



Friends of St. Sebastian River

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

May 2012

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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.

ALGAE AS AN INDICATOR OF EXCESS NUTRIENTS IN THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON

Dr. Brian LaPointe of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Ft. Pierce has been researching water quality and the health of seagrasses and coral reefs, in Florida and the Caribbean for many years. His work in the Florida Keys represents the longest nutrient record and its impact on coral reefs, anywhere in the world.

Dr. LaPointe's work in Florida Bay and the Keys was able to trace and demonstrate the significance of fertilizers and mainland sources of nutrient pollution on water quality. His work led to stronger regulations in the Keys and Monroe County to limit the deposition of phosphates and nitrogen in marine protected areas, and increased treatment of sewage effluents.

Dr. LaPointe will be the speaker at our May General Meeting to talk about nutrient pollution issues in the Indian River Lagoon and Harbor Branch's water quality study of the lagoon, that began last summer. The study specifically is looking at nutrient pollution, eutrophication, and its impact on "harmful algal blooms" in the lagoon.

Similar to his study in the Keys, nitrogen isotopes are used to trace the specific sources of excess nutrients. He will also be studying the algae to determine its variability and to what extent nutrient loading is contributing to the blooms. Some seasonable variability is normal in the lagoon and contributes to that smell people often complain about in late summer. But algal blooms have been increasing in recent years and the potential detrimental impacts to the lagoon are enormous! At our last meeting in March, Dr. Grant Gilmore spoke on fish species, habitat quality issues and recent declines in the lagoon that he has been observing, with growing alarm.

"The current Harbor Branch study addresses fundamental water quality issues and directly ties to overarching restoration goals outlined in IRL planning documents. The ability to fingerprint nutrient sources and reveal nutrient hotspots in the IRL are anticipated to be of value to resource managers and decision makers overseeing policy affecting the IRL. The new data on concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus, and chlorophyll a will also be useful to the ongoing development of numerical nutrient standards for the IRL", says Dr. LaPointe. Those standards are TMDL's which we have been involved with and reporting on in our newsletter for 10 years now!

The meeting will be **Tuesday, May 22, 7:30 PM** at the library in Sebastian, at 1001 Sebastian Blvd and everyone is welcome to attend.

FIND A USEFUL AFTERLIFE FOR YARD TRIMMINGS

The idea that American homes should feature smooth green lawns arrived from Europe only in the mid-19th century, but today the great American lawn stretches from coast to coast. And that means figuring out how to dispose of an awful lot of trimmings.

Yard trimmings make up about 18% of all municipal waste, according to the EPA. Grass clippings (which

contain nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus) can provide 25% of a lawn's fertilizer needs. It is recommended to set mowers at a tall setting and let the clippings fall where they may – mulching mowers are best for this.

Composting is also a solution and can significantly cut down on household waste, and the Internet offers great instruction on building your own composting bin. Grass by itself can be a problem, either because it's recently been treated with chemical weed killers, or because it has a tendency to pack down so thickly that there is no room for aeration to aid in decomposition. So mix grass with other yard debris, along with kitchen waste like leftover vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds and eggshells. Do not include any animal or dairy waste products in compost.

Compost is great for suppressing weeds, holding in soil moisture, encouraging earthworm activity and preventing erosion. For more information, visit the full article and a list of online resources at <http://solutions.edf.org/2011/09/27/where-do-lawns-go-in-the-wintertime>.

Solutions, Fall 2011, Environmental Defense Fund

CAN ECONOMISTS SAVE THE PLANET?

Gernot Wagner has done something remarkable. The Harvard-trained economist has written an enjoyable book about the economics of global warming. He's even included cartoons.

Scientist can tell us how bad it will get, Wagner writes in *But Will the Planet Notice?* Published by Hill and Wang. But it's the economists who can help guide us out of this morass and save the planet.

Climate change ranks low among Americans' concerns, but it is possibly the most important issue facing the world, and it has to get back on the agenda. Also for too long, environmentalists have told people that if only they recycle and buy local produce, they can stop global warming.

Sadly, that's not so. And talk like that may even have contributed to the public's current disillusionment. If everyone did the right things tomorrow, it would slow global warming, but not stop it.

The answer is rooted in policy – in making it in people's self-interest to do the right things. Every ton of carbon emissions causes around \$20 of damage – that's the price of global warming. But polluters pay virtually none of that cost. "When I fly across the country and emit one ton of carbon, the ticket price does not reflect the damage the airline and I are doing to the planet," says Wagner.

So, we need policies that essentially make everyone who pollutes – be it the airline, a company or a person – pay for that privilege. The economics are simple.

When polluters pay, they'll think twice about polluting. More importantly, when becoming greener profits you personally, that's what you'll do. And that's where companies will put their money and innovative energy. A price on carbon emissions above a certain level, a cap, will drive costly pollution out of the marketplace.

The same types of ideas were instrumental in helping the country to cut acid rain. They also brought some of our commercial fisheries back from the brink of extinction.

For more information about the book, visit www.maketheplanetnotice.com.

Solutions, Fall 2011, Environmental Defense Fund

Restore Science to Its Rightful Place

Over the past several years, our nation has been beset by an increasing disregard for objective knowledge and evidence-based analysis in government decisions. The facts about climate change – accepted in virtually every other nation – are commonly ignored and disparaged in American discourse. Today's hyper-partisan debate makes it difficult for political leaders (and many of their constituents) to agree on even the basic facts underlying a problem, let alone a policy solution grounded in science.

The Union of Concerned Scientist believes that the situation is serious and is launching an initiative called the Center for Science and Democracy. They have brought together some of the nation's top thinkers on government, the natural and social sciences, media and communications, and philanthropy. They all resoundingly endorsed the need for action.

The Center will formally launch in May and will host a series of high-profile forums to facilitate collaboration

between scientists, policy makers, and citizens on the key obstacles to developing and enacting science-based policies.

Look back through our nation's history, we have made the biggest gains in our health, prosperity, and security when our decisions have been guided by the best available science.

Physicist and former IBM vice-president Lewis Branscomb has donated \$1 million to assist with the launch of the new Center.

For more information, visit www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/launch-events-center-science-democracy-1386.html

Catalyst, Spring 2012, Union of Concerned Scientist

DID YOU KNOW

In 2011, it is estimated that more than 1 million bats died from the white-nose syndrome disease.

The estimated value of bats' pest-control services in the U.S. is \$3.7 to \$53 billion per year.

The estimated cost of a response to the white-nose syndrome is \$45 million over the next five years.

The amount allocated in the 2011 federal budget to white-nose syndrome was \$1.9 million.

Endangered Earth, Winter 2012, Center for Biological Diversity

GEORGE SCHUM MEMORIAL AWARD

George Schum was a long-time member of our board of directors. He passed away in April 1997 and the award is given in memory of his spirit of volunteering and community service. The award is given to a Sebastian River High School senior who has participated in similar activities and has shown an interest in environmental issues.

We are pleased to announce that this year's winner is Andrew Berg. Andrew has volunteered on several occasions at the Environmental Learning Center in Wabasso.

The award includes a \$500 scholarship. Congratulations to Andrew and best of luck with his future education and endeavors.

FINANCIAL UPDATE (corrected)

March 1, 2012 – April 30, 2012

Balance 3/1/12	\$4133.39
Receipts	325.00
Total	4458.39
Disbursements	828.47
Balance 4/30/12	\$3629.92

George Schum Memorial Award Fund

Total to date \$561.00

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, May 14, 6 PM

Trip Down the

St. Sebastian River

Kristen & Mike Beck,

FL Outdoor Center

North IR County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd., Sebastian
info:

www.pelicanislandaudubon.org
772-567-3520



Tuesday, May 22, 7:30 PM

50 Years of Indian River

Lagoon Research

Dr. Brian LaPointe, Harbor
Branch Oceanographic Inst.

FSSR

North IR County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd., Sebastian



Wednesday, May 23, 7 PM

Conservation of the

Scrub Ridge

Dr. Jon Moore, FAU

Harbor Branch Oceanographic Inst.
5600 US 1 North, Ft. Pierce

772-242-2559



Wednesday, June 6, 6 PM

Florida Manatee: Native

American

Ann Spellman, FL FWCC

Brevard Zoo, Melbourne

Free admission

info: www.brevardzoo.org/conservation

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

Kathleen Otremba

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Roseland Community Association