BAY REFLECTIONS

Restoring Our Bays

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter March 2011

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Bay Reflections Now Bimonthly

Bay Reflections provides information about projects, programs and events associated with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. Bay Reflections is published in January, March,

Seagrass Habitat Expands by 51 Acres From 2008 to 2010 According to SWIM Report



Sarasota Bay gained 51 acres of new seagrass between 2008 and 2010 according to scientists with the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The effort to map seagrass acreage is managed by the District's Surface Water Improvement and Management Program (SWIM). This group uses aerial photographs and field research to estimate the acreage of seagrass in five gulf coast estuaries including Sarasota Bay.

The increase over the past few years in Sarasota Bay is part of a longer term trend showing significant seagrass recovery. The current level of 12,692 acres is the highest level reported and is 25 percent above 1950. In 1998, the total acreage of seagrasses in Sarasota Bay was 8,650.

According to Mark Alderson, the Director of SBEP, the recent findings are encouraging. "The additional acreage since 2008 is modest, but the overall trend continues to indicate significant progress," he said. "Sarasota Bay had a little more than 10,000 acres of seagrass in 1950. The increase in the total number of

May, July, September, and November.

Thank you for encouraging friends and other contacts to sign up to receive Bay Reflections on the SBEP website. Please ***click here*** *for access to the home page.*

Randy Moore, Editor
randy@triple3marketing.com

acreage is meaningful given the rapid growth of the region during the past 50 years.

Seagrass is an important feature of estuaries and a good barometer of the Bay's health. Seagrass growth depends on relatively clear water in order for light to reach the Bay floor where various species of seagrass grow. Seagrass also provides vital habitat for various fish species including sea trout, snook and redfish.

The report by SWIM indicates that four of the five embayments within Sarasota Bay experienced modest increases in seagrass acreage with the highest increase in Little Sarasota Bay. Big Sarasota Bay saw a slight dip in the total number of acres.

Bay Partners Grant Spotlight:

Mote Marine's High School Internship Program Uses Grant to Complete Study about New Pass



Local students surveying marine life as part of the study.

Mote Marine Laboratory's High School Internship Program used a SBEP Bay Partners Grant to collect baseline data in the New Pass Estuary. Students sampled local seagrass beds; measuring seagrass height, animal biodiversity and water quality. Various items including tape, stakes and a hand held compass were purchased with the SBEP grant. These items were used to create transect lines and mark sampling sites within New Pass. Students used dip nets, buckets and aerators to collect marine animals. With the use of new field guides, they were able to identify the individual species and record their findings.

The data collected from the seagrass assessment can now be compared against future samples to monitor changes in the health of the estuary. The seagrass assessment project also included a

public outreach element. The interns shared their findings with parents, staff, volunteers and the general public during an oral presentation held at Mote Marine Laboratory's Immersion Cinema.

The creative use of the SBEP Bay Partners Grant provided the means for data collection in the New Pass Estuary, while giving participating students research experience in the field. Many of the students plan to pursue advanced degrees in biology, marine science and environmental studies.

Focus Groups to Test LIDAR Map Detailing Rising Water Scenarios Expected in Future Decades



Photo by Scott Veix

SBEP is setting up focus groups to test the new LIDAR digital map that shows the impact of rising water levels over the next several decades. LIDAR is a visualization tool using Light Detection and Ranging data. The focus groups will include the current Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Anyone that would like to join an additional focus group can contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.

The feedback from the focus groups will help the contracted programmer to make updates to the map before going final. The process is expected to take about a month. Select community workshops are the next step in the development process. The May edition of Bay Reflections will provide more details about the workshops.

SBEP is collaborating with Mote Marine's Policy Institute and the GIS departments with Manatee and Sarasota County on this project as part of ongoing climate ready adaptation planning. The effort is part of the Climate Ready Estuaries (CRE) Program with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). **Click here** to learn more.

CLIMATE READY ESTUARIES EPA

Three Free Trips Remain with Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program; Explore Whitaker Bayou and Lyons & Blackburn Bay with Guide Brad Tanner

Residents can still enjoy one of the three remaining free guided kayak tours on Sarasota Bay. SBEP's annual Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program features individual trips from December through April. The kayak excursions are a fun learning opportunity to discover the plants, animals, habitats, and restoration projects that distinguish Sarasota Bay. Brad Tanner, an expert kayaker and the School Programs Coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory leads the free trips.

Prior trips explored Leffis & Jewfish Key, Neal Preserve and South Lido Mangrove Tunnels. The remaining trips include Whitaker Bayou on March 19 and Lyons and Blackburn Bay on April 9 and April 23.

Participants are required to bring their own kayak. Outfitters throughout the region rent kayaks and offer demonstrations and beginner classes. The Bay Wise Kayak Program is for experienced kayakers.

Please register online and notify SBEP if you need to cancel at sara@sarasotabay.org. You can also add your name to a waiting list for trips that are already booked.

3/19 - Whitaker Bayou **CLICK HERE**
4/9 - Lyons and Blackburn Bay **CLICK HERE**
4/23 - Lyons and Blackburn Bay **CLICK HERE**



Kayak Guide Brad Tanner

SBEP Launches Socio-Economic Study to Determine the Economic Value of Sarasota Bay

In response to input from the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), SBEP funded a socio-economic study in the current fiscal year with a progress report due September 2011 and a final report due September 2012. This initial study will be a comprehensive economic assessment that helps determine the economic value of Sarasota Bay.

Two PhD level economists have been identified as prospective research partners for the study. A similar study of the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) System in 2007 reported that the value of the highly urbanized water system on the east coast of Florida is worth 3.7 billion annually. The study used the following categories for completing the economic assessment:

(1) Recreational Expenditures
(2) Recreational Use Value
(3) Non-Use Value of the Lagoon
(4) Real Estate Value (annualized)

(5) Income Generated in IRL Counties
(6) Restoration, Research and Education Expenditures
(7) Commercial Fishing Dockside Value

The May edition of Bay Reflections will present an update about the SBEP study.

SBEP Creating Digital Map to Showcase Diverse Habitat Restoration Projects & Artificial Reefs

Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing is working with Jay Leverone, PhD, SBEP's staff scientist, and Eric Adams with Adams Technology Service to develop a new Habitat Restoration page on the SBEP website. The new page will feature new text and a digital map with pop ups about each site. Photos will be added in March following a field trip.

The ongoing effort to enhance the SBEP website will include new editorial content for The Water Connection and Research pages. A new Creative Expression page is also being developed to capture the widespread passion people feel about the beauty and importance of the entire Sarasota Bay lagoon system.

Bay Guardians Work with Sarasota Military Academy to Remove Invasive Plants at G.WIZ; Next Outing to Neal Preserve Set for March 26



Volunteers working at G.WIZ

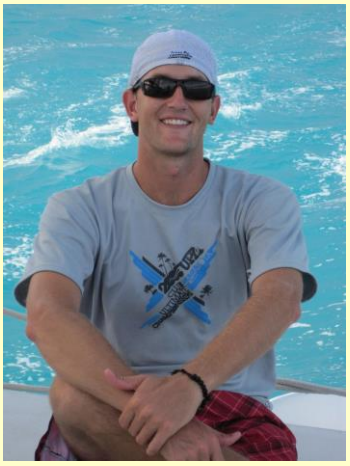
The SBEP Bay Guardians worked with Sarasota Military Academy and Around the Bend Nature Tour on February 12 to remove invasive plants at G.WIZ Science Museum located near downtown Sarasota.

The next Bay Guardian event will be Saturday, March 26 at Neal Preserve located at 12301 Manatee Avenue West in Bradenton. The effort to remove invasive plants will include support from Manatee County Natural Resources and Around the Bend Nature tours. **Click here** to register online and RSVP is required to help with planning.

The Bay Guardians welcome new volunteers. This is a great way to make a meaningful contribution in a concentrated period of time. Most outings are only two or three hours. Learn more by emailing Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.

Kendra Garrett, Bryan Moore and Sarah Hirsch Join the CAC; Advisory Group Expects to Add More Members to Guide and Support SBEP

The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) rcently added three new members; Kendra Garrett, Bryan Moore and Sarah Hirsch. Kendra currently serves as a marine scientist for Erickson Consulting Engineers in Sarasota. She received her undergraduate degree in marine biology from Florida Atlantic University and her graduate degree in biology from Purdue University. Kendra worked previously with endangered sea turtles in St. Croix for six years.



Bryan Moore

Bryan Moore is the Florida coordinator for the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA) and he's a professional disc golfer sponsored by Discraft. Bryan serves as the outreach coordinator for the Sarasota Sky Pilots Disc Golf Club, where he's organized youth clinics, tournaments and charity events benefiting All Faiths Food Bank and the Racing Dog Rescue Project. He served previously as the site manager for the E-Fest Green Living Music & Arts Festival.

Sarah Hirsch works as a staff biologist for the Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Program at Mote Marine Laboratory. She manages the database that records sea turtle activity. A graduate of Wake Forest University, Sarah has a BA degree in biology with a minor in environmental science.

SBEP expects to add several additional members to the CAC over the next few months. An application can be downloaded at sarasotabay.org. Questions can be directed to Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.

Express Your Passion for Sarasota Bay by Sharing Your Favorite Photos, Art and Poetry

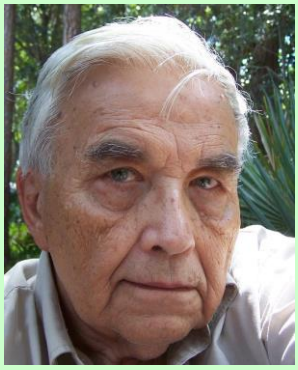
We welcome free submissions of photos, art, poetry, and other creative expressions that can be featured in upcoming editions of Bay Reflections and on the new Creative Expressions page being developed for the SBEP website. Images and poems should focus on the local habitat, sunsets, coastal scenes, and diverse wildlife associated with Sarasota Bay. The new page is being launched in March.



Photo by Lou Newman

Please submit high resolution digital files and a brief bio to Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing at randy@triple3marketing.com.

Honorary CAC Member, Respected Local Author and American Littoral Society Leader David Bulloch Passes Away in Sarasota February 5



David Bulloch

David Bulloch, an honorary member of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and a life time conservationist, passed away February 5 in Sarasota. Dave was a founding member and former president of the American Littoral Society. He also served as the director of the group's southeast chapter. He wrote extensively about the marine environment for *Underwater Naturalist* magazine and he also authored five books including *The Whale Watcher's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises of North America*.

Dave was a retired chemist and vice president of research and development. He was also an avid boater, dive instructor and underwater photographer. SBEP acknowledges the contributions made by Dave Bulloch to our organization and the entire community.

SBEP in the News

February 12 - *SNN6 and ABC7* **-** Both stations featured a segment about the Bay Guardian event at G.WIZ Science Museum.

February 10 - *Sarasota Observer* - Article about seagrass levels expanding written by Maria Amodio. Article features quotes from Jay Leverone, SBEP's staff scientist. **Read more**

February 3 - *Pelican Press* - Report about various access points for kayaking. Article references partnership between City of Sarasota and SBEP to help improve the 40th Street Drainage Outfall.

February - *Transformation Magazine* - The monthly column Positive Change with Randy Moore includes an overview about SBEP.

January 1 - *Longboat Key News* - Brief about Kendra and Bryan joining the CAC. Article also referenced the Bay Guardian volunteer event at G.WIZ. **Read more**

CAC Member Profile: Marion Kuster



Marion with Ondine

Marion Kuster is a "snowbird" with a second residence in Green Lake, Wisconsin. Her interest in the environment is not bounded by place. In Sarasota, Marion supports SBEP as a member of the CAC. In Wisconsin, she is an active member and former president of the Green Lake Conservancy, a land trust she helped launch in 1995.

Green Lake is a small community 3.5 hours north of Chicago that swells in size to 10,000 people during the summer months. It's a deep lake (up to 273 feet) that is seven miles long and two miles wide. The trust was formed in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Green Lake Sanitary District. "Our major concern was protecting environmentally sensitive lands including wetlands," explained Marion.

Marion raised two sons, Jeff and Rick, who now live in Paris and Denver respectively. "They both served in the corps," added Marion. "Jeff did an assignment with the Peace Corps in Guinea and Rick did a tour with the U.S. Marine Corps." She is also the proud grandmother of four grandchildren. The two grandsons who live in Paris visited Marion the last week of February.

Marion was a former social studies teacher for seventh graders in Ripon, Wisconsin. She also served as the coordinator for gifted students, which gave her a unique opportunity to develop an exchange program called French Adventure. "We matched fifth grade students in Wisconsin with students in France based on their common interests," said Marion. "The highlight of the program was the opportunity for the students to visit Wisconsin and France."

Marion's love for the French language continues in the classroom at Ripon Community College. "I want to be sure I can keep up with my French-speaking grandchildren," she said. Marion will be celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary on November 25th.

Click here to read short profiles about all of the CAC members. The CAC welcomes applications from prospective new members. Please contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.

PIER Update with Karen Fraley; Dip Net Estuary and Crab Inquiry Programs Set to Start this Month



PIER is an acronym for Protection Involvement Education and Restoration. SBEP launched PIER in 2003 as a way to support public and private schools as well as home schooled children throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties.

SBEP initially ran the field trips until 2005 when they contracted with Around the Bend Nature Tours. Last year,

the PIER program supported 43 field trips impacting over 2,000 students and 250 chaperones. Additional funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District has expanded the outreach to over 4,700 students and 500 chaperones in the current school year. More than 34,000 students in the region have participated in PIER since its inception.

Coming In March is the start of the Dip Net Estuary and Crab Inquiry Programs with local schools. There are six Dip Net Estuary study trips scheduled from March through May at Emerson Point, Coquina Bayside and Ken Thompson Parks. Younger students are introduced to the estuary through the eye stalks of the fiddler crab. Grades K-2 interact with fiddler crabs and hear a story adapted from the Bakongo people of Zaire that explains why the crab has no head. Six schools will participate in 12 field study days at Ken Thompson, Durante Park and Emerson Point Preserve.

Please call Karen Fraley at 941-794-8773 to schedule a free field trip for your school or group of students. She can also be reached at Karen@AroundBend.com.



UF/IFAS and FFL Encourage Home Irrigation Tune-Ups

The University of Florida IFAS Extension and Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program are working together to encourage home owners to consider scheduling a free irrigation evaluation. The idea is to help identify ways to reduce the environmental impact of inefficient water systems associated with automatic lawn sprinkler systems and rain sensors. Greater efficiency is good for the environment and it can also lower the amount of money homeowners spend each month. Learn more by calling 941-232-2267.

Long Time CAC Member Charles Edwards Steps Down After 17 Years of Distinguished Service

After 17 years of service, Charles Edwards has decided to step down from the CAC. He will continue to be acknowledged as an honorary member. Charles moved to Sarasota in 1993 after a long career of teaching, research and administration in the field of biology. His passion about the environment led him to joining the CAC in 1994. His daughter's interest in sustainable development influenced his sensitivity about some of the issues impacting on the environment and public policy. He has lived in Maryland, Utah, Minnesota, New York, and currently resides in Plymouth Harbor with a lovely Bay view.

SBEP Acknowledged by Florida-Friendly Landscaping for Helping Fund Award-Winning Marketing Products Focused on Education

SBEP was recently acknowledged for helping to fund several award-winning marketing products developed by the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program. The various educational products recognized by national and state associations focused on different aspects of landscaping. They included: *Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* (DVDs) and reprints of *Neighboring Nature, Guide to the Mangroves of Florida,* and *Guide to the Epiphytes of Florida*.

Final Reflection: Holy Mole by Rick Hotton



This cartoon strip is a wonderful reminder that nature is best experienced outside. Technology offers us great tools, but it falls short in replacing reality. Holy Mole is featured regionally in the *Bradenton Herald*, *Ticket*, *Lakewood Ranch Herald*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *Positive Impact*, and *Transformation Magazine*. The strip is also featured in magazines in 20 other states as well as Great Britain, Canada and Australia.

Holy Mole Cartoon

Editor: Randy Moore
randy@triple3marketing.com

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