



The BFA January 2019 NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year All!

Please mark your calendar for the next General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, 6 February 2018

This will be an Dinner Meeting with a Guest Speaker! Doors open at 5:30 PM. Dinner will be served at 6:00 PM. Dinner will be provided by the Apple Market and will include grilled chicken alfredo, fresh roasted veggies and a garden salad Cost \$10.00/person
1615 East LaRua Street, Pensacola

Please join us in welcoming Ms. Traci Goodhart, who has spent the past few years studying the Carpenter Creek Watershed in Pensacola, Florida. Her research has focused on developing streamflow records for three sites that vary in land use and relating pollutants to flow rates. Her presentation is entitled:
Examining the spatial and temporal dynamics of stormwater pollutants in an urbanized watershed of northwest Florida.

Traci Goodhart is a northwest Florida native. She earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of West Florida in Environmental Policy and Management. After graduation she began working for the West Florida Regional Planning Council as an Environmental Planner where she worked with local government, the private sector, and NGOs in the development of environmental programs and projects - most notably the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Estuary Program and the Economic and Environmental Revitalization of Carpenter Creek RESTORE project. Ms. Goodhart currently works as a Graduate Research Assistant under Dr. Matthew Deitch at the University of Florida's West Florida Research and Education Center where she is pursuing a Master of Science in Soil and Water Sciences.

LOCAL EVENTS

Jack E. Davis - Florida and the Gulf of Mexico: History, Wisdom, and Hope

For those of you who may have missed author **Jack Davis** when he visited Pensacola in 2017 as our guest speaker, the Pulitzer Prize winning author of **The Gulf, the Making of an American Sea**, will be back in Pensacola on Tuesday, 5 February, from 7 - 9:00 PM at the Jean & Paul Amos Performance Studio. Tickets are free, but you must register.

<https://www.wsre.org/events/public-square-speakers-series/>

Dayna Reggero - How to Communicate Science with Stories

Dayna Reggero is an award-winning filmmaker and science communicator. Dayna's work has been featured by National Geographic, Woman's Day Magazine and Salon.com. Her Climate Listening Project films have been screened at International Paris Climate Talks and have won Best Documentary at the Belize International Film Festival. This presentation is also on Tuesday, 5 February 2019, at 4:00 PM UWF Campus Building 13, Room 230.

<http://climatelisteningproject.org/> and for a map of the UWF Campus, please visit this site:

<https://ufw.edu/about/locations/maps/>

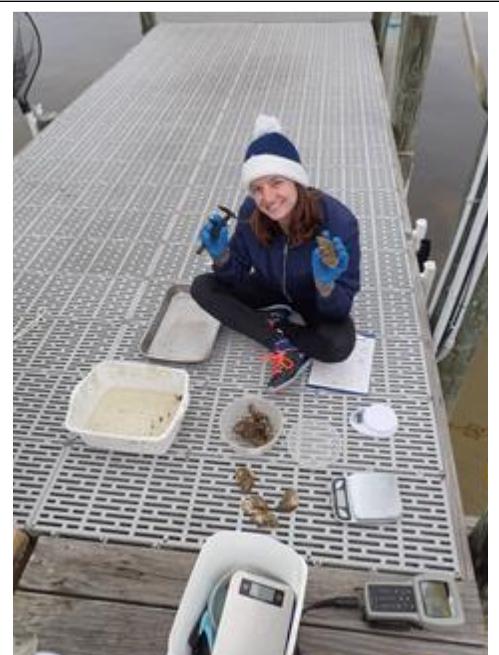
PROJECT OYSTER PENSACOLA (POP)

POP continues to provide interesting data about our regional waters. Roughly 25 participants signed up to hang a cage with 75 baby oysters (spat) off docks and local piers in May 2018. Oysters serve as a bellwether in that they reflect conditions and health of varying waterbodies.

BFA Members and Students have visited the various sites on four occasions since oysters were deployed and collect water chemistry, survival, weight and growth at each site. This data once compiled will provide resource managers with important information for areas more suitable for successful oyster reef restoration projects.

Next steps for POP will include identifying permitted oyster reefs in each of the water bodies we are currently monitoring, so that these sentinels can live out their lives in these important habitats. POP Participants will also receive a site-specific report card on the growth, survival and water quality parameters and a general overview of the POP participant data observed during this project timespan.

The BFA is delighted to partner with Don McMahon and Josh Neese of the **Pensacola Bay Oyster Company** again this spring (2019) for the next POP project. Participants need not worry if they do not live on the water, BFA will work with individuals to identify locations for this project. Round two of POP will begin accepting interested participants in early March. This is a state regulated project which requires several steps before a permit may be obtained. Through this program, our area waters are being filtered one oyster at a time. For more information on POP, school groups, boy scouts or how you may get involved or register, please send an email to TheBreamFishermen@gmail.com.



Meet Emily Hotinger, POP volunteer, UWF Marine Biology student and conducting bio-geo-chemical research in our area waters with Dr. Jane Caffrey.

STATE NEWS

Finally, Some great news for the state's environment and area waters! Florida's new governor seems to be listening to the voters and is acting without delay. Enter Ron DeSantis, whose dizzying first week in office included rolling out an ambitious program of environmental reforms that called for spending \$2.5 billion over the next four years on restoring the Everglades and "protecting our water resources."

DeSantis has acted boldly in the opening days of his administration. He can continue that streak by insisting the Legislature follow the voters' orders to protect this state's environmental treasures.

<https://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/editorials/os-op-amendment-1-ron-desantis-land-buying-20190118-story.html>

Of course, it makes perfect sense to focus efforts and invest in the areas of the state that have been impacted the most by green slime and red tide, such as the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie Rivers, and the lands between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades, but here in northwest Florida we are beginning to see and feel the results of red tide (Bay County west to Escambia County), accelerated fragmentation of our creeks and streams from road expansion projects and threats to low lying critical habitats from explosive growth most notable occurring in South Santa Rosa County.

The sweeping list of environmental programs and promises that Gov. Ron DeSantis unveiled in the last few weeks included a lot of the usual targets: clean up water pollution, end toxic algae blooms, restore the Everglades.

But there was one that wasn't usual at all: Move "environmental crimes law enforcement" from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to the state Department of Environmental Protection. "We're going to do some reorganization to be more effective protecting the environment," DeSantis said during a Thursday news conference announcing his plans. <https://www.tampabay.com/environment/desantis-plan-move-wildlife-cops-to-agency-not-known-for-enforcing-rules-20190115/>

That may sound like a good approach, but the environmental compliance and assistance system in this region has been broken for roughly two decades...and, as we've seen before - history has a way of repeating itself. Recall the 1999 Report of the Special Grand Jury on Air and Water Quality. https://www.escamabiaclerk.com/clerk/coc_grand_jury.aspx

Many of the new residents moving into the area bring with them an appreciation for our natural resources. They might not recall a time when our area bays had fish kills that were measured in square miles – but those events led to this organization becoming more serious about our area waters and habitats.

Meanwhile, thanks to the anti-regulatory push by prior Gov. Rick Scott, the Department of Environmental Protection, which has no sworn law officers, has spent the past eight years retreating from enforcement. The more permissive approach was spelled out in a 2011 memo to the staff from the agency's new deputy secretary of regulation: "*Where noncompliance occurs ... your first consideration should be whether you can bring about a return to compliance without enforcement.*" Instead of fining polluters, agency staffers were directed to send out "*compliance assistance letters,*" offering to show businesses how to get back into compliance.



The effects of red tide in Bradenton. [Herald-Tribune staff photo / Dan Wagner]

LOCAL NEWS

The BFA and community witnessed this first hand with Indian Bayou. Two and a half years after turbidity concerns were reported to state, federal, county officials including the BARC Council, continued rain events resulted in turbidity which has been documented, presented and studied. Turbid waters from road construction continued to enter Indian Bayou feeder creek above legal limits several times in Dec 2018. What has been done to address the issue? A lot of paper shuffling by state and county officials, a meager \$17,800 fine to the FDOT contractor by the FDEP – all of which will flow into the general fund and be placed towards the Everglades. BFA has high hope for the new governor, we'd like to raise the bar for the natural resources, surface waters and environment, and hopes he invests in all the state not just south Florida. The good news is, he seems to have a good team assisting him.

BFA would like to see more accountability across the board. Many of our current members worked with different state agencies in the past and can identify the point where the **professional staff** (biologists, ecologists, etc.) **were replaced by political strategists and lobbyists**. We've all felt the damage incurred by President Trump's first EPA Administrator, **Scott Pruitt**, who resigned amid a series of scandals in July 2018, and has been replaced by Deputy Administrator Andrew Wheeler, a former coal industry lobbyist. Another scandalous example of unqualified individuals includes **Ryan Zinke**, former US Secretary of the Interior. As Secretary, Zinke opened more federal lands for oil, gas and mineral exploration and extraction. Zinke's expenditures as Secretary of the Interior, which included expensive flights, raised ethical questions and controversy, and were investigated by the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General. His ethical troubles were the subject of a PBS News Hour report on October 19, 2018. On October 30, 2018, the investigation into Zinke was referred to the Justice Department by Interior's Inspector General. Trump announced on December 15, 2018, that Zinke would leave his post on January 2, 2019

The new governor is offering unprecedented optimism to right the many wrongs that have occurred in the past few years. One area that will be especially difficult to right is 'the morale and self-integrity' that countless city, county, state

and - especially during this 33 + day furlough time-frame – that many federal employees experienced. Maybe the momentum and swinging pendulum will help to balance out these wrongs, one can only hope!

Exciting things are happening in our area which we hope will translate to more protection and stewardship of our natural resources. The **Bay Area Resource Council** has morphed into the **Pensacola and Perdido Bay Estuary Program**, which was formed to develop the **Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)** – this plan is intended to be the guiding light which will serve to focus environmental efforts on local issues, priorities and legacy pollutants.

The **Northwest Florida Water Management District** updated their Panhandle Estuary **Surface Water and Implementation Management (SWIM)** Plans in 2018, including one for **Perdido Bay, Pensacola Bay System, Choctawhatchee Bay, St Andrew Bay, Apalachicola Bay, St Marks and Apalachee Bay**, and the Ochlockonee Bay systems. These documents can be found at <https://www.nwfwater.com/Water-Resources/Surface-Water-Improvement-and-Management>

Let us not forget the **Nature Conservancy** which also saw an opportunity and jumped in to help support the panhandle waterways by developing the **Community Based Watershed Plans for Perdido Bay; Pensacola Bay; Choctawhatchee Bay; St Andrew & St. Joe Bay** back in 2014.

All the plans and reports mentioned above come to the area as a courtesy of the BP Oil Spill. Of course, they come through various and different venues, different pots of money and from different federal and state agencies, but rest assured for those interested in following the money trail, it all leads back to funds recovered due to the oil spill disaster.

Plans are a lot like road maps. They must be updated on a regular basis. As our state and region continue to grow (recall we've recently become the 3rd most populous state in the nation), a map from 2000 is quickly outdated in 2019. It would be far more effective to have all the **SWIM Plans** and **Community Based Watershed Plans** were synthesized into one comprehensive plan which is **updated every five years** with the opening chapter including the **list of projects implemented** from the previous report and a short report card on how the project met or did not meet the specific goals defined. **Lessons learned, what worked and what didn't**. Instead, the reports discuss nutrient removal, wetland protection, and surface water improvement as lofty goals.

In our region, the City of Milton continues to discharge their treated effluent in **Blackwater River**. The Holley Navarre treatment plant couldn't meet state water quality standards for **Hidden Creek** in East Bay, so the state provided a permit to develop a 'Rapid Infiltration Basin System' (RIBS) in **Williams Creek** which enters the Santa Rosa Sound in Navarre. Williams Creek is the largest wetland system entering Santa Rosa Sound and was found to have **healthy beds of seagrasses** during the 2016 study conducted by UWF in partnership with FL Fish and Wildlife Commission. Seagrasses are critically endangered habitats in our area. <https://myfwc.com/research/habitat/seagrasses/projects/roadblocks/> The 'Golden Goose of Tourism', Pensacola Beach, also continues to discharge their treated Pensacola Beach effluent into **Santa Rosa Sound** with some diverted to irrigate the palm lined streets. One day, BFA hopes that all septic systems in low lying areas will be connected to sewer, and all sewer systems will convert their discharge from entering surface waters to upland* discharge or go to 100% recycled use.

To begin to tackle some of these issues, Santa Rosa County has recently received a state approved expenditure plan through the Restore Act to removed 167 septic tanks along Soundside Drive. Look for this in the future. Another portion of this dedicated funding is also slated to remove the Navarre Waste Water Treatment Plant effluent currently

discharging into Santa Rosa Sound and re-route it to a RIBS system off Hwy 87 on Eglin AFB Property. *That upland discharge is tricky business here in our sandy soils, but technology is advancing in this science as well.

Another concern for our region and suspiciously **missing** from the earlier plans are the **hydrodynamics of these systems**, including **bathymetry, freshwater hydrology**, flows from river deltas and tributaries, **tides, salinity, circulation patterns**, plus the **sediment inputs and budget**. In a nut shell, each estuary should have a hydrodynamic assessment completed every decade, to give the complete representation of the current condition of our panhandle estuaries.

Unfortunately, all the best plans in the world, updated or not, read or referenced don't mean a thing if we don't change our view of our natural resources including wetlands, forests and waterways. Fifty years ago, we couldn't begin to understand the **many important services wetlands provide** for our shorelines and area waters including: **wave attenuation, creating habitat**, acting as a carbon sump, primary production sites, **nurseries for many important fisheries**, and **filtering out nutrients** – to name a few. Last year I heard someone make a comparison between wetlands and cancer. Wow! This is an area where we must change our lens and start understanding the importance of these systems.

Today, if we continue to ignore and impact these natural areas – we stand to lose the tiny percentage of these ecosystems that remain today. The red tide and green slime that created the impact on tourism in southern Florida and the drop of property values can only be addressed when our citizenry, children, the many newcomers, elected officials and decision makers are educated on these complex topics and begin to value the many ecosystem services these systems provide.

NEW FACES

The recent elections brought some new faces and some very welcome new approaches in transparency. In Santa Rosa County, new **Navarre District Commissioner Dave Piech** hosted a roundtable in which he invited the local citizenry to inform him of the most pressing issues the community is currently facing. Water quality and growth without concern for updating current infrastructure, traffic, schools, etc. bubbled to the top. An organization which has formed and named itself **Save our Soundside (SOS)** includes citizens on both sides of the peninsula – are joining forces to slow development until the current foundation (infrastructure) of growth are being met.

Similarly, **Pensacola Mayor Grover Robinson** developed a **terrific transition team** which has been active in the public realm soliciting important feedback from the community concerning various issues facing the revitalization and growth occurring in the City of Pensacola. Mayor Robinson has the added advantage of having been the EsCo Commissioner for the past 12 years and had the responsibility of being the county representative for the district that felt the greatest impacts of tourism decline during the BP Oil Spill. In addition, Robinson represented FL in many Gulf-wide and federal oil spill meetings. Other welcome new faces within the city council include **Ann Hill*** **District 6**, and **Jared Moore District 4**, and **Sherri Myers, District 2**, continues to keep her seat.

Escambia County welcomes **Robert Bender** to fill the seat vacated by Grover Robinson. The transition of so many elected new faces is exciting, and we hope these new and remaining representatives will continue to listen to their constituents, recognize that listening and addressing important issues that citizens bring forward is part of the vibrancy our area is experiencing.

***City Councilwoman Hill** attended the **Technical Advisory Committee of the Estuary Program** in January, then the Policy Board, on which she sits. This was refreshing, as most elected officials rarely take time to participate in the

technical side. Her interest in the environment and the process are a hopeful sign to the biologists and environmental scientists who have been working in this arena for decades.

SOME AMAZING SCHOLARS ARE AMONG US

Last Year, thanks to **Elizabeth Eubanks (From the Ground Up)** the BFA met with students from the **Dixon School of Arts and Sciences**, and several home schoolers, who had an interest in Carpenter Creek, micro-plastics, sedimentation in area waters and planktonic recruitment in an urban bayou, namely Bayou Chico. Students learned about these systems, collected data, compiled and interpreted their findings and prepared a poster on each topic which was represented at **American Geophysical Union** Meeting in Washington DC in December 2018. Kudos and a shout out to the many fine young students who are going to be the future stewards of our area.

Two more items before we close the newsletter. The **City Environmental Advisory Board** is amid revisiting the **tree ordinance**, concurrently **citizens in Escambia County** are also asking the county to revisit this important topic. Many interested participants and staff are reminded to connect with the local chapter of the **Native Plant Society** and **Audubon**, the **Extension Service**, **UF**, **UWF**, and local experts to make sure that the species identified are native and quality habitat. As an example, the water oak and the laurel oak are fast growing trees which provide habitat and support important many species including over 550 species of insect which support birds, reptiles, amphibians and more. These species are fast growing, short lived, reach a sizable girth in a decade or two, but are not wind resistant. They pop up in many places, having been planted by squirrels. On the other hand, a live oak is slow growing, extremely wind resistant and supports even more species. **Our region has over 40 species of oaks.** Let's make sure as we move forward with these ordinances, deciding which trees to keep and which to cut that we have regional experts involved. The tree canopy in Escambia and Santa Rosa County has diminished since Hurricane Ivan and is thinning out as more development occurs. Much like wetlands provide important ecosystem services, so do our tree canopies. Trees can store water, **tulip poplars and willows are known to drink up to 350 to 400 gallons during hot summer days**, and cool their area through transpiration, provide shade from the sun and a wind shade during tropical events.

FLORIDA PANHANDLE MARITIME NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Reuben O'D. Askew Institute for Multidisciplinary Studies (**AIMS**) which is housed through the University of West Florida (**UWF**), in partnership with the Florida Public Archaeology Network (**FPAN**) and the National Park Service (**NPS**), are currently amid collecting data for a feasibility study to determine if the Panhandle of Florida would lend itself to a National Heritage Area (NHA) designation. The region identified includes 14 panhandle counties.

This designation is bestowed by the National Park Service to areas which share notable themes to **connect historic, archaeological, cultural, and natural areas with community based and socially relevant themes**. The benefits of receiving this designation are many, including a branding of the area with a national title (some examples include Muscle Shoals NHA in Alabama and the Blue Ridge Parkway NHA in North Carolina). Currently, Florida does not have an NHA although a small portion of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor which spans NC, SC, GA includes a small portion of northeast FL in this NHA.

The Florida Panhandle Maritime National Heritage Area would serve to brand a cohesive nationally important region which is rich in early native American archaeological sites, as well as the recently discovered Luna Settlement and multiple shipwrecks including the remains of the US's oldest multiyear European Settlement. This combined with the impressive historic military presence from forts, camps, redoubts and batteries and the current military enclaves

including Naval Air Stations Pensacola, Whiting Field, Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field and Tyndall Air Force Base and the National Guard facilities peppered throughout the panhandle region.

The historic military presence is entwined with the area's bountiful natural resources, beginning with the deepest natural pass along the Florida Gulf Coast. The Florida Panhandle has always been home to the piney woods dominated by the longleaf. These resources brought the timber industry, which grew the area commerce and supported the military through naval stores and turpentining. Areas dominated by live oak hammocks that were cultivated over decades for future ship building (ex., Naval Live Oaks).

This designation is a slow process, as at this time data is being collected to ascertain interest in this effort. Our economy has been entwined with tourism, military and our natural resources. This opportunity would serve to cross pollinate and accentuate the many cultures that historically occupied the region for future generations. To learn more, please visit www.uwf.edu/fpnha or www.facebook.com/FloridaPanhandleNHA/.

The Bream Fishermen Association The vision for the Bream Fishermen Association is the re-connection of communities to their watersheds through a thriving regional watershed monitoring approach. The activities of citizen volunteers through this organization foster the appreciation, conservation, restoration, and appropriate management of our area waters. The desired outcomes for the resources are increased biological diversity and productivity from head-water streams to our panhandle bays.

The BFA has a long legacy of assisting county, state and federal partners in area-wide water quality monitoring. Through these monthly efforts, citizens have become aware and engaged in their area waters and are becoming better stewards for the environment.

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 \$20 annual dues to our mailing address:

Bream Fishermen Association 1203 N. 16th Ave, Pensacola, FL 32503
