



The BFA APRIL 2016 NEWSLETTER

Happy Beautiful Spring Everyone!

Please mark your calendar for the next General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, 4 May

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. Vegan options for our vegan friends will also be available.

Cost \$10.00*/person (*Please note the slight price increase)
1615 East LaRue Street, Pensacola

PRESENTATION - "Alabama Water Watch (AWW) – Will it work for the BFA?"

Please join us in welcoming Eric Reutebuch, Director for the Alabama Water Watch, Auburn University Water Resources Center (<http://www.alabamawaterwatch.org/>). Mr. Reutebuch has 27 years of field biology, research and outreach experience in Aquatic Ecology, Limnology and Watershed Stewardship focused on southeastern streams, rivers, reservoirs and coastal waters and their communities. He worked for the Auburn University Fisheries Rivers and Reservoirs Group under Dr. David Bayne for 17 years, and then joined Alabama Water Watch full-time in 2006. In 2013, he accepted the position of Associate Director of Alabama Water Watch, and accepted the position of Director in 2014. As such, he manages the AWW Program, a statewide volunteer water monitoring program formed in 1992, which merged with the AU Water Resources Center in 2013.

A Message from the President....

The January BFA Newsletter focused attention on the role of Citizen Scientists in the protection of our natural resources. Many of the February meeting attendees shared how much they enjoyed learning about our Blackwater River State Forest ecology and birds from Peggy Baker. This quarter we continue the discussion and learn what other communities are doing to protect their natural resources for future generations.

To do that, we'll need to go back a few decades to remind us all of where we were and how far we've come. The March 2016 issue of Smithsonian Magazine has a great article on Steve Wozniak, who developed the first computer in 1975 (became known as Apple 1). Without knowing it, he launched the tech revolution. Today, technology is being developed in almost every sector at lightning speed. The military has afforded civilians many new technologies. Just look at the cell phones we carry with us, ever wonder how we could have lived without one? Today you can watch a movie on a two inch screen; listen to your favorite music or book through ear buds; check your email by wristwatch and know how far you've walked, calories burned, and when you should move to avoid becoming sedentary – all of which is tailored to your body type, age, weight and gender. Inventor Elon Musk is developing an electric car, within an affordable price range, which will allow the driver to travel 200 miles on a charge. Google is focusing their efforts on self driving cars, which will likely be available in the US and abroad by simply requesting one through your watch or cell phone, so owning a car may one day be obsolete. Imagine that.

The handful of folks from this region of FL, who've grown long in the tooth, could have never foreseen spending money on bottled water, never mind more on bottled water than a Coke Cola or a gallon of gasoline. And of course, every generation takes what they grew up with for granted. Unfortunately in our area, the natural resources that wooed us to the region and sustained our past generations have been used up, impacted, and unfortunately that which remains is a far cry from what this region once supported.

Our BFA Organization was founded by a bunch of guys who grew up in this region, many living off the land when resources were still plentiful. These men and their families could not have thought it possible that you could kill off all the important grassbeds that supported so much diversity in our crystal clear bays; kill all the turkey which roamed the forests; nor cut down every tree without even considering replanting. That would not compute, because it was so vast and the region supported such bounty.

Back in the 1960's, when many of the veterans of the Korean War and WWII were either making their way home or remembered how beautiful the region was while training at one of our many military bases earlier in their career - found themselves shocked at the conditions of our resources when they returned. We cut down the longleaf pine and replanted with slash or sand pine for the paper mills; we intentionally cut down everything with roots that held our sandy soils together; we discharged effluent from industry directly into the bays, wetlands, and

creeks – and along the way managed to killed everything we once valued and took for granted. Even the brown pelican moved on. By the late 1960's we were building the interstate system, and again without knowing what we were doing were fragmenting small seepage slopes and steep head ravines which create the first order creeks – which are so very important to our nutrient cycling, the fishery, water quality, and house many unique species of flora and fauna.

At that time, the University of West Florida was in its embryonic stage and was recruiting some of the best talent to the area to study the dying bays and the causes that contributed to their demise. The Dept of Biology really put UWF on the map, and at its helm was Dr. Tom Hopkins; a Marine Corps brat who became the youngest drill instructor in the history of the Corps and a veteran of the Korean War. He had quite a pedigree: he taught at Scripps Institute of Oceanography and at New College in Sarasota before coming here. Many of Tom's UWF students can still be found in the area. Some have retired, some are nearing retirement age, but his entire student body learned about big picture ecology through coherent and systematic field sampling to better understand how processes within a system work.

Tom Hopkins also worked closely with the BFA, who together developed a unique method for pollution tracking. Longtime BFA Member Ernie Rivers was a Commander in the Navy and was in Special Operations with the Photo Squadron. Ernie had a special interest in his bay (having lived his whole life on it) and through his work also worked closely with the young pilots who were being trained to fly aircraft. He taught the young pilots to pay special attention to industry outfalls and to note where large populations of birds were congregating. When the young pilots landed at Sherman Field PNAS, they would report their findings: ~ 500 seagulls near the outfall pipe for the Main Street WWTP Sewage Outfall.

A special relationship developed between these two men in which any young pilots returning to the Navy Base would directly report any unusual activities within the bay; Ernie indicated that Tom had a special phone that sat on his desk, after Ernie's students returned from their training flights, they would report any unusual plumes near the outfalls, masses of birds, anything unusual and Ernie would call Tom on the special phone and report the observations. Tom Hopkins would turn around and deploy his graduate and undergraduate students to sample the area - in this way critical sampling was being accomplished in as close to real time as possible.

If seagulls were present at the boil for the WWTP outfall, Ernie would call the City of Pensacola Administrator and tell them to 'quit polluting my bay'. Ernie retired from the Navy in 1971 and joined the FL Game and Fish Commission in order to continue protecting his beloved bay.

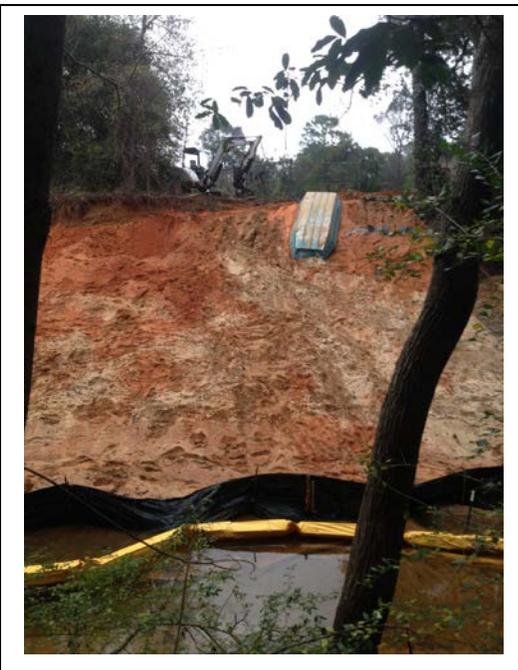
I share all this with you, because last month Tom S. Hopkins passed away in Tuscaloosa, AL. Although I never had the pleasure of meeting him, his legacy continues through our Water Quality Monitoring Program. By the way, Tom left UWF and went over the state line to AL to establish the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Another feather in his cap! Apropos Water Quality Monitoring Program: on Saturday, 5 March, the BFA hosted the first Water Quality Sampling Academy in partnership with UWF. Volunteers, many of which are UWF students, were trained

by staff from the FL Dept of Environmental Protection on water sampling techniques. This afforded attendees to receive hands on training and the opportunity to learn the nuances for proper sampling methods. The following month, three of the newly trained up volunteers participated in the monthly WQ run which included the Blackwater, Yellow and Shoal Rivers with seasoned BFA Sampler Tom Lett and myself. Full circle for Tom, with regard to our guest speaker this month, in that Tom began his career at Auburn and put himself through college by sampling WQ stations for the university.

To tie all these past and present thoughts together, I am brought back to the beginning of this newsletter. The April 2014 Floods created tremendous havoc in our community and in many of our creeks. The technology that is applied to dentistry, 3D printers and sending orbiters to Mars which can send photos back to Earth is fantastic and truly amazing, but then why are we practicing creek restoration like we did when we didn't know - what we know today?

I've said it before, and I'll say it again...hardening of the arteries is bad for the body; hardening of creeks is bad for the watershed. So why does this still happen today? Why is it allowed and permitted? Would you ever consider going to a dentist who doesn't use Novocain when pulling a tooth? So why are we removing riparian zones, bringing in red clay, and armoring our creeks in 2016? We have the knowledge and skills – yet we use archaic methods to 'fix' these systems.

To add insult to injury, a proposal was submitted to the Escambia County Restore Program to restore Carpenter Creek holistically from the headwaters all the way to the bay. This project was ranked No. 2 in the environmental category. Part of the process required the applicant to gain support and match. Being one of the applicants, this project received support from ten organizations representing over 8,000 members. The hardening of this creek section and the other downstream reach cost ~\$900K. It is highly engineered and not environmentally friendly.



Carpenter Creek being prepared for armoring between Davis Hwy & Airport Blvd. Note the mountain of red clay brought in for this project.



The two views above show the final product. Cement embedded onto a plastic mesh which was rolled out over packed down red clay. Sod was laid over the upper six feet of armor. The property owner recently relayed her disappointment as to the un-natural approach used in this stabilization process. “How will I get down to the creek now? Where will the turtles lay their eggs?” she lamented.

This particular site and the other downstream location were destroyed in part by the volume and velocity of the stormwater that entered the creek from Davis Hwy during the 2014 flood event. Davis Hwy Bridge was replaced in ~2004 and during that process had the entire riparian zone on both banks removed and replaced with rubble rock. Water coming off the road during the storm would have hit the rock with such force, that it literally scoured out the area downstream – leaving a large hole; which is precisely what happened (see below).

It’s too bad we don’t have someone like Tom Hopkins to be our champion and help us restore our aquatic environments back to a healthy functioning ecosystem. Maybe the University or State College will fill this important niche so we can live to see grassbeds back in our bays, which would recruit sea life – like we used to have in the area. At least the brown pelicans have returned.



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. The BFA promotes: Water Quality Monitoring; Habitat Conservation; Citizen Engagement; and Environmental Education.

The BFA meets four times a year for a General Membership Meeting (1st Wed in Feb, May, Aug and the 1st Sat in Nov for our annual fish fry) and generates four newsletters a year.

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



Every day is Earth Day – but we celebrate it on Sat, 23 April, this year. Do something nice for the Earth!