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BAY REFLECTIONS

News from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

January 2020

2020 is off to a fast-paced start at SBEP. We're cheering our partnership's 2019 accomplishments while looking forward to new projects in 2020.

In this newsletter, we're sharing news about SBEP's community grants program, upcoming Sarasota Bay Guardians volunteer events, a handy exotic invasive plant guide, and more.

Thanks for reading!
SBEP Staff (Mark, Darcy, Jay, Michael, Christine, and Cheryl)

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Sarasota Bay Partners Grant Applications Due March 2



SBEP is accepting applications for 2020 Sarasota Bay Partners Grants until March 2! Apply for up to $4,000 to support restoration and education projects that focus on Sarasota-Manatee bays from Anna Maria Island to the Venice Inlet. Have questions? Call SBEP at (941) 955-8085. Click below for more information about the grant program.

More information about Sarasota Bay Partners Grants >

SBEP Study Contributes to Regional Understanding of Tidal Creeks



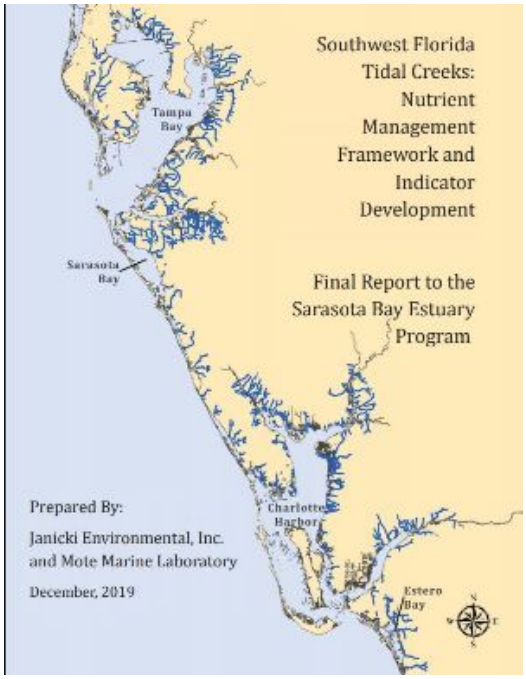
SBEP and partners recently concluded a second regional study on tidal creek nutrient dynamics. Both studies were funded through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 Wetlands Program Development Grant program. The first study resulted in the development of a nutrient management framework for southwest Florida tidal creeks. This follow-up study focused on:

1. Validating outcomes of the initial study,
2. Refining the nutrient management framework, and
3. Identifying additional indicators of tidal creek condition to refine nutrient targets and thresholds that protect the biological integrity of these critical natural resources.

Read A Summary of the Tidal Creek Study >

Read the Full Tidal Creek Report

Thanks to project partners Janicki Environmental, Inc., Mote Marine Laboratory, Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Coastal & Heartland



National Estuary Partnership, EPA, FWC, Manatee County, Sarasota County, Pinellas County, Hillsborough County, Charlotte County, and Lee County.

Bay Critter Corner

Ask a crowd what lives in Sarasota Bay and you'll get a variety of answers – dolphins! manatees! fish! – all important and beloved. But there's another world of Bay critters that go almost entirely unnoticed by human eyes. While the critters may prefer to keep it that way, we at SBEP think it's important to highlight these species to show the amazing diversity of life in our bays.

Sarasota Bay Explorers operates daily boat tours from City Island on Sarasota Bay. During the trip, Sarasota Bay Explorers staff pull a trawl net through the water to collect bay wildlife for educational purposes (it is a condition of their permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to return animals to the water). In September 2019, staff began recording the species they find in their nets. We'll be working with them to see if we can recognize patterns of species occurrence over time.

Here are a few fascinating species found on recent tours:

The Atlantic Brief Squid (*Lolliguncula brevis*) is a mollusc closely related to cuttlefish and octopuses. Brief squids tolerate low salinity and low oxygen conditions better than other types of squids,



and therefore are found in estuaries more often than their saltwater-loving squid kin.

Explore brief squid sightings on iNaturalist >



Yes, this is an animal! The ragged sea hare (*Bursatella leachii*) is inhabits coastal warm waters worldwide. Ragged sea hares are grazers that feed primarily on algae films found on bay bottoms and seagrasses. They are known to eat *Lyngbya majuscula*, a common blue-green alga in Sarasota-Manatee bays that can sometimes form harmful blooms.

Explore ragged sea hare sightings on iNaturalist >



Juvenile giant hermit crabs (*Petrochirus diogenes*) are usually found in estuaries while adults move offshore into deeper waters. This juvenile has made its home in a lightning whelk shell. As it grows, it will abandon this shell for larger ones. (The Friends of Rookery Bay caught a giant hermit crab's moving day on video!)

Explore giant hermit crab sightings on iNaturalist >

All photos courtesy Martha Robinson, Sarasota Bay Explorers.

SBEP Debuts New Youth Kayaking Program

This year, SBEP partnered with Mote Marine Laboratory and the Sarasota Housing Authority to take 18 kids kayaking in Sarasota Bay. This was a first experience with kayaking - and with Sarasota Bay - for most of the kids who participated. Mote's Senior School Programs Coordinator, Brad Tanner, guided two trips in November and January, teaching the kids about the different organisms found in the bay. One group even experienced a visit from some local dolphins. After a morning paddle, the group enjoyed lunch and free admission to Mote Marine Aquarium. Thank you to Michelle Stears from the Sarasota Housing Authority and Brad Tanner from Mote Marine Laboratory for helping make this new program a success!



"Thank you Sarasota Bay Estuary Program for hosting SHA teens for a kayaking excursion on the bay. By exposing our young people to the beauty of our Sarasota Bay, you are sowing seeds of environmental stewardship for the future." - Michelle Stears, Sarasota Housing Authority





Free Bay Wise Paddle Tours

Register now for an upcoming paddle!

All tours start at 9:00 a.m. and last for approximately 2 hours. Participants must bring their own kayaks or paddleboards and gear.

Feb 15: Quick Point Nature Preserve (departs from City Island)

March 7: South Creek (departs from Oscar Scherer State Park)

March 28: Phillippi Creek (departs from Pinecraft Park)

Exotic Invasive Plant Guide for Volunteers



Invasive Beach Naupaka (*Scaevola taccada*) at Palmer Point Park

Winter is in full swing, which means our volunteer events are picking up. If you've signed up for a workday with us or are looking to do some backyard "restoration" of your own, we've put together a guide to some common exotic invasive plants found in our area that can cause significant harm to our local plant and animal communities.

Exotic Invasive Plant Guide >

Have you seen this new invader?
Hyptis brevipes

The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC), which compiles a list of invasive plant species every two years, is looking for help locating a new invasive plant called the lesser roundweed (*Hyptis brevipes*). If you have seen this plant on your property or in other natural areas, please report to EDDMapS and consider filling out this questionnaire.



Photo Credits: UF/IFAS Extrension Program

There is another species of Hyptis that is native to Florida, *Hyptis alata*. It looks very similar to the invasive species except it has longer peduncles (the stem leading up to the bud/flower).

Native *Hyptis alata*



Invasive *Hyptis brevipes*



Photo Credits: UF/IFAS Extrension Program

Removing invasive species you find in your yard or reporting those you find around your neighborhood can help prevent them from spreading to other natural areas and also helps managers better control their impacts.

Upcoming Sarasota Bay Guardians Volunteer Events



March 7: Whitaker Bayou Cleanup & Community Health Celebration

Join SBEP and partners for a paddle and land cleanup of Whitaker Bayou and Dr. MLK Jr. Park, followed by lunch, the Newtown Farmers' Market, and health and nature activities in the park.

Register for the Whitaker Bayou Cleanup >



April 25: 10th Annual Bowlees Creek Island Cleanup

Save the date for the annual paddle cleanup on Bowlees Creek Island. Mark your calendars - registration is coming soon!



May 2: Sarasota County Seagrass Survey and Festival

Join the citizen science effort to better understand and protect our local seagrasses. Mark your calendars - registration is coming soon!

May 9: Perico Bayou Oyster Reef Building

Join for part II of the oyster reef building project in Perico



Bayou. Mark your calendars - registration is coming soon!

Florida Legislation Update

The 2020 Florida Legislative session is underway. A wide array of bills with potential impacts for Florida's estuaries have been introduced in both chambers. In this newsletter, we're highlighting three bills with special relevance for Sarasota-Manatee bays:

Manatee County Water Quality Improvement with Native Oysters and Clams
HB 3829 (introduced by Representative Will Robinson, District 71)

This appropriations project would appropriate $950,000 for FY2020-2021 from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to fund a shellfish restoration and water quality improvement project in Manatee County waters. This pilot project involving SBEP partners Manatee County Parks & Natural Resources Department, Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START), Sarasota Bay Watch, Florida Sea Grant, and the Gulf Shellfish Institute would place oyster shell and live native clams in Sarasota Bay, Tampa Bay, and the Manatee River.

Florida National Estuary Program Act
SB 1608 (introduced by Senator Debbie Mayfield, District 17)
Similar HB 791 (introduced by Representative Heather Fitzenhagen, District 78)

This bill recognizes the resource protection and restoration benefits that Florida's four National Estuary Programs (Sarasota Bay, Tampa Bay, Coastal & Heartland, and Indian River Lagoon) provide to the state, and that there are distinct benefits to the state in partnering with the federal government and local governments through the NEPs. The bill would require the Florida Department

of Environmental Protection to give funding consideration to projects in the NEPs' Comprehensive and Conservation Management Plans (CCMPs).

Want to track progress of a specific bill? Every filed bill has a web page on Flsenate.gov that offers current information about the bill and provides links to official documents associated with the bill. With a Senate Tracker account, you can track items throughout the website, view the latest updates on the Tracker tab, and receive email notifications when those items are updated by clicking the "Track This Bill" icon. For more information, go to the Tracker Help page on FlSenate.gov.

Partner Events Around the Bays

We're setting up shop for these events. Hope to see you there!

Lido Key Birding Festival
Saturday, February 22 | 8 - 11 a.m.

Sarasota County Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources and Audubon Florida

Explore our unique ecosystem at this free family event.

Lido Key Birding Festival

Saturday, Feb. 22 | 8 - 11 a.m.





Eagle



Sandpiper



Skimmer family



Snowy Plover



Least Tern family

Photos courtesy of Audubon Florida

Join us at South Lido Beach and learn about the area's rich biodiversity and bird-watching opportunities.

- "Early Bird" Breakfast–9:30 -10:30 a.m.
- Interactive presentations hosted by educators, wildlife experts, conversationalists and ecologists.
- Children who visit each nest (learning center) will earn a reusable water bottle.
- Guided bird hike (at North Lido Beach) takes place from 8 to 9:15 a.m. Bring binoculars, and get ready to see some eagle fledglings! Free parking for the hike at the intersection of Polk Dr. and John Ringling Blvd. Shuttle will be available.

Ted Sperling Park at South Lido | 2201 Benjamin Franklin Dr. | Meet by the playground
For more information, call 941-448-4219 or go to scgov.net.

IT STARTS IN PARKS

CAPRA ACCREDITED

Sarasota County

Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities. View the complete policy at scgov.net (keywords ADA compliance).

Florida Native Plant Society Festival & Sale
Saturday, April 18 | 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Bring home native plants for your home landscape!



Serenoa Chapter

Florida Native Plant Society

and the

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

present

Spring Wildflower Festival & Native Plant Sale

Saturday, April 18th

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sweetbay Nursery

10824 Erie Road, Parrish

I-75 Exit 224 east on 301 to Old Tampa Rd /Erie Rd

Turn left (North) onto Erie Rd travel 4 miles

Large selection!!!

Native trees, shrubs, grasses, blooming wildflowers

For use in all garden types

Also Flori- mulch for sale – environmentally harvested

For plant list or directions check: www.SweetbayNursery.com

Get all the latest info from conservation groups

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program ~ Florida Native Plant Society

Audubon Society ~ Tampa BayWatch ~ and more!

Members get 15% off entire plant purchase!

Join at the sale to receive your discount!

Food for purchase: Local food truck TBD

Ask the experts – lots of volunteers available

To answer your native plant questions

For more information call

941- 776-0501 or 941-704-4325

More Events Around the Bays

- Feb 8: Suncoast Reef Rovers Coastal Cleanup of the Venice Urban Forest 10 AM, 308 East Venice Ave, Venice, FL 34285. RSVP to Ken Lackman ken.lackmann@usda.gov
- Feb 19: Climate Action in the Coffee you Drink, Transition Sarasota
- Mar 13: Dr. Sylvia Earle, Gulf Coast Community Foundation

- Mar 23: The Rising Tide: Increasing Demand for Climate Action, Sarasota World Affairs Council
- April 4: Great American Cleanup, Keep Sarasota County Beautiful
- April 22: Earth Day, City of Sarasota, 11:30am – 1:30pm at Selby Five Points Park
- April 25: Earth Day, Oscar Scherer State Park
- Third Saturdays – monthly compost workday, Sunshine Community Compost

Outdoor Education Programs and Nature Walks

Sarasota County Parks

Manatee County Parks & Natural Resources

Classes, Indoors and Out

New! Manatee County Coastal Restoration Master Naturalist Program

March 3-17, 2020

This course provides training in the restoration of living shorelines, oyster reefs, mangroves, and marsh, with focus on ecology, benefits, methods, and monitoring techniques.

Lead and Point of Contact: ***Alyssa Vinson***, Extension Agent
Phone: 941-722-4524
Email: alyvinson@ufl.edu

Register for the Coastal Restoration course >

All Upcoming University of Florida/IFAS Extension Classes

Sarasota County

Manatee County

Water Reading from Around the Web

As Cities' Interest in Green Infrastructure Grows, So Does the Need to Develop Strategies and Resources to Maintain it



"Things like porous parking lots, wetlands, green roofs and rain gardens can help reduce flooding in neighborhoods and on roadways...The success of these installations, however, hinges on vegetation and underlying filtration systems being in good shape — a status that has been surprisingly difficult to achieve."

Read more on Ensia >

Request a Speaker from SBEP

SBEP staff members regularly speak to homeowner, neighborhood, and community groups and upper-level classrooms about Sarasota Bay ecology and restoration. Weekday and evening presentations are now being scheduled through summer 2020. Call the SBEP office at (941) 955-8085 or click the button below to request a speaker for your group.



Visit the SBEP website to schedule a speaker >

Bay Reflections is the quarterly e-newsletter from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset - Sarasota Bay. We offer special thanks to our partners: Sarasota County, Manatee

County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Our office is located in the Federal Building in downtown Sarasota:
111 S. Orange Avenue, Suite 200W | Sarasota, FL 34236 | (941) 955-8085

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