



Friends of St. Sebastian River

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

March 2011

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.

MRC'S RIGHT WHALE VOLUNTEER SPOTTER PROGRAM

Harry Richter started the Marine Resources Council's Right Whale Monitoring program when he was a member of their Board of Directors, and coordinated the efforts of their Right Whale Volunteer Spotters.

Right whales are an endangered species and migrate seasonally, using the Atlantic coast of Georgia and Florida as their calving grounds during the winter season. The MRC volunteers who have regular access to viewing the coast help to monitor their behavioral and migrating characteristics, birth of new whales, and provide location information to help prevent collision with boat traffic in the coastal waters.

Right whale monitoring efforts in Florida are partially funded by revenues generated from the sale of the "Protect Florida Whales" license plate program, which is administered by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Ft. Pierce. For more information on this program, visit the HBOI website at www.fau.edu/hboi/LicensePlates/FloridaWhales.php.

For more information on the MRC's Right Whale Volunteer Spotter program, be sure to attend our meeting this month where Mr. Richter will be the guest speaker! He will bring us up to date on the status of right whale recovery efforts and results of whale research along the Florida coast. You may also find more information about the MRC program on their website at www.mrcirl.org.

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

WATER QUALITY MONITORING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

One of the other programs of the Marine Resources Council is water quality monitoring throughout the Indian River Lagoon. This program is also partially funded by revenues from Florida license plates, through the St. Johns River Water Management District's Indian River Lagoon Program. The MRC is in need of volunteers for water testing in the St. Sebastian River. The MRC provides training and testing supplies and volunteers need to have access to a specific location on the river to be able to conduct water quality tests on a weekly basis. If you are interested in volunteering for this program, we will have more information about it at our meeting this month, or you can contact the MRC at 321-725-7775.

ST. SEBASTIAN RIVER BOAT TRIP

We are once again hosting a boat trip on the St. Sebastian River. The trip will be an early morning cruise to the river aboard the Mangrove Mamma, with breakfast snacks provided. The trip will be from 8 to 10:30 AM on Saturday, April 9, departing from Capt'n Butchers at 1732 Indian River Drive in Sebastian. The cost of the trip is \$15/person for Friends members and \$25/person for non-members. The cost for non-members includes a one-year membership for the Friends.

Reservations are required and can be made by calling 772-202-0501 or by making an online payment through our website at www.fssr.org.

BAD SEASON FOR FISH KILLS

You likely have heard about some of the various fish kills that have occurred so far this winter. The cooler winter season is not usually a normal time of year when we would expect fish kills of any great significance, because the cooler waters are able to hold more dissolved oxygen and algae blooms associated with warm water temperatures are not usually a problem. But so far this winter seems to be an exception.

Some of the fish kills have been somewhat expected though with the cold weather this season. An event in the Sebastian Inlet area killed thousands of fish and has initially been attributed to low oxygen levels. There doesn't seem to be a good explanation yet though for the low oxygen at this time of year.

We are also hearing about other smaller-scale fish kills in and around the St. Sebastian River that are rather concerning. Dr. Grant Gilmore, a world-renowned fish and marine scientist in the Vero Beach area has observed some of the fish kills in our river. He has observed dead and emaciated catfish – some with lesions, in addition to dead blue crabs. Catfish are not as susceptible to low oxygen levels and Dr. Gilmore has observed other fish in the same areas that appear to be healthy and not being bothered by whatever is affecting the catfish and blue crabs. Therefore he suspects it is some sort of toxin that only the catfish and crabs are sensitive to.

Dr. Gilmore provided some information that he received from the Florida FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. They responded to his concerns saying that they have observed dead catfish throughout the Indian River Lagoon over the last few months and have been testing tissue samples to determine the cause. They also said that widespread die-offs of catfish have occurred in the past in Florida and there was a large event in 1995 caused by a still "unknown disease".

You are encouraged to report fish kills that you observe, to the state's fish kill hotline at 800-636-0511 or online at www.myfwc.com/research/saltwater/health/fish-kills-hotline/.

MORE ON THE FUTURE OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN FLORIDA

In our last newsletter we quoted the 1000 Friends of Florida organization's prediction that this would be one of the most challenging legislative years for growth management in Florida's history. The following is an excerpt from a recent statement by 1000 Friends of Florida on what appears to be this year's legislative agenda.

"Florida's growth management system and this state's environment are under attack like never before. Proposals being considered during the 2011 legislative session include eliminating the Florida Department of Community Affairs, slashing funding to retain only 10 planners to oversee managing growth in a state with 18 million residents and 80 million visitors a year, gutting state law to lessen or remove state oversight, eliminating requirements that developers show the need for new development, weakening citizen rights to challenge planning decisions, eliminating trust funds for Florida Forever and affordable housing, and more..."

"1000 Friends and its allies are being targeted. A group linked to the Florida Chamber of Commerce has identified 1000 Friends, the Department of Community Affairs, and the EPA water quality standards as the three greatest 'anti-free-market' threats to Florida, and have launched a statewide campaign proclaiming 'now is the time to go on the offensive.'"

"At the same time, the voters get it. A recent Everglades Foundation poll shows that 81% of Florida voters think 'We need the state to manage new development to protect our rivers, lakes, streams, and beaches from pollution.'"

To learn more, please visit the 1000 Friends of Florida website at www.1000friendsofflorida.org.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

This is a busy time of year in our area and as usual, we are participating in several events and activities, and are looking for anyone interested in helping out. The first event will be the Pelican Island Wildlife Festival on March 19 at Riverview Park in Sebastian. The event is from 10 AM to 5 PM and we could use help with setup, pickup or for an hour or two throughout the day handing out information, answering questions or selling shirts, hats and animal puppets.

The next event will be the Goby Fest at the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park in Fellsmere. That event is on March 26 from 10 AM to 4 PM and we could use similar help on that day too. If you are interested in helping out with either of these events or would like more information, please call Buzz at 772-589-9811.

Finally, we are planning to participate in the American Rivers National River Cleanup with an event on the St. Sebastian River on Saturday, May 7. We will once again be cleaning up on land or on the water and Kristen and Mike from the Florida Outdoor Center (formerly Kayaks, Etc.) will be providing the use of kayaks for free for those volunteering to cleanup on the water. The final details for our event are yet to be determined, but if you are interested, you can give us a call at 772-202-0501 and let us know you are interested. We'll keep you informed as more details become available. For more information on the American Rivers nationwide event, visit them online at www.amrivers.org/cleanup.

A FRIENDS GATHERING

We are starting what we hope will be a new tradition for the Friends – a “gathering” or get together for Friends members. We envision this as just a very informal, social event for anyone who wants to stop by and visit with any other like-minded members. The setting will be very relaxing – a spot to just kick back and enjoy a friendly visit with us and other Friends members.

We plan to start off gathering in the “ship” at Capt. Hiram’s Sandbar beach. So we’re hoping for someone to show up who can be “commodore” and someone who can provide some putt-putt sounds as we “play” cruising in the ship, while enjoying the relaxing beach setting and view of the Indian River Lagoon.

We also plan to move our Board of Directors meeting to the Hiram’s “Boardroom” on the same day as our gathering. Anyone is welcome to join us for our Board meetings, which can be entertaining – or not. Our meeting is always the second Tuesday of each month (except August – no meeting) and we will be starting at 5:30 PM. Then at 7 PM we will adjourn to the “ship” on the beach and join other members who stop by for a visit. Feel free to join us at either time and let us know your ideas, questions or comments about what we are doing or what you think we should be doing.

The gathering is free, other than if you chose to purchase any food or drink items from Capt. Hiram’s. So feel free to drop by each or any month – no reservations required.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

January 1, 2011 – February 28, 2011

Balance 1/1/11	\$6156.73
Receipts	361.70
Total	6518.43
Disbursements	87.06
Balance 2/28/11	\$6431.37

George Schum Memorial Award Fund

Total to date	\$204.00
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday, March 17, 7:30 PM
Living Beaches of Florida
 Blair Witherington, FL FWC
 FL Native Plant Society –
 Eugenia Chapter
 FL Medical Entomology Lab
 Oslo Rd, Vero Beach
 info: 772-567-1565



Sat, March 19, 10 AM – 5 PM
**Pelican Island
 Wildlife Festival**
 Riverview Park, Sebastian
 info:
www.pelicanislandfriends.org



Tuesday, March 22, 7:30 PM
MRC Right Whale Program
 Harry Richter,
 Marine Resources Council
 FSSR
 North IR County Library,
 Sebastian



Sat, April 23, 9 AM – 3 PM
Earth Day
 City of Sebastian,
 Natural Resources Board
 Riverview Park, Sebastian
 info:
www.earthdayjournal.com

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

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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 check here to allow us to use your contact info on our membership list in the "Members Only" section of our website. To restrict use of any info, list here: _____

Please mail your completed application and dues to:

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

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

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Officers for 2011

President Tim Glover
Vice President Mike Beck
Secretary Gayle Heath
Treasurer Sherry Shipley

Directors for 2011

Paul Barker Tom Bauer
Buzz Herrmann Anne Putman
Lynn Stieglitz Bruce Zingman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Roseland Community Association
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