

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter November 2012

In This Edition:

Don't miss the regional **Sarasota Bay Water Festival** Saturday, November 17 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota. SBEP has completed the first phase of an economic valuation study of Sarasota Bay. The sixth annual Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program launches December 1 with ten free guided trips from December through April. Be sure to read the interview with Manatee County Commissioner Michael Gallen featured in Sarasota Bay Today. Thank you for supporting SBEP, its major partners and everyone in the public and private sector helping to restore and protect Sarasota Bay.

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Area National Estuary Programs Prioritizing Projects in Support of the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force

SBEP, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program are helping to coordinate a Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan to support planning by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. The plan will develop a prioritized list of environmental projects that would help to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, and coastal wetlands of Southwest Florida.



The projects will be consistent with federally-approved actions in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMP) used by the three National Estuary Programs. They will also be consistent with the goals set by the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force. The group identified four major goals: restoring and conserving habitat, restoring water quality, replenishing and protecting coastal and marine resources, and enhancing community resilience.

The various projects focused on these major goals will be reviewed, revised and approved by the Management and Policy Boards of the three NEP programs. It can be used by local governments and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council for consideration in the development of funding priorities under the Restore Act. Government entities, agencies, non-profit groups, and other organizations were invited to submit projects that are located between Crystal River in the north and Ten-Thousand Islands in the south.

Sarasota Bay Water Festival to Feature Live Music, Wildlife Art for Sale, Local Food Trucks, and Exhibits Promoting Bay Recreation and Bay-Friendly Living



Cort Farris on the Steel Pan.

The **Sarasota Bay Water Festival** is set for Saturday, November 17 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota. More than 75 organizations from the public and private sector are engaged as sponsors and exhibitors. The purpose of the free festival is to celebrate the importance of Sarasota Bay to our region's environment and economy. SBEP is the host sponsor and Triple 3 Marketing is managing the festival. Visit our **Sponsor Page** to learn about the various sponsors.

Festival highlights include live music on the main stage; a Creative Arts Tent presenting a dozen local wildlife photographers and artists selling art items; the winning submissions to the I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest; vintage boat displays; local food trucks; a beer and wine garden; and exhibits promoting boating, fishing, kayaking, paddle board sports, scuba, birding, and more. Visit the **Festival Website**.

The first "iceberg" ever seen in Sarasota Bay will be unveiled thanks to the creativity of New College of Florida Sculpting Professor Richard Herzog. The award-winning Ski-A-Rees Water Ski Show Team will perform at 4pm. Visitors can also gain free admission to the popular Mote Aquarium which is open from 10am to 5pm. Admission requires getting a stamp at the festival; come early if you want to enjoy the festival and a visit to Mote Aquarium.

Please carpool or use other alternative transportation. A free water taxi between the dock at Marina Jack and the dock at the Sarasota Sailing Squadron has been set up thanks to Freedom Boat Club. The water taxi departs about every 30-40 minutes as of 9am. Other transportation options include hourly stops by SCAT and the LBK Trolley, a free bike valet, and a free kayak valet. Visit the **Getting There** page.

SBWF will also unveil the Brita Hydration Station, a touch-free, sensor-operated water dispenser that provides filtered municipal water without the waste or cost of single-use bottled water. Please bring your reusable water container for free water. Reusable containers will also be sold at the festival.

Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing is the festival director and the associate directors include Sherri Swanson with HDR Engineering, Bryan Moore with Triple 3 Marketing, and Sara Kane with SBEP. A team of volunteers are helping with planning and festival promotion.

Commissioner Michael Gallen Answers Questions about Environmental Issues and Related Topics



The latest interview in Sarasota Bay Today features a conversation with Manatee County Commissioner Michael Gallen. Commissioner Gallen serves on the SBEP Policy Board. In the interview, he answers questions about Piney Point, his tenure at Florida DEP, the challenges in protecting local wetlands, future sea level rise planning, the challenges of election campaign financing, and the importance of SBEP. **Click here** to read the interview.

Sarasota Bay Today is the region's Bay-centric blog edited by Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing and sponsored by SBEP. Visit **Sarasota Bay Today** to read interviews with other area professionals including Tim Rumage, Cris Costello, Jon Thaxton, Jeanne Dubi, Zachary Cole, Jack Merriam, Frank Alcock, Paul Hindsley, Sara Kane, Jay Leverone, and Randy Moore.

SBEP Completes Phase One of Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay; SBEP Policy Board Approves Second Phase Focused on Recreational Uses

A research team contracted by the SBEP recently completed **phase one** of an economic valuation study of Sarasota Bay. The study estimated the total capitalized value of single family properties on or near Sarasota Bay to be $3.6 billion dollars. This amount reflects the high value many area residents place on the opportunity to live on or near Sarasota Bay or the Gulf of Mexico.



Photo credit Freedom Boat Club.

The SBEP Policy Board approved funding for phase two of the economic valuation study on September 7. The policy board includes elected representatives from Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, and the Town of Longboat Key. Other members represent Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. EPA.

Phase two of the study will include a comprehensive survey of residents and visitors that use the Bay for recreation activities such as boating, fishing, scuba diving, birding, and more. The survey will provide detailed information about how people access and use the resources associated with

Sarasota Bay. The totals from this analysis will be added to the property value for an overall valuation of the Sarasota Bay ecosystem. Phase two is expected to be completed in 2013.

The lead researcher is Paul Hindsley, PhD, an Environmental Studies Professor at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg and the Coordinator of Eckerd's Coastal Management Program. The other research team members 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.

Bay Guardian Volunteers Plant Hundreds of Native Plants at Perico Preserve in Manatee County



A group of 38 Bay Guardian volunteers planted Florida native plants on Saturday, October 6 at **Perico Preserve in Manatee County**. It was the fifth Bay Guardian event in 2012. The effort was supported by Manatee County Natural Resources and Around the Bend Nature Tours. A group of students and teachers from Martha B. King Middle School also participated. The plants were donated by the Florida Wildlife Commission and the Southeast Littoral Society.

The photo on the left shows Rina Avellaneda taking a break at Perico Preserve. Rina works for Stantec and has supported projects throughout Manatee and Sarasota County.The photo was taken by Randy Moore.

The SBEP **Bay Guardians** continue to have a positive impact on efforts to restore and protect Sarasota Bay. More than 410 volunteers have participated in seven volunteer outings since October 2011. Most of the projects involved planting Florida native species, removing invasive plants and removing trash and debris. The SBEP Bay Guardians is the region's largest volunteer program focused on Sarasota Bay.

Completed projects include: North Lido Beach Park, Ken Thompson Park, Quick Point Nature Preserve, and North Water Tower Park located in Sarasota County, and Perico Preserve, Emerson Point Preserve, and FISH Preserve located in Manatee County.

SBEP Bay Wise Kayak Tours to Launch in December

SBEP will kick off its sixth consecutive season of free guided kayak tours of Sarasota Bay on December 1 with a trip to Neal Preserve in Manatee County. Brad Tanner, a professional kayak guide and School Program Coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory will lead the tours. Brad is also a member of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).



The **Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program** will consist of two trips each month from December through April. Future trips include Leffis and Jewfish Key in January, South Lido Mangrove Tunnels in February, Blind Pass in March, and Lyons and Blackburn Bay in April.

Upcoming trips requiring online registration:
Neal Preserve - December 1 - **here** and December 15 - **here**
Leffis and Jewfish Key - January 5 - **here** and January 19 - **here**

Fiscal Year Highlights Include Watershed Symposium, Blue Dolphin Awards, Seven Bay Guardian Outings, and Completion of Nine Bay Partner Grant Projects



Jack and Carmen Merriam.
Photo by Kimberly Dyer.

SBEP was a major sponsor of the Sarasota Bay Watershed Symposium hosted by New College of Florida February 15-17. SBEP hosted the inaugural Sarasota Bay Awards Program April 5. Blue Dolphin Awards, acknowledging local champions of Sarasota Bay, were presented by SBEP Policy Board members to Charles Edwards, Jack Merriam, Martha B. King Middle School, Raindrops Cisterns, and Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch and Shorebird Monitoring. **Click here** to see 136 photos from the awards program.

Bay Guardian outings involving more than 410 adult and student volunteers were held at Perico Preserve, Neal Preserve, FISH Preserve, and Emerson Point Preserve in Manatee County, as well as Ken Thompson Park, Quick Point Preserve, and North Water Tower Park in Sarasota County. **Click here** to learn more about the Bay Guardians.

Nine local organizations completed SBEP Bay Partner Grant projects designed to encourage Bay stewardship and public involvement in support of Sarasota Bay. SBEP has awarded more than $213,000 in grants to 109 local organizations since 2003. SBEP awarded eight grants for the current fiscal year. March 1, 2013 is the deadline for the next round of grants. **Click here** to learn more about the Bay Partner Grant Program.

On the restoration front, SBEP completed two new oyster habitats in Sarasota Bay at White Beach in Little Sarasota Bay and the eastern shore of Manatee County south of Tidy Island. SBEP is also providing technical expertise in an effort to help boost the local scallop population. SBEP was awarded a grant from the EPA to characterize water quality, habitat and fisheries within tidal creek wetlands in Southwest Florida. The goal is to develop water quality standards that will protect aquatic life within the area's tidal creeks. SBEP is leading the effort to develop a comprehensive restoration plan for regional tidal tributaries.

Nature's Academy Completes SBEP Bay Partners Grant Benefiting Manatee County Fifth Graders



Photo by Sara McCutheon with Nature's Academy.

Nature's Academy completed a SBEP **Bay Partners Grant** as part of their Island Adventures Project targeting fifth graders in Manatee County. The program involved a nature walk, seagrass ecology dip netting at Coquina Beach, learning about the importance of water quality, a coastal clean-up project, and presentations that enable the students to share what they learned with other students, teachers and family members.

The photo shows students from Prine Elementary School in Manatee County. Dana Pounds with Nature's Academy indicates that one of her goals is to provide outdoor environmental education to every fifth grader in Manatee and Pinellas County by 2020. Congratulations to Nature's Academy and everyone that supports the effort to inspire our area students about the importance of ecology and Bay-friendly living.

Other funding partners that support the Island Adventures Project include Southwest Florida Water Management District, Tampa Bay Estuary Program, United Park Services, and the county parks and school districts in both Manatee and Pinellas County.

SBEP News Briefs

Restore America's Estuaries Conference
SBEP staff attended the sixth annual conference October 20-25 at the Tampa Convention Center. The conference focused on coastal and estuarine habitat restoration.

SBEP Power Point
SBEP welcomes opportunities to do local presentations about its mission and programs. This would benefit local business groups, schools, private clubs, and social service organizations. SBEP also has an EnviroScape model for younger students that illustrate the impact of stormwater pollution. Please contact Sara Kane at **sara@sarasotabay.org**.

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 current goal of 500 likes.

Upcoming Public Meetings
The next SBEP Management Board is a joint meeting with Tampa Bay Estuary Program and Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program. It will be held from 9am to noon on Friday, November 9 at the Manatee County Administrative Center located at 1112 Manatee Avenue West in Bradenton. The next SBEP Policy Board meeting is set for Friday, November 16 from 9am to noon at the Manatee County Convention Center located at One Haben Boulevard in Palmetto. Both meetings will focus on planning for the Gulf Coast Restore Act.

CAC Meeting
The next meeting of the SBEP **Citizens Advisory Committee** (CAC) is set for 4:30pm on Monday, December 3 at Dan McClure Auditorium located at the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport.

Visit These Bay-Friendly Links Today

Click here to see 600 photos from 40 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 Holy Mole



Rick Hotton is the creator of the popular Holy Mole cartoon strip. In addition to being a noted cartoonist, Rick teaches martial arts in his private studio and mathematics at State College of Florida. Holy Mole is featured in the Bradenton Herald, Sarasota Herald Tribune Ticket, Transformation Magazine, St. Petersburg Times, and other magazines, newspapers and websites nationwide. Holy Mole is also popular in England, Australia and Canada. Rick will be one of the local artists showcased at the **Sarasota Bay Water Festival** on November 17 as part of the Creative Arts Tent.

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."

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