

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter January 2013

In This Edition:

Happy New Year! Our first edition of 2013 features the following news items: (1) EPA accepts the water quality standards recommended by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; (2) Now is a good time to reserve a free kayak trip with the Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program; (3) SBEP is part of a regional effort to organize projects to be considered by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council; (4) The inaugural Sarasota Bay Water Festival was a big hit with adults and children; (5) Sarasota Baywalk Creek is the first destination for the Bay Guardian volunteers in 2013; and (6) March 1 is the deadline to submit applications for SBEP Bay Partner Grants.

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EPA Accepts Water Quality Standards Developed by SBEP and Other Gulf Coast National Estuary Programs



Photo of Lyons Bay by Amanda Dominguez

The U.S. EPA recently accepted the Florida DEP rules governing water quality for Sarasota Bay and other estuaries along the South and Southwest Coast. The rest of Florida's waterways will be governed by federal rules enforced by the EPA.

The standards for estuary waters were developed through a collaborative effort focused on restoring seagrass. Jim Giattina, the director of the EPA Water Protection Division acknowledged SBEP, Tampa Bay Estuary Program and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program for developing science-based water quality targets. Private industry experts including Janiciki Environmental were integral to the development of the standards.

Florida estuaries governed by the approved standards include Sarasota Bay, Tampa Bay, Clearwater Harbor, Charlotte Harbor, Clam Bay, and South Florida marine waters. Guidelines for the remaining estuaries in Florida will be completed by June 20, 2015. **Visit the EPA website.**

Free Guided Bay Wise Kayak Tours Available Through April; February Trips Set for Lido Mangrove Tunnels



There are still openings for the free kayak tours to the Lido Mangrove Tunnels in February and Blind Pass in March. The tours to Leffis and Jewfish Key on January 5 and January 19 are already booked, but please email info@sarasotabay.org if you are interested in being added to the waiting list. **Bay Wise Kayak Tour Schedule.** Brad Tanner leads the free kayak tours. He's a professional kayak guide, School Program Coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory and a member of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The guided trips require online registration.

Convenient registration links:
Lido Mangrove Tunnels - **February 2** or **February 16**
Blind Pass - **March 2** or **March 16**

SBEP, TBEP and CHNEP Develop Restoration Plan to Help Organize & Prioritize Projects to be Presented to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council



SBEP, Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP), and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) are helping to coordinate a Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan to support planning by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. More than 240 projects from 36 local governments, agencies and other organizations are part of the joint plan with a total cost of $985 million. Most of the projects focus on habitat restoration, fisheries research and infrastructure improvements to enhance water quality.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council has been designated to receive 30 percent of the money allocated under the RESTORE Act to the Gulf Coast states. The Council's portion can only be used for environmental improvement and restoration activities. The RESTORE Act was passed by Congress in late June. It directs 80 percent of Clean Water Act fines from the BP oil spill to economic and ecosystem restoration in the five Gulf States.

The various projects will be reviewed, revised and approved by the Management and Policy Boards of the three national estuary programs. Two elected officials from each of the estuary programs, plus a representative of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, will serve on a committee to prioritize the projects. The committee is expected to meet in the spring and submit a final plan in April.

Inaugural Sarasota Bay Water Festival Attracts 3,000 Visitors and More than 60 Sponsors and Exhibitors

An estimated 3,000 adults and children attended the inaugural Sarasota Bay Water Festival (SBWF) November 17 at Ken Thompson Park. It was largest public event ever held in the region focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay. SBEP was the host sponsor and 60 other local organizations participated as sponsors and exhibitors. The purpose of the festival was to celebrate the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region's environment and economy. **Check out the Water Festival photo slideshow**.



Bryan Moore with festival volunteers Kathy Harmon, Alice Sciarrino, Christine Sciarrino, and Rina Avellaneda

The SBWF featured a free taxi service between Marina Jack in downtown Sarasota and the Sarasota Sailing Squadron. More than 200 people used the service provided by the Freedom Boat Club. The SBWF also promoted recycling and composting while providing visitors with free water refills through the Brita Hydration Station. The first "iceberg" ever seen in Sarasota was unveiled thanks to the creativity of New College Sculpting Professor Richard Herzog. A Creative Arts Tent showcased a dozen wildlife photographers and artists as well as the entries to the I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest.



Triple 3 Marketing (T3M) managed the festival with SBEP staff and volunteer support. Organizers are looking for additional major sponsors as well as grant opportunities to support future events. Inquiries and referrals are welcome. Please contact Randy Moore with T3M at randy@triple3marketing.com.

SBEP Bay Guardians to Complete Project February 23 at Sarasota Baywalk Creek near New College

Planning is underway for the first Bay Guardian volunteer outing for 2013. It will take place Saturday, February 23 at Sarasota Baywalk Creek near New College. Details about the project will be provided in an announcement later in January. Other Bay Guardian outings being planned for 2013 include Jiggs Landing, Bowlees Creek Island, and Ungarelli Preserve. **Bay Guardian volunteers** have contributed thousands of hours completing projects throughout Sarasota and Manatee County.



SBEP manages the program in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. Most of the projects involve planting Florida native species, removing invasive plants and removing debris. New volunteers receive a blue tee shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo. Each outing features environmental education and a picnic lunch. Join the group for a single project or as an ongoing commitment. Local school, scout and church groups interested in volunteering can contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.

SBEP Bay Partner Grants Applications due March 1



Volunteers at Pelican Cove

Applications for SBEP Bay Partner Grants are due no later than March 1. The grants promote local environmental education, awareness, community involvement, and Bay-friendly stewardship. SBEP has awarded more than $213,000 in Bay Partner Grants since 2003. All of the completed projects focus on Bay Restoration, Bay Education or Bay-Friendly Landscaping.

Fully-funded grant recipients for 2013 include City of Sarasota, Florida House, Nature's Academy, and the Founder's Garden Club of Sarasota. Partially-funded grant recipients include Sunbow Bay Condominium Association, Mote Marine Laboratory, Keep Manatee Beautiful, and Sarasota Bay Watch. **Learn more and download an online application form**.

Brian House and Justin Bloom Join the SBEP CAC

Brian House and Justin Bloom were recently approved for membership by the SBEP **Citizens Advisory Committee** (CAC). The group provides the SBEP with citizen input and helps the organization promote its programs and projects. Members include parents, grandparents, researchers, resource managers, environmental advocates, teachers, and realtors.



Brian House

Brian House is a laboratory technician with the Manatee County Utilities Department. He completed a Bachelor of Sciences Degree in Environmental Science and he also served as an intern at Mote Marine Laboratory in 2011. Brian is a former Boy Scout who earned his Eagle Scout designation as well as a World Conservation Award. His interests include swimming, kayaking, hiking, and jogging.



Justin Bloom

Justin Bloom is the executive director of Suncoast Waterkeeper, a newly formed non-profit organization. He also serves as the staff attorney for Waterkeeper Alliance, an international organization focused on environmental protection. Justin graduated from New College of Florida in 1991 with a BA Degree in Environmental Studies. He completed law school at Tulane University in 1996. His interests include sailing, boating, swimming, paddle sports, snorkeling, and diving.

SBEP News Briefs

Cortez Fishing Festival
The annual Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival is set for February 16-17 at the Village of Cortez in Manatee County. **Visit the Cortez Fishing Festival website**.

Sarasota Wildlife Art Festival
The Sarasota Wildlife Art Festival is set for March 2-3 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota. The juried fine art show features wildlife art and a symposium with local experts. The Rotary Club of Sarasota is the presenting sponsor and proceeds benefit Save Our Seabirds and the Rotary Club of Sarasota Foundation. SBEP is one of the festival sponsors along with Comerica, Mote Marine Laboratory, Whole Foods Market, and Ringling College of Art & Design. **Visit the Sarasota Wildlife Art Festival website**.

Join us on Facebook
Click here to check out the SBEP facebook page. The social media site also features links to many other Bay-friendly organizations. Thank you for helping us reach our goal of 500 likes.

Bay Repair Kit
SBEP produced the Bay Repair Kit in 2012. The brochure presents the major elements of Bay-friendly living. A digital version of the Bay Repair Kit is posted on the SBEP website along with other helpful brochures. **Check out the Bay Repair Kit**.

Scallop Restoration
SBEP continues to work with local non-profits and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute to help restore the scallop population in Sarasota Bay. SBEP has initiated several attempts at scallop restoration over the past decade in collaboration with Mote Marine Laboratory. The current plan is to manage seeding of the most vibrant grass beds with hatchery raised scallop larvae. SBEP is funding the project with additional funding provided by Sarasota Bay Watch.

Public Meetings
The SBEP Management Board will meet 1:30pm on January 24. The SBEP Policy Board will meet 10am on January 25. The next meeting of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is set for 4:30pm on Monday, February 4 at Dan McClure Auditorium located at the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport. **Visit the SBEP calendar for upcoming events**.

Visit These Bay-Friendly Links Today

Click here to see 600 photos from 40 plus local events and programs.
Click here to visit 65 websites of other Bay-friendly organizations.
Click here to visit the websites of the SBEP habitat restoration project partners.
Click here to visit a digital map showing completed, current and planned restoration projects.
Click here to learn more about the members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
Click here to learn more about the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

Final Reflection with Dotty Motta



This image is called "Weather" by Dotty Motta. You can see **more work by Dotty Motta** along with many other artists at our **Creative Expressions Gallery**.

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset - Sarasota Bay. Its unique program strives to improve water quality, increase habitat and enhance the natural resources of the area for use and enjoyment by the public. Sarasota Bay is one of 28 estuaries in the U.S. that have been named by the U.S. Congress as an "estuary of national significance."

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