

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter May 2013

Welcome Readers

Welcome to Bay Reflections. Highlights in the May edition: (1) Tidal Creek Study update; (2) The SBEP announces the 2013 Blue Dolphin Award winners; (3) Sarasota Bay Water Festival accepting applications from sponsors and exhibitors; (4) Bay Guardians complete local volunteer projects; (5) National estuary programs recommend restoration projects for RESTORE Act funding; (6) Hold the fertilizer this summer; and (7) Bay Partner Grant profile about the Sunbow Bay Condominium Association. Thank you for supporting the SBEP mission and its programs and projects.

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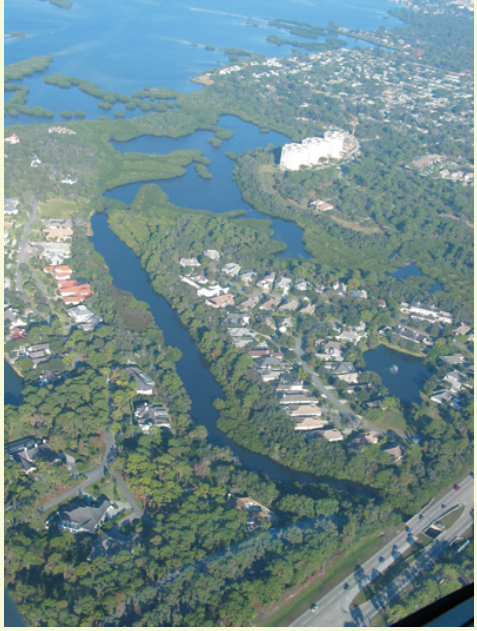
Tidal Creek Study to Develop Water Quality Standards; More than 50 Local Professionals are Helping with Planning and Ongoing Water Sampling

The SBEP is overseeing a regional study of tidal creeks throughout Southwest Florida in partnership with Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program and six Florida counties. The study will develop water quality (nutrient) standards to help protect the unique natural resources of the complex tidal creek systems.

Tidal creeks are vital nursery habitat for many fish species and they have unique water quality conditions that are different from upstream freshwater and downstream estuarine waters. The project has identified 330 tidal creeks in the region, and has developed a classification scheme to separate these creeks according to geology, hydrology and buffer zones. Sixteen creeks will be selected for a one-year sampling effort that will begin this summer.

The SBEP acknowledges the 50 local professionals that are helping with project planning and water sampling. Many scientists and resource managers in the area are part of the

SBEP **Technical Advisory Committee** (TAC). Their ongoing support enhances the SBEP mission and various technical projects and studies.



View of North Creek by Greg Wahl

SBEP Announces the 2013 Blue Dolphin Award Winners; Congratulations to Local Bay Champions Don and Denise Elliott, Sean Russell and Lee Fox



Mark Alderson & Sara Kane with Denise & Don Elliott

SBEP has announced the winners of Blue Dolphin Awards for 2013. The special award honors local champions of Sarasota Bay. Congratulations to Denise and Don Elliott with the Sunbow Bay Condominium Association, Sean Russell with the Stow It Don't Throw It Project, and Lee Fox with Save Our Seabirds, Inc.

The Elliott's are being acknowledged for their efforts to create a Bay-friendly demonstration garden at Sunbow Bay located on Anna Maria Island. SBEP provided Bay Partner Grants to support the multi-year project. Sean Russell of Sarasota, currently a student at the University of Florida, has helped raise awareness about preventing marine debris and supporting ocean conservation through his non-profit group. He's also the organizer of the Youth Ocean Conservation Summit held annually at Mote Marine Laboratory. Lee Fox manages bird care at the popular Save Our Seabirds Wild Bird Learning Center.

The SBEP Blue Dolphin Awards were launched in 2012 to bring positive attention to local champions of Sarasota Bay. The inaugural winners included Jack Merriam, the former environmental manager for Sarasota County, Martha B. King Middle School in Bradenton, AMI Turtle Watch and Shorebird Monitoring, Raindrop Cisterns, a company focused on rainwater harvesting, and Charles Edwards, a long-term volunteer with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee. **Photo gallery from 2012**.

Members of the SBEP Policy Board presented the first Blue Dolphin Awards at a special program held last April at Powel Crosley Estate in Manatee County. The event attracted more than 150 professionals from diverse local organizations focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay. This year's awards will be presented at select venues throughout the year. The first award was presented to Denise and Don Elliott Monday at the SBEP **Citizens Advisory Committee** meeting.

Sarasota Bay Water Festival Seeking Sponsors and Exhibitors; Unique Event to Feature Live Music, Food, Art for Sale, Workshops & Dragon Boat Races

The second Sarasota Bay Water Festival is set for Saturday, November 2 at Ken Thompson Park. The SBEP is the Presenting Sponsor and HDR Engineering, Inc. is the Host Sponsor for 2013. Online applications from sponsors and exhibitors are now being accepted. Festival highlights and a short video from last year are posted on the **festival website**.

The purpose of the water festival is to celebrate the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region's environment, economy and quality of life. This year's festival is a kickoff for the SBEP 2014 Silver Anniversary. The inaugural festival last year was the largest public event ever held in the region focused exclusively on the welfare of Sarasota Bay.

Thank you to all of the early **2013 sponsors**: Sarasota County, Freedom Boat Club, Manatee County, Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Scheda Ecological Associates, Whole Foods Market, Sierra Club, Southwest Florida Water Management District, City of Sarasota, Mote Marine Laboratory, City of Bradenton, Caldwell Trust Company, Save Our Seabirds, Town of Longboat Key, Triple 3 Marketing, Around the Bend Nature Tours, High Five Dragon Boat, Friends of Sarasota County Parks, Gold Coast Eagle Distributing, and Sun King Disc Sports. **Like the Water Festival on facebook**.



Dragon Boat Races are one of the new features of the 2013 Sarasota Bay Water Festival

Bay Guardian Volunteers Complete Projects at Jiggs Landing March 9 and Bowlees Creek Island April 6; Next Outing Set for May 4 at Perico Preserve

Volunteers with the SBEP **Bay Guardian Program** completed two projects in March and April. A group of 54 volunteers planted more than 1,400 native plants at Jiggs Landing on Saturday, March 9. Enjoy the **photo gallery**. Participants included volunteers from the



Young volunteer at Jiggs

Old Braden River Historical Society, Cub Scout Troup 22, Take Stock in Children, Around the Bend Nature Tours, and staff members with Manatee County Natural Resources. The Manatee County Natural Resources Department and Old Braden River Historical Society donated the native plants.

Another group of 47 volunteers worked with the Florida Audubon Society and Around the Bend Nature Tours to remove 427 pounds of debris and exotic plants from Bowlees Creek Island Bird Sanctuary on April 6. Participants included volunteers from Audubon, Martha B. King Middle School in Bradenton, Sara Bay Marina, Take Stock in Children, Sarasota Military Academy, and New College of Florida.

The fourth Bay Guardian volunteer outing for 2013 is set for this Saturday, May 4 at Perico Preserve in Manatee County. Volunteers will plant another shoreline area with Spartina grass plugs and herbaceous plants. The plants are being donated by FWC Redfish Hatchery at Port Manatee and Manatee County Natural Resources.

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



Bay Guardian volunteers following the project at Bowlees Creek Island Bird Sanctuary

Sherri Swanson with HDR Engineering Joins the CAC



Sherri Swanson was approved for membership by the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) on Monday, April 29. Sherri has worked as a Senior Environmental Scientist for HDR Engineering since 2006. She worked previously as a Project Scientist for Sarasota County from 2003 to 2006.

Sherri is close to completing a Masters of Art Degree in Global Sustainability with a focus on Water from the University of South Florida. She completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental, Soil and Water Science from the University of Arkansas in 2000. Sherri is a member of the Society of Wetland Scientists.

Sherri is the sustainability manager with the Sarasota Bay Water Festival and a key volunteer. Her employer, HDR Engineering, is the Host Sponsor for 2013.

SBEP and Sister National Estuary Programs Submit Joint Restoration Plan Projects to Gulf Council

The SBEP, Tampa Bay Estuary Program and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program have submitted a joint restoration plan to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and the State of Florida. The Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan was created to help prioritize restoration projects following the Gulf Coast Oil Spill in 2010.

Projects in the **SW Regional Plan** include large scale coastal habitat restoration, land acquisition, water quality enhancement, as well as environmental monitoring, assessment and education programs. More than 100 projects from 50 organizations were recommended for the first three years of funding. The SBEP, Tampa Bay Estuary Program and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program are federally authorized programs that provide Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans (CCMP) that support ongoing efforts to restore and protect high value estuary waterbodies in Florida.

Protect the Bay: Local County Ordinances Prohibit Using Fertilizers June 1 through September 30



The SBEP and other partners of the Be Floridian fertilizer education campaign remind Sarasota and Manatee County residents they cannot apply nitrogen or phosphorus to their lawn or plants during the summer season. Sarasota and Manatee County ban application of fertilizers from June 1 through September 30. Not using fertilizers in the summer reduces the amount of chemicals running into Sarasota Bay through the storm drain system and tributaries following rainfalls. The heavy amount of nitrogen and phosphorus has an adverse impact on water quality and it can also harm aquatic life.

Garden centers throughout the area offer a variety of products that will help keep landscapes green and growing through the summer months. These "summer-safe" products comply with local fertilizer ordinances. Other practices that are good for local yards and Sarasota Bay include applying products with potassium or magnesium, mixing in composted cow or chicken manure to enrich the soil, applying iron, and planting Florida native plants which require less water and fertilizer. **Learn more**.

Bay Partner Grant Profile: Sunbow Bay Volunteers Develop Bay-Friendly Demonstration Garden

The Sunbow Bay Condominium Association recently completed a landscaping project with support from a SBEP **Bay Partners Grant**.

The project retrofitted existing turf to be a Florida-friendly garden resulting in the addition of nearly 2,500 square feet to the larger demonstration garden. The project leader is Denise Elliott supported by her husband Don and other members of the association's board of directors including Lynn Erickson and Dan Gonzalez. More than 25 residents supported the project with volunteer hours.

The recently completed project is part of a multi-year plan by Sunbow Bay to make their 10-acre property more Bay-friendly with the use of Florida-friendly landscaping principles. The project launched in 2010 has reduced the use of pesticides, fertilizers and irrigation saving energy and money.



Volunteers with the Sunbow Bay Condo Association

A subcommittee with the **Citizens Advisory Committee** (CAC) is evaluating current applications for Bay Partner Grants for the next fiscal year. The grants promote environmental education, community involvement, and stewardship to support Sarasota Bay. SBEP has awarded $213,000 in grants to more than 109 organizations since 2003.

SBEP News Briefs

Reef Innovations Enhances Oyster Habitats
During April, Reef Innovations helped the SBEP place another layer of shell on the recently created oyster habitats in Manatee County waters. The shell material was needed to strengthen the habitat structure. The new habitat is attracting many oysters including some approaching two inches in length. The habitat sites are the newest and largest natural oyster reefs in this region of Florida. The spawning season for oysters runs from May through the summer months.

I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest
The Sarasota Bay Water Festival has announced the I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest with three age divisions. The winning submissions will be on display at the Sarasota Bay Water Festival set for Saturday, November 2 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota. **Contest guidelines**.

District Rotary Conference at Save Our Seabirds
Rotary District 6960 will host a native plant planting project at Save Our Seabirds (SOS) on Saturday, May 18. Participating groups include SOS, SBEP, Florida Native Plants Nursery, and Longboat Key Garden Club.

Living Shoreline Project at Bay Front Park
Preparations are underway for the installation of a living shoreline along the bay at Bay Front Park in downtown Sarasota. The project will feature 150 feet of native plants that stabilize the sediments and provide vital habitat. Construction is expected to begin in June. The project is designed to showcase alternatives to traditional hardened sea walls made of rock, concrete and other materials.

Stay Informed: Media Coverage Page
The SBEP website features thousands of media links referencing news about SBEP, its major partners, local environmental issues, and other news briefs and articles related to Florida and its vital waterways and coastal habitat. **Visit the Media Coverage page**.

Join the SBEP on Facebook
The SBEP social media site also features links to other Bay-friendly organizations. Thank you for helping us reach our current goal of 500 likes. **Like us on facebook**.

SBEP Public Meetings
The next Management Board meeting will be held 1:30pm on Thursday, May 2 at the City Building located at 111 South Orange Avenue in Sarasota. The next Policy Board meeting will be held 10am on Friday, May 10 at Selby Auditorium located on the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus. The next meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is set for 4:30pm on Monday, June 3 at Dan McClure Auditorium located at the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport. **SBEP calendar**.

More Bay-Friendly Links

Click here to see 600 photos from 42 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 Sandy Hedgepeth of Venice



The Painted Bunting is one of the more colorful birds seen in Florida. This photo by Sandy Hedgepeth of Venice shows a male in summer plumage. Females are yellow-green. The small bird is found in pastures with brush and edges of woodland areas. It's sound includes a high pitched warble with a call that sounds like a sharp *chip*.

Visit Sandy's page on the SBEP **Creative Expressions Gallery** to see more of her photos. Sandy will be one of the professional photographers selling photos, art and gifts at the Sarasota Bay Water Festival set for Saturday, November 2 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota.

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."