



SARASOTA BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM
Restoring Our Bays

Media Contact: Sara Kane
Public Affairs Manager
Sarasota Bay Estuary Program
941-955-8085 / sara@sarasotabay.org
www.sarasotabay.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 26, 2011

Photo Option – Visitors to the local celebration of National Estuaries Day practiced kayaking techniques with a professional guide.

Local National Estuaries Day Celebration Attracts Hundreds of Adults and Children for Learning Fun

SARASOTA, FL – The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) and Around the Bend Nature Tours hosted a National Estuaries Day celebration Saturday, September 24 at Ken Thompson Park near Mote Marine Laboratory. The theme of this year's free community event was Enjoy Sarasota Bay. Highlights included fun learning activities and exhibits as well as a performance by the Sarasota Ski-A-Rees Water Ski Show Team.

The event started with 83 volunteers with the SBEP Bay Guardians helping to clean up the park and surrounding area as part of Coastal Cleanup Day. Adult and youth volunteers from King Middle School, the Sarasota Young Professionals Group, Southeast High School, and the Sarasota Military Academy participated.

One of the highlights for many visitors was the opportunity to learn more about kayaking with the SBEP Bay Wise Kayak Tour Guide Brad Tanner. Brad took out several groups into the Bay to practice proper techniques. Visitors also had an opportunity to encounter aquatic life with dip nets and conduct water quality testing with support by guides with Around the Bend Nature Tours. Bryan Moore, a professional disc golf player with Team Discraft, provided putting tips to dozens of kids.

Exhibitors included Mote Marine Laboratory, Island Style Water Sports, MarineMax, Sarasota Audubon, Florida Underwater Sports, Manatee County Natural Resources Department, Friends of Tampa Bay Wildlife, Florida Native Plant Society, Save our Seabirds, Sarasota County Extension, Mote Marine High School Intern Program, and Stow-it Fishing Line Bins.

The designation of a national estuaries day underscores the importance of estuaries as a vital habitat for juvenile fish and shellfish. An estuary is a water body where freshwater mixes with salt water from the sea. The estuaries in the U.S. provide vital habitats for a wide variety of fish and shellfish species. Estuaries are regarded as one of the nation's most valuable natural resources, creating more food per acre than the richest farmland. Sarasota Bay is one of 28 nationally protected estuaries in the U.S.

-30-

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program 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 protected estuaries in the U.S. The SBEP was founded in 1989 and its partners include Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.