



LONGBOAT KEY

WEDNESDAY, APR. 13, 2022 8 hours ago



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. variety of ways, Longboat keeps an eye on the environment

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Eco-friendly events and policies are gaining traction with residents and town leaders as Longboat moves greener.

by: **Eric Garwood** | Managing Editor

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quartet of islands adjacent to Longboat Key, issues revolving around the environment are drawing the attention of residents and town leaders both on the sparkling waters of Sarasota Bay and inside Town Hall.





heading maybe a mile into Sarasota Bay for a [cleanup project on Sister Keys](#), work that would have likely been seen as a honey-do chore if limited to a backyard.

For about three hours, teens, kids, retirees and two members of the Town Commission criss-crossed shorelines, sandy pathways, dense mangroves and shin-deep shallows gathering up the refuse left behind by others. A floodlight bulb. An unopened can of Coors Light. A tattered American flag.

Sure, there was free lunch at the end, but clearly food was not the only motivation.

Gene Printz-Kopelson and his wife, Mindy, said this was their first time venturing out to Sister Keys, which the town purchased for their preservation

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"We're happy to do it," he said standing along one of pathways.

Read more: [Town survey drives point home about traffic](#)

Aside from their volunteerism, Longboat Key residents are on record over their love of things natural. In the town's recently completed 2022 Citizen Survey, 95.6% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the town's beaches. When asked about Joan

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same strong response (49.3%), but it seemed to be hampered by low recognition. More than 59% said they were not familiar with the preserve, twice as many as were unfamiliar with Durante.





Turtle season coming soon

Tim Thurman, the president of Longboat Key Turtle Watch, recently thanked town commissioners for not only committing to the recently completed beach renourishment program but also passing last year a new set of beach requirements for turtle-nesting season. The new, more stringent rules take effect May 1, when the season officially begins.

"It's a great benefit for sea turtles and to keep the public engaged with the proper things to do on the beach so they can enjoy the beautiful beaches but the turtles can nest there as well," he said.

In the 2021 season, 1,032 turtle nests were recorded on Longboat Key, down from 1,136 in 2020 and 1,342 in 2019 but up from the 2018 season, when 993

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Read more: [Shorebirds start arriving on Longboat Key](#)

Thurman said the partnership of his organization, the town and the Longboat Key Garden Club continues to make possible the "Flip a Switch, Make a Move" campaign promoted in posters, door hangers and more. The campaign encourages beachfront residents to remember the role light pollution plays in turtle disorientations and the potential obstacles turtles face when beach furniture or other

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"We just want to ask the town to remain committed to assuring the past high levels of (turtle) disorientations ... do in fact decrease as the new ordinances are put into effect and subsequently enforced," he said.





Seagrass

Rusty Chinnis, the chair of Suncoast Water Keepers, recently raised the issue of seagrass loss with the Town Commission, seeking help to spread the word of a potentially dire situation in Sarasota Bay if action is not taken.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District in 2021 estimated about an 18% loss of seagrass in the estuary system, totaling about 2,300 acres, from the north end through Roberts Bay to the south. Seagrass is considered a critical habitat for sea life and crucial for a variety of young fish to grow to adulthood.

“Guys who I have talked to who sometimes spend over 200 days a year on the water — that’s their job, that’s their livelihood — are reporting to me as high as



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Chinnis said.

Chinnis said he was asking the town and its elected commission to be a proactive community in terms of promoting the health of Sarasota Bay.

“One that addresses this, one that gets the word out to our citizens to be a model for these other communities. I don’t think we really appreciate the potential downside to not only our quality of life but also to the economy.”

Outreach and education is a good first step, Chinnis said in response to a

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COMMISSION MEETING.

“We need guidance from any kind of source we can get,” Mayor Ken Schneier said. “We want, to help and we want to do it in the right way.”





to its residents and commercial operators to alert them of the seasonal restrictions. Sarasota County recently broke ground on a new, more advanced sewage treatment plant that is designed to reduce harmful discharges into the bay.

Still to come

Here are several townwide initiatives in the works:

- Groin tightening at New Pass to hold back more sand on beaches to the north.
- [Assessing flooding and mitigation plans](#) in Sleepy Lagoon and Buttonwood



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- Working with Sarasota Bay Estuary program on shoreline restoration.
- Planning and permitting for a [second sewer line](#) from the town to the mainland.
- Planning to purchase in the 2023 fiscal year two to four electric vehicles and charging stations as part of the town's normal vehicle replacement rotation.
- Planning for an energy audit in fiscal year 2023.
- Adding questions about the green initiatives to the town's annual citizen survey in 2023.

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ELECTRIC VEHICLES WORKSHOP THIS WEEK

Sarasota County and the University of Florida Extension Office are sponsoring a workshop this week at Town Hall for people who want to learn more about electric vehicles and the infrastructure that supports them. The free event, from 10-11 a.m. Thursday, April 14, will be led by Sara Kane, the county's sustainability program supervisor. Kane's presentation will cover the basics of electric vehicles, gas-electric hybrids and plug-in gas-electric hybrids. She will also cover how to calculate





- Yes, I own a full-electric vehicle: 5.5%
- No, I own a hybrid-electric vehicle: 6%
- No: 88.5%

If charging stations were available, would you plan on purchasing or leasing an electric vehicle in the next five years?

- Yes: 32.6%
- No: 36.5%
- Unsure: 30.1%

Are there currently charging stations or outlets for electric vehicles available in your home or residential community/complex?

- Yes: 16.7%
- No: 74.6%
- Unsure: 8.7%

Is access to convenient charging stations or outlets a concern that might prevent you from purchasing an electric vehicle?

- Yes: 51.1%
- No: 48.9%

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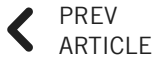


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construction is moving on up

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to the north.



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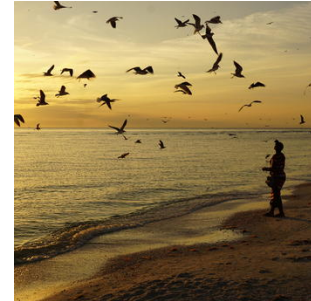




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