

## **\*\*Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association 30th Reunion\*\***

Thank you, Matt Nelson, for your leadership and wisdom in guiding us through the night. This event provided a fantastic opportunity to unite our founding fathers and the next generation that will carry F.S.C.A. forward. Seeing three generations of F.S.C.A. members gathered to share their accomplishments over the years was inspiring. F.S.C.A. was honored to welcome everyone to the 30th reunion of the Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association.

The evening was a journey through the past 30 years, highlighting the many achievements of this club, the tireless efforts of its founding fathers, presidents, and members, and the invaluable relationships built with staff from local, state, and federal agencies. From courtrooms to the thickest mud in the glades, this club has faced every challenge to public access to protect and preserve traditional access and recreation on public land in Florida.

F.S.C.A. extends its gratitude to all who attended, hoping you enjoyed the evening and gained insight into the hard work that has made our current access possible. The leadership would like to thank Nick Wiley, who traveled from Tennessee as our moderator, and Jamie and Velve Mellette, who came from Swamp Cracker Barbecue, for providing dinner. They are one of the hardest-working families in conservation, and we were honored to have them at the event.

A special thanks goes to Mike Elfenbein and Travis Thompson for their Amendment 2 discussion. Amendment 2 will be on our ballot this November. They answered questions and guided how to help spread the word to ensure this amendment passes. We also applaud Nikki and Tommy McGoldrick for managing the front door and checking everyone in, along with Bo Moyer, who donated the .308 Browning rifle won by Daniel King. Thanks to Daniel King for recording the event and Sandra Shoemate for capturing photos that will last a lifetime.

If you're wondering what F.S.C.A. has achieved over the past 30 years, this event offered a glimpse of our many accomplishments.

F.S.C.A. was started in 1994 by a small group of like-minded individuals with one goal. Working to increase public recreation in Florida is a straightforward goal that has branched into many areas, but the focus of F.S.C.A. has never changed.

### **Accomplishments & Projects**

- Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association members enthusiastically answer the call for help when volunteer help is needed throughout the year to assist with various conservation efforts. Members have spent countless hours and have removed tons of trash from various public lands. Projects such as this only emphasize the need for more public awareness of a growing problem that faces Florida. Projects include Northlake Blvd, Corbett W.M.A., Multi-turf, Conservation Area 2, and Lake Kissimmee. On Earth Day 2014, our latest project gathered 32 airboats with 80 volunteers to remove two abandoned Duke University research stations in WCA2. Several clubs and camp owners participated in this massive cleanup. Still, the most impressive thing was the innovative ideas, tools, and techniques demonstrated by the Gladesmen to get the job done. These cleanups exemplify what volunteers can do to save the district thousands of dollars.
- When the Everglades Youth Camp at the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area was threatened with closure due to the condemnation of the camp's obsolete wastewater discharge system, F.S.C.A. volunteers donated 1404 man-hours of labor and heavy equipment to truck in 2,340 yards of fill material and construct a

modern drain field and filtration marsh. This effort allowed the summer youth camp program to open on schedule and saved the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (F.W.C.) \$50,000.00 during a crucial budget shortfall. Years later, we returned to the new pavilion to build a B.B.Q. for outdoor grilling.

- The annual "Outdoor Youth Day" program is specifically designed to educate our children about the various recreational activities available in our natural areas. Events include pony rides, canoeing, a wildlife show, fishing, airboat & buggy rides, archery, a K-9 show, and a rifle range. Each year, we host over 1000 children for this unique experience. This event also helps us sponsor underprivileged children at the Everglades Youth Camp each summer.

- In January 1995, members helped convert an old horse stable into the Conservation Pavilion at the South Florida Fair. Every year, we set up a booth to help educate the public on S Fl conservation issues.

- Our representatives have consulted with F.W.C. and S.F.W.M.D. to facilitate opening and establishing responsible regulation of new lands for recreational use. To date, these lands include Nicodemus Slough, Fort Drum Swamp, Browns Farm, Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, Frog Pond, West Jupiter Wetlands, Dinner Island, Spirit of the Wild W.M.A., John and Mariana Jones W.E.A., all 5 S.T.A.'s, Okalawacoochee and Allapatha Flats

- In 2011, we purchased 2.5 acres of property in Royal Palm Beach for our future Conservation headquarters. The property is instrumental in the growth of our organization by allowing us to have a footprint in South FL.

- F.S.C.A. was instrumental in establishing the Youth Hunt program of Fl. We held the 1st non-agency personnel youth hunt in our state, and we hosted 15 different hunts for over 75 children. Twenty-nine of our members are certified Hunt Masters with the state of Florida Youth Hunt program  
The N.R.A. Youth Hunter Ed challenge tournament is an excellent program in which F.S.C.A. had three boys from Region Five qualify for Pennsylvania to represent the state of Florida in 2008.

- In cooperation with the Everglades Coordinating Council (E.C.C.) and the Florida Conservation Council, F.S.C.A. has helped organize and host events designed to educate our state legislators about environmental programs facing South Florida's unique ecosystem, as well as the recreational opportunities and economic enhancements a healthy ecosystem can provide. These events have included three legislative tours of the Everglades and Legislative Day family outings at the Everglades Youth Camp.

- Assisted in constructing a park in the City of West Palm Beach in the Water Catchment Area, allowing public access to wildlife viewing opportunities in an area closed to the public since the early 1980s. F.S.C.A. volunteers returned to provide maintenance for the park trail system.

- October 27, 1994, F.S.C.A. volunteers participated in "Operation Deer Feed" in Water Conservation Area III, taking native vegetation to starving deer stranded on islands during flood conditions. An essential component of this project involved transporting elected officials and the news media into flooded areas to educate them about the plight of the wildlife in the area. Additionally, uncovering the flaws in the water management system that contributed to the devastation.

- In cooperation with S.F.M.D., we built a 20x30 foul weather shelter on DuPuis and two along the Kissimmee River PUA. We moved posted signs back for more public access and made a campground for all user groups.

- Designed and built the 1st horse paddock for Dupuis W.M.A. before they would open to equestrian use. Volunteers also installed a fence at the public campground on the Dupuis Reserve.

- The Florida Trails Association has an Ocean to Lake Hiking Trail that runs for approximately 63 miles, west from Hobe Sound Beach to Lake Okeechobee. The trail starts at the ocean, entering Jonathan Dickinson State Park at U.S. 1, traveling through the park, Palm Beach County Natural Areas, Corbett Wildlife Management Area, and Dupuis Management Area, and ends at the lake. This trail was enhanced when the Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association placed a bridge over the game canal in the JW Corbett Wildlife management
  - Designed, built, and installed Wood Duck Boxes at Dupuis Reserve, on Lake Okeechobee, John and Mariana Jones W.E.A., and the Kissimmee River in cooperation with S.F.W.M.D., F.W.C., and Delta Waterfowl. Programs such as these have enabled wood duck populations to rebound from near extinction nationwide.
  - We participated in the Vessel Sound Ordinance Testing in cooperation with F.W.C.
  - May 23, 1995, the F.S.C.A. was appointed to the South Florida Water Management District (S.F.W.M.D.) Environmental Advisory Committee.
  - Adopted a "White-Tailed Deer" in June 1997 as a participant in the Dreher Park Zoo Adopt-an-Animal program.
  - Repaired 11 miles of vandalized fence on Cecil Webb Wildlife Management Area (W.M.A.), enabling continued public enjoyment of this area. F.S.C.A. established a peer pressure education program to urge ethical conduct on public lands.
  - We have treated youth groups to fun-filled environmental education field trips via swamp buggies and airboats. These groups include Girl Scouts, 4H kids, summer youth camp attendees, Boy Scouts, and Indian Princes.
  - F.S.C.A. members lend a hand to members of our community in need. In June 1994, they held a benefit barbecue for a single mother who was seriously injured in an automobile accident. In July 1997, F.S.C.A. held a benefit for two-year-old Cody Freshwater, diagnosed with Acute Lymphocyte Leukemia; then, years later, he was one of our Youth hunters.
  - Developed and coordinated youth education programs in local schools and the Everglades Youth Camp.
  - Participated in habitat enhancement prescribed burning program with F.W.C. within the J.W. Corbett Management Area.
  - On three separate occasions, F.S.C.A. donated and installed culverts to improve hydrology under backcountry trails on public lands and provide continued public use during periods of flooding.
  - We have hosted numerous Wounded Warrior events, including turkey, deer/hog and alligator hunts
- Volunteers improved visitor safety and aesthetics on S.F.W.M.D. lands by removing over 2450 fence posts and over 170,000 ft of barbed wire from Nicodemus Slough, Gardner Marsh, and Kissimmee River.
- Re-roofed the storage building at the Everglades Youth Camp rifle range, where young people and adults are trained in firearms safety.

- "Mangrove Marathon" on Jupiter Waterways Park, a project to replace harmful exotic trees with native mangroves, which are essential in restoring inshore islands and marine nurseries along Florida's east coast.
- Worked with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to count and mark existing Red red-cockaded woodpecker colonies.
- Volunteers have frequently participated in annual exotic tree eradication programs in various management areas.
- We promote conservation and environmental education in the annual "Earth Fest" and "Earth Fest for Educators" at the Palm Beach Mall.
- Hosted Bass Tournaments to promote catch-and-release fishing opportunities and to raise funds to further our conservation efforts.
- Developed and managed a "Dolphin Fishing Tournament" to promote fishing opportunities and to raise funds to further our conservation efforts.
- Volunteers provide swamp buggy rides in the Ft. Pierce Cattlemen's and Belle Glade Black Gold parades.
- In conjunction with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (D.E.P.) F.S.C.A. volunteers participated in real Florida nature scaping in John D. MacArthur State Park.
- F.S.C.A. volunteers have participated in the annual Kids Fishing Day event sponsored by the West Palm Beach Fishing Club.
- Held our first annual alligator hunt kickoff party at Belle Glade Marina on Lake Okeechobee.
- Helped the F.W.C. set rules for three new land acquisitions.
- Helped S.F.W.M.D. form the WRAC Rec committee, ensuring all their lands have all the recreational opportunities possible.
- Every year before the peak period in which native wildlife is expected to produce offspring, F.S.C.A. volunteers work with members of other conservation organizations to plant over 600 lb. of seed to enhance wildlife habitat.
- We annually host a Treasure Coast Wildlife Management area summit to allow user groups to coordinate on problems in our local W.M.A.'s
- Each July, F.S.C.A. celebrates Plant a Tree for Marjorie Day. By planting a tree in honor of a person who, like Marjory Stoneman Douglas, has dedicated their life to promoting conservation and environmental responsibility.
- F.S.C.A. participates in the F.W.C.'s Adopt-a Boat Ramp program.
- In 1997, joined the "Adopt a Highway" program, providing ongoing litter control over a 4-mile stretch of Northlake Blvd. In the Royal Palm Beach Acreage. Volunteer work details are scheduled to coincide with peak rush hour traffic to promote environmental responsibility through example.

- F.S.C.A. volunteers lend a hand in cleaning up local lakes and waterways during the F.W.C.'s annual Project Eagle environmental cleanup.
- Help Santa collect toys for underprivileged children every Christmas by participating in the US Marines Toys for Tots program.

If you're not a part of this association, feel free to get involved; we welcome everyone aboard. This is by far not a one-person show, as you can see.