

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter July 2013

Welcome to Bay Reflections

Highlights: Update about the Bay Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay; The importance of seagrass habitat; Sarasota Bay Water Festival now accepting applications; Bay Guardians plant 3,500 natives; SBEP deploys 36 new habitat modules on three artificial reefs; Schedule for the King Tide Photo Exhibit; SBEP awards Bay Partner Grants; and new Tech Kits to benefit high school and middle school teachers. Thank you for supporting the SBEP mission and its various programs and projects.

Like us on Facebook



SBEP is helping to restore scallops and oysters in Sarasota Bay.

Results of Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay Coming in January; Second Phase Focuses on How Various People Use and Value Sarasota Bay



The findings from the second phase of the SBEP-funded Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay will be made public in January. The study focuses on how residents and visitors use and value Sarasota Bay for recreation activities such as boating, fishing, scuba diving, and birding. The study findings is based on field surveys and a convenient online survey.

The **first phase of the study** was completed in 2012. The research team estimated the total capitalized value of single family properties on or near Sarasota Bay to be $3.6 billion. The findings from the second phase will be added to the property value for an overall valuation. This is the first study of its kind focused on the economic impact of Sarasota Bay spanning Sarasota and Manatee County.

Paul Hindsley, PhD, an Environmental Studies Professor at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg is the lead researcher. Other researchers include Kelly Debure, PhD, a Professor of Computer Science with Eckerd College and O. Ashton Morgan, PhD, an Associate Professor of Economics with Appalachian State University. The SBEP **Citizens Advisory Committee** (CAC) recommended SBEP conduct the study.

Seagrass is Worth Protecting; Habitat Protects Juvenile Fish, Reflects Water Quality and Helps Strengthen Essential Bay Bottom Substrate

The importance of **seagrass** is easy to overlook because its unseen at the bottom of various waterways. Being mostly out of sight doesn't diminish its importance to ecology, fishing, aquatic life, and the fragile Sarasota Bay ecosystem.



Photo by Jimmy White of Bradenton.

Sarasota Bay is the home to five species of seagrass: shoal grass, turtle grass, manatee grass, widgeon grass, and star grass. The habitat rebounded by 25 percent since 1950 following dredging operations that destroyed seagrass to accommodate the development of channels for boats as well as private homes and boat slips for large watercraft.

The total number of seagrass acres in Sarasota Bay is estimated to be more than 12,500. In 1988, the total was 8,650 acres. A recent report from the Southwest Florida Water Management District's **Surface Water Improvement Management Program** (SWIM) reports a one percent decrease in coverage over the past couple years. The report said the decrease was within the statistical margin of error.

Water Festival Welcomes New Sponsors and Exhibitors; Free Event Celebrates Importance of Sarasota Bay to Region's Environment & Economy

The **Sarasota Bay Water Festival** is set for Saturday, November 2 at Ken Thompson Park. SBEP is the Presenting Sponsor and HDR, Inc. is the Host Sponsor. Another 29 organizations are sponsoring the free public event. Highlights and a short video are posted on the festival website. **Join us on Facebook**.

The purpose of the festival is to celebrate the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region's environment and economy. The inaugural festival in 2012 was the largest public event ever held in the region focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay.

Other **sponsors**: Sarasota County, Freedom Boat Club, Sierra Club, Manatee County, West Coast Inland Navigation District, Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Mote Marine Laboratory, Scheda Ecological Associates, Whole Foods Market, The Old Salty Dog, WUSF Public Media, Caldwell Trust Company, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, WSRQ Sarasota Talk Radio, Southwest Florida Water Management District, City of Sarasota, Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, City of Bradenton, Gold Coast Eagle Distributing, Town of Longboat Key, Save Our Seabirds, Around the Bend Nature Tours, High Five Dragon Boat, Friends of Sarasota County Parks, University of Florida IFAS Extension, Suncoast Waterkeeper, Sun King Disc Sports, and Triple 3 Marketing.

Randy Moore welcomes sponsor inquiries at randy@triple3marketing.com. Bryan Moore welcomes inquiries from non-sponsoring exhibitors at bryan@triple3marketing.com.



The Lauren Mitchell Band performing at the 2012 Sarasota Bay Water Festival. Photo by Pia Cormier.

The SBEP Bay Guardians Plant 3,500 Native Plants at Perico Preserve; Fourth Project for 2013

A group of 49 adult and student volunteers planted 3,500 Florida-native plants May 4 at **Perico Preserve** in Manatee County. The plants were donated by FWC Redfish Hatchery at Port Manatee and Manatee County Natural Resources. It was the fourth Bay Guardian outing in 2013. Prior projects include Bowlees Creek Island on April 6, **Jiggs Landing** on March 9 and **Baywalk Creek** on February 23.

The Bay Guardians are the largest and most active volunteer organization in the region focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay. The program is managed by



The Bay Guardians are family-friendly.

the SBEP in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. Recent partners include Manatee County Natural Resources, Florida Audubon, Martha B. King Middle School, Sara Bay Marina, Sarasota Military Academy, Old Braden River Historical Society, Cub Scout Troop 22, Take Stock in Children, and New College of Florida. King Middle School was a 2012 recipient of a SBEP **Blue Dolphin Award**. The awards acknowledge local champions of Sarasota Bay.

New volunteers receive a blue tee shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo. Each outing includes education about local ecology 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 should contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.



Being a Bay Guardian is a unique opportunity to make a difference while making new friends.

SBEP Deploys 36 Habitat Modules on Local Artificial Reefs; Sarasota Sportsmen's Association Supports Fish-Friendly Project Managed by Sarasota County

The SBEP recently deployed 36 new habitat modules on three artificial reefs in Sarasota Bay. The reefs included Walker Reef, Hart's Family Reef and Sarasota Sport Fishing Anglers Club Reef. Sarasota County Environmental Services manages the reefs and the modules were constructed by Reef Innovations. Some of the modules were built by Riverview High School students and scouts with Boy Scout Troop 14.

Six different types of habitat modules were deployed at each site. The reefs are popular fishing destinations and the modules are designed to attract grouper and other fish species. The deep cover module (*see photo below*) mimics

natural ledges to offer large groups of fish safety from predators. The reefs will increase survival rates of various species until they are large enough to move offshore and become part of the adult fishery. Fishing is essential to Florida's economy along with tourism.

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



Reef Innovations supervising a prior deployment.



King Tide Photo Exhibit to be Displayed at Mote Through August; Photos are Helping to Raise Awareness about Future Sea Level Rise Conditions



The SBEP and Tampa Bay Estuary Program have partnered to present ***Chasing the Waves***, an exhibit of select photos showing king high tides in Florida and other locations. The free exhibit opened June 6 with a reception at the Federal Building lobby in downtown Sarasota. The photos will be on display at Mote Marine in July and August before traveling to other venues in the region.

The unique exhibit expands awareness about the impact of sea level rise. Images include winning submissions to the King Tide Photo Contest held last year. The exhibit also includes photos from other places in the U.S., Australia, and small Pacific Island nations.

The current schedule includes South Florida Museum in Bradenton in September and October; the Sarasota Bay Water Festival on Saturday, November 2 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota; Weedon Island Preserve in St. Petersburg November 4 - 30; Robinson Preserve in Bradenton in January and February 2014; and Oldsmar Public Library in St. Petersburg in April 2014.

The SBEP Announces Bay Partner Grants for Local Organizations; Projects are Focused on Bay-Friendly Landscaping, Restoration, Environmental Education



Pelican Cove is a local condo association that benefited from a prior SBEP Bay Partner Grant focused on Bay-friendly landscaping.

Nine area organizations were awarded SBEP **Bay Partner Grants** in May. The fully-funded projects include Anna Maria Elementary School, Ballard Global Studies Magnet School, New College of Florida, Plymouth Harbor, and Save Our Seabirds. The partially-funded projects include Keep Manatee Beautiful, Mote Marine Laboratory, Nature's Academy, and Sarasota Audubon Society.

The SBEP has awarded nearly $232,000 in Bay Partner Grants to 113 organizations since 2003. A subcommittee with the Citizens Advisory Committee selects the recipients. The next deadline for applications is March 1, 2014.

I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest Welcomes Submissions; Winning Entries to be Displayed at 2013 Water Festival on November 2

The **I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest** is one of the activities associated with the Sarasota Bay Water Festival. The winning submissions for all three age divisions will be showcased at the event on Saturday, November 2 at Ken Thompson Park.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to vote on a People's Choice Award at the free festival. The photo contest celebrates the beauty and importance of Sarasota Bay. Guidelines are posted on the festival website. **Visit today**.



Makaela Frankford won first prize last year in the youth division.

Tech Kits Focused on Ecology Will Support Area Teachers; Project Funded by EdExplore Next Grant

The SBEP, Around the Bend Nature Tours and Sarasota County Parks & Recreation have collaborated to produce unique "tech kits" for high school and middle school teachers. Each kit contains activities and related materials focused on four themes; Scrub Diversity, Orienteering, Estuary Exploration, and Low Impact Development.



The kits will be available for loan for two-week periods beginning in the fall through the **EdExplore website**. Local artists contributing to the kit include Phil Chioccio who produced seven videos and Brenda Smoak who created artistic depictions of habitats.

The tech kits were created through an **EdExplore Next Grant** supported by Sarasota Arts & Cultural Alliance and the Patterson Foundation.

County Ordinances Prohibit Using Fertilizers with Nitrogen and Phosphorus through September 30

The SBEP and other partners of the Be Floridian fertilizer education campaign remind Sarasota and Manatee County residents they cannot apply fertilizer with nitrogen or phosphorus from June 1 through September 30.



Not using fertilizers in the summer reduces the amount of chemicals running into Sarasota Bay following heavy rainfalls. The overuse of nitrogen and phosphorus has an adverse impact on water quality and can also harm aquatic life. Visit the **Be Floridian website**.

SBEP News Briefs

Annemarie Post
The SBEP lost a friend with the recent passing of Annemarie Post, the former Environmental Horticulture Agent with UF / IFAS Extension Sarasota County. Annemarie was a champion of Florida Friendly Landscaping and the protection of Florida's coastal ecosystems. She actively supported local groups including Selby Gardens, Sarasota Garden Club and the Florida Native Plant Society. Annemarie will be missed by everyone who had the pleasure to know her.

Seagrass Coverage
The Southwest Florida Water Management District's Surface Water Improvement and Management Program (SWIM) reported a one percent decrease in seagrass cover between 2010 and 2012 as a result of a comprehensive mapping study. Kris Kaufman with **SWFWMD** reports that a change of less than two percent can be due to the accuracy of mapping methods or natural variability in seagrass. Sarasota Bay registered positive **seagrass** growth in the 2008 SWIM report.

Andres Duany Visits Sarasota
The SBEP hosted urban planner Andres Duany on a recent visit to Sarasota. Duany shared his views about urban growth at a luncheon, dinner and presentation to a joint meeting of the Sarasota County and City of Sarasota commissions. His remarks included brief references to Light Imprint, a design concept he advocates that promotes stormwater management without excessive regulations and high costs that can deter development.

Citizens Advisory Committee Retreat
The SBEP **Citizens Advisory Committee** (CAC) are planning a retreat August 1 to review the CAC

bylaws, brainstorm new ideas and strengthen personal relationships. The retreat will be held at New College of Florida. The CAC has 27 volunteer members who reside in Sarasota and Manatee County.

Kudos to Tommy Vaughan-Birch
Tommy received a National Tourism Week Award in May in connection with her volunteer work at Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium. Tommy is a long-time member of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and serves as secretary for the volunteer group.

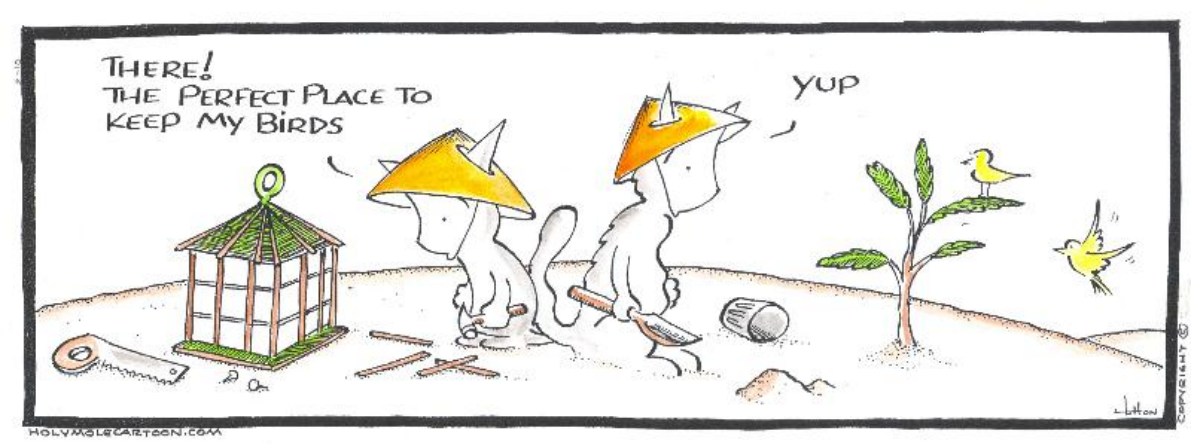
Local Dragon Boat Teams Forming
High Five is seeking local teams from Sarasota and Manatee County to compete in the races at the Sarasota Bay Water Festival on November 2 at Ken Thompson Park. High Five provides registered teams with boats, paddles, life vests, a steerperson, and training. Each boat is 42-feet in length and the coed teams consist of 20 paddlers. **Learn more**.

District Rotary Conference at SOS
Rotary District 6960 hosted a planting at Save Our Seabirds (SOS) on Saturday, May 18 in collaboration with SOS, the SBEP and Florida Native Plant Nursery. Participants planted 100 Florida-native plants and learned more about the relationship between plants, wildlife and water quality. Future plans involve placing signage to educate visitors about the importance of **Bay-friendly** stewardship. The plants were funded by a SBEP Bay Partners Grant.

Media Coverage Page
The SBEP website features thousands of **media links** focused on news about SBEP, its major partners, environmental issues, and related topics. The growing archive is a rich resource for anyone interested in issues impacting on Sarasota Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and other Florida environmental resources.

SBEP Public Meetings
The next SBEP Management Board meeting is set for 9:30 am and the next Policy Board meeting is set for 1:30 pm on Friday, September 13 at the Federal Building, room 100, located at 111 South Orange Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Visit the **SBEP website** for calendar updates.

Final Reflection with Holy Mole



Holy Mole is featured around the world and most recently as a new cartoon strip in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Sarasota resident Rick Hotton is the creator. Visit **Holy Mole's facebook page** or check out some of his work on the SBEP **Creative Expressions Gallery**. Rick is working on his first book showcasing some of his favorite strips.

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."