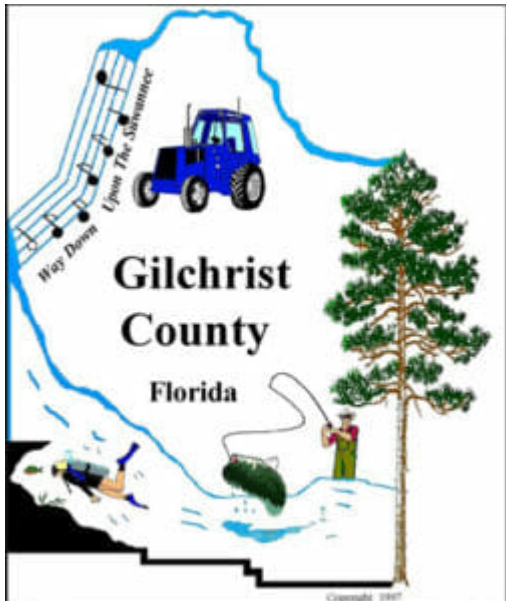


Gilchrist County and the Phosphate Mine..... continued

June 20, 2018



The following was written by OSFR president Mike Roth. We can only congratulate and thank him, Ken Cornell, Oscar Psychas (about whom we have posted before), Lucy Anstey and the others who spoke, especially the students. It takes guts to stand up and speak to county commissioners. Many adults are too afraid to do it, and don't.

We will follow up this story when Gilchrist County sees fit to place the issue on the agenda.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

As part of our efforts to keep the proposed phosphate mine in

Union and Bradford Counties from further polluting the Santa Fe River, I have been working to educate the Board of Gilchrist County Commissioners about the dangers to the Gilchrist springs that feed a large portion of their budget and trying to persuade them to write a letter of concern to the Boards of Union and Bradford, as Columbia and Alachua (and many municipalities) have already done. After a few mentions during the “public participation” portion of their last several meetings, I presented them with a sample letter and scheduled a hearing where I could formally present our request and obtain an action from the board.

I advertised this hearing to the membership and newsletter subscribers of OSFR and got a strong response – we were going to have several solid speakers and a really good showing of concerned citizens at the meeting. But it was not to be – my scheduled hearing was “inadvertently” left off the agenda, and County Attorney “Duke” Lang said that the Board couldn’t act without the prior public notice and rescheduled the hearing for a later meeting. With five hours of notice, I tried to put out the word that the hearing was postponed and stopped most of the group from making the trek to Trenton, though a few members were there anyway, one clad in an OSFR tee shirt. It was gratifying to see.

The Clerk did announce for anyone interested that the hearing had been postponed. I used the opening public participation session to express my displeasure and urge them to listen to those that wanted to speak at the closing public session. I also made the point that the Commission now was armed with more than sufficient information to act without further urging.

Then, a few minutes before the original hearing schedule time, Alachua County Commissioner and OSFR member Ken Cornell showed up with students from the Young Leaders for Wild Florida program, founded by 20-year-old Oscar Psychas, who was present but did not speak. However, presentations by Anna Mavrodieva, Grace Winner, Elizabeth Walker, Christian Landaeta and Anna Slayton were concise, accurate, to the point and informative. Then Commissioner Cornell offered Alachua County assistance in assessing the danger of the mine and thanked the Gilchrist Commissioners for hearing out the students. Finally, Lucy Anstey, another OSFR member, made a compelling appeal for the letter of concern to be written.

In the end, despite the formal hearing being cancelled, I feel that a strong case was made in favor of the Gilchrist County Board of Commissioners weighing in on the mine issue with a letter of concern. Now, it's up to the Board.



Commission

Grace Winner addresses the



Elizabeth Walker



Christian Landaeta



Anna Slayton



Oscar Psychas (left) and the Young Leaders for Wild Florida speakers