



Friends of St. Sebastian River

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

May 2017

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 COUNTY CONSERVATION LANDS PROGRAM

Indian River County has a Conservation Lands Program that has acquired lands throughout the county, with voter-approved bond monies. Those monies were leveraged quite successfully to acquire environmentally sensitive and important lands in the county. Once acquired, the challenge is to preserve, or restore where necessary, habitat critical to the many species of plants and animals that rely on it for survival, while also providing public access for education and passive recreation. Most land conservation programs are perpetually understaffed and underfunded, and Indian River County is no exception.

Wendy Swindell from the IRC Conservation Lands Program, will join us this month to give an overview of the County's conservation lands and the issues they face in the management of those lands. The meeting is Tuesday, May 23rd, 7:30pm at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd in Sebastian and all are welcome to attend. For more information, visit our website at www.fssr.org or call 772-202-0501.

CREATE A FLORIDA WILDLIFE HABITAT IN YOUR BACKYARD

Florida is a wonderful place to garden. In most of the state we have the opportunity to garden year-round and actively support our native wildlife. The Florida Wildlife Federation has created an online resource with information that will aid you in establishing your own Florida wildlife habitat and enjoy its beauty for its own sake, while providing a place that helps animals, birds and bees which are rapidly being displaced by development. Every habitat garden is a step toward replenishing resources for wildlife locally and along migratory corridors.

The FWF is an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation, and their website at www.fwfonline.org/Habitat/Florida-Wildlife-Habitat-Center.aspx has a link to information from the NWF on how to establish your yard as "Certified Wildlife Habitat." We also have links to lots more information about using native plants on our website at www.fssr.org/links.htm#plants.

FEBRUARY YARD SALE

Thanks to everyone who helped with our February yard sale! This year was a great success and all proceeds raised go towards our George Schum Memorial Award, given to a graduating Sebastian River High School student. The Award also includes a \$500 scholarship. This year's SRHS Award Ceremony was Thursday, April 13th and we presented two awards that evening, to deserving senior students. Please see the article below for more details about the award recipients.

FLORIDIANS OPINION ON WATER QUALITY

Protecting ecosystems while maintaining an abundant water supply for human use is a delicate balance in Florida. For this reason, many Floridians view water as a very important issue. Floridians value a plentiful water supply for use in both cities and agriculture. Researchers with the UF/IFAS (University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources surveyed 524 residents for their opinions on water conservation, quality and policy in its annual statewide public opinion survey on water use.

The survey revealed 83 percent of respondents rank water as a highly or extremely important issue, the highest rank out of 10 issues. The majority of Floridians feel likewise about a plentiful water supply for cities and agriculture.

Seventy-nine percent of Floridians are likely or very likely to vote to support water conservation programs. Furthermore, 74 percent of respondents are likely or very likely to vote for a candidate who supports water conservation.

For more information, visit www.pieccenter.com/water.

Source: UF/IFAS, Water 2017 Issue Guide

A ROBOT TAKES ON INVASION OF LIONFISH

Similar to Florida and much of the Caribbean, Bermuda has been invaded by the invasive lionfish species, posing a threat to its native fishes and the health of its coral reefs. This month, Bermuda is being invaded by a friendlier group, for the America's Cup sailing race, and the British America's Cup team Land Rover BAR and their sustainability partners hope to leave a legacy in Bermuda, by making lionfish eradication a priority.

Ben Ainslie, Land Rover BAR founder and skipper, has spent time in the Caribbean and Bermuda, and "... talking to the locals, you realize the extent of the lionfish issue, and the potential devastation it could cause," he added. "It's something they are really, really concerned about."

In mid-April, a small group of scientists and conservationists, with the financial and promotional help of Land Rover BAR, deployed a robot prototype in Bermuda designed to stun and capture lionfish at depths that human divers rarely reach.

The robot is the brainchild of a new organization, Robots in Service of the Environment, which was founded in 2015 by Colin Angle and his wife, Erika.

Colin Angle is the chief executive and co-founder of iRobot, whose products include the robot vacuum Roomba and the bomb-disarming PackBot. Avid divers, the Angles founded Robots in Service of the Environment, known as RSE (pronounced rise), after a trip to Bermuda.

"Below recreational dive depths there are still enormous populations of lionfish, and some biologists believe they are doing most of their breeding at depths below the typical 90 feet that recreational divers swim at," said Orin Hoffman, RSE's chief roboticist. "So the goal is to have our robot go down to 400 feet and be easy to use so commercial fishermen can efficiently use it."

To read the full New York Times story, visit www.nytimes.com/2017/04/17/sports/sailing/americas-cup-bermuda-lionfish.html. For more information on lionfish in Florida, visit <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/marine-species/lionfish>. And be sure to check out the Sebastian Lionfish Fest this month on May 19-21. It's not just for fisherman – you can do your part by trying out the delicious recipes made from fish harvested during the event! For more details, visit <https://sebastianlionfishfest.com>.

Source: "In America's Cup Waters, a Robot Takes On an Invasion of Lionfish," Christopher Clarey, The New York Times, April 17, 2017

GEORGE SCHUM MEMORIAL AWARD

Our George Schum Memorial Award is given annually to a Sebastian River High School senior, in memory of George's spirit of community service, and who has shown an interest in environmental issues. The award includes a \$500 scholarship, and this is the fifth year in a row we have been able to present a second award, due to the generous donation of a previous recipient, Dr. Kimberley Maxwell. Kimberley received our Schum award in 2004 and has kept in touch with us ever since. She attended the West Point Military Academy and now serves as a pediatrician, currently stationed in Italy.

Congratulations to this year's Schum award winners, Allison Fahey and Marian Vu, and best wishes with your

continuing education and future careers!

NATIONAL RIVERS MONTH

June is National Rivers Month and the American Rivers organization encourages friends of rivers around the country, to conduct a river cleanup in June, and throughout the year.

Across the country, rivers serve people, animals and plants in a variety of ways. Humans rely on rivers for drinking water and recreational activities such as fishing, swimming and rafting. As for plants and animals, rivers serve as shelter where these living creatures can grow, reproduce and thrive. However, our rivers are falling victim to increasing pollution. National Rivers Month aims to get people learning about, celebrating, and cleaning up these waterways.

The Friends often holds a cleanup on the St. Sebastian River in the month of May. This year we have been staying busy and didn't get around to organizing our usual event. We hope to find time to schedule a river cleanup later in the fall. Please share your email address with us and we will let you know when our plans shape up for the next event.

FLORIDA LEGISLATURE REFUSES TO FUND FLORIDA FOREVER

Legislative leaders agreed to defund Florida Forever and slash the Department of Environmental Protection Budget by 20 percent (approximately \$325 million) from last year as part of 2017 budget negotiations. In response, Florida Conservation Coalition (FCC) Chairman, former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham said, "Florida legislators have made it clear that they don't care about Florida's environment or Florida voters. No one who can see over the horizon to Florida's future should support this budget." In 2014, Floridians overwhelmingly voted for conserving Florida's most important lands. 75% of voters passed a constitutional amendment setting aside dedicated funding every year, for twenty years, for this purpose. For the 2017 – 2018 fiscal year those funds amount to more than \$800 million.

"Zero. It is inconceivable that the Legislature would deny the will of the people and not fund the most successful environmental program in the country. Environmental decisions should be made based on long-term scientific research, not short-term political priorities," says FCC Vice-Chairman and Seminole County Commissioner Lee Constantine. Incredibly, the Legislature couldn't find one penny of the \$800 million set aside by Amendment One for Florida Forever or Florida Communities Trust. Significant new funding was set aside for Everglades restoration in this year's state budget. But equally pressing conservation needs in every other part of Florida were basically stifled. Nathaniel Reed, FCC Vice-Chairman said, "As one of the fathers of the predecessor of Florida Forever, I am terribly disappointed that the will of the voters has been ignored by our elected legislative body. Every year that there is no funding for Florida Forever is a lost year for Floridians. We obviously need new leaders with a commitment to Florida's future, which is now left up to the voters."

Combined with proposed significant federal budget cuts to environmental programs, this budget leaves Floridians less well-prepared to handle future environmental challenges.

Source: Press Release, May 4, 2017, Florida Conservation Coalition

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, May 23, 7:30pm

**Indian River
Conservation Lands**
Wendy Swindell,
IRC Conservation
Lands Program
FSSR

North IRC Library
1001 Sebastian Blvd.,
Sebastian
info: www.fssr.org or
772-202-0501



May 19-21, 2017
Sebastian Lionfish Fest
Capt. Hiram's
1606 Indian River Dr.,
Sebastian
info:
www.sebastianlionfishfest.com



Saturday, May 20, 7pm
**Movie Night – "Gimme
Green"**
Marine Resources Council
3275 NE Hwy US 1,
Palm Bay
info: www.mrcirl.org or
321-725-7775

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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Vice President Buzz Herrmann
Secretary Mark Bondy
Treasurer Bill Brennan

Directors for 2017

Tom Bauer Lee Ann Kluepfel
Judy Orr Jane Schnee
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Bruce Zingman

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Mari Ogimachi & Glenn Smith
John & Debra Sedor

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