

Magnolia Chapter FNPS Monthly Update: July 2012

“You should never wear your best trousers when you go out to fight
for freedom and truth” (Henrik Ibsen)

Chapter Happenings

North Florida's native plants are better adapted to July's heat and humidity than is the Magnolia Chapter, many of whose members migrate indoors, to the beach or up north away from the mug and bugs. Hats off to the brave hardy souls whose work demands summer forages into the field!

September 6, 2012 Program – Audrey and Frank Peterman, *Legacy on the Land*

The Magnolia Chapter will kick off the Fall lineup of speakers with a special program aimed at reaching a wider spectrum of our community. September's speakers, Audrey and Frank Peterman, are diversity consultants, assisting public and private conservation organizations to engage a more diverse cross section of people in the enjoyment and stewardship of our publicly owned lands. The Petermans' became catalysts for change after embarking on a mid-life tour of our national parks and seeing very few people of color at all the glorious places they visited. Returning home they started a newsletter and tours to introduce African Americans and other people of color to the great outdoors. Since then, Audrey and Frank have developed into award-winning leaders in the conservation movement and co-authored *Legacy on the Land: A Black Couple Discovers Our National Inheritance and Tells Why Every American Should Care*.

The Magnolia Chapter is honored to have the Petermans' present their experiences at the September 6 Magnolia Chapter Meeting on the FSU campus. The presentation is intended to help inform environmental and conservation advocates about how to reach out and communicate with people who are not typical members. The Peterman's book will be available for sale. For more information on Audrey and Frank Peterman, go to the web: earthwiseproductionsinc.com and legacyontheland.com.

September 8, 2012 Field Trip – Natural Bridge State Park

Saturday morning, September 8th, the Magnolia Chapter will have a field trip to Natural Bridge State Park, famous for its natural beauty and as one of the last battle sites of the War between the States. Mark Stevenson, Florida Park Service Ranger, will lead the tour and interpret the site's battle history, which included African American contingents on both sides. African American war re-enactors are being invited to participate as well.

Big Bend Candidates' Environmental Forum, July 26, 2012

The Big Bend Environmental Forum (BBEF) and the League of Women Voters of Tallahassee hosted a candidates' forum on Thursday, July 26 for local candidates (Tallahassee City Commission: Seats 1 and 2 and Leon County Commission At Large Seat 1). Wakulla Springs, water quality protection, urban sprawl and quality of life issues took up most of the three hour series of question and answer sessions for each of the three slates of candidates. Questions were prepared by BBEF and also submitted by the audience. All candidates seemed to agree that the environment, Wakulla Springs, trees and water quality are important but appeared to have some differences in “walking the walk.”

The forum was well organized by Neil Fleckenstein and Nia Wellendorf and will be held again for the general election in the fall. The questions were moderated by WFSU's Tom Flanagan, timed by Florida Trails' Kent Wimmer and kept at a snappy pace. In a meet and greet prior to the forum, Magnolia Chapter members Vergy Sheridan and Fritz Wettstein worked the native plant booth, answering questions and giving out brochures and “Real Florida Gardener's Guides.” The Magnolia Chapter of FNPS is one of thirteen members of BBEF and one of the six or so other organizations to have a booth at the event. Tall Timbers, a new Wakulla Springs group (organized by Jim Stevenson and Madeline Carr), Audubon, Florida Trails and other organizations had displays, but none so colorful as the Florida Native Plant Society's (except maybe the food table prepared by the League of Women's Voters, yummmmy!)

To this attendee, distinctions among the candidates were evident in responses to questions (paraphrased below) regarding their experience in relation to the position they were seeking (“How frequently do you attend commission meetings?”), about urban sprawl (“Would you expand the Urban Service Area?”), and about septic tank regulations

(“How do we clean up failed systems?”). On impressions from this one event, this attendee found several candidates more credible on the environment. It was encouraging to hear candidates for political office speak about the area’s “green infrastructure” of trees, canopy roads and parks, and note exotic plant removal as an important management activity. Most important, however, was BBEP’s getting the candidates attention. Readers may want to contact other Magnolia Chapter members attending may have different impressions: Wilson Baker, Eleanor Dietrich, Grant Gelhardt, Nia, Vergy and other’s whose names I forget (sorry).

July Plant of the Month – Rudbeckia mollis:

Dan Miller donated a beautiful blooming specimen of this plant for the June National Trails Day event at Phipps Park. Country kin to the widely cultivated Black Eyed Susan, this long blooming but short lived warm season wildflower is well adapted for dry, open environments similar to its high pine sandhill habitat. Called “Sandhill Black-Eyed Susan” or “Soft-Haired Coneflower” (even though the hairs on the leaves of our variety seems more bristly like hair on a pig than soft like hair on a mouse), *Rudbeckia mollis* may be most drought tolerant of the five native *Rudbeckia* species found in the Tallahassee area.

Roadside Wildflowers

An updated Leon County Wildflower Resolution was passed as part of the consent agenda approved at the July 10th county commission meeting. This new resolution does not designate specific roads, providing greater flexibility to work out mowing schedules between the county and FDOT as options become available, as has happened this past year with the adoption of roadside mowing schedules to benefit wildflowers on SR 267, Bloxham Cutoff. An important next step in this effort is recruiting and training observers to document blooming times and locations of wildflower populations along the new wildflower friendly roadsides (see Help Wanted, below).

News on the Conservation Front

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is writing a statewide environmental resource permitting rule. Workshops are announced, the draft rule is posted and more information can be found on the website: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands/swerp/index.htm>.

Help Wanted

Roadside Wildflower Spotters

With help from Lana Arnold, president of the Tallahassee Garden Club, Eleanor Dietrich is organizing a roadside wildflower observer program at the Leon County Extension Service office later in August. Plans are to get folks out spotting roadside wildflower populations in September. Contact Eleanor Dietrich at eleanor43@aol.com or Fritz Wettstein at fwettstein@comcast.net for more information.

Prepared by Fritz Wettstein
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