

BAY REFLECTIONS

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter for July 2012

In This Edition:



Welcome to our lastest edition of Bay Reflections. Although we normally publish bimonthy, we decided to launch two editions in June and July to get caught up with all the news. Learn about the EPA grant supporting the effort to develop water quality standards for tidal tributaries, the plan to deploy six new reef modules this summer, and the restoration plan at FISH Preserve. Congratulations to the winners of the King Tide Photo Contest. Thank you for considering becoming a sponsor of the Sarasota Bay Water Festival set for Saturday, November 17 at Ken Thompson Park. We appreciate all of the organizations that are already sponsoring this free event.

Randy Moore, Editor
Sara Kane, SBEP Public Outreach Manager

Like us on Facebook

SBEP Awarded EPA Grant to Develop Water Quality Criteria for Tidal Creek Wetlands; Project Supports Restoration Plan for Regional Tidal Tributaries

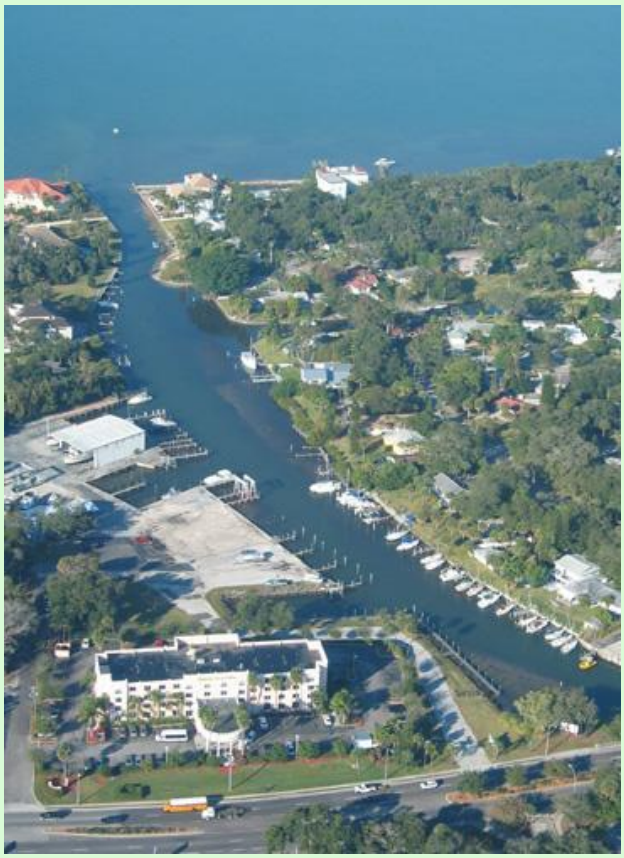


Photo of Whitaker Bayou by Greg Wahl.

SBEP was recently awarded a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to characterize water quality, habitat and fisheries within tidal creek wetlands in Southwest Florida. The goal is to develop a unique set of water quality standards that will protect aquatic life within the area's tidal creeks.

Under the guidance of Dr. Jay Leverone, the SBEP Staff Scientist, the effort will develop a model that relates hydrology (water flow) with nutrients and the biology of tidal creeks. This will be done by reviewing existing wetland and water quality programs, evaluating and characterizing all of the targeted tidal creeks with additional sampling. The data will be analyzed and a tool will be developed for determining water quality criteria. The information will also provide resource managers with protective nutrient standards for the tidal creeks in their respective counties.

SBEP has partnered with Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, and five county partners in Southwest Florida including Manatee, Sarasota, Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Lee.

SBEP is spearheading the initiative to develop a comprehensive restoration plan for regional tidal tributaries. A recent workshop series coordinated by Mote Marine Laboratory focused on the attributes of local tidal creeks, such as hydrology, water quality, and fisheries. The workshops provided a framework and plan of action for coordinated management, research and ongoing monitoring of tidal creeks in the region.

SBEP to Deploy Six New Reef Modules this Summer on Three Artificial Reefs in Sarasota County; Similar Deployment Set for Manatee County Next Year

With names like deep cover, lincoln log and layer cake, SBEP will be deploying new reef modules this summer on three existing artificial reefs in Sarasota Bay. The reefs include Walker Reef, Hart's Family Reef and Anglers Club Reef. The reefs are managed by Sarasota County Environmental Services and they were constructed by Reef Innovations based in Sarasota.



Deep cover module is expected to attract juvenile fish species.

Six different types of reef modules will be deployed on each site. The reefs are popular fishing destinations that are already supported by materials such as rocks and reef balls. The new modules are specially designed to attract young reef fish such as grouper during their first two years of life. The deep cover module, in particular, mimics natural ledges and can hold large numbers of fish, offering safety from predators and humans. The reefs will increase survival rates of various fish species until they are large enough to move offshore and become part of the adult fishery.

Next year, SBEP plans a similar deployment at three artificial reef sites in Manatee County waters within Sarasota Bay. This project is jointly conducted with Sarasota County and would not be possible without the generous financial support of the Sarasota Sportsmen's Association.

SBEP Continues Support of Ongoing Habitat Restoration at FISH Preserve; Two Year Project Involves Removal of Exotic Plants and the Development of Additional Wetland Habitat

SBEP is continuing to do habitat restoration at FISH Preserve, a 100-acre parcel adjacent to Sarasota Bay within the Village of Cortez in Manatee County. The latest plan includes the removal of exotic plants later this fall followed by the conversion of two stormwater retention ponds into additional wetland habitat. New creeks, ponds and trails will also be created as part of the plan. The project is expected to take up to two years to complete under the guidance of Dr. Jay Leverone, the SBEP Staff Scientist.



Bay Guardian volunteers at FISH Preserve in 2011.

FISH is an acronym for Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, a non-profit organization that purchased the property in 1999 to help restore, conserve and protect the upland and wetland habitats and adjacent waters. The ongoing restoration at FISH Preserve is supported by major funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

The first phase of the large-scale restoration project was completed in 2009 and involved the removal of exotic vegetation, creation of a tidal wetland, and mangrove restoration. Last year, two bridges were constructed to connect hiking trails thanks to support from the Bonefish Grill. The restoration will increase wetland acreage, improve tidal circulation, and reestablish natural water flow. Exotic Brazilian pepper and Australian pine trees that currently dominate the landscape will be cleared and replaced with native trees and shrubs. Trash piles will also be removed.

The Florida Department of Community Affairs designated Cortez a Waterfront Community in 1997. Since that time, the community has worked to preserve their community through policy change, land acquisition, the development of a maritime museum, and other projects. The creation of the FISH Preserve is a cornerstone of the longer term preservation plan.

Unique Iceberg to be Unveiled at Sarasota Bay Water Festival; Free Event Seeking Additional Sponsors



The first iceberg ever seen in Sarasota Bay waters will be unveiled at the Sarasota Bay Water Festival November 17 thanks to the creativity of Rick Herzog, a professor of scupting at New College of Florida.

The free regional event will be held at Ken Thompson Park near Mote Marine Laboratory. Highlights include live music on the main stage, local food vendors, science and environmental education exhibits, entries to the Sarasota Bay Photography and Art Contest, and many displays promoting boating, kayaking, fishing, paddle board sports, scuba diving, birding, and more. The award winning Sarasota Ski-A-Rees Water Ski Show Team will perform at 4pm.

Early Champion Sponsors include City of Bradenton, City of Sarasota, Solar Direct, Manatee County, Sarasota County, HDR, Southwest Florida Water Management District, and the Town of Longboat Key. Early Friend Sponsors include Mote Marine Laboratory, New College of Florida, Caldwell Trust Company, Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Around the Bend Nature Tours, Friends of Sarasota County Parks, Sarasota Audubon, Save Our Seabirds, and UF/IFAS Extension for Sarasota and Manatee County.

Click here to learn more about sponsorship or contact Randy at randy@triple3marketing.com.

SBEP Announces King Tide Photo Contest Winners; Contest Nets 161 Images From 32

Photographers

The King Tide Photo Contest sponsored by SBEP and Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) received 161 individual photos from 32 photographers. The winners include Larry Stults (first prize), Kristen Pate (second prize) and Alicia Squillante (third prize).

Click here to see many of the images showing the impact of King Tides that were captured in early June. SBEP and TBEP will be using some of the photos to educate the public about the longer term impact of gradual sea level rise. The effort to collect these images is occurring in coastal communities throughout the U.S. as well as Canada and Australia.

A King Tide occurs when the moon and sun align on one side of the Earth and their gravitational pull creates higher tides than normal. King Tides normally occur twice a year and the prior King Tide event was last October.



Photo of king high tide at Braden River by Christine Sciarrino.

Thank You Christine Sciarrino: Hello Costa Rica



Christine Sciarrino has served as an intern with SBEP the past year. Her many contributions in supporting the SBEP mission and programs have been exceptional. Christine will be headed to Costa Rica soon to do research on sea turtles. She will be missed by SBEP staff and many other professionals in the community.

This photo of Christine with Bay Guardian volunteers at a volunteer outing held at Quick Point Preserve on Longboat Key earlier this year captures the positive approach Christine brought to SBEP everyday during her tenure. Thank you Christine and best regards always.

SBEP Bay Guardians Complete Volunteer Project Planting Natives at North Lido Beach Park July 14

Fifty-five Bay Guardian volunteers planted 500 native plants and removed small Australian pine trees at North Lido Beach Park July 14. The group included 20 middle school students from the Duke University Talent Identification Program, a marine biology summer camp focused on estuaries and marshes. The American Littoral Society and Sarasota County donated the plants.



Volunteers planting a seagrape at North Lido Beach Park.

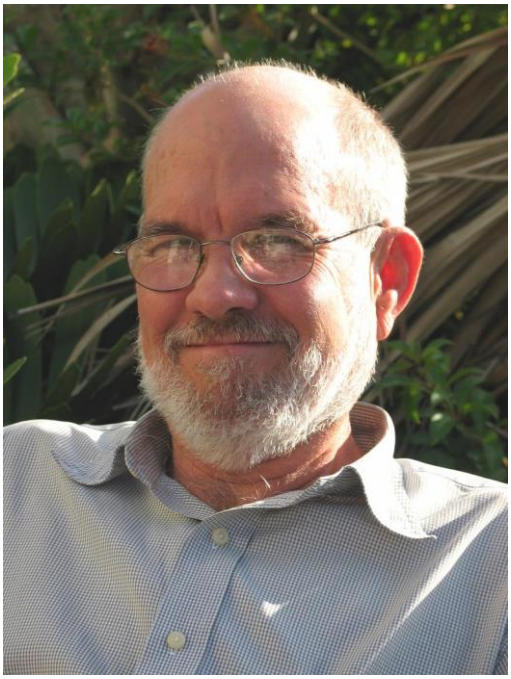
The project at North Lido Beach Park was the fourth volunteer outing for the SBEP Bay Guardians in 2012. Prior outings this year took place at Emerson Point Preserve in Manatee County, North Water Tower Park in Sarasota County and Quick Point Preserve on Longboat Key.

The new tidal tributary at North Lido Beach Park was completed in March 2011. The project improved 30 acres on the 70 acre site. The effort removed non-native vegetation, excavated the tidal wetland, contoured the upland area, created dunes, and planted thousands of native plants. The tidal wetland was created to provide essential habitat for estuarine dependent fish species. Florida Native Nursery planted more than 8,000 plants at the park last spring.

Major funding for the restoration project comes from Southwest Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Individuals and organizations supporting the project include the Lido Shores Property Owners Association, Lido Key Residents Association, Sarasota Audubon Society, and Captain Jeffrey Karr with the Sarasota Police Department.

The Sarasota Bay Guardians is a family-friendly program that SBEP manages in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. New volunteers receive a blue tee shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo. Each outing features environmental education and a picnic lunch. Join the Bay Guardians 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.

Sarasota County's Former Environmental Manager Jack Merriam Joins Citizens Advisory Committee



John (Jack) Merriam was recently approved for membership by the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The group provides SBEP with citizen input and helps the organization promote its programs and projects. The members include parents, grandparents, educators, former elected representatives, business owners, environmental advocates, scientists, ecologists, realtors, and engineers.

Jack is the recently retired environmental manager for Sarasota County. He worked for Sarasota County for 12 years over two periods in the mid 80s and more recently from 2005 until his retirement earlier this year. His extensive background in resource management includes stints with the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation, Florida Department of Natural Resources, Florida House of Representatives, and Hillsborough County Stormwater Section.

Jack completed his graduate and undergraduate degrees at the USF College of Natural Sciences. He has been involved with SBEP previously as a member of the SBEP Management Board. Jack was honored with a SBEP Blue Dolphin Award at the inaugural Sarasota Bay Awards Program held in April. The award honors area champions of Sarasota Bay. His personal interests include kayaking, fly fishing, sailing, bird watching, and enjoying sunset views with his spouse Carmen. The couple recently launched Merriam's Mushrooms specializing in shitakes and oysters.



CAC Member Profile: Jennifer Berges Meyer

Jennifer works with WUSF Public Media as their Associate Development Director. The organization is a source for local and national news, educational programming and music. A Florida native, she moved to Sarasota from Tampa where she worked for the Mayor's Beautification Program and was a volunteer with Tampa Bay Watch. Jennifer graduated from Washington University in St. Louis and received her MBA at USF Sarasota-Manatee. She'sbeen scuba diving since she was 13 and loves water activities.

"I enjoy being a member of the CAC because it helps to keep me informed about the environmental impact on Sarasota Bay," she said. "I have a deep regard for our local waters and wildlife, and I appreciate the good work being done by SBEP and its partners to restore and protect Sarasota Bay."

Jennifer enjoys biking to Siesta Key and exploring new restaurants with her husband Dirk. **Click here** to learn more about other members of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee.

SBEP News Briefs

Restore America's Estuaries Conference Set for October

The sixth annual conference on coastal and estuarine habitat restoration is set for October 20-25 at the Tampa Convention Center. Early-bird registration is available through September 7. The conference will present information about restoration programs and techniques. Click here to learn more.

Youth Ocean Conservation Summit Set for November 3

The second annual event will be held at Mote Marine Laboratory featuring students learning from marine scientists and conservationists. The $13 registration covers lunch, snacks and program materials. Click here to learn more.

Hold the Fertilizer this Summer

SBEP and Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) remind Sarasota and Manatee County residents they cannot apply nitrogen or phosphorus to their lawn or plants during the summer season through September 30. Not using fertilizers in the summer reduces the amount of chemicals running into Sarasota Bay through the storm drain system following rainfalls. Learn more at beflordian.org and sarasotabay.org.

Moore Completes Florida Master Naturalist Program

Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing and the SBEP marketing contractor recently completed the Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) with the University of Florida. The certificate program entailed 120 hours of classroom learning and more than 14 field trips. The core modules included coastal systems, freshwater wetlands and upland habitats.

Upcoming Public Meetings

The next meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is 4:30pm on August 6 at Dan McClure Auditorum located at the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport. The next meeting of the SBEP Policy and Management Board is September 7.

Visit These Bay-Friendly Links Today

Click here to see 600 photos from 30 plus local events and programs.
Click here to visit 60 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 Sandy Hedgepeth



Click here to see more images by Sandy on the SBEP Creative Expressions Gallery. Sandy has been interested in nature and wildlife since early childhood. She began her studies as a new mother. Today, after a career in nursing and project management, she has been able to combine her love of the outdoors with the art of photography. The SBEP Creative Expressions Gallery showcases the passion many people feel about the beauty and importance of Sarasota Bay.

Randy & Bryan Moore
Triple 3 Marketing, LLC
randy@triple3marketing.com

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."*

Trusted Email from Constant Contact
Try it FREE today.