



Friends of St. Sebastian River

P.O. Box 284 ❖ Roseland, Florida 32957-0284

January 2013

website: www.fssr.org email: info@fssr.org ph: 772-202-0501

The mission of the Friends of St. Sebastian River is to maintain and improve the health and beauty of the St. Sebastian River and its watershed.

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON STATUS UPDATE

Kathy Hill, Education/Outreach Coordinator for the Indian River Lagoon Program will give a presentation on the status of the Indian River Lagoon, including the latest information available on the recent, unprecedented seagrass die-off. Speculation has been that significant algae bloom events, resulting in clouded lagoon water, may be one of the major causes for the loss of the grasses.

Dr. Grant Gilmore, a well-known local lagoon scientist, has observed that the die-off seems to be more than just a temporary loss of the grasses. In recent surveys he has observed that the rhizomes – the root structure of seagrasses, also seem to have disappeared, which poses serious concern for quick recovery of the grasses, a primary component to the lagoon ecosystem and habitat for all life in the lagoon.

Our January meeting is also our Annual Meeting, at which, current Friends members will be voting on this year's Board of Directors. Incumbent Board members up for re-election are Tim Glover, Gayle Heath, Buzz Herrmann and Bruce Zingman. An additional nominee is Bill Brennan, who was a past Board member and will be returning to help out. If you are interested in being involved and joining our Board, please let us know. The only requirement is maintaining a current membership, and having the time and interest to serve. Nominations will also be accepted at the meeting.

The meeting will be **Tuesday, January 22, 7:30 PM** at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd. in Sebastian, and all are welcome to attend.

2012 ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AWARD

Each year we present our Environmental Enhancement Award to an individual, business or organization which we believe has done the most to help protect and preserve the St. Sebastian River and surrounding areas. For this year's award, our committee has selected Brenda Davis.

Brenda has recently changed jobs, but she was chosen for our award, based on her previous work as the Education Coordinator for the Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District (IRSWCD). Over the last few years in her work at the IRSWCD, Brenda developed a plan, funded by the District, to plant native trees in residential areas, and make tree seedlings available for sale to homeowners. Hundreds of trees and several thousand seedlings have been planted or sold, for planting by homeowners. This program is ongoing, and it is hoped that it can be expanded to include additional plant species.

As Education Coordinator for the IRSWCD, Brenda also participated in many outreach events and activities, including Sebastian's Earth Day Celebration, the Indian River Lagoon Envirothon, and activities at local Indian River County schools, such as the Treasure Coast Elementary garden club and Sebastian River High School Green Club.

Brenda now works for the Indian River County School District and we trust she will continue to be involved with educating local students about conservation and environmental issues. Brenda thanks for making a difference and congratulations!

ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT COMPLETES LANDS ASSESSMENT

As reported in our September 2012 newsletter, the St. Johns River Water Management District was in the process of reviewing all the lands they own, to see if they still met the management objectives for which they were originally acquired. All water management districts in the state were required to undertake such a review, at the direction of Florida Governor Scott.

St. Johns has completed that review and voted to retain most of their District-owned lands. There are various levels of determination made on the status of the lands, and less than 1 percent are now considered “surplus” and available for possible sale or exchange.

The full results of the District’s land assessment, including a breakdown by county, and maps showing the location of District-owned lands, can be viewed on their website at <http://floridaswater.com/landassessment>.

EPA ADOPTS WATER POLLUTION RULES IN FLORIDA

The EPA announced on November 30, 2012, that it was adopting tough water pollution rules in Florida, that comply with the consent decree issued in August of 2009, settling a lawsuit brought by several Florida environmental organizations. Those organizations, lead by Earthjustice’s Florida office, remain concerned with the EPA ruling, and enforcement of the requirements of the Clean Water Act, in Florida.

The EPA conditionally approved the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Impaired Waters Rule (IWR), which will apply to approximately 15% of the state’s water bodies. The remaining 85% of the state’s waters will be regulated under numeric nutrient standards set by the EPA.

One argument of the organizations that brought suit against the EPA, was that the IWR the state was trying to implement, didn’t set nutrient standards, but rather provided for a “narrative description” to judge whether a water body was impaired or not. The EPA described the final, approved version of the state’s rule as “... FDEP’s new method of deriving numeric limits for the amount of nutrient pollution allowed in lakes, springs, streams and estuaries is technically and scientifically sound, and more effective and efficient than the previous narrative approach.”

Under the conditionally approved rule, those organization claim that the state’s standard is a “threshold” that can be exceeded without necessarily providing a requirement for nutrient reductions for the impaired water body. They claim that the approved rule requires that a water body have a “biological failure” before the state is required to take any action. The state would then conduct studies to attempt to link the failure to nutrient threshold exceedence(s), with no commitment to actually conduct or complete such studies. The standards also provide no protection for non-impaired waters.

The EPA also provided “numeric downstream protective values”, which are limits of upstream waters, that would protect and allow downstream receiving water bodies to meet numeric pollution standards. The DEP rule did not include such standards, and a regional EPA representative later indicated that the numeric standards it was imposing, could change, based on further discussions with the state.

Meanwhile, the Tampa Bay Times has been reporting the last few weeks, on layoffs of veteran DEP regulators last month. “Few operations have been as compromised under Gov. Rick Scott as Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection. An agency that time after time has put the interests of developers and the polluting industry ahead of the state’s natural resources struck again last month, laying off nearly 60 employees — many if not most of them responsible for enforcing compliance with environmental regulations.”

A recent study by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), based at Tufts University, found that

harmful algae blooms and red tide in Florida are costing taxpayers between \$1.3 and \$10.5 billion dollars each year. SEI researchers compiled data from dozens of studies and assessments to come up with the valuation of environmental services provided by clean water for Florida.

“The scientific community is now clear that pollution is a primary cause of harmful algae outbreaks. What remains is for federal and state agencies to set, and fund, an agenda for gathering the underlying data needed to comprehensively assess the value of Florida’s clean waters.”

One finding of the study was that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection had assessed just 20 percent of the river miles in the state and found 53 percent had pollution-related impairment.

You will find links to several recent news stories on this issue, on the “News and Information” page of our website. In addition, a facebook page entitled “Fight Slime Crimes” has been developed to specifically address concern and document water quality issues around the state. The page can be found at www.facebook.com/FloridaSlimeCrimes. It provides links to many news and information sources on this issue, as well as photos and comments from homeowners around the state.

There is more information about water quality issues and implementation of the Florida and EPA water quality rules on the EPA web pages at www.epa.gov/aboutepa/states/fl.html and http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/florida_index.cfm, and the Earthjustice website at http://earthjustice.org/our_work/campaigns/clean-water-for-florida. Earthjustice also has an “Action Alert” on their website at <https://secure.earthjustice.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=1407> where you can send comments to the EPA regarding protecting clean water in Florida. Please send your comments soon and thanks for your help!

FINANCIAL UPDATE

November 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012

Balance 11/1/12	\$3260.87
Receipts	522.84
Total	3783.71
Disbursements	0.00
Balance 12/31/12	\$3783.71

George Schum Memorial Award Fund

Total to date	\$61.00
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday, January 17, 7:30 PM
**Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora:
 Species Common to Florida and
 Nova Scotia**

Diane LaRue, Mersey Tobeatic
 Research Institute
 Eugenia Chapter
 FL Native Plant Society
 Boathouse, FMEL
 200 9th St SE (Oslo Road)
 Vero Beach
 info:
www.eugenia.fnpschapters.org



Monday, January 21, 7:30 PM
Siberian Cranes

John Canter
 Pelican Island Audubon Society
 Vero Beach Community Center
 2266 14th Ave, Vero Beach
 info:
www.pelicanislandaudubon.org
 772-567-3520



Tuesday, January 22, 7:30 PM
Indian River Lagoon Update

Kathy Hill, IR Lagoon Program
 FSSR
 North IR County Library
 1001 Sebastian Blvd., Sebastian



Wednesday, January 30, 7 PM
Discovery Channel: Giant Squid

Dr. Edie Widder, ORCA
 The Emerson Center
 1590 27th Ave., Vero Beach
 fee/ticket required
 info: 772-778-5249 or
www.TheEmersonCenter.org

Please visit the “Meeting Info/
 Events” page of our website for
 more events!

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NOTE: The date on your mailing label is the month/year when your dues are next due. Thank you.

APPLICATION FORM

The Friends of St. Sebastian River depends on member support for programs of conservation and education.

Youth (under 18) free — Individual \$10/year

Family \$15/year — Corporate \$50/year

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Special interests, concerns or expertise: _____

Please mail your completed application and dues to:

P.O. Box 284, Roseland, Florida 32957-0284

This newsletter is available on our website and delivery by email for current members. We encourage email-only delivery to save funds and paper! Email us at the address on the front to request email delivery.

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Officers for 2012

President Tim Glover
Vice President Buzz Herrmann
Secretary Gayle Heath
Treasurer Sherry Shipley

Directors for 2012

Tom Bauer Anne Putman
Lynn Stieglitz Bruce Zingman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Mark & Michelle Lefevbre
Bruce & Maggie Sabol

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Roseland Community Association
Tropical Kayak Tours