



SARASOTA BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM
Restoring Our Bays

BAY REFLECTIONS

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter March 2014



Welcome Readers

Highlights: Bay Guardians complete projects at Arlington Park, Jiggs Landing and Bowlees Creek; Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay; Save Our Seabirds completes project; Upcoming Bay Wise Kayak Tours; Technical Project Update; Russell and Fox receive Blue Dolphin Awards; and Wright and Kemp join the CAC. Thank you for supporting the SBEP programs benefiting Sarasota Bay.

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SBEP Bay Guardians Complete Three Projects at Arlington Park, Jiggs Landing & Bowlees Creek Island



Bay Guardian volunteers following the completion of a project at Arlington Park.

A group of 53 **Bay Guardian volunteers** removed more than 1,200 pounds of air potato vines and seeds at Arlington Park on January 25. Removing the invasive plant supports the vitality of native vegetation. Another 61 Bay Guardian volunteers planted nearly 6,000 Florida-native plants near Jiggs Landing in Manatee County on February 8.

The Bay Guardians worked with Audubon and other groups on Saturday, March 1 to help clean up Bowlees Creek Island. Bay Guardians removed 427 pounds of debris and exotic vegetation last year from the bird sanctuary. A joint planting project with the Tampa Bay Estuary Program is set for April 12 at Perico Preserve in Manatee County. All of the volunteer outings take place in the morning followed by a picnic lunch provided by SBEP.

The Bay Guardians is the region's largest and most active volunteer program focused on Sarasota Bay. The award-winning program is managed by SBEP with support from Around the Bend Nature Tours. New volunteers receive a blue tee shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo. Join the Bay Guardians for a single project or as an ongoing commitment. Local school, scout and church groups interested in volunteering should contact SBEP at sara@sarasotabay.org.

Findings from the Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay Set to be Released This Summer



The findings from the SBEP-funded Economic Valuation Study of Sarasota Bay will be released early this summer. Phase one of the study was completed in 2012. The research team estimated the total capitalized value of single family properties on or near Sarasota Bay to be \$3.6 billion dollars. Phase two includes a survey of residents and visitors that use the bay for recreation activities such as boating, fishing, scuba diving, birding, and more. The totals from the survey will be added to the property value for an overall valuation of Sarasota Bay.

Dr. Paul Hindsley of Eckerd College's Coastal Management Program is the lead researcher. He has expertise in coastal policy analysis, natural hazards research and econometrics. Other team members include Dr. Kelly Debure with Eckerd College and Dr. O. Aston Morgan with Appalachian State University. Debure is a professor of computer science and Morgan is a professor of economics.

Save Our Seabirds Completes Bay Partners Grant

Project to Add Native Plants and Interpretive Signs

Save Our Seabirds (SOS) completed a project with support from a SBEP **Bay Partners Grant**. The effort included removing exotic vegetation and replacing the plants with Florida native species, as well as installing interpretive signs. The signs educate visitors about the importance of native plants and they also explain which plants attract specific types of birds.

Project partners included the Florida Native Plant Nursery, Rotary District 6960 and the Longboat Key Garden Club. Local media profiled the project to support environmental education while expanding awareness about the SOS mission.



Upcoming Bay Wise Kayak Excursions Include Blind Pass March 15 and Lyons & Blackburn Bay in April



The SBEP **Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program** is a fun learning opportunity to discover the plants, animals, habitats, and restoration projects that distinguish Sarasota Bay. Brad Tanner, a professional guide and the School Programs Coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory, is the kayak tour leader. Brad is also a volunteer with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee.

Prior trips included Leffis and Jewfish Key in January, Lido Mangrove Tunnels in February, and Blind Pass on March 1. Additional information and online

registration is available at SarasotaBay.org. Participants are required to bring their own kayak and gear. Local outfitters rent kayaks and offer classes. The program is for experienced kayakers.

The late Jack Taylor, a respected marine biologist and former volunteer with the Citizens Advisory Committee, launched the kayak tour program in 2007 as part of a SBEP Bay Partners Grant. Jack earned a PhD in Marine Biology from the University of Florida and was an expert on bay wildlife.

Blind Pass - **March 15**

Lyons and Blackburn Bay - **April 12** or **April 19**

Technical Project Update: Tidal Tributaries, Habitat Restoration, Artificial Reefs, Shellfish and Fisheries

SBEP continues to support a regional study of tidal tributaries through an EPA Grant on behalf of SBEP, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program. Project contractors and partners include Janicki Environmental, Mote Marine Laboratory, FWRI, five county governments, University of South Florida, and Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Current restoration projects for 2014

include Oscar Sherer / South Creek Phase II, Quick Point and Cattfish Creek. SBEP also received funding support from SWFWMD for habitat restoration at FISH Preserve located at the Cortez Fishing Village in Manatee County. SBEP also plans to strengthen the artificial reefs located in Manatee County this summer. The Sarasota Sportsman's Association has supported the effort over the years with donations exceeding \$20,000.



Curry Creek aerial photo by Evan Brown.

SBEP reports new oysters have settled on previously placed shell which indicates the reefs are maturing. SBEP continues to help local efforts to restore bay scallop populations in collaboration with Mote Marine Laboratory, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Foundation and Sarasota Bay Watch. SBEP supported a recent Mote initiative to conduct a stock enhancement program to help sustain local scallop populations. The effort is designed to enhance future scallop release projects.

Russell & Fox Receive SBEP Blue Dolphin Awards; Award Acknowledges Champions of Sarasota Bay



Sean Russell with SBEP's Mark Alderson and Sara Kane.

Sean Russell with the **Stow It Don't Throw It Project** and Lee Fox, a caregiver for injured wild birds, were honored recently with SBEP Blue Dolphin Awards. The awards were presented at a social hosted by the **Citizens Advisory Committee**. Russell and Fox join Don and Denise Elliott with the Sunbow Bay Condominium Association as 2013 recipients.

Russell has raised awareness about preventing marine debris and supporting ocean conservation. Fox managed the bird hospital for **Save Our Seabirds** for many years; she continues rescuing birds from her clinic in Wimauma. The Elliott's were honored for their efforts to create a bay-friendly garden. SBEP provided Bay Partner Grants to support the multi-year

project at the their condo development located on Anna Maria Island.

The Blue Dolphin Awards Program was launched in 2012 to acknowledge champions of Sarasota Bay. The inaugural winners included Martha B. King Middle School in Bradenton, Jack Merriam, the former environmental manager for Sarasota County, Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch and Shorebird Monitoring, Raindrop Cisterns, a business providing rainwater harvesting, and Charles Edwards, a long-term volunteer with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee.

Please Use Slow-Release Fertilizers in the Spring Planting Season for Your Lawn and Flower Beds

SBEP encourages residents to use fertilizers with slow-release nitrogen if they fertilize their lawn or flower beds during the spring. Slow-release products (also called controlled release or timed release) feed lawns and plants gradually and for a longer period of time. They are more easily absorbed by the plants and less likely to become stormwater runoff. SBEP also reminds residents that local ordinances prohibit fertilizing in the summer months from June through September. Too much fertilizer can undermine water quality and harm aquatic life. [Learn more.](#)

Annual Native Plant Festival and Sale Set for April 5

The annual Spring Native Plant Festival and Sale is set for April 5 at [Sweetbay Nursery](#) located at 10824 Erie Road in Parish. The event is sponsored by the [Florida Native Plant Society](#) and SBEP. The sale is from 9 am to 3 pm and features a large selection of native trees, shrubs, grasses and blooming wildflowers. Volunteers will be available to answer questions and make recommendations on plant selection.



Sarasota Bay Water Festival Set for November 1; Fun Event Celebrates Importance of Sarasota Bay



The third annual [Water Festival](#) is set for Saturday, November 1 at Ken Thompson Park. SPEP is the Founding Sponsor and [HDR, Inc.](#) is this year's Community Sponsor. Organizers are seeking a Host Sponsor for 2014. Please contact Randy Moore at randy@triple3marketing.com.

Area businesses and nonprofit groups can also support the event as sponsors at one of three levels: Bay Champion, Bay Friend or Bay Supporter. The 2014 sponsor entitlement package will be posted on the Water Festival website later this month. Last year's event attracted 43 sponsors and showcased more than 70 diverse exhibitors. [Find us on Facebook](#).

SBEP News Briefs

Mote Special Lecture Series

The final speakers for the Mote lecture series are Dr. Kevan Main and Genevieve Brighthouse. Main will speak on Sustaining Future Seafood and Fishing Resources through Aquaculture 7:30 pm on Monday, March 3. Brighthouse is Superintendent of the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa; her talk 7:30 pm on Monday, March 10 will present the group's vision. The cost is \$12 per lecture for Mote members and \$15 for non-members. Advanced tickets required; please call 941-388-4441, ext. 691.

Great American Cleanup

[Keep Sarasota County Beautiful](#) is seeking volunteers for this year's event set for March 22. The annual effort has been ongoing for more than 20 years at various locations around the U.S. Visit the KSCB website to learn more and to register. [Keep Manatee Beautiful](#) is planning a cleanup on Upper Manatee River on April 5 and a county wide cleanup April 12.

The Gulf Coast Heritage Art Exhibit

The exhibit is on display at the Federal Building located at 111 South Orange Avenue in Sarasota. The exhibit is being hosted by SBEP and Sarasota Bay Watch. It marks the intersection of art and local history, with an emphasis on paintings that tell stories of early life along the Gulf Coast.

Wright and Kemp Join CAC

Robert Wright, who works for Sarasota County, and local student Daniel Kemp are the newest volunteers with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee. Members include parents, grandparents, educators, boaters, environmental advocates, business owners, educators, scientists, realtors, and engineers. The group provides SBEP citizen input and helps promote SBEP programs and projects.

King Tide Photo Exhibit

The Chasing the Waves exhibit showing photos of king high tides in Florida and other locations will be on

display at Oldsmar Public Library in St. Petersburg in April. SBEP and Tampa Bay Estuary Program are jointly sponsoring the traveling exhibit.

2015 Wildlife Calendar

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program is seeking submissions for its 2015 [Wildlife Calendar](#). The deadline is July 15 and there is no entry fee.

Map Shows Extreme Sea Level Rise

An artist from Slovakia created a unique [World Map](#) showing the impact of long-term sea level rise conditions. Florida, Denmark and the Netherlands are completely submerged in the map and the east coast of the U.S. is pushed back more than 100 miles. Sea levels have risen about 8 inches since 1990 and many scientists predict they could rise another two to seven feet by 2100.

Media Coverage Links

The SBEP website features the largest and most up to date archive of articles and editorials in the region focused on Sarasota Bay, water-related issues and other issues that impact on Florida's environment. More than 1,700 [media links](#) have been added to the website the past three years.

Join SBEP on 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 goal of 750 likes!

Thank You Volunteers

SBEP acknowledges several individuals for serving in leadership positions on the CAC and TAC. They include Chris Warn, Tommy Vaughn-Birch and John Stevely.

SBEP Public Meetings

The next Management Board Meeting is set for 9 am on Friday, May 2 and the next Policy Board Meeting is set for 1 pm the same day. Please check the calendar on the SBEP website for the venue. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will meet 9 am on April 4 at the Sarasota Airport's McClure Auditorium. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will meet 4:30 pm on April 7 at the same venue. [SBEP Online Calendar](#).

Final Reflection with Holy Mole!



Holy Mole is a original creation by Sarasota resident Rick Hotton. Many of the strips acknowledge the importance of conservation. Visit the [Holy Mole website](#) and [Facebook page](#) to see more strips and to learn about Rick's new book.

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."