



BFA

BREAM FISHERMEN ASSOCIATION

1203 N 16th Avenue
Pensacola, Florida 32503

A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION CHARTERED IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

October 2014 Newsletter

Fall is finally here!

Please mark your calendar for the **Annual BFA Fish Fry** to be held on **Saturday, 1 November. Please join us from 11:00 – 2:00 PM.**

Bring your family and friends out to our park and enjoy the day.

We will of course have a fish fry, baked beans, coleslaw and hushpuppies.

Desserts are welcome & encouraged!

1615 East LaRua Street, Pensacola.

Issues We are Keeping an Eye On: by Barbara Albrecht, BFA President:

- The April flood event certainly got everyone's attention – whether you were directly or indirectly impacted – our community can no longer afford to ignore these costly impacts. Here we are six months after the floods and what have we learned? The City of Pensacola & Escambia County have finally assembled a Stormwater Task Force, but they have yet to meet. Besides all the usual suspects, engineers and urban planners, who were tapped to be on this committee, one person stands out among the group, Dr. Elizabeth Benchley, an archaeologist at UWF. Her knowledge about the historic streams and wetlands – if heard among this committee – will prove that our *Modus operandi* (method of operation) for developing within low lying areas and filling-in creeks is simply no longer acceptable – given what we now know. Our Aug 2014 Newsletter highlighted the impacted flood areas on an elevation map. The correlation cannot be ignored. Kudos to Dr. Benchley for taking on this role & position to make our community more resilient and to guide these experts on where and more importantly, where not to build!
- **DON'T FORGET TO VOTE on 4 Nov!!** This year Florida voters will be invited to vote to if they want to protect their drinking water and the forests, beaches, and water bodies that make FL unique. If passed, **Amendment 1** will set up a 20-year source of funding for water and land conservation; more importantly, this will not raise taxes for Floridians!



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- Preserving open space and creating new parks and forests is an integral element in our heritage. Floridians once enjoyed the benefits of the nation's most comprehensive land conservation program, as the state purchased and protected millions of acres of FL parks and forestlands (CARL, Preservation 2000, and Florida Forever). In more recent years, the State's land conservation efforts have been virtually non-existent, putting FL farther behind as a growing population continues to gobble up open space.
- To put Florida's population into perspective – by year's end 2014 – experts predict that FL will have 20 million residents and will have had 100 million tourists visit our landscape. That is a huge amount of pressure on our ecosystems, water, air, etc. Couple this stressor with the fact that each person uses 100+ gallons of water a day for flushing, brushing their teeth, showering, and a host of other daily activities that we rarely give a second thought to – and water will become more valuable.
- Speaking of Conservation Lands – a fine parcel of land has been purchased with BP Oil Spill Funds and will be managed by the state. Escribano Point is located in southwestern Santa Rosa County and lies along lower East Bay. Through a carefully negotiated process, these 4,057 acres of land will protect some of the last undeveloped waterfront tracts in Santa Rosa County as well as preserving wetlands and forests serving to buffer the Yellow River Marsh Preserve to the west and Eglin Air Force Base to the east.
- Purchasing Escribano Point, much like the hatchery in Pensacola, was made possible by closed door negotiations between the federal government and BP Oil. These monetary purchases and promises fall under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Program in which BP will receive credits for each mitigated project within the given areas impacted by the spill. Given that the oil spill impacted all five Gulf Coast States, these lengthy negotiations will continue for many years to come.
- Apropos BP Oil Spill – as mentioned above there are many different discussions going on about our community and how best to address the issues – implementing the incredibly large sums of money speculated to be coming into our area. The NRDA \$\$ is different from the Restore \$\$\$. The NRDA \$\$ allows BP and the federal government to discuss and agree on projects, and in return BP gets credit towards restitution. The Restore \$\$\$ will be allotted to each state and in FL to the 8 impacted counties & 15 indirectly impacted counties to Restore the environment and the communities, and address long term disparity that can be affecting each community. In FL, each county may decide how projects are selected and vetted based on criteria they are developing. The judge presiding over the BP Trial sits in New Orleans, LA, and has asked for a recess/hiatus until Jan 2015 so he and his team may review over 1 million pages of information.
- BP Oil was able to expedite some mitigation funds to more directly impacted business' (namely those dependent on tourism) by providing \$\$\$ for PR, tourism, and economic development. All those commercials, billboards, concerts on area beaches, aquariums in visitor's centers, and free \$100 gas cards to visitors have been provided to curry favor with businesses. Too bad our environment hasn't



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received any of those monies, since after all it was directly affected by the oil that washed ashore. Part of the problem is translating the value of our environment into a monetary currency.

- And the last item we are keeping a close eye on is a political hot potato – which may serve as a precedent to many other communities within the state of FL. Santa Rosa Shores is an older community platted along a series of man-made canals – due south of Tiger Point in Gulf Breeze, FL. Located along the Santa Rosa Sound, this 1950's era community is comprised of modest homes each backing up to a canal which was developed for the homeowner who could walk out their back door and pull away from the dock in their boat at any time, day or night. The canals (three of them) empty into shallow waters which are home to many healthy seagrass beds (*Thalassia* – turtle grass - and the pioneering seagrass *Halodule*). The problem is that the homeowners are having increasing difficulty in getting from their homeport dredged canals into deep sound water without impacting the seagrass beds.
 - The homeowners have been seeking to dredge a deeper channel for the past 20 years; this year a co-applicant on the permit is Santa Rosa County.
 - The current permit description is to impact 3.4 acres of seagrass beds for this dredging operation.
 - Seagrass beds are highly productive components of our ecosystem which support many commercially viable species by affording them refuge and nursery grounds. Seagrasses are sentinel species dependent on good water quality (low nutrients), clear waters (little to no turbidity); and a healthy sediment with the right mix of bacterial consortia. Without these three items, seagrasses cannot flourish.
 - Seagrass transplants have had some success in south and central FL waters, but currently there is no published literature in NW FL which has shown success.
 - Over 90% of the estuarine and marine seagrass in the Pensacola Bay System (including Santa Rosa Sound) has been eliminated by man-made pollution, as reported by the 'Escambia Bay Recovery Study' published in 1975. This study was assisted by the BFA Members – to help identify why our bays were dying.
 - Of the remaining less than 10% of our grassbeds, is it really reasonable to fragment, impact, and potentially destroy 3.4 acres of a healthy system so a handful of boat owners can get their bigger boats into deeper waters?
 - Stay tuned as there are many eyes across the state watching very closely to see which way the FDEP & the Army Corps of Engineers will decide. History has a way of repeating itself, and we often don't value items until they are lost.
 - The irony of this situation is that there are many tens of projects being developed – hoping to receive Restore \$\$ to restore seagrass beds. How can the same state and federal agencies tasked with protecting these valuable resources also provide a permit to destroy them?
 - The camel seems to be getting his nose under the tent...



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- Tying up loose ends: The Fiesta of Five Flags hosted Pensacola’s 54th Seafood Festival several weekends ago. This 3-day money-making event featured artists, music, a 5K run, kid’s activities & tent, and of course seafood. The event was well attended on Friday night and I took the opportunity to poll the food vendors on their source of seafood. Of the five vendors I spoke to – two bought their seafood from Birmingham, AL, two bought their seafood from Atlanta, GA, and one from Mobile, AL.
 - It’s a shame that our area waters no longer support the bounty of seafood they once did;
 - That the oystermen are not able to harvest the bushels they once did from our historic oyster reefs in East Bay;
 - It’s a shame that 40 families once made their living in upper Escambia Bay by crabbing, fishing, shrimping (our upper bay used to produce white shrimp, pink shrimp, and brown shrimp) – only to have the last family close shop and move in the late 1990’s because the bay had died;
 - Annual poundage of finfish and shellfish in commercial landings of Escambia County steadily increased from a low of 3.2 million pounds in 1966 to a 10-year high of 5.6 million pounds in 1973; and
 - Had the Fiesta of Five Flags hosted the Pensacola Seafood Festival in 1973, the commercial landings for Escambia County alone were broken down as follows: 4,649,294 lbs of fish, 69,451 lbs of blue crab, 7,287 lbs of oysters, 12,516 lbs of squid and 906,133 lbs of shrimp. Now that would have been locally grown, locally caught and locally consumed Seafood Festival from our area waters...of course all of that would depend on the vast seagrass meadows that dominated our sounds, bays and bayous back when the ecosystem was still healthy.

BFA Community Outreach

Dear BFA Members, many of you were able to attend the May 2014 BFA Mtg and hear SeaGrant Agent Rick O’Conner discuss ‘Bringing Back the Bayou’s (B3)’ in our area. Shortly after I stepped into Charles Lowrey’s shoes as the president, we conducted a short survey of the members to fine tune their goals & mission for the organization (this occurred at the Feb 2012 General Membership Meeting). The survey outcome was that many of our BFA Members wanted to see our bayous and bays return to their previous productivity.

The next challenge was how to go about measuring productivity – relatively easily and on a shoestring budget. The Oyster Spat Trap was born. In 2013 and again in 2014, the BFA has been invited to meet with high school students and introduce them to the BFA Organization and explain how and why we organized in the 1970s.

Prior to becoming a SeaGrant Agent, Rick O’Conner was the Marine Science Instructor at Washington High. Ed Bauer continues the legacy and is now encouraging his students to work in teams developing their own research. In addition to Washington High School, West Florida Tech HS, Pensacola HS, and Escambia HS are developing marine science classes for their student body. Students at Washington HS are currently building more oyster spat collectors for other schools and citizens interested in monitoring their water bodies.

The BFA Board is very happy that we have so many new and interested young people looking at our area waters and continuing the role of being environmental stewards...through all our efforts we may be able to restore our waters!



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History has a way of repeating itself. Christian Wagley has been environmentally conscious his whole life. After discussing some current-in-our-backyard issues last week, I thought it appropriate to include his poignant column published in the Pensacola News Journal 29 Jan 1998.

We keep slicing pieces from the ecological pie. christianwagley@earthlink.net

Plans by Gulf Power to place a 10,500-foot-long power line beneath Santa Rosa Sound to serve new development on Pensacola Beach have raised environmental concerns among residents. A small patch of seagrasses, which help filter the water and provide food and cover for small fish, crabs and other animals, will be destroyed.

Which brings us to the question of perception. A 1-foot wide trench through a few thousand square feet of seagrass doesn't seem like such a big impact. But perception may not be reality. An environmental agency employee I know puts this into a clear historical perspective.

During slide presentations, the employee uses a pie chart to make his case. Each generation has an impact on the natural world, he says. As each generation comes and goes, succeeding generations are left with less of the resources than previous generations enjoyed: fewer trees, less green space between our communities, no oysters left in the bay.

So when people talk about a new highway destroying only 1 percent of the trees, or the discharge from a factory smothering merely 10 acres of fish spawning grounds, they're really talking about destroying a percentage of the percentage that still remains.

As my friend says: "We keep taking pieces from a pie that isn't a whole pie." Each generation cuts off a piece of that pie, and in many cases what's left today is slim pickings.

While there are no reliable figures for the decline in seagrasses in Santa Rosa Sound, in the Pensacola Bay system only 5-10 percent of the original seagrasses remain, according to a 1991 water management district report.

If the utility line goes ahead as planned, seagrasses it destroys may grow back quite well. Or officials may locate a route for the cables that impacts fewer grass beds. Nevertheless, every day we cut more slices from a pie that many of us mistakenly think just came out of the oven.

The BFA Website will soon have several position papers for our membership. The main stressors in our area include: Sedimentation, Nutrient Runoff, Stormwater Runoff, to name just a few. If you have questions or concerns about our area waters, please let us know. Call 850.384.6696 or send an email to:

PanhandleWatershed@gmail.com

Hope to see you at the Annual BFA Fish Fry!



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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 mailing address: 1203 North 16th Ave, Pensacola, FL 32503

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