



# October 2015 Newsletter

**Fall is finally here!**

NOW HEAR THIS...Emily Bosso, Grand Daughter of Long-Time member, John Chason, has graduated BOOT Camp in Oklahoma and is now stationed in Ft. Gordon, Ga. PVT Emily is scheduled to graduate from the Famous Signal Group & be home by Turkey Day!

Please mark your calendar for the **Annual BFA Fish Fry** to be held on **Saturday, 7 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 Economic Impact of our Natural Ecosystem:

- Seagrass meadows are key; submerged aquatic vegetation, which was found in all of our Northwest FL Bays, our bayous, and many of our creeks just 60-70 years ago are missing;
- The State recognizes the value of this ecosystem and has placed a value of \$20,500/acre, which translates into a statewide benefit of \$55.4 billion annually;
- Seagrass meadows function as a nursery for 70-90% of commercial fish and thousands of invertebrate species; [Fishing is an economic driver in FL via tourism]
- Seagrasses sequester carbon, meaning they capture CO<sub>2</sub> and release O<sub>2</sub>, but they are 3 times more efficient at doing so than a terrestrial forest;
- Seagrasses act as a filter to remove fine sediments from the water column, and are known to stabilize shorelines;
- Bay and bayou bottoms devoid of seagrasses are vulnerable to intense wave action and shoreline erosion; and lastly,
- Seagrasses remove nutrients from water column. [Buzzwords = Ecosystem Services]

Many of you know this already. Our livelihood and our overall health are tied to a healthy ecosystem. When our uplands are healthy, our waters are healthy. And when our waters are healthy, our community is healthy. If any of those parts are broken, then we can expect to see a decline in our health.

Wetlands are another crucial component in our healthy ecosystem. Many environmental scientists referred to wetlands as the kidneys of our environment back in the 1980s and 90s; for the ability of wetlands to filter nutrients, retain waters, slow runoff and support a vegetated buffer between uplands and lowlands.

- Wetlands are part of the foundation of our nation's water resources and are vital to the health of waterways and the communities that are downstream;

- Wetlands feed downstream waters, trap floodwaters, recharge groundwater supplies, remove pollution, and provide fish and wildlife habitat;
- Wetlands are also economic drivers because of their key role in fishing, hunting, agriculture and recreation; and
- Healthy wetlands, release waters to streams and headwaters, which in turn support many aspects and industries that are dependent on clean water.

Wetlands include swamps, marshes and bogs. Wetlands can vary widely because of differences in soils, topography, climate, hydrology, water chemistry, vegetation, and other factors. Wetlands are often found alongside waterways and in flood plains. Some wetlands have no apparent connection to surface water like rivers, lakes or the ocean, but have critical groundwater connections, especially in Northwest FL.

Another critical component in this equation is the Riparian Zone. This may be a new term for you, but chances are you know this area especially if you're outdoorsy. This is that transition zone between low-lying wet areas and upland areas. This is the area you cross when making your way to the stream or river. Usually densely wooded, somewhat spongy and able to retain water; Driving through this area in a vehicle would leave ruts. The riparian zone is made up of plants that can live with wet feet or can survive in dry times; these plants are used to having lots of leaf litter (organic material), and live in a somewhat spongy in texture, that never is packed down. Such that when heavy and intense rain events occur; these areas like wetlands, act as a sponge to hold water, slow water, and slowly release water like a sponge into their surrounding areas.



Dune Lake, photo courtesy of Tracy Howell; Florida Lake Watch

Hard to imagine what we are talking about? Have you heard of the Dune Lakes? These Dune Lakes are a unique geologic feature in Walton County. These lakes are fresh water basins that are hydrologically connected to their uplands. The surrounding area was wooded and in a natural state (the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem). When the area received rain, the land would swell and hold water (like a sponge) until the surrounding area dried out. As it dried out, the water would leak out from the spongy earth, darker for having steeped in pine needles and oak leaves (like a tea bag making tannins). These waters would flow towards a low lying area feature to become one of the Dune Lakes. During hurricanes, tropical weather, and heavy rains, the lakes over flow into the Gulf, and carry their rich medley of nutrients out to sea. During tropical events, strong on-shore winds would blow the salty waters of the Gulf along with schools of juvenile fish into the lakes. The combinations of these events contribute to the uniqueness of the lakes, and their differences from one another.

Several of the Dune Lakes are currently under threat by developers. Those who understand the uniqueness of these jewels have been steadfast in keeping them natural by maintaining a 100’ buffer and only allowing 25% of the lot in the lake zone to be developed.

1000 Friends of Florida and the FL Wildlife Federation have joined with fellow conservationists because the County Comprehensive Plan was tweaked earlier in the year to open this loophole. To read more about this issue, go to:

<http://www.nwfdailynews.com/article/20151012/NEWS/151019878/?Start=1>

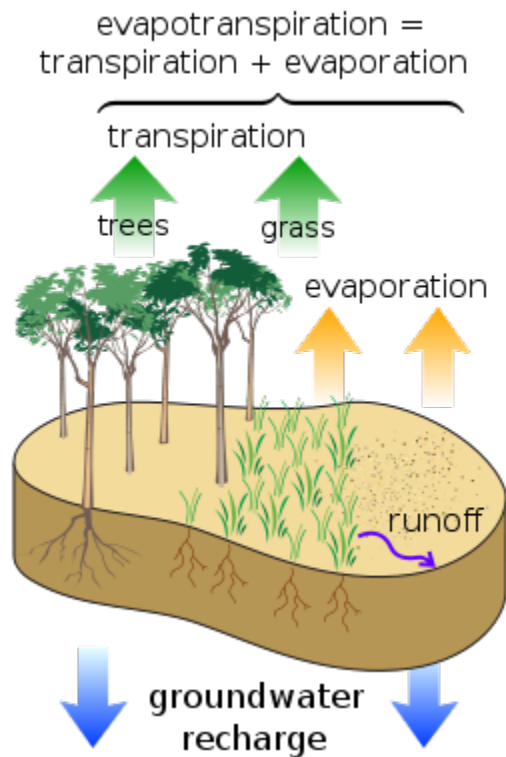
Knowing these few key concepts and truly understanding them and more importantly how they are connected – is the next step. Let’s revisit the April 2014 Flood.

For years, wetlands and riparian zones have been under threat. Early on, these areas were often undervalued because we didn’t understand their role. Today, they are still under threat even though science has pointed out their importance in maintaining water quality, absorbing and slowing runoff, recharging the aquifer, removing nutrients, etc. Our environmental laws today are a generation out of date...and this will become our children’s problem tomorrow!

These areas require buffers to ‘do their job’. Consider the following:

Land Use Changes	Evapo-transpiration	Groundwater Infiltration	Surface Runoff
100 acres of natural land (that is, forested, meadow, etc.)	40%	50%	10%
100 acres with 10-20% impervious surface	35%	42%	20%
100 acres with 35-50% impervious surface	35%	35%	30%
100 acres with 75-100% impervious surface	30%	15%	55%

Stormwater Runoff and Sedimentation are the two most hazardous threats to our inland waters. Now consider what happened during the April 2014 flood, or the 5-8-10" rain event we had a few weeks ago. Let's apply these rain events to an area the size of Cordova Mall, and its parking area. The site is roughly 73 acres. One inch of rain on one acre is 27,000 gal. Five inches of rain on one acre is 135,000 gal. The nearest creek to Cordova Mall is Carpenter Creek. The wetlands and riparian zones that used to protect the creek are long gone; today they are built up.



"Surface water cycle" by Mwtoews

Today, when Cordova Mall receives 5" of rain; that translates into almost 10 million gallons of water flowing straight down the hill and into the creek. Add to that the parking lots of Sacred Heart Hospital, Lowes, Publix, Winn Dixie, Target, and all the other business' in the area and you soon realize that the creek doesn't stand a chance.

All of our creeks and bayous face the same sentence, unless we get smarter about our development methods. Stay back from the water's edge. Leave natural areas natural.

As we develop the last handful of places, let's leave our buffers in place. These will serve to protect uplands during floods, they will allow wildlife to have a corridor, they will protect water quality and water temperature by providing shade; Native species have co-evolved to live in these areas and they support the basis of the food web for many organisms including birds, fish & shellfish. If we are ever to have grassbeds back in our bayous and bays, we will have to begin protecting these inland creek systems.

I've chosen this topic for the newsletter, because every day, every county along the Gulf Coast is being asked to relax the laws or current codes when it comes to development. In Gulf Breeze and Santa Rosa County, a 50' setback from the water (not a wetland or a marsh) is the norm. Every month, the Land Development Committee receives 3-5 requests for a variance – to build closer to the water. And 99% of the time, these requests are granted. The Committee likely has no background or understanding of why 50' buffers were selected (to protect the water quality), and truthfully might not care.

Seagrass Meadows are like a rare orchid, and require wide buffers along the shore, low nutrients, and clear waters so sun may penetrate; they are very slow growing systems. Yet, several subdivisions co-located in areas with small remaining portions of healthy seagrass meadows wish to dredge through them so they may have boating access.

Or, in the case of the ECUA Pensacola Beach Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) which releases treated effluent through a diffuser pipe into Santa Rosa Sound (in the vicinity of seagrass beds); the FDEP just awarded ECUA another five year discharge permit. Really?

In 2004, Pensacola proved just how vulnerable it is to have a WWTP near the shore. I guess we'll have to take our chances with the small isolated islands of seagrass meadows that have managed to hang on.

The Ole' timers can recall a time when the seagrass meadows were visible through crystal clear waters and surrounded by white sand. The fish were bountiful. Armed with a net, you could catch a fish dinner in no time; shrimp, crabs and oysters were plentiful. No one went hungry!

The BP Oil Spill Fines, when added up equal an awful lot of money, but all the money in world can't bring back our environment if we don't change our ways. The first step in that process requires understanding how everything fits together. And one size does not fit all!

## **Looking for Some New Board Members**

The BFA has a wonderful and active Board, but sometimes life gets in the way and it's time to regroup and refresh. That time has come, and it's time to pass the baton on to some others. The BFA Board meets 7-8 times a year, and hosts 4 Membership Meetings annually. Please let us know if you have time (or are willing to make the time) and interest to continue with our long standing conservation efforts. We would love your help!

## **Escambia County Restore Advisory Committee**

Many of you may be keeping up with the Restore Process, but for those that aren't in the know, here's a quick update. The County received 124 proposals, which are currently being vetted. Once these are reviewed by the Restore Advisory Committee, they will be reviewed and blessed or not by the Escambia County Commissioners, and then will make their way into the Multi Year Implementation Plan. It will be at this point that the public will have an opportunity to comment. \*\*Water Quality Projects topped the list of what was received\*\*

Santa Rosa County is several months ahead of Escambia, in that they have accepted proposal, they have vetted them, and are now in the public comment phase. If you wish to review and comment, please visit <http://santarosa.fl.gov/bocc/restore.cfm> before 16 Nov 2015

## **Restore Projects**

There will be many projects submitted that will be economic in nature, focus on tourism, infrastructure, etc. but please keep the discussion at the beginning of this newsletter fresh in your mind. If we do not protect our inland waters, wetlands, and riparian buffers, our bayous and bays will remain dead. If we protect our environment, we will protect our economy. It's that simple.

**Hope to see you at the Fish Fry, Sat, 7 November, 11:00 – 2:00 PM.**

**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

Water Quality Monitoring – Habitat Conservation – Citizen Engagement – Environmental Education

## Bream Fishermen Association

*1203 N. 16th Ave, Pensacola, FL 32503*

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