current on their dues. Membership is tracked as one year from the date

of the previous donation; when that period has passed, an asterisk is printed after the name on your mailing label. (Please take a moment now to check the mailing label on this newsletter.)

Since the completion of our last land purchase, the Castile Corridor addition to our St. James Creek Preserve, 79 members have donated \$100 or more toward our next acquisition, which is a small park and canoe launch with access to our Big Jim Creek Preserve (see discussion below). These 79 members have given us a good start in paying off the purchase price and development costs for this exciting new project, and we thank them for their generosity.

Twenty four new members have signed up in the past twelve months. The membership committee does not think this is adequate to support our future activities. Several events are held each year to raise funds for land acquisition, but the vast bulk of our funds come as donations from our membership. So if we want to raise the money for purchasing more endangered lands, we need to increase our membership. The committee is asking each Land Trust member to find at least one new member. Let's double our membership in 1995! When you sign up a new member, add your name on the membership form as their "Sponsor." Future newsletters will carry an honor role of successful recruiters.

#### *Treasurer's Report*

Treasurer Bill Spikowski reported that as of 1/1/95, Calusa Land Trust has \$23,619 in unrestricted funds, \$18,642 in the land management fund and \$9,500 in the emergency fund. He commented that although these numbers are better than last year, the land trust has committed itself to manage the 750 acres it owns and considering that responsibility, our financial condition isn't as sound as it should be. The annual financial summary is included in this newsletter. A detailed accounting of all expenditures is available upon request.

#### *Fundraising Reports*

The T-Shirt Committee was very busy this year. Don and Mary Shontz led the way and worked hard at six scheduled events around the Island, including the St. James City Civic Association Spring Festival, the Pine Island Seafood Festival, and the Elks Independence Day celebration. They also filled many individual orders. Maxine Ingelse (Don calls her the T-Shirt Queen!) of the Pine Island KOA seems to have sold shirts to practically everyone there. The total number of shirts sold for the year came to 85, which netted the Land Trust \$550. These shirts make great gifts too, so if you are interested, call Don or Mary at 283-4818.

Don and Mary Shontz also ran a very successful shrimp dinner fund raiser last March 13th. Their volunteer crew served 167 tasty dinners at \$6.50 each, one of the best bargains in town. In addition to a delicious meal, there was music to listen to and a raffle. Everyone had a great time. Special thanks to the Dolphin Lounge which hosted this event for the second year in a row. It took 75 pounds of shrimp and lots of work, but the Land Trust added \$815 to its treasury by the end of the day.

The Pine Island Boat Club held its 2nd Annual Poker Run on December 11, 1994, to benefit the Calusa Land Trust. On what was to become a cold, windy, and rainy day, about 55 boats braced themselves and took their chances to draw cards at seven water locations. Over 200 gamblers drew from 140 decks of cards to play 542 hands of poker. The winning combination, five jacks, won nearly \$1100. And Calusa Land Trust realized an income of about \$3100 for the day! Part of this came from purchases at the Calusa Land Trust T-Shirt booth manned by guess who. Anyone who donated \$100 that day received five free poker tickets from the Boat Club. If you missed this incredible day, do not worry. This event has become a tradition and another one is already scheduled for December 3, 1995. Mark your calendars.

### *Land Acquisition Report*

Chairman Rich Larkin reported that the main goal for 1994 was to improve public access to the large tracts of land that the Calusa Land trust already owns. After much research and negotiation, CLT has signed a contract to buy a small uplands parcel with easy car access to Stringfellow Road and canoe access to our Big Jim Creek Preserve in Bokeelia. This parcel would be used as a park and canoe launch, and would be formally named "Walbridge Otto (Bill) Fritts Park" as a memorial to this early conservationist (please read his 1964 article for a sense of his convictions). For the sake of brevity, we will probably just refer to this as the "Fritts Park." Peggy Fritts has agreed to sell us 1½ acres of this land at an excellent price, with an option for us to buy an adjoining acre next year. The land acquisition committee is in the process of researching the status of legal access across Beach Daisy Lane to the parcel and then into the mosquito control canal system that connects directly to Big Jim Creek. Our cost for the initial purchase would be \$10,000 plus certain physical improvements to the land. The additional acre would cost us another \$10,000. This is very exciting news as it will open up this beautiful preserve to our members and guests. We will keep everyone posted as this project progresses.

### *Other land acquisition announcements*

*St. James Creek Preserve* — Negotiations with the adjacent land owner over our conflicting claims to the entrance of our St. Jude Trail have broken down again. As you may remem-

ber, we are in court to resolve this dispute. Attorney Charles Bigelow is handling our case at no charge to us. We have attempted formal mediation during this past year, to no avail.

*Pine Island Eagle Preserve* — Many of you have seen that a controlled burn was conducted on this property in a cooperative effort of Lee County, the state forestry department, and the Pine Island fire department. Without occasional burning, the slash pine and palmetto habitat that supports the current wildlife will be replaced by less productive vegetation. Because there has been no fire on this property for at least a couple of decades, there was a very large build-up of flammable ground cover, making this first burn unavoidably hazardous. The fire did get quite hot and some of the trees closest to Pine Island Road probably will not recover. The palmetto understory recovered immediately. All of the professionals involved called the burn a success. The county has also erected a fence around this part of the preserve, as promised, and is getting ready to plan the next steps including an identification sign and paths. (See below for an upcoming meeting about this very subject.) CLT has also obtained a lease at no cost from the Greater Pine Island Water Association for a small grassed parking area on Castile Road (in case the Post Office no longer allows visitors to the Eagle Preserve to park there).

*McCardle Island* — The legal system drags on in this case as well. The federal government claims ownership of McCardle because they say their title transfer to the state of Florida (and eventually to us) is null and void because the land hadn't been properly surveyed at the time of transfer. Our title insurance company is incredulous and is stalling on paying off our policy. The island is safe either way, since the federal government has no interest in selling or developing it (at least for the next 40 years). If we lose title, all proceeds of the title insurance policy will be used by the Calusa Land Trust for further land acquisition. Attorney (and CLT member) Bill Grace is representing our interests in this matter.

### *Land Management Report*

Chairman Ed Chapin reported that his committee has been very active this past year. On the first Saturday of every month, members and friends come out and work to help clear exotic vegetation, clean up trash, and plant native species. Ed has been keeping track of who has been able to help and how many hours of labor have been donated. In summary, 36 people have participated in 12 different work days, contributing a total of 280 man/woman hours! Most of the work this past year was done at the St. James Creek Preserve, especially on the St. Jude Trail, with 9 days spent there for a total of 175 hours. Then came Big Jim Creek for 2 days, and Calusa Island for one day. All this represents a tremendous effort and everyone is to be commended for their help and devotion. Not on a few occasions these volunteers had to brave aggressive bugs, heat, or rain, not to mention sore muscles and scratches. Many thanks to all of them and those we undoubtedly missed on the following list.

Alison Ackerman	Leslie Garrison	Harvey Ingelse	Mary Shontz
Brenda Anderson	Norm Gowan	Maxine Ingelse	Bill Spikowski
Doug Canette	Jimmy Green	Chic Kennedy	Stan Tracy
Phil Cappel	Mike Green	Richard Little	Charlie Williams
Hanni Carver	Rino Guthrie	Rick Moore	Steve Yerks
Jack Carver	Ida Herbert	Peter Ordway	June Zeller
Cari Caudill	Mike Herbert	John Orrell	Ludwig Zeller
Ed Chapin	Wyatt Hooks	Sheila Orrell	
Dean Dolbeck	Bud House	Chip Schonder	
Charles Garrison	Shirley House	Don Shontz	

*Election to Board of Directors*

There are 11 members on our Board of Directors. The nominating committee recommended the following six members to fill expiring 2-year terms: Ed Chapin, Norm Gowan, Bud House, Rich Larkin, Peter Ordway, and Don Shontz. Bud House was appointed by the board this past year to fill the vacancy left by Gloria Sajgo’s resignation. Ellie Boyd also retired from the board this year, and Peter Ordway was selected to replace her. We are all very sorry to lose Gloria and Ellie and I am sure everyone joins the board in our appreciation for their time and contributions over the years. There were no other nominations from the floor and all six members were elected. The other five members who will be finishing out one more year in their terms are Alison Ackerman, Chic Kennedy, Cindy Bear, Bill Spikowski, and Helen McClary.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS**

***Eagle Preserve Meeting*** — Come to the Pine Island Library on Tuesday, February 21, at 1:00 to meet with Lee County biologist Roger Clark and Ed Chapin to discuss what the next steps should be at the Eagle Preserve, now that the controlled burn has been completed and the perimeter fence is up. What about nature trails? Should palmettos be cut to make room for other natural vegetation? Join them and help make plans for this most important preserve.

***Shrimp Dinner*** — Marie Gowan heads up the committee for this project this year. It is planned for March 12 at the Dolphin Lounge in St. James City at 1:00 in the afternoon. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$7.50, which will buy you an excellent dinner prepared by Land Trust volunteers. All the details aren't firmed up as yet, but there will be good food, raffle/door prizes, a chance to mingle with other Land Trust members and of course to help the Trust preserve that next piece of land. If you can help, call Marie at 283-8203. Otherwise, we hope to see many of you there.

***Fund-raising*** — A new fund-raising team is being formed this year and new ideas and volunteers are being sought. One event under consideration is a "Duck Race." Numbered plastic ducks would be sold and, on the day of the race, floated into canals on an outgoing tide and picked up downstream at the finish line. Winners would be awarded prizes at the finish, which (of course) would also be a party area. Much work would have to be done to have such an event before this season is over but it may be worth a try. What are your ideas? Call Norm Gowan at 283-8203 to get involved.

***Grant Application*** — New board member Peter Ordway has discovered an opportunity for the Calusa Land Trust and has been pursuing it with our new GIS committee. The Conservation Technology Support Program is offering grants to up to 30 non-profit organizations around the country who want to establish their own "Geographic Information System" (GIS). A GIS is a computerized mapping system that can access data on vegetation types, land ownership, and other important geographic data. Our GIS committee has completed the grant application and submitted it to the grant selection committee. Our GIS committee has also met with several state and local governmental organizations to coordinate efforts and identify data and maps that we can use if the grant is approved. We will keep our members apprised of the results of this effort.

***New Officers*** — The Board of Directors has elected new officers for 1995. They are: President, Norm Gowan; Vice-President, Alison Ackerman; Secretary, Peter Ordway; Assistant Secretary, Chic Kennedy; Treasurer, Bill Spikowski.

— Alison Ackerman, newsletter editor