



Bay-Friendly Guideline Series

Topic: Creating a Living Shoreline

Living Shorelines refer to waterfronts that feature native plants and natural slopes across a property to the edge of the water. For the environment, they are a highly desired alternative to hardened seawalls constructed of concrete, boulders, corrugated metal, and other materials. Living shorelines reduce the flow of stormwater pollution entering local waterways from adjacent properties. The pollution collected by rainwater includes excess fertilizer, pesticides, pet waste bacteria, chemical products, and trash including cigarette butts. Reducing stormwater pollution enhances water quality for everyone's benefit. Living shorelines also provides habitat for fish and birds.

Local Project Promotes Action

In June 2011, SBEP and its partners converted an eroding waterfront into a living shoreline along Sarasota Bay at Herb Dolan Park in the City of Bradenton Beach. The project, the first of its kind in our area, involved removing concrete rubble and creating proper slopes between the land and water. The shoreline was fortified with a natural fiber material and native vegetation. When the plants are fully established, they will attract and support wildlife.



Completed project at Herb Dolan Park.

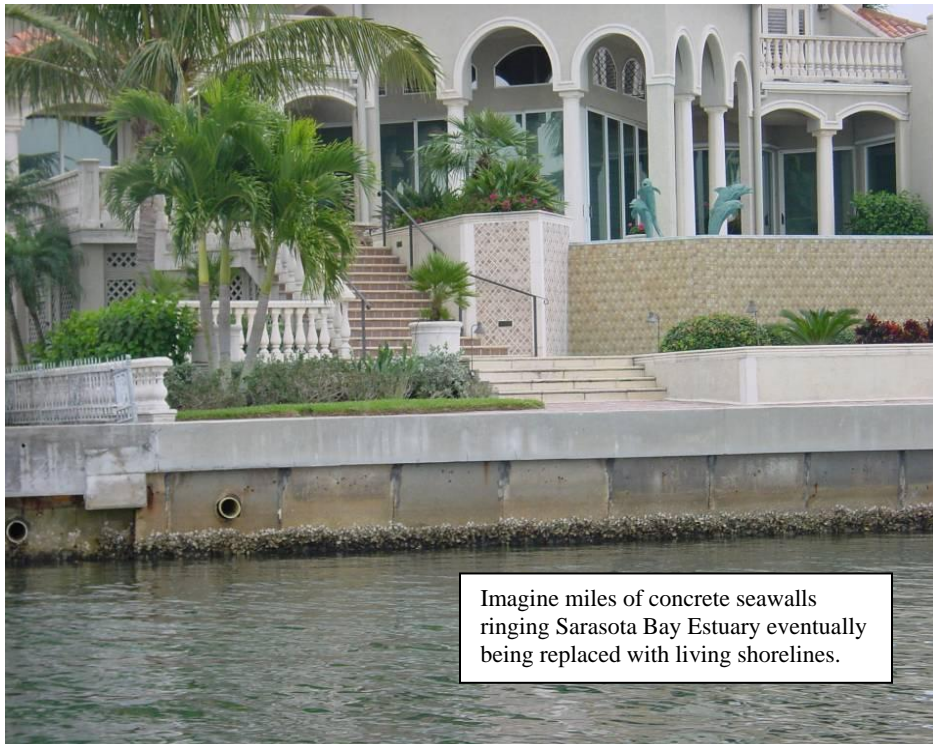


Original site with concrete rubble.

Helpful Guidelines

1. Most existing concrete seawalls will eventually need to be replaced. A living shoreline is an eco-friendly alternative that is better for the Bay and other waterways. Creating a living shoreline requires planning and compliance with existing county and state regulations.
2. The first step is the decision to create a living shoreline instead of replacing an old seawall with a new one.
3. The next step is mapping out the scope of the project including the dimensions of the buffer area. The footprint of a living shoreline is often larger than the seawall being replaced and it provides the homeowner the added benefit of creating a more dynamic shoreline area with native plants and water access features.

4. The biggest step in the process is removing the existing seawall. Local contractors have the experience and equipment to remove these structures.
5. The best plants to consider for a living shoreline project are native to Florida. They include grasses (bulrush, arrowhead, blackrush, and spartina) and a variety of herbaceous shrubs. Do your homework to make sure the selected plants are Bay-friendly. It is particularly important not to plant invasive exotic species. Use local plant nurseries that are aware of the impact of plants on the aquatic life that depend on healthy estuary waters.
6. Keep in mind that various plants thrive better at different tidal elevations. A good source of information about the right plants for the right tidal zone is the local county extension service.
7. Spring and early summer are generally best for setting marsh plants. Space the plants 12 to 18 inches apart. High wave energy requires higher planting densities and increased plant size. Dig the holes deep enough so the top of the root mass is 3-8 inches below the top of the soil.
8. It's important to be aware of the appropriate county and state regulations overseeing shoreline stabilization projects. Here are some helpful links.
9. Sarasota County – Review information at <http://www.scgov.net/>.
10. Manatee County – Review information at <http://www.mymanatee.org/home.html> and <http://www.mymanatee.org/home/government/departments/building-and-development-services/building.html>.
11. Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) – Review information at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/>. The attached PDF provides information about shoreline stabilization.



Questions Welcome

The SBEP wants to know about your interest to create a living shoreline; we also welcome your questions. Please email Randy Moore at randy@triple3marketing.com. Thank you to all of the SBEP partners and other organizations that help restore and protect Sarasota Bay. Learn more at www.sarasotabay.org. SBEP partners include Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.