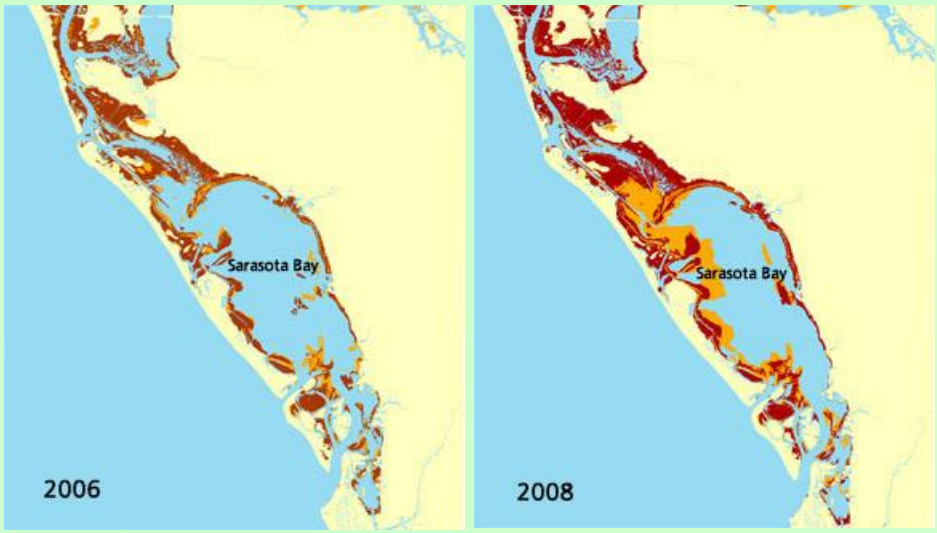
BAY REFLECTIONS

Restoring Our Bays

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter Spring 2009

Seagrass In Sarasota Bay Increases by 28% from 2006-2008!

Red represents continuous seagrass Orange patchy seagrass



Source of graphics: Southwest Florida Water Management District

The Southwest Florida Water Management District's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program's District Seagrass Mapping Project recently released the findings from its 2008 seagrass mapping study, and the results for Sarasota Bay were the most impressive in southwest Florida. Seagrass acreage in Sarasota Bay increased by almost 2,800 acres in the past two years, a 28 percent increase! This follows on the heels of a seven percent increase between 2004 and 2006. "The stunning jump in seagrass in Sarasota Bay represents the payoff of hundreds of millions of dollars of public investment over the last 20 years," comments Mark Alderson, executive director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary

Program. "Improved sewer and stormwater systems keep pollution out of the bay, and the mangroves on restored shorelines eat up nitrogen, making the water clearer."

These increases may be due, in part, to the recent drought, since less rain means less stormwater runoff flowing into the bay. Polluted runoff clouds the water and prevents sunlight from reaching seagrasses growing on the bottom of the bay. The lack of rain also results in clearer water and allows for better views of deeper growing seagrass. However, when compared to its neighbors to the north and south, which essentially showed no changes in overall seagrass cover, the increases in Sarasota Bay were significantly greater than what could be accounted for by weather and mapping alone.

Seagrass mostly grows in shallow waters- less than six feet deep- but can be found in depths greater than 12 feet in certain portions of the bay. Seagrass is considered an important barometer of the bay's health because it requires relatively clean water to flourish.

"As important as seagrasses are to fish and other living resources, the 2008 survey results are equally important in assisting the SBEP in setting targets, or desired levels, of seagrass acreage for the long term," says Jay Leverone, senior scientist SBEP. "Once the seagrass targets are established, then we can develop appropriate water quality targets that, through proper watershed management, will ensure the persistence of seagrass meadows throughout Sarasota Bay for years to come."

Upcoming Events

FREE Science Teacher Training Workshop
Saturday May 30, 2009, 8:30am - 4pm
Pritzker Marine Science Research Center at New College of Florida
5800 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota.
SBEP partners with New College of Florida to offer this workshop for k-12 science teachers. The general theme is currents and waves with a recent addition of navigation. Notebooks and materials that address the Sunshine Standards and National Standards will be provided. The number Space is limited to 20, so please contact Dr. Sandra Gilchrist at 941-487-4377/941-487-4453 or gilchrist@ncf.edu to reserve your spot.

Alerts

Restricted Season for Fertilizer Application Begins June 1st

Both Sarasota County and the Town of Longboat Key have ordinances regulating the use of fertilizers during the rainy season. No fertilizer containing nitrogen and/or phosphorous shall be applied to turf or landscape plants between June 1 and September 30th of each year. These ordinances were developed to reduce nutrient pollution flowing into our waterways thereby improving water quality. For additional information visit:

www.scgov.net/environmentalservices/water/SurfaceWater/Fertilizer.asp
OR www.longboatkey.org/Departments/PWK/fertilizerLBK.pdf

Success Stories

The National Estuary Program in Action - SBEP success highlights

A broad range of issues are being addressed by the National Estuary Programs (NEPs) nationwide. Their many success stories demonstrate the significant work being done and showcase how the NEPs implement the Clean Water Act in Ways that are Effective, Efficient, Collaborative, and Adaptive. Sarasota Bay Estuary Program was highlighted in two areas: Creating Artificial Reefs & Reducing Nutrient Enrichment. To find out more about these SBEP features, please visit http://www.sarasotabay.org/aboutsbep-national.html

Pelican Cove Condominium Association Wins Statewide Award



Pelican Cove Condominium Association has won a 2009 Florida Communities of Excellence Award under the Environmental Initiatives category for its Watershed and Landscape Management Program. This Program was put into place to reduce contamination of Clower Creek from rainwater runoff along the community's 3,600-foot shoreline on the waterway that drains into Little Sarasota Bay. The 2009 Florida Communities of Excellence Awards were created to identify and promote innovative solutions and best practices in maintaining and improving the quality of life for residents of community associations throughout the State. Nine condominium and homeowners associations -- from Destin to Palm Beach -- were recognized for achievement in

addressing the needs and concerns of residents and surrounding communities in five independently judged categories: Environmental Initiatives, Disaster Preparedness, Communications, Safety & Security and Civic Involvement. This project was funded in part by SWFWMD and SBEP.

National Wildlife Federation Highlights Landscaping for Climate Change

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) recently highlighted *Landscaping for Climate Change (LCC)* as an example of a local solution to a global problem. *LCC* is a collaborative effort of Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) and Sarasota County's Sustainable Sarasota and Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST). The program helps homeowners "connect the dots" to see the big picture of the relationship between climate change, pollution and landscaping.

LCC targets homeowners and neighborhood committees, providing scientific expertise, technical guidance, and financial assistance for climate-sensitive practices. LCC principles are being adopted throughout the community. Many of the program's steps, such as shoreline naturalization and the use of native species, help increase biodiversity and habitat, while others emphasize reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program offers funding for LLC projects through its Bay Partners Grants at http://www.sarasotabay.org/nar-grants.html

Other

SBEP Creates Business Partnership with WUSF 89.7

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program has created a co-sponsorship with WUSF-FM 89.7 Public Broadcasting which consists of a rotating schedule of promotional spots on *Market Place, Morning Edition, All Things Considered, Weekend Edition,* and *Weekend All Things Considered*. This co-sponsorship adds up to over 100 spots to run on WUSF 89.7 from April through June to promote SBEP. The two messages are: Support for WUSF comes from our members and the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program working with local governments and citizens to restore the Sarasota Bay ecosystem AND Support for WUSF comes from our members and the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program which is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset - Sarasota Bay. More information is available at www.sarasotabay.org

SBEP Launches Pooches for the Planet Campaign: Clean Waters! Clean Yards! Clean Shoes!



Getting the Scoop on Poop

Pooches for the Planet

Q **What's worse than picking up dog poop?**
Stepping in it.

Q **What's even worse than that?**
Swimming in, fishing in or drinking water that has dog poop in it.

Rainwater can wash those little presents your pooch leaves on the ground into streams and rivers leading to Tampa Bay, or directly to the bay itself. Just like human waste, **dog poop poses a threat to both public health and water quality.** It contributes harmful bacteria that can make people ill, as well as **excessive nutrients that cause algae blooms and rob the water of oxygen** needed to support fish and other aquatic life.

Join the "Pooches for the Planet" pack and pick up after your dog. It's easy, it's neighborly, and it's the healthy thing to do ... for you and for Tampa and Sarasota Bays.

Scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey estimate that pet waste contributes between 20 to 30 percent of the water pollution in America - bow WOW!



Scoop that Poop!

Pooches for the Planet

You can help keep local waterways, parks and your own neighborhood clean by taking the following actions:

Pick up after your pet. Flushing pet waste down the toilet is best, because then it is treated at a sewage treatment plant.

Never put waste into storm drains. They flow into streams or rivers leading to Tampa Bay, or into the bay directly.

Bag your dog's waste and put it in a trash can if flushing down the toilet is not feasible. Newspaper bags or plastic grocery bags are great for dog poop disposal. Bag dispensers that clip to a leash also are widely available at pet supply shops.

Spread the word about the harmful impacts of dog poop on our waters to your friends and neighbors, and encourage them to join the "Pooches for the Planet" pack!

CLEAN YARDS CLEAN WATERS and clean shoes!

TAMPA BAY Estuary Program
www.tbep.org

SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM
www.sarasotabay.org

Pet waste is a significant source of nutrients and fecal coliform bacteria entering Sarasota Bay. Approximately 26 tons of pet waste is deposited on the ground in Sarasota and Manatee Counties every day! Dog poop does not stay on the grass but gets washed down the stormdrains and delivered untreated to the closest waterway during rain events. To address pet waste pollution the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program has teamed up with its sister program, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program to bring the successful Pooches for the Planet pet waste pollution education program to the Sarasota Bay watershed. There are many doggie bag stations around Sarasota and Manatee County Stay tuned for a Pooches for the Planet addition to the SBEP

website where you can find valuable info on how you and your pooch can help keep Sarasota Bay clean and healthy!

Protect public health and the Bay, pick up after your pet!

Florida Fisheries-Independent Monitoring (FIM) Program Comes To Sarasota Bay

The Fisheries-Independent Monitoring (FIM) program is a statewide, long-term program designed to monitor the relative abundance of Florida's fisheries resources. This program, developed, conducted and managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), has three primary goals: 1) address the critical need for effective assessment techniques for an array of species and sizes of fishes and selected invertebrates, 2) providing timely information for use in management plans, and 3) monitoring trends in the relative abundance of fishes and selected invertebrates in a variety of estuarine and marine systems throughout Florida.

The FIM program has been in existence since the late 1980s. Over the years, program personnel have developed standardized sampling techniques to collect fish and selected invertebrates in many of the state's estuaries, tidal rivers and coastal areas. Because the FIM database is long-term, is based on a standardized sampling with a variety of gears and techniques, and covers a broad geographic area, researchers at FWRI and elsewhere find it useful for a variety of scientific and management purposes. Some of these purposes include preparation of species inventories, documentation of a particular species' habitat and dietary requirements, fish and estuarine health, development of ecosystem models, and assessment of the implications of water-resource management actions. Thus, the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is very excited to welcome the FIM program into Sarasota Bay, since they are well positioned to monitor fish and selected invertebrate populations in our waters.

The FIM program will start this summer. SBEP looks forward to learning more about our resident fish communities and sharing this information with you.

SBEP in the News

February 2009 Pelican Cove News highlights

February 5 Longboat Observer Neighborhood section coverage of Burch presentation to Longboat Key Garden Club that includes photo of Burch & Virginia Sanders

February 19 Longboat Observer Key Life section coverage Sister Keys Clean-up with participation of Bay Buddies with photos (R. Hartill)

February 27 Longboat Key News coverage of Fairway Bay One Condo receiving Bay

Partners Grant from SBEP to remove exotics and replace w/ native plants

March 4 Coverage in HT Business Buzz announcing Leverone joining SBEP

March 30 Coverage in HT Business People announcing Leverone joining SBEP

April Issue Coverage in Biz941 announcing Leverone joining SBEP

April Issue article in POSITIVE CHANGE magazine about Landscaping for Climate Change

April 7 guest column (Burch/Powers) in HT about Landscaping for Climate Change http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090407/COLUMNIST/904071016/2080/OPINION

April 16 HT TICKET "Five Options for Celebrating Earth Day" mentions SBEP and Burch nature walk "Celebrating the Earth: Preserves Protecting the Watershed" http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090416/ARTICLE/904161033/2406/FEATURES?Title=Five-options-for-celebrating-Earth-Day#

April 24 HT front page Local Eric Ernst highlights Burch nature walk http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090424/COLUMNIST/904241028/2127?Title=Saving-the-land-along-with-ourselves

May 17 HT front page article "A Meadow Beneath the Waves" by Doug Sword http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090517/ARTICLE/905171042/-1/archive?Title=Seagrass-in-Sarasota-Bay-makes-big-comeback

Sarasota Bay Buddies Events

Quick Point Nature Preserve Event





On Saturday, May 2 the Sarasota Bay Buddies teamed up with Sarasota Bay Watch, the Longboat Key Club Marina, Save Our Seabirds, Florida Audubon, and the Town of Longboat Key to clean up Quick Point Nature Preserve. The 24 Bay Buddies waded and snorkeled while concentrating on removing debris and fishing line from the water around the mangrove fringe. After a very successful clean-up event the volunteers returned to the Key Club Marina for lunch and a presentation by Audubon, Save Our Seabirds, and Captain Jonnie Walker.

A Fond Farwell to Our Public Outreach Coordinator Julia Burch



After four very productive years as Public Outreach Coordinator for SBEP, Julia Burch is relocating to Austin, Texas to pursue a Master's degree in Environmental Policy with a concentration in water issues and watershed management at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas.

Julia's significant contributions as public outreach coordinator to the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program during her tenure are as numerous as they are varied. She can be credited with energizing SBEP's outreach programs and community engagement. Under her guidance several new and effective outreach programs were developed including the **Bay Buddies** volunteer program, **Pooches for the Planet** pet waste pollution education, **Landscaping for Climate Change** and **Living on the Water's Edge** while continuing already established strong outreach programs such as **PIER** and **Bay Partners Grants**.

Burch spearheaded innovative marketing projects such as the documentary ***Sarasota Bay: Celebrating Our Water Heritage***, new interactive website www.sarasotabay.org, a business sponsorship with WUSF 89.7FM and an update of the **Gulf Coast Heritage Trail** map. Her effective collaborations with neighborhoods resulted in several projects to protect the Bay including the Whitaker Bayou Greenway Park and the IBSSA Stormwater Retrofit Pilot Project.

Julia says she will particularly miss working with SBEP's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), a group of dedicated citizens from Sarasota and Manatee Counties who have been tireless in their efforts to improve the community's understanding of and appreciation for Sarasota Bay. Burch credits her work with the CAC, SBEP staff, and local community leaders for developing her interest in environmental public policy. "My background is in science, but at SBEP I got to put science into action through public policy that protects our environment, economy and future generations," Burch explains. "Sarasota Bay has seen a remarkable comeback thanks to the foresight of community leaders who put protective measures in place twenty years ago which culminated in the forming of SBEP. In these times of tough choices, I hope this community continues to put the restoration of Sarasota Bay at the top of the priority list."

Julia will be greatly missed by her many co-workers and friends. We wish her all the best as she undertakes this exciting new adventure. Her last day with SBEP will be July 31.

Citizen Advisory Council Member Profile



Yvette Little

Yvette is a Florida native who grew up in Pinellas County and earned her BS in Business Administration from the University of South Florida. She has been involved with environmental stewardship for as long as she can remember and her business efforts have concentrated on environmental education for the past eight years in a variety of capacities. She is a Community Development Specialist, Volunteer Coordinator and Liaison for private, non-profit & public organizations. She was responsible for securing grants to begin new Manatee County programs for Monofilament Recycling. As Program Director for Keep America Beautiful's local affiliate, she coordinated annual events such as the Great American Cleanup & the Ocean Conservancy's Florida Coastal Cleanup and many more programs that were supported by over 4,000 volunteers annually.

Little joined the CAC in 2008 to encourage environmental education and public outreach in our community to protect our waterways, habitats and natural resources. "My passion involves community outreach and environmental education. I feel that the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's mission and programs fit perfectly with my own goals," says Little.

Yvette is co-owner of Simply Green Solutions, LLC a company that offers simple, effective options to green your business, community or home environment thus minimizing your imprint on the earth. They work with clients to create simple solutions to reduce resource usage, to build the local economy and therefore save money while helping the environment. Simply Green Solutions, LLC seeks to find win-win solutions between business, community and the environment.

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