



August 2015

WILDERNESS PROTECTION · WILDLIFE PRESERVATION · FISHING AND HUNTING CONSERVATION

BFA NEWSLETTER

HAPPY SUMMER EVERYONE!

Please mark your calendar for the next General Membership Meeting

Wed, 5 August.

This will be an Eating Meeting with a Guest Speaker! Doors open at 5:30 PM. Dinner will be served at 6:00 PM. Dinner will consist of a fish fry, baked beans, coleslaw and hushpuppies.

Cost \$8.00/person.
1615 East LaRua Street, Pensacola.

PRESENTATION

Please join us in welcoming Elizabeth Benchley, UWF Archaeologist, who will inform, educate us and present a description of our early downtown Pensacola landscape. Her presentation entitled "Colonial and Early American Water Management in Downtown Pensacola" is sure to help us better understand the flooding problems we observed in June 2012 and April 2014, and why they happened. Dr. Benchley is also an active member of the Storm Water Advisory Task (SWAT) Committee, which is currently working with the City of P'cola and Escambia County to address and mitigate future storm water issues.

HAS ANYONE NOTICED....

...all the environmental issues which seem to be bubbling up to the surface these days? The 'Think Globally, Act Locally' adage holds true...Maybe; just maybe it will cause us to start paying attention as to how we treat our landscape...both globally and locally. Are we even conscientious of how our natural areas are adjusting to our continued growth and development? It really will take each of us to make a difference for all of us.

Late May 2015, the USEPA and the Army Corps of Engineers refined a few points to clarify their intent & missions. Namely, they finalized the Clean Water Rule to clearly protect from pollution and degradation the streams and wetlands that form the foundation of the nation's water resources. The Clean Water Rule protects the streams and wetlands that feed our rivers, lakes, bays, and coastal waters. These waters are critical for agriculture, healthy communities, our **economy**, and our way of life. Don't worry; the rule does not create any new permitting requirements...<http://www2.epa.gov/cleanwaterrule>

Speaking of the Economy...In April 2010, the entire Gulf Coast learned exactly how intrinsically linked the economy and the environment is through the BP Macondo oil spill. Fast forward 5 years... *In early May (2015), with its legal options dwindling and investors impatient, BP Plc saw a chance to negotiate what became a \$18.7 billion settlement that ended five years of litigation over the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history.*

It took BP nearly two months of 10-hour sessions, often through the weekend, to reach the provisional agreement signed a week ago, finally putting a price tag on the spill's civil damages. The deal swelled BP's total bill for Macondo to \$53.8 billion, yet provided a sense of closure for investors and boosted the share price of the company valued around \$120 billion by as much as 5 percent. Wow!

<http://news.yahoo.com/options-dwindling-bp-seized-chance-settle-oil-spill-051031803--finance.html>

And then we have Pope Francis with a stern wake-up call...*The vision that Francis outlined in a 184-page papal encyclical is sweeping in ambition and scope: He describes relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment and says apathy, the reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness are to blame.*

The most vulnerable victims, he declares, are the world's poorest people, who are being dislocated and disregarded. What a powerful message, and so timely! To learn how you can help the community and the environment, visit <http://bit.ly/1LOIAzY> http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/world/europe/pope-francis-in-sweeping-encyclical-calls-for-swift-action-on-climate-change.html?_r=0



One of the most heartbreaking aspects of 'the pollutions: air, water, soil, food, etc.,' are the future ramifications which are unknown to us today. We continue to pay for our previous mistakes; hopefully learning as we go along. In order to have a productive discussion on the topic, one has to identify the issues, concerns, and then try to develop and assign a value (monetize) to the potential impacts. (Think back to BP and the many communities, cultures, business' and livelihoods dependent on a healthy Gulf). Currency seems to be the universal language. *WHAT'S A HEALTHY baby worth? A pristine lake? How about the market value of an IQ point? Some people might say it's impossible to put a price tag on such things. But the Environmental Protection Agency has been doing it for decades, proving that it is possible—though also very difficult to do in a way that pleases everyone.* This is where compromise comes in; compromise can only be accomplished when all the key players are at the table (which help to identify the issues) and allow people to work together, so building a sense of trust, based on what's best for the set of circumstances. That is why Stakeholders are such a critical element in the decision making process. <http://www.wired.com/2015/07/epa-puts-price-tag-pollution>

The Clean Water Rule (2015, discussed earlier) recognizes that people need clean water for their health. About 117 million Americans – one in three – get drinking water from streams that lacked 'CLEAR' protection before the rule was developed. The Clean Water Act (1972) established the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the US and regulating water quality standards for surface waters. <http://www2.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act> So what about ground water? Who oversees the contaminants that end up in our groundwater? *Many of Earth's biggest aquifers are overstressed. People around the world rely on groundwater for drinking and crop irrigation. But a new satellite data study says that many of our biggest aquifers are overstressed.*

Approximately 2 billion people rely on groundwater for their primary water source, and groundwater is used to irrigate many of the crops that people depend on for food. Needless to say, groundwater is a very valuable resource. As with any valuable resource, it is a good idea to keep track of it, but that can be difficult to do with groundwater because it resides underneath the ground. Now, using new satellite technology, scientists have mapped trends of groundwater depletion in 37 of the world's biggest aquifers—about one-third showed signs of highly unsustainable water use. http://earthsky.org/earth/many-of-earths-biggest-aquifers-overstressed?utm_source=EarthSky+News&utm_campaign=797d06aa9eEarthSky_News&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c643945d79-797d06aa9e-393802057

So, just to keep everyone on the same page – we are discussing surface water, quality of surface water, and groundwater (namely quantity and quality of groundwater). And we are talking about people and their needs, but what about all the other plants and animals that require good quality and adequate quantity of water to survive? Some folks don't factor in that variable. And of course, many folks have problems following the rules when it comes to doing what's best for their project and the environment. At a recent meeting, a gentleman exclaimed that he had no problem abiding by and following the rules as long as everyone followed the same rules. I agree.

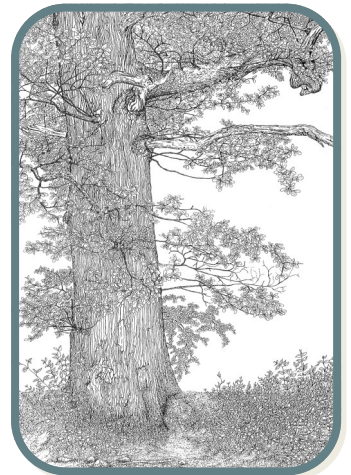
So it comes as no surprise that some states are suing to block Obama's water rule. *Eighteen states sued the Obama administration Monday (29 June 2015) to stop a new regulation asserting federal authority over minor waterways like streams and wetlands. The rule from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is one of the most controversial regulations from the Obama administration, redefining how the EPA enforces the water pollution protections of the Clean Water Act.*

Brian Deese, a top adviser to President Obama, said "the only people with reason to oppose the rule are polluters who want to threaten our clean water." It is hard enough to find clean surface water or a healthy habitat, ask any local biologists where their reference stations are for their local watersheds, and you'll see that we have a problem within our area. They were plentiful back in the 1950s and before, but then we used to take water for granted back then too! Today it's a different story. Just ask the folks living in the western states.

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/246435-three-states-sue-to-stop-obama-water-rule>

IT TAKES 100 YEARS TO GROW A HUNDRED YEAR OLD TREE

I guess that's what makes it so sad when we see the bare land associated with clear cutting in areas slated to be developed. Earlier this year, many watched as the riparian zone along Carpenter Creek by Airport Blvd and Davis Hwy was cut down to make room for a mattress shop and strip mall. I intercepted many phone calls from concerned citizens who wanted the property to be left in a wooded state. I even touched on it in the April 2015 Newsletter. The creek adjacent to the riparian zone was not impacted by the heavy 2014 April rains, but just above that site (upstream) – between Davis Hwy and Airport Blvd – the creek suffered immensely due to the development in the riparian zones. The creek needs our help. Our development approach really should mandate larger buffers between upland and low lying areas. The species that live in these low lying areas adjacent to creeks, along ravines, wetlands, etc. have evolved to life with a fluctuating water table since we regularly receive 65" of rain annually; Much of it in 3-5" downpours.



The Riparian Zone has such an important role in our region since it is the roots of these native plants that 'hold' our erodible sands in place. The building material of choice for local creek restoration projects in our area in our area includes armoring and rubble rock. We don't have naturally occurring rocks here! You literally have to drive to the north end of the county to find naturally occurring rock, in the form of iron rock. Besides the critical role of holding our soils in place, the roots support the plants which sequester our carbon and provide fresh air, and if we are lucky provide shade, and habitat. Drive to any parking lot where a mature tree casts a shadow in the summer, and that is where everyone wants to park. The most heartbreaking aspect of this is that we cut down native species that served a number of ecosystem services, and tend to replace them with non-native species such as crepe myrtle, an ornamental flowering species.

Our neighbors to the west just underwent the same shock when a developer bulldozed down nine mature live oak trees in downtown Mobile, AL, for the new Hilton Hotel. *City officials said that the developer will be required to replant several trees, but they are not required to be live oaks.* Like I said, it takes 100 years to grow a hundred year old tree.

<http://www.fox10tv.com/story/29486507/mobile-officials-developer-within-his-rights-to-cut-live-oaks>

THE LOCAL UPDATE

The Escambia County Restore Committee

BP settles, monies coming...eventually - By Christian Wagley

The oil giant BP has settled with Federal and State governments to the tune of \$18.7 billion to cover environmental and economic damages and penalties from the 2010 oil tragedy. The RESTORE Act ensures that some of those funds flow directly to counties in Florida, with Escambia slated to receive about \$58 million in funds from the spill, and Santa Rosa about \$24 million. There are also many other State and Federal sources of settlement funding, some of which will be spent on projects in NW Florida.

The amount of the settlement is a big disappointment for many, as we expected that the settlement would be higher. Apparently government officials were willing to take a smaller settlement in return for an end to litigation that could have taken years to reach a resolution. However, one element of the settlement is that BP will pay slowly over an 18 year period, so in the end the funds will still take many years to filter into the communities and ecosystems needing protection and restoration.

Santa Rosa County is reviewing the first projects submitted for RESTORE funding, while in Escambia County we are in the midst of a 90 day period in which projects are being developed in preparation for final submission due no later than September 29. Many BFA members have made the case that restoring our environment restores our economy, and so we hope that projects that restore our environment and enhance our economy (without undue environmental harm) are submitted for funding. If you have a great idea for a project be sure to review Escambia County's RESTORE guidelines and submit a project at: <http://restore.myescambia.com/>. As a member of Escambia's RESTORE Act Advisory Committee, I'm happy to offer my help to anyone with questions or ideas about restoring our economy and environment following the oil tragedy. You can reach me at: christianwagley@earthlink.net or 850/687.9968.

Santa Rosa County Restore Committee continues to be a few steps ahead of Escambia County when it comes to the submittal and selection process of the Pot 1 Restore Money (which was set up so each county can decide how monies from the oil spill can best help their community).

SR Restore Committee and selected technical teams have met and given point scores to the 56 proposals submitted for the \$4.3 million in Deepwater Horizon oil spill fines currently available in phase 1 of the SR County's Pot 1 Restore funds. Originally, the top scoring project was for Navarre Beach Restoration (re-nourishment). The scores were presented to the Santa Rosa Restore Council for review and consideration at their June meeting. Discussion followed on projects members felt would have a lasting impact on the county, but no decision was made on which projects should be recommended to the County Commission. The next meeting of the Council is July 13 at 3 pm at the Santa Rosa County Administrative Center Board Room, 6495 Caroline Street, Milton.

The Okaloosa Restore Committee is also a tad ahead of Escambia County and will be selecting projects from the received proposals mid July.

The Entire Gulf Coast could see a huge benefit since the BP Economic Claim Settlement included a separate suit filed by FL State Attorney General Bondi. In that proceeding, due to Clean Water Act violations, an estimated significant amount of funding (\$1.5 BILLION over the next 30 years!!) is coming to the panhandle by way of a non-profit created through the legislature, Triumph Gulf Coast. That will be an amazing opportunity to develop and accomplish smart regional growth, clean up our legacy contaminants, strengthen our regional land development codes, and insure that we provide healthy uplands and waters for all the future generations.

The Storm Water Advisory Team (SWAT) has been meeting monthly and has been hearing from various engineering firms as they report how best to address future storm water events throughout the city and the county. Part of the concern and a huge expensive issue is that the water begins inland and flows to the coast. At the same time, the creeks, streams, and wetlands that were the conveyances have been built upon (Stay tuned for Dr. Benchley's presentation). As we developed our downtown area over time, creating more & more impervious surfaces,

when it rains hard, we begin to saturate upwards from the groundwater (as the groundwater is recharged) and mix with storm water runoff to become flowing systems again. That is what really created the havoc in downtown Pensacola last April 2014. Other areas which were heavily impacted included Bristol Park, an entire subdivision built on the Eleven Mile Creek Riparian Zone. As the creek rose, it jumped the banks and flowed into the homes. The houses built in that area literally had water rushing through their homes that was 2-3' deep.

In the past, folks would mark the highest point of where the water reached, and not build below it. That information was passed on by word of mouth. Today, we delineate wetlands, the states and counties write and re-write the land development codes, everybody makes a dime or two off the permitting/sighting/development process, and what should be a finely tuned method which protects the landowner and infrastructure has become a political boondoggle that allows (and encourages) development in non-suitable locations so taxes can be collected. The flora and fauna in these areas evolved to handle and slow the waters. We have so heavily re-engineered our landscape that we are watching the demise of our creeks, wetland corridors, bayous and bays. When will we learn?

The Bay Area Resource Council (BARC) and Technical Advisory Council (TAC)

has been given new life by new staff and the expectation of BP Money. The BARC and BARC TAC fall under the West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC) which is a quasi political entity that is recognized by the state of Florida, supports NW FL by planning for and coordinating intergovernmental solutions to growth-related problems, providing technical assistance to local governments and meeting the needs of communities across the region.

A meeting was convened to discuss the 'FL Restore Council Projects' submitted for consideration and how these programs may be implemented. The FL Council joins councils from the other 4 Gulf Coast States, and Federal Partners; who together are the trustees for 'Pot 2' money. The total 'Pot 2' \$\$ for this period is \$150-180M.

WFRPC is working closely with counties throughout the Gulf Coast, The Nature Conservancy, and other groups to bring a program modeled after the National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs) – Programs to each of the large bays in NW FL. NERRs are federally funded and located throughout the coastal nation. The two closest facilities to our region are Apalachicola Bay NERR and Weeks Bay NERR. The establishment of NERRs to coastal communities has the positive benefit of educating the general public about our natural resources, providing excellent outreach opportunities for schools and research, and has shown improvements of the environment and ecosystem through their presence.

Ironically, many of us who voiced opposition to the hatchery two years ago - suggested taking the \$18.7M and establishing NERRs-like facilities for each of the four large NW FL Bays. The thought was and continues to be, that if we address & fix the water quality issues in are local waters, our seagrasses would become re-established, and they in-turn would recruit species naturally.

APROPPOS FISH HATCHERY

There have been two meetings to date focused on the proposed hatchery. One meeting was strictly to discuss the design of the building and the 'amenities' (boardwalks, pavilions, etc) which will be located between the old Tank Farm and the new ball park at Bruce Beach. The second meeting was focused on how the hatchery layout would be established, which cannot be finalized until a decision is made as to what type of fish will be cultured.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The Lion Fish Tournament & Festival was held in May 2015, and was very well attended. There is absolutely no doubt that this particular invasive is an ecological nightmare to our waters. These fish can release between 25,000-100,000 eggs every 2-3 days. Although usually found in the Gulf on reefs, last month one was found in Grande Lagoon. These prolific invaders have finally put invasive species in the 'I care' Category. Most of those who care are fishermen, and since fishing is a \$6 billion industry annually, the state has stepped in to help us care more. Hence, the FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission was one of the sponsors for the festival.



Invasive species come in all shapes and sizes. The most prolific include the plants. Cogon Grass, privet, popcorn trees, Japanese Climbing Fern, potato vine, etc., are all bad actors.

Feral hogs, cats, nutria, pythons, grackles, etc. all create havoc in our natural ecosystems. Florida's climate is very accommodating to many different species. Some are non-native and not very viable, but many are invasive, meaning they can out-compete natural species. What does that mean...For those of you who have bahia grass as your lawns, you know that grass that grows a foot a day in the summer, that was introduced to FL in the mid 1950s for cattle farmers. Today we live with bahia grass, will we live with lion fish too?

The BFA Board has been meeting regularly to discuss our water quality program, modifying the existing routes due to heavier traffic (distracted drivers), shortening the run and working with our partners at FDEP to return the bacterial monitoring component to our existing water quality parameters. The presence of *E.coli* in water is evidence that it is contaminated with human or animal waste. The closure of the local NW FL FDEP Lab in 2008 made this parameter unable to meet the holding times. Escambia County recently discovered a large outfall that was not regulated and discharging into Jackson Creek. BFA has monitored the site for many years due to a small sewage lift station upstream. This information exchange occurred during the last Basin Monitoring & Assessment Program (BMAP) Meeting, when the BFA was invited to participate.

Three Cheers for the BFA Board for their excellent support and steering the BFA forward!

The BFA Water Quality Sampling Class will be scheduled in August, so there is still time to sign up. This 4 hour class will be split between indoor learning and field practice. Certification is offered. Attendees must be BFA Members and minimum age of 16 yrs old. For information, please email Barbara@PanhandleWatershed.org or call 850/384.6696.

NEW BFA Logo...Kudos to the talented Lisa White who lent her talents and skills towards our organization By designing the new BFA logo & Newsletter layout. Let us know what you think.

The Bream Fishermen Association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of the conservation responsibilities as well as the recreational enjoyment of fishermen, hunters, campers and related outdoorsmen. It is the objective of the BFA to support, develop, and implement programs that will: 1) Improve the quality of our environment; 2) Protect and maintain our present wilderness type lakes, rivers, swamps, marshes, bays, forests, and beaches in their natural undeveloped state; and 3) Advance the causes of plant, marine, and wildlife preservation. Membership is open to all individuals who support these objectives.

Please join the BFA by sending us your contact information (name, mailing address, phone, and email) be sure to notify us if you prefer to receive notices and announcements by mail or email, and \$10 annual dues to our office address: 1203 North 16th Ave, Pensacola, FL 32503



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