

NEWS FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

On Sunday, January 27, members of the Central Florida RCC met to discuss issues of regional concern and to report on progress toward our two regional conservation goals adopted at Audubon Assembly in October 2018. Representatives from five of our ten member chapters were able to attend. We encourage a representative from every chapter to attend our next meeting scheduled for Sunday, April 7, at [Audubon Center for Birds of Prey](#), 1101 Audubon Way, Maitland, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The center has recently been renovated. Bring a bag lunch and stay to tour the grounds and bird aviaries and see raptors up close and personal.

Charles Lee, Audubon Florida staff advisor to our RCC, alerted us to a new issue – the Northeast Connector Expressway Extension – a proposed toll road from US 192 in Osceola County to State Road 50 in Orange County. The Central Florida Expressway Authority has undertaken a concept, feasibility and mobility study, raising issues regarding the future of the eastern part of the county which now consists largely of rural farmlands, natural areas and scattered rural homesteads and settlements. This proposal is in the beginning stages. Detailed plans are needed for each segment and all the land will be subject to wetlands testing. Our RCC action plan is for chapter leaders in Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties to form a committee to meet with Charles Lee to create a comprehensive plan on how to advocate.

In preparation for the upcoming legislative session – March 5 through May 3, 2019 – Audubon Florida has selected bills to be watched and worked on with legislators. In general, AF's legislative activity will follow water quality, water quantity/supply, climate change, Indian River Lagoon, septic tank issues and conservation program funding. Governor DeSantis has requested larger amounts of money for environmental and conservation issues than previously recommended by the Scott administration. Follow all 2019 bills at [Welcome: Online Sunshine](#).

Contact your chapter president or conservation chairperson if you'd like to be involved in either of these initiatives. "The Advocate" is a weekly e-mail update distributed when the FL legislature is in session. Sign up [here](#) to ensure you receive legislative updates and action alerts in a timely fashion.

The following action has been taken on our regional goal to promote Lake Apopka Restoration, Visitor Access & New Audubon Nature Center: The 70-acre former nursery site adjacent to the Wildlife Drive entrance was transferred from St. Johns River Water Management District to the City of Apopka with deed restrictions. A Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Orange Audubon Society crafted over two years ago and signed in June 2017 is the working document and is referenced in the deed restrictions.

Paula Wehr
Central Florida Chapters Representative
Audubon Florida Board of Directors