

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter January 2014

Happy New Year!

SBEP is celebrating its 25-year anniversary throughout 2014. It's an opportunity to acknowledge the Program's partners and many other groups that are part of the ongoing effort to restore and protect Sarasota Bay. Highlights in this edition: Upcoming Bay Wise Kayak Tours; Bay Partner Grant applications due March 3; Bay Guardian volunteers win Sea Preservation Award; and Bay Guardians to Arlington Park January 25. Thank you for supporting the SBEP mission and its programs benefiting Sarasota Bay.

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SBEP to Celebrate Silver Anniversary in 2014

Regional Partnership 1989 - 2014
25 YEARS
SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM
Restoring Our Bays

Sarasota Bay was named as an "estuary of national significance" in the Water Quality Act of 1987. After being designated a National Estuary Program in 1989, local, state and federal officials developed the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) to serve as a framework for specific actions to restore Sarasota Bay.

SBEP was established as a special district in Florida on July 23, 2004, with the signing of an interlocal agreement. The SBEP partners include Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. SBEP is one of the 28 members of the **Association of National Estuary Programs**. The Program also works with private contractors and non-profits to complete restoration projects and expand public awareness about the importance of conservation.

Major accomplishments by SBEP and its partners include: significant water quality improvement with a 64 percent reduction in nitrogen pollution since 1988, a notable 46 percent increase in seagrass coverage, restoration and enhancement of approximately 1,200 acres of wetland habitat, deployment of 3,000 habitat modules on 9 new artificial reef sites, establishment of the first oyster re-colonization project, development of research protocols for restoring local bay scallop populations, support for more than 40,000 local students receiving environmental education about Sarasota Bay, and the awarding of

more than $232,000 in grant funding to support 113 local organizations. All of the waterways in Sarasota Bay now meet Florida water quality standards for nutrient pollution.

Bay Wise Kayak Tours Run Monthly Through April



The SBEP **Bay Wise Kayak Tours Program** for 2013-2014 kicked off in December with two visits to Neal Preserve in Manatee County. The upcoming tours include two visits each month to Leffis and Jewfish Key (January), Lido Mangrove Tunnels (February), Blind Pass (March) and Lyons and Blackburn Bay (April). There are still openings for the free guided kayak tours to Leffis and Jewfish Key on January 4 and January 18.

Brad Tanner leads each of the trips on Sarasota Bay. He's a professional kayak guide, School Program Coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory and a member of the SBEP **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)**. Each outing requires online registration and participants need to provide their own kayak. Many area businesses rent kayaks for the day and some provide expert instruction. The Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program is for experienced kayakers.

The late Jack Taylor, a respected marine biologist and former member of the CAC, launched the Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program in 2007 as part of a SBEP Bay Partners Grant. Visit the SBEP website to learn more about the program and to register online. You can also email **info@sarasotabay.org** to be added to the waiting list for trips that are already booked.

Leffis and Jewfish Key - **January 4** or **January 18**
Lido Mangrove Tunnels - **February 1** or **February 15**
Blind Pass - **March 1** or **March 15**
Lyons and Blackburn Bay - **April 12** or **April 19**

SBEP Bay Partner Grant Applications Due March 3

Applications for SBEP **Bay Partner Grants** are due no later than March 3. The grants promote local environmental education, awareness, community involvement and Bay-friendly stewardship. SBEP has awarded more than $232,000 in Bay Partner Grants since 2003. All of the projects focus on Bay Restoration, Bay Education or Bay-Friendly Landscaping.

Fully-funded grant recipients for 2013 include Anna Maria Elementary School, Ballard Global Studies Magnet School, New College of Florida, Plymouth Harbor, and Save Our Seabirds. Partially-funded grant recipients include Keep Manatee County Beautiful, Mote Marine Laboratory, Nature's Academy, and Sarasota Audubon Society, Inc. **Learn more about the Bay Partners Grant Program**.

Bay Guardian Volunteers Win Sea Preservation Award from Keep Sarasota County Beautiful



The SBEP Bay Guardians were honored with the **Sea Preservation Award** from Keep Sarasota County Beautiful. The award was presented at the annual awards dinner held November 13 at the Venice Community Center. Many other organizations and individuals were recognized at the event.

The **Bay Guardians** are the largest and most active volunteer program in the region focused on Sarasota Bay. The program is managed by SBEP in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. In 2013, the Bay Guardians completed volunteer projects at Jiggs Landing and Perico Preserve in Manatee County and North Water Tower Park and Bay Walk Creek in Sarasota County.

Bay Guardians to Remove Air Potato Vines and Seeds at Arlington Park in Sarasota on January 25



The first **Bay Guardian** volunteer outing for 2014 is January 25 at Arlington Park in Sarasota. The plan is to remove air potato vines and seeds that can harm native vegetation. Prizes will be given to volunteers collecting the biggest and smallest air potato seed. **Please register online here**.

Other upcoming volunteer projects include a native planting along the Braden River at Jiggs Landing February 8, a rain garden planting project at New College of Florida March 15, and a joint volunteer outing with Tampa Bay Estuary Program to plant natives at Perico Preserve April 12. All of the projects take place in the morning followed by a picnic lunch provided by SBEP.

The **Bay Guardians** are the largest and most active volunteer program in the region focused on Sarasota Bay. The award-winning volunteer program is managed by SBEP in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. Join the Bay Guardians for a single project or as an ongoing commitment. Local school, scout and church groups should contact Stephanie Hames at **info@sarasotabay.org**.

Third Annual Sarasota Bay Water Festival Set for Saturday, November 1 at Ken Thompson Park

The **2014 Sarasota Bay Water Festival** is set for Saturday, November 1 at Ken Thompson Park. The family and pet-friendly daytime festival will be followed by an evening party at a separate Sarasota venue featuring live music and a water / nautical themed costume party. The purpose of the Water Festival is to celebrate the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region's environment, economy and quality of life. **Visit the Water Festival facebook page**.

In 2013, SBEP was the Presenting Sponsor and HDR Engineering, Inc. was the Host Sponsor. More than 40 other organizations from the public and private sector supported the event. Sponsor inquiries are welcome at **randy@triple3marketing.com**.

Panel Discussions at Water Festival Expand Public Awareness About Bay-Friendly Living



SBEP hosted four panel discussions at this year's Water Festival focused on wildlife protection, reducing stormwater pollution, environmental education and stewardship, and the past, present and future of Sarasota Bay. Visitors were able to ask questions and make comments.

Thank you to all of the participants: Krystan Wilkinson with Mote Marine Laboatory, Jeanne Dubi with Sarasota Audubon, James "Buddy" Powell with Sea to Shore Alliance, Tim Thurman with Longboat Key Turtle Watch, Jay Leverone with SBEP, Michelle Atkinson with Manatee County Extension, Tom Heitzman with Florida Native Plant Society, Alison Albee with City of Sarasota, Raymond Kaiser with the AMI Eco-Village, Melissa Nell with Manatee County Natural Resources, Sara Kane with SBEP, Karen Fraley with Around the Bend Nature Tours, Rob Wright with Sarasota County, Jennifer Shafer with the Science and Environmental Council of Southwest Florida, Damon Moore with Manatee County Natural Resources, local archeologist Bill Burger, Captain Kathe, and Sherri Swanson with HDR.

The I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest Honors a Dozen Neighbors with Custom Ribbons and Prizes



A dozen neighbors were honored with custom ribbons at the Sarasota Bay Water Festival as part of the **I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest**. First place ribbons in the four age divisions were awarded to Terry Frankford, Sally Twinem, Logan McLeod, and Emma Griffith. The four first place winners also received gift certificates from Whole Foods Market.

Terry Frankford and Emma Griffith also won second place ribbons in their respective age divisions. Contest participants were allowed to enter two submissions. The other second place winners included Francis Twinem and Caroline Griffith. The third place winners included Michael Oelschlager and Judy Sargent. Honorable mention ribbons were awarded to Karl Ford, Larry George, Judith Horn, and Greg Penkwitz. Julie Doyle won this year's People's Choice Award.

Visit Sarasota Bay Today for an Interview with Randy Moore Regarding the Sarasota Bay Water Festival

Sarasota Bay Today, the bay-centric blog sponsored by SBEP, features a new interview with Randy Moore, the Director of the Sarasota Bay Water Festival. **Sarasota Bay Today features 17 interviews** of professionals associated with efforts to study, restore and protect Sarasota Bay. New interviews are being planned for the first quarter of 2014.

SBEP News Briefs

Regional Water Supply Plan
A Southwest Florida Water Management District report about the Draft Regional Water Supply Plan is available for public review through January 10. The Plan quantifies existing and future water needs, ensures protection of water resources and related natural systems, and identifies sustainable water supply options. **Learn more about the report**.

Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival
The popular annual event is set for February 16-17 at the Cortez Fishing Village in Manatee County. The event features live music, local exhibitors, a kid's fun zone, and lots of food. The festival is supported by volunteers with the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage (FISH), a nonprofit focused on restoring and protecting 100-acres of environmentally sensitive land just east of Cortez. **Visit the Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival website**.

Mote Exhibit Focuses on Extreme Adaptations
Mote Marine Laboratory will be showcasing its newest exhibit beginning February 1. The exhibit Survivors: Beautiful and Extreme Adaptations will be displayed through September 14. The exhibit reveals some of the more unique ways that marine animals and amphibians survive in their natural environment. Some of the species profiled in the exhibit include the clownfish, sea apple, Vietnamese mossy frog, and the fire-bellied toad.

King Tide Photo Exhibit
The Chasing the Waves exhibit showing photos of king high tides in Florida and other locations will be on display at Robinson Preserve in Bradenton throughout January and February; and Oldsmar Public Library in St. Petersburg in April. SBEP and Tampa Bay Estuary Program are jointly sponsoring the exhibit.

Join us on Facebook
Click here to like SBEP. The social media site also features links to many other Bay-friendly organizations. Thank you for helping us reach our goal of 750 likes!

SBEP Public Meetings
The next Management Board Meeting is set for 9 am on Friday, January 31 and the next Policy Board Meeting is set for 1 pm on the same day. Both meetings will take place at the Auditorium in the Manatee County Central Library located at 1301 Barcarrota Blvd. West in Bradenton. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will meet 4:30 pm on Monday, February 3 at Dan McClure Auditorium located at the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport. **SBEP Online Calendar**.

Final Reflection



This photo features Brian Wigglesworth creating a custom sand sculpture during the Water Festival. SBEP was the Presenting Sponsor and HDR, Inc. was the Host Sponsor. **Visit the Water Festival website to see the photo slideshow**.

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."