



Friends of St. Sebastian River

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

March 2015

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.

ALEXIS THOMAS – THE ENFORCER

Well, it's not as scary as it sounds! Alexis Thomas was hired by Indian River County to educate the public about, implement, and enforce the relatively recent fertilizer ordinance. That ordinance was enacted to help prevent yard fertilizers from leaching into our local waterways, and therefore help improve the health of the Indian River Lagoon.

The ordinance regarding fertilizer and landscape maintenance has been in effect for over a year, but many citizens are still unaware of what it really entails. This presentation breaks down the ordinance piece by piece and explains what the new law is and how it is to be followed. Also covered will be ordinance-friendly tips for taking care of your turf, and products available around the county that are in compliance with the ordinance.

Ms. Thomas' official title is Indian River County Stormwater Educator and Fertilizer Enforcement Officer; a diverse job that ranges from teaching kids about watershed pollution, to harvesting algae, to training landscapers on the ordinance. She grew up in Sebastian, graduating from Sebastian River High School before attending the University of South Florida, earning a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. Known in high school for her "tree hugger" ways, it is not surprising that she has returned to implement her environmental passion and knowledge to protect the home she grew to love.

Ms. Thomas' was also the recipient of the Friends' George Schum Award in 2008! We are happy to have played some small part in promoting her environmental interests and glad to have her back in the area putting those talents to work.

Our meeting will be **Tuesday, March 24th, 7:30 pm** at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd in Sebastian and all are welcome to attend. For more information, visit www.fssr.org or call us at 772-202-0501

2015 OFFICER AND DIRECTORS

Election of Directors was held at our January Annual Meeting. Bill Brennan, Tim Glover, Gayle Heath, Buzz Herrmann, and Bruce Zingman were re-elected unanimously, and per our Bylaws, Officers were selected by the Board at our February Directors meeting. There was no change in offices held, therefore this year's Officers are Bill Brennan, Treasurer; Tim Glover, President; Gayle Heath, Secretary; and Buzz Herrmann, Vice President. Congratulations and thanks to all who participate and serve the Friends.

Are you interested in being more involved? We are always looking for those who have the interest and time to participate. If you would like more information on how to get involved, please see the "Contact Info/Volunteer" page of our website, or call us at 772-202-0501. One of our major projects is the St. Sebastian River Research Project. This is a long-term, ongoing project to research information that we can locate about our river and issues that impact it. There are several references we have located and catalogued so far, but we know there is much more yet to be unearthed. Visit the "Library/Newsletters" page of our website for more information.

FLORIDA LAWMAKERS CONSIDERING USE OF AMENDMENT 1 FUNDS

There has been a lot of talk in the halls of the Legislature and the media about what conservation projects qualify for Amendment 1 funding. There are many hands reaching into the cookie jar for projects that lack a true conservation purpose.

The good news is that we've changed the debate. Lawmakers are asking questions of scientists and experts and listening to the informed opinions of conservationists and state agencies. At virtually every meeting relating to conservation and protecting our water resources, our legislators have shown that they are well aware of how strong the support for Amendment 1 is among voters.

The media also is paying close attention to what happens in the Legislature. They are on the look-out for any shenanigans lawmakers might pull with Amendment 1 funding. Nobody, it seems, wants another Lottery Amendment.

Now, we need you to be ready. Any day now the Senate and House will be releasing their proposed Amendment 1 allocations. If their numbers don't align with ours, if they dedicate Amendment 1 dollars to sweetheart deals that benefit only a few, if they simply replace existing funding with Amendment 1 funds, we'll need you to contact your Senators and Representatives and give them a piece of your mind.

You can weigh in with your comments now on how Amendment 1 funds should be spent. Florida's Water and Land Legacy organization which organized efforts to get the amendment on last year's ballot, has a sample comment letter on their website, and addition talking points to consider. Visit their website at <http://goo.gl/IEW5KY>.

APRIL IS WATER CONSERVATION MONTH

The St. Johns River Water Management District has designated April as Water Conservation Month.

"Water conservation is at the core of the District's mission of protecting and ensuring the sustainability of Florida's water supplies," said John Miklos, chairman of the District's Governing Board. "Recognizing Water Conservation Month helps to encourage water users to take simple steps to conserve."

More than half of all residential water use is outdoors for lawn and landscape irrigation. Following districtwide lawn watering rules helps ensure the efficient use of water for landscape irrigation. The rules specify the days when residents and businesses may water.

Watering wisely year-round promotes healthier lawns and landscapes and can save thousands of gallons of water per month, as well as save homeowners money. Overwatering a lawn can promote weeds and insect pests, as well as weakened grass roots. For more information visit: <http://floridaswater.com/wateringrestrictions>.

Source: St. Johns River Water Management District "Water News", March 10, 2015

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON SEAGRASS MAPPING

The St. Johns River Water Management District, South Florida Water Management District and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are partnering to map seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) this year.

Mapping IRL seagrass enables the agencies to identify areas of the estuary along Florida's east coast that may warrant special protection and potential problem areas that may warrant further investigation. Seagrass is an important indicator of the health of the lagoon, as well as a food source for manatees and sea turtles, and a nursery, refuge and foraging habitat for a variety of fish and other marine life. Mapping is performed every 2 to 3 years to provide an overall picture of seagrass in the lagoon.

"Mapping seagrass in the lagoon allows our scientists to track changes over time," said William Tredik, leader of the St. Johns District's Indian River Lagoon Protection Initiative.

From early spring through late fall 2011, two massive blooms of phytoplankton caused a loss of about 47,000 acres of seagrass throughout the lagoon system. In 2013 DEP adopted restoration plans for the IRL, known as basin management action plans or BMAPs. The BMAPs identify project zones based upon the distinct hydrology of the basin.

The 2013 mapping of IRL seagrass reflects some encouraging progress. The mapping revealed a 12 percent

gain in seagrass acreage compared to 2011. Median seagrass depth has increased in almost all of the project zones as well. Both of these are encouraging initial signs of recovery. Between the summers of 2013 and 2014, scientists also recorded moderate increases or no loss of seagrass at 52 out of 69 study sites. The results also indicate a general loss in shallow and deep seagrass edge.

"The mapping project reflects some improvements and will also help us identify other areas in need of additional restoration," said Tom Frick, Director of DEP's Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration. "We are working toward our restoration targets, and we will continue to work alongside state and local partners to invest in the projects necessary to restoring this remarkable estuary."

For more information, visit <http://floridaswater.com/itsyourlagoon>.

Source: St. Johns River Water Management District "Water News", March 17, 2015

STATE MANATEE COUNT A RECORD

Warm temperatures and clear, sunny days between some of the coldest weather of the year assisted Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) biologists and partners in counting an all-time high number of manatees during this year's statewide aerial survey.

The FWC reported a preliminary count of 6,063 manatees statewide. This year's synoptic survey count exceeded the previous high count for 2010 by almost 1,000 animals.

"Manatees used warm-water sites and other winter habitat areas to cope with a strong cold front that recently moved through the region," said FWC biologist Holly Edwards. "In many of the regions surveyed, warm, sunny weather caused manatees to rest at the water's surface, which facilitated our efforts to count them in these areas. Calm waters and high visibility also contributed to the high count."

"We were very fortunate to have near-optimal conditions for our survey this year," said FWRI Director Gil McRae. "The high count this year is especially encouraging, given the large-scale mortality events that resulted in over 800 deaths in 2013."

For more information, visit the FWC at <http://myfwc.com/research/manatee>.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

December 1, 2014 – February 28, 2015

Balance 12/1/14	\$3206.21
Receipts	210.00
Total	3416.21
Disbursements	111.89
Balance 2/28/15	\$3304.32

George Schum Memorial Award Fund

Total to date \$1372.24

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, March 24, 7:30 PM

Alexis Thomas,
IRC Stormwater Educator
 FSSR
 North IRC Library
 1001 Sebastian Blvd.



Saturday, March 28, 9 AM – 3 PM

Florida Wildflower Festival
 W. Indiana Ave, Deland
 info:
www.floridawildflowerfestival.com



Saturday, April 11, 10 AM – 3 PM

Party for the Planet
 Brevard Zoo
 N. Wickham Rd, Melbourne
 info: <http://brevardzoo.org>



Monday, April 13, 6 PM
Living with Sandhill Cranes
 Reinier Munguia, Photographer
 Pelican Island Audubon
 North IRC Library
 1001 Sebastian Blvd.
 info:
www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



Saturday, April 18, 9 AM – 2 PM

**Earth Day/Arbor Day
 Celebration**
 City of Sebastian
 Riverview Park, Sebastian
 info: <http://sebastiannrb.com>

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.

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

Officers for 2015

President Tim Glover
Vice President Buzz Herrmann
Secretary Gayle Heath
Treasurer Bill Brennan

Directors for 2015

Tom Bauer Jane Schnee
Lynn Stieglitz Bruce Zingman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Roseland Community Association
Tropical Kayak Tours