



# BAY REFLECTIONS

Restoring Our Bays

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter

Winter 2010

## The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is Assisting EPA and DEP in Setting Numeric Nutrient Criteria for Sarasota Bay

By Jay Leverone, Ph.D., SBEP Staff Scientist



algal blooms

Water quality may not be the most appealing topic when talking about Sarasota Bay, but right now it is the most controversial with the proposal of new Federal regulations that, if enacted, will certainly affect every citizen in the state.

First, though, a little history is in order. For years, Florida has relied on a narrative standard for protecting water quality. This standard says that nutrients shall not

"cause an imbalance in natural populations of flora or fauna." (The most common disturbances are noxious algal blooms, which can occur in both fresh and salt waters). However, other than obvious algal blooms, determining when an imbalance has occurred has been very difficult to demonstrate and defend.

So now, in response to a legal settlement with Florida environmental groups, the EPA must establish numeric criteria to replace the narrative standards, and to do so by October 2010 for fresh water and by October 2011 for estuaries. Criteria are being proposed for nitrogen and phosphorus- primary fertilizer ingredients- with limits being placed on either their concentration in the water or the amount that is delivered to the estuary.

Challenges to this decision have already begun, and it could be a long time before this issue is settled in the courts. However, while these legal challenges begin, the EPA and FDEP are asking local experts from each estuary to help recommend suitable criteria for their local systems. This is where the SBEP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been focusing its time and energy over the past six months and will continue to do so over the next year.

The SBEP is already ahead of the curve. In 1995, a goal of reducing nitrogen loads to the bay by 48% was established with the intent of restoring seagrass beds. The results have been impressive! Today, there is 30% more seagrass acreage in the Bay than there was in 1950. This is coupled with a 50% reduction in nitrogen loads. Bay scallops returned to Sarasota Bay in 2007. These efforts were acknowledged recently by the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program when they awarded the SBEP and its partners the 1st Place Gulf Guardian Award in the Partnership category.

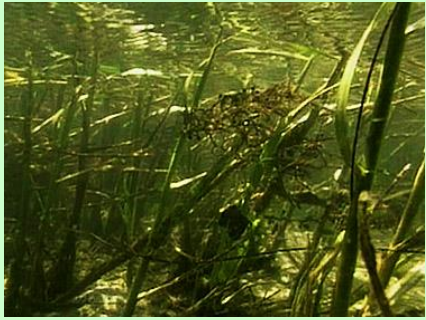
We have an excellent cadre of local scientists and managers with an unrivaled wealth of knowledge about Sarasota Bay and its valuable resources. The SBEP- through the TAC- is perfectly positioned to lead this effort and help ensure that the criteria ultimately enacted for Sarasota Bay provides the proper protection of its water quality and natural resources that we all so dearly love and treasure. Look for a follow up story next year when we complete our work.

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**March is Seagrass Awareness Month**



Preserving Florida's seagrass meadows is critical to protecting marine life, water quality and Florida's ocean-based economy. Seagrasses are flowering plants that live underwater.

Florida's seagrass community is the largest seagrass meadow in the world and supports hundreds of species of fish, sea turtles, manatees and other wildlife at various stages of their development.

Florida's estimated 502,000 acres of seagrass are important natural resources that perform many significant functions: 1) they help maintain water clarity by trapping fine sediments and particles with their leaves; 2) they can stabilize the bottom with their roots and rhizomes in much the same way that land grasses hinder soil erosion; 3) they provide habitat for many fishes, crustaceans, and shellfish; 4) seagrass and the organisms that grow on them are food for many marine animals, and most importantly; 5) they are nursery areas for much of Florida's recreationally and commercially important marine life.

In Florida, seagrasses are protected by law. Boaters can face federal and state fines as well as costs associated with restoration efforts and monitoring if they are caught damaging them. A boat's hull, anchor or propeller can uproot seagrasses, ripping several inches into the soft sediment and creating a path several meters long. Recovery is slow and research has shown it may take up to ten years for damaged areas to regenerate.

Learn more at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/habitats/seagrass/>.

Five species of seagrasses are found in Sarasota Bay: shoal grass, turtle grass, manatee grass, widgeon grass, and star grass. Seagrass recovery is a major element of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Sarasota Bay.

## Upcoming Events

### **Bay Wise Kayak Tours**

Don't miss the opportunity to join retired marine biologist and SBEP Citizen Advisory Committee member Dr. Jack Taylor on an educational kayak tour in Sarasota Bay waters. Discover the plants, animals, habitats and other features that make Sarasota Bay an Estuary of National Significance. This program is sponsored by the Sarasota

Bay Estuary Program and is FREE to the public. All trips will be 2 - 3hrs. in duration and will depart promptly at 9 AM. Space is limited to 15 people per trip. **Participants must bring their own kayak and gear.**

**Dates and departure points are:**

**Mar 17th (Wed) and 20th (Sat)** - Whitaker Bayou: Bay Front Park to Whitaker Bayou and return.

**Apr 14th (Wed) and 17th (Sat)** - Lyons and Blackburn Bay: North jetty at Venice Inlet to Lyons and Blackburn bays and return.

**Florida Friendly Family Festival  
Saturday, March 6th from 9am-3pm**

Held at the Manatee County Fairgrounds this event features a variety of fun activities, learning programs and entertainment related to environmental awareness and water conservation methods for children of all ages. SBEP is a sponsor of this Manatee County Florida Yards and Neighborhoods festival. Be sure to visit the SBEP booth. For more information contact [michelleatkinson@ufl.edu](mailto:michelleatkinson@ufl.edu)

**Dog Days at Desoto  
Saturday, March 13th from 10am-3pm**

Picnic with your pooch at Desoto National Memorial and visit the Pooches for the Planet booth and other pet education venues. For more information contact [Charles\\_oshaben@nps.gov](mailto:Charles_oshaben@nps.gov)

**2010 Eco - Earth Day Festival & Bridge Street Market  
Sunday, April 18, 2010 from 10am - 4pm**

Historic Bridge Street on Bradenton Beach from Gulf Drive to the Pier will be closed for the huge event featuring live music, vendors, demonstrations, green seminars and more. Be sure to visit the SBEP booth and listen to a presentation by Public Outreach Coordinator, Sara Peatrowsky. For more information contact [nancya@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:nancya@tampabay.rr.com)



**SENSE OF PLACE**  
**Discover Sarasota Bay's**  
**Natural and Cultural Treasures**



For the eco-heritage tourist the Gulf Coast Heritage Trail map is a must have. Whether your passion is birding, kayaking or visiting our areas educational, natural and cultural icons, the map highlights our area's bountiful natural and cultural heritage that define our sense of place. A sense of place is the culture, heritage and diversity of a region. It is finding inspiration in the past, creating meaning for the present and planning for the future.

Beginning at the Sunshine Skyway Fishing Pier State Park in Northern Manatee County and ending at Cedar Point Environmental Center on Lemon Bay in Englewood, the Gulf Coast Heritage Trail map highlights 127 must visit destinations near and along Sarasota Bay.

## Destination Spotlight:

### 3 Emerson Point Preserve

Emerson Point Preserve is a 365-acre preserve located at the tip of Snead Island in western Palmetto. Visitors can take in the beauty of Florida's wildlife and native plant communities while exploring both prehistoric and historic sites. Multi-use trails and boardwalks are aligned so that the natural habitat and cultural resources will be protected. Picnic areas and a pavilion are available by reservation. A canoe/kayak launch allows access to the tidal canals and Terra Ceia Bay. For more information call (941) 721-6885 or visit [www.mymanatee.org](http://www.mymanatee.org) and click on Conservation Lands Management.

### 19 De Soto National Memorial

A 237-acre National Memorial offering nature trails, canoe/kayak launch, a living history camp and visitors enter, and a museum with educational films and artifacts focusing on Native American and Spanish history in Florida. For more information call (941) 792-0485 or visit [www.nps.gov/deso](http://www.nps.gov/deso).





### **31 Robinson Preserve**

Robinson Preserve is a 487-acre preserve that includes 40-acres of peaceful waterways for canoeing and kayaking. Recreational opportunities include hiking and biking trails, a canoe/kayak launch and wildlife viewing. Additional amenities include observation towers and platforms, picnic areas, and a visitors' center. For more information call (941) 745-3723 or visit [www.mymanatee.org](http://www.mymanatee.org) and click on Conservation Lands Management.

The Gulf Coast Heritage Trail was the first regional eco-heritage based tourism trail program within the state of Florida. Today the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program continues to be at the forefront of recognizing the economic value of linking and promoting Sarasota Bay's cultural, historical, and environmental heritage. Visit <http://www.sarasotabay.org/tourism-ght.html> and experience the interactive on-line version of the Gulf Coast Heritage Trail map.

Look for monthly destination highlights on the SBEP website beginning March 2010.

## **SBEP Attends Southeast Adaptation Planning Workshop**

Public Outreach Coordinator Sara Peatrowsky represented SBEP at the Southeast Adaptation Planning Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 2nd and 3rd, 2010. Sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water, Office of Air and Radiation, and EPA Region 4, the goal of the workshop was to explore how stakeholders from across the Southeast can work together to adapt to climate change now and into the future.

The Southeast is already experiencing climate change impacts such as sea level rise and a number of states and municipalities have started planning efforts to respond to these and other potential impacts. To date, however, efforts to plan and coordinate across an entire geographic region have been limited. With climate change likely to affect multiple municipalities and states, a coordinated effort on these impacts will enhance the ability of stakeholders to successfully mitigate these problems.

The workshop highlighted two important Southeastern sectors affected by climate change: coastal and water resources. Many other sectors, such as human health, forests, agriculture, wildlife, fisheries, transportation, infrastructure, emergency response, and tourism, are also affected by climate change. Additionally, certain vulnerable parts of the population will be disproportionately impacted. During the workshop, organizers used adaptation planning for coastal and water resources as a

departure point to discuss adaptation planning for a wide range of potentially impacted sectors.

## SBEP in the News

**November 4** - Biz941 Daily e-newsletter "Florida Environmentalist Wins National Audubon Society Volunteerism Contest" coverage about CAC member Yvette Little winning TogetherGreen Community Passport contest. Mentions SBEP.

**November 5** - Herald Tribune "Volunteer's 323 hours recognized" showcases Yvette Little as winner of award from National Audubon for volunteer hrs; mentions SBEP. <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20091105/ARTICLE/911051054>

**November 30** - Pelican Press "Going Green, or Maybe not in some cases around Florida" (Roat) Covers SBEP involvement in LID roadway project, Landscaping for Climate Change brochure and Herb Dolan North Park on Anna Maria Island [http://pelicanpress.org/content/1590\\_1.php](http://pelicanpress.org/content/1590_1.php)

**December 3** - Pelican Press "Sarasota Waters: Let the sunshine in! " showcases SBEP winning Gulf Guardian Award and promotes Bay Wise Kayak tours. (Zimmerman) [http://www.pelicanpress.org/content/1615\\_1.php](http://www.pelicanpress.org/content/1615_1.php)

**December 5** - The Bradenton Times on-line newspaper "Sarasota Bay Estuary Program offers free excursions around the Bay" gives schedule of Bay Wise tours. <http://www.thebradentontimes.com/index.php?cid=731057&src=news&refno=1098&category=Environment&curlid=2062>

**December 30** - Anna Maria Island Sun - Coast Lines "Explore the Gulf Coast Heritage Trail" showcases GCHT destinations on Anna Maria Island, Holmes Beach and Bradenton Beach. (Cindy Lane)

**December 30** - Anna Maria Island Sun - Reel Time "Sarasota Bay Watch Evolves" article highlights SBW accomplishments and mentions SBEP as a partner on various projects. (Rusty Chinnis) <http://www.amisun.com/reeltime.htm>

**February 1** - HT front page article "Spoil Island Dilemma: Save the views or the bay?" mentions SBEP making spoil island restoration as a Part of 1995 CCMP. (Doug Sword) <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20100201/ARTICLE/2011057>

**February 1** - HT article "One bays problem starts with a creek" does not mention SBEP but addresses water quality in Phillipi Creek and Robert's Bay. (Doug Sword) <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20100201/ARTICLE/2011058>

**February 10** - HT article "Waterway blacklist updated- Roberts and Blackburn bays are out while Hudson and Whitaker bayous are in" (front page local section - tease on front page) about improvements in Roberts and Blackburn Bays and worsened Whitaker & Hudson Bayou. (Doug

Sword) <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20100210/ARTICLE/2101040/2066/NEWS?Title=Waterway-blacklist-updated>



## POOCHES FOR THE PLANET

**Scoop that Poop - Clean Waters! Clean Yards! Clean Shoes!**



**TOP 8 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR VET:**

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1. Do you provide a holistic approach to medicine? (Eastern & Western) / we do
2. Do you determine risk factors & lifestyles before choosing vaccines to give my pet? / we do
3. Will you provide my pet with a dye-free, naturally preserved, human-grade highly digestible diet? / we do
4. Do you provide seminars & instructions on preventatives for breed specific issues? / we do
5. Do you offer alternative therapies for my pet? / we do
6. Are you successful in solving pet behavioral issues? / we do
7. Do you have a holistic approach treating chronic diseases that otherwise appear untreatable? / we do
8. Do you provide hospice care to keep my pet comfortable for their last days? / we do



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 Manatee Counties over 26  
 tons of dog "doos" are  
 deposited on the ground.  
 Pet waste can be as  
 disease-causing bacteria,  
 viruses and feline  
 parasites. The little bit of  
 pet waste from your dog  
 fills ecosystems with  
 chemical poisons for  
 our local wildlife.  
 Pick up after your dog  
 every time, every day.



**Scoop that POOP!** **CLEAN YARDS  
CLEAN WATERS  
and clean shoes!**

[www.courtesybay.org](http://www.courtesybay.org)

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SBEP recently held a bag stuffing event where volunteers from Senior Friendship Center stuffed another 350 Pooches for the Planet adoption kits. The eco-friendly Pooches for the Planet reusable shopping bags were filled with valuable educational information and free goodies for anyone who adopts a dog at a local shelter. For more information about Pooches for the Planet and links to participating animal shelters and

Humane Society's websites in Manatee and Sarasota Counties visit <http://www.sarasotabay.org/poochesfortheplanet.html>.

**The 2010 Pet Pages - Official Yellow Pages for Animal Lovers** includes 1/4 page ad of the Pooches for the Planet pet waste education poster promoting 'Scoop that Poop'- Distributed to 100,000+ in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto Counties.

## CAC Member Profile

### Lisa Marie Phillips

Lisa Marie first became aware of Anna Maria Island's changing ecology as a teenager where her daily ritual was drinking in the sun while strolling its incredible beaches before its shell roads were paved. A graduate of Manatee High School and the University of Florida the self-proclaimed "water geek" became passionate about Florida's natural environment as a Girl Scout leader with three great children of her own to nurture.

She focused this environmental passion and became involved in local government where she served as a Commissioner for the City of Bradenton Beach. Presently Lisa Marie serves as Director of Project/Program Management for that City where preservation of green space, community gardening, environmentally friendly civic improvements and native plants unique to Anna Maria Island are at the top of her work lists.

Phillips became a member of the CAC in 2007. "I heard that the SBEP-CAC was an organization that actually accomplished things, and that it had dynamic members," says Phillips, "and that opinion was spot on!"

Lisa Marie is a volunteer environmental educator with Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and Anna Maria Elementary School, and an enthusiastic member of many leading local environmental organizations. A Heritage Site Manager for the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, she serves as an adviser for that organization's ongoing habitat restoration program of its 100 acre F.I.S.H. Nature Preserve. She earned a fellowship at the University of Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute in 2008, and is a Burl Long Award Winner.



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