

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter May 2014

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U.S. Senate reauthorizes National Estuary Program; SBEP receives EPA Gulf of Mexico Grant for renovation at North Water Tower Park; Bay Guardians complete three more projects; Arbor Day celebration at Twin Lakes Park; Link to an interview with James "Buddy" Powell with Sea to Shore Alliance; and Sarasota Bay Water Festival welcomes sponsor inquiries and exhibitor applications. Thank you for supporting the SBEP mission and its various programs.

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U.S. Senate Reauthorizes Funding for National Estuary Programs (NEP) with Bipartisan Support



The U.S. Senate approved a bill in early April reauthorizing the National Estuary Program (NEP). The bill was introduced by Democrat Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island. The NEP was established in 1987 by the late Republican Senator John Chafee to protect and restore estuarine habitats threatened by pollution and over development.

The federal bill maintains the funding authorization for the NEP at $35 million per year while also limiting the amount of funding that the EPA can use for overhead. EPA administers the NEP. This change will ensure that more funds are directed to the field programs throughout the U.S. The NEP consists of 28 programs including SBEP, Tampa Bay Estuary Program and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program along Florida's Gulf Coast.

In the past decade, NEPs around the nation have restored and protected over a million acres of estuarine habitat. The nation's estuaries provide habitat for more than 75 percent of America's commercial fish catch. The bill requires each NEP to identify local risks to the estuary and the measures for mitigating the risks. The information is detailed in a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). SBEP is working on its current edition.

SBEP to Support Restoration at North Water Tower Park with EPA Gulf of Mexico Partnership Grant

SBEP and its partners have been approved for an EPA Gulf of Mexico Partnership Grant for restoration at North Water Tower Park. The $300K grant supports stormwater improvements, removal of invasive vegetation, planting Florida native plants, and education outreach. The 20-acre park was established in 2003.



North Water Tower Park is home to the region's oldest disc golf course.

Partners and supporters for the three-year project include City of Sarasota and its Urban Design Studio, Sarasota County, North Trail Redevelopment Partnership, Bayou Oaks Neighborhood Association, Indian Beach Sapphire Shores Neighborhood Association, and the **Professional Disc Golf Association** (PDGA). The neighborhood associations represent local residents and the PDGA supports the popular disc golf course located in the park.

The **SBEP Bay Guardians** will donate approximately 1,800 hours of community support during a series of volunteer projects. Their primary focus will be the removal of invasive species including Brazilian Pepper trees and Air Potato vines and seeds. Bay Guardian projects are coordinated by Around the Bend Nature Tours. The award-winning Bay Guardians are the largest and most active volunteer group in the region focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay.

Bay Guardians Complete Projects at Bowlees Creek Island, Perico Preserve and Oscar Scherer State Park



The **SBEP Bay Guardians** recently completed three volunteer projects. More than 40 Bay Guardians removed debris and exotic plants from **Bowlees Creek Island** on Saturday, March 1. Students from King Middle School in Bradenton and Sarasota High School participated with Sarasota Audubon volunteers and staff members with Around the Bend Nature Tours.

A second project was completed **April 12 at Perico Preserve** when more than 100 volunteers from the Bay Guardians and Tampa Bay Estuary Program worked with Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources to plant 12,000 plugs of marsh grass. The plants were donated by the FWC Redfish Hatchery at Port Manatee. Local boy scouts, girl scouts and a 4H group also participated.

A third project was completed on April 27 at Oscar Scherer State Park in connection with Earth Day. Approximately 140 Bay Guardian volunteers planted 9,000 native wetland plants. Groups included the Daisy Girl Scout Troop 254, Samosett Elementary, Americorps and a local Boy Scout troop. Partners included Scheda Ecological Associates, Around the Bend Nature Tours, and park staff. Lunch was provided by Friends of Oscar Scherer Park.



Prior Bay Guardian projects this year include **Arlington Park** in Sarasota County and **Jiggs Landing** in Manatee County. The Arlington Park project resulted in the removal of 1,200 pounds of air potato vines and seeds. The Jiggs Landing project resulted in the planting of nearly 6,000 Florida-native plants.

The **SBEP Bay Guardians** are the largest and most active volunteer program in the region focused on Sarasota Bay. The award-winning program is managed by 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 should contact **Sara Kane**.

SBEP Celebrates Arbor Day in April with Educational Classes at Twin Lakes Park County Extension Office

SBEP in collaboration with Sarasota County, UF/IFAS Extension and FPL celebrated Arbor Day with two free educational events at the Sarasota County Extension office located at Twin Lakes Park in Sarasota. *Tree School* was held April 25 with a focus on best practices and proper tree care for landscape professionals. *The Value of Trees and Pruning for Tree Health* was held April 26 with pruning demonstrations and a discussion about how to place the right tree in the most suitable location. Participants were able to earn Continuing Education Credits.



Visit *Sarasota Bay Today* for Interview with Dr. James "Buddy" Powell with Sea to Shore Alliance



James "Buddy" Powell is the latest interviewee on **Sarasota Bay Today**, the bay-centric blog sponsored by SBEP. Buddy is the founder and director of Sea to Shore Alliance, an international research and conservation nonprofit based in Sarasota. He's been studying and protecting manatees, right whales, sea turtles and other species for more than four decades. Buddy earned his PhD from the University of Cambridge, and he's a 2000 recipient of the prestigious Pew Award for Marine Conservation.

Randy Moore interviewed Buddy in April; the interview covers the **Sea to Shore Alliance** mission and the ongoing efforts by S2S staff to protect marine species including the endangered right whale. **Sarasota Bay Today** features interviews with local leaders focused on the welfare of Sarasota Bay, other coastal systems, marine life, birds, and other wildlife.

Sarasota Bay Water Festival Welcomes New Sponsors;

Exhibitors Save Money With Early Bird Registration



The third **Sarasota Bay Water Festival** is set for Saturday, November 1 at Ken Thompson Park. The fun event celebrates the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region's environment, economy and quality of life. SBEP is the Founding Sponsor, HDR, Inc. is the Community Sponsor and Sea to Shore Alliance is the Host Sponsor for 2014. Triple 3 Marketing is managing the free public event. T3M has served as the marketing contractor for SBEP since 2010. **Bryan Moore** with T3M is the festival director and **Randy Moore** is the liaison for sponsors and the media.

Organizers are seeking more **sponsors** and **exhibitors** can save money with early registration prior to June 2. Exhibitors include businesses focused on water recreation, diverse groups focused on bay stewardship and nonprofits focused on wildlife conservation. The **Art Zone** presents exhibitors selling unique art items and photography, as well as the winning submissions to the *I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest*. New for 2014 is a Pet Zone featuring select exhibitors selling pet-friendly products and services.

Other highlights: **live music**, panel discussions on bay-friendly living organized by SBEP, Dragon Boat Races, food trucks, beer and wine garden, raffle prizes, vintage and new boats, kids fishing clinic, dip netting and nature walks, community art mural, and displays promoting boating, fishing, kayaking, paddleboard sports, scuba diving, and more. Also new for 2014 is an evening party at a separate venue from 7pm until midnight featuring live music and costume contest.

I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest Set with Four Age Divisions; Winning Submissions to be Displayed at the Sarasota Bay Water Festival on November 1



The Water Festival has announced the third annual ***I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest***. The winning submissions will be displayed at the festival November 1. The contest celebrates the beauty and importance of Sarasota Bay. Submissions should have a connection to the bay or its tributaries and watersheds spanning Sarasota and Manatee County.

Prior submissions have focused on seascapes and landscapes, sunrises and sunsets, people enjoying water recreational activities, boats and boating, aquatic life, birds, and other wildlife. The contest rules and guidelines are posted on the Water Festival website.

The **2013 winners** included Emma and Caroline Griffith (see photo), Terry Frankford, Sally Twinem, Logan McLeod, Karl Ford, Larry George, Francis Twinem, Judith Horn, Judy Sargent, Michael Oelschlager, and Julie Doyle.

SBEP Completes Eighth Bay Wise Kayak Tour Season



SBEP recently completed its eighth year of providing free guided kayak tours of Sarasota Bay. The program runs from December through April and includes 10 guided trips with professional guide Brad Tanner. Brad is the School Programs Coordinator with Mote Marine Laboratory and he's also a volunteer with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

The **kayak excursions** in the most recent season included trips to Lyons and Blackburn Bay, Blind Pass, Lido Mangrove Tunnels, Leffis and Jewfish Key, and Neal Preserve. The late Jack Taylor, a respected marine biologist and former volunteer with the CAC, launched the kayak tour program in 2007 as part of a **SBEP Bay Partners Grant**. Jack earned a PhD in Marine Biology from the University of Florida and he was active with local conservation groups.

Say Yes to Slow-Release Fertilizer in the Spring Planting Season and Hold the Fertilizer All Summer



SBEP encourages residents to use fertilizers with slow-release nitrogen if they fertilize their lawn or flower beds during May. Slow-release products (also called controlled release or timed release) feed lawns and plants gradually and for a longer period of time. They are more easily absorbed by the plants and less likely to become stormwater runoff.

Local ordinances prohibit fertilizing in the summer months from June through September. Too much fertilizer undermines water quality and harms aquatic life. **Learn more about the Be Floridian Campaign**.

SBEP Leading Local Project to Restore Freshwater Wetland Habitats at Oscar Scherer State Park



SBEP is leading a project at Oscar Scherer State Park to restore several freshwater wetland habitats. Project partners include Oscar Scherer State Park, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Scheda Ecological Associates, Tampa Contracting Services, Inc. Funding is being provided by the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Work is already underway on three separate projects that will impact roughly ten acres within the Park. One project involves creating a littoral shelf around Lake Osprey (adjacent to the Nature Center) for habitat value and conservation education. Another project focuses on an existing, isolated wetland that will be restored through hydrologic restoration and habitat creation. The final project involves restoring littoral features surrounding Big Lake, including the eradication of a massive cattail infestation.

SBEP News Briefs

Florida DEP to Remove Nutrients
Florida DEP has started a **two-year study** to remove nutrients at Ichetucknee Springs State Park in Fort White. The goal is to improve septic tank performance in soils located near springs. Excessive levels of nitrate harms aquatic life by depressing oxygen levels. The study entails placing wood chips below a drain field to provide nitrogen removal through microbial treatment.

Importance of Mangroves
An article in ***Ecologist*** by marine scientist Mark Spalding explains that mangroves are a smart investment because they help sequester large amounts of carbon. Did you know that mangroves have double the living biomass of tropical forests?

Climate Change as a National Issue
Climate change ranks almost last on a list of 15 national priorities in a **recent Gallup survey**. Twenty-four percent of respondents said they worry about climate change a great deal and 56 percent said they worry about climate change a little or not at all.

Cities Threatened by Sea Level Rise
Bloomberg lists the top 20 cities in the world that are expected to face the greatest consequence of climate change and sea level rise. The four American cities on the list with their ranking include Miami (1), New York City (3), New Orleans (12), and Virginia Beach (19).

EPA Lifts BP Drilling Ban
EPA lifted its ban on new federal contracts with BP, the energy company responsible for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster. **The five-year deal** will allow BP to pursue new oil leases in deepwater tracts in the Gulf of Mexico. BP has already purchased new tracts for future drilling.

Report Details Harm to Gulf Marine Life
A **National Wildlife Federation report** looks at the impact of the BP Oil Spill on 14 species. More than 900 bottlenose dolphins have been found dead, which is three times normal rates. Approximately 500 sea turtles have been found dead every year for the past three years.

Climate Change Resources
NOAA has a resource-rich website that provides science-based information about the ongoing impact of climate change. It includes maps, technical data, substantive reports, and helpful resources for teachers.

Watershed Stewards Academy
A University of Florida team is working on an educational program focused on water issues. **The Watershed Stewards Academy** will be offered through UF/IFAS Extension. The program will be modeled after the

popular Master Naturalist and Master Gardner certification programs. A survey is being used to collect public input.

Help Protect Snowy Plovers
An article in the ***Sarasota Herald Tribune*** details efforts to protect the threatened snowy plover on Siesta Key. The peak nesting season coincides with the July 4 weekend. Last year was deemed a success with 13 nests; two of the nests hatched producing five chicks. Four of the chicks survived long enough to fly.

Map Shows Extreme Sea Level Rise
An artist from Slovakia created a unique **World Map** showing the impact of long-term sea level rise conditions. Florida, Denmark and the Netherlands are completely submerged in the map and the east coast of the U.S. is pushed back more than 100 miles. Sea levels have risen about 8 inches since 1990 and many scientists predict they could rise another two to seven feet by 2100.

Join SBEP 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, May 2 and the next Policy Board Meeting is set for 1 pm on the same day. The venue for both meetings is Longboat Town Hall located at 501 Bay Isles Road. The next meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will be held 4:30 pm on Monday, June 2 at Dan McClure Auditorium located at 5900 Airport Auditorium Lane in Sarasota. **SBEP Online Calendar**.

Final Reflection with Dotty Motta



Dotty Motta is a talented wildlife and nature photographer from Bradenton. Check out some of her impressive photos on the **Creative Expressions Gallery**.

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."