



**St. Andrew Bay
Resource
Management
Association
(www.sabrma.org)**

**MARCH-APRIL 2010
NEWSLETTER**

DATES TO REMEMBER

MARCH 16	RMA BOARD MEETING—6:30 PM, RMA OFFICE
MARCH 16	SEAGRASS WATER SAMPLING WITH DEP
MARCH 16-18	BAYWATCH WATER SAMPLING
MARCH 30	CAMP HELEN WALKWAY DEDICATION – 10-11:30
APRIL 17	<u>EARTH DAY</u> 10AM-4PM AT CARL GRAY PARK
APRIL 16-18	BAYWATCH WATER SAMPLING
APRIL 27	SEAGRASS WATER SAMPLING WITH DEP

RMA BOARD MEETING

An RMA Board meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, March 16, 6:30 pm at the RMA building, PCMI.

**AIRPORT ISSUES IN THE WEST BAY WATERSHED: UNFULFILLED
PROMISES THREATEN A FRAGILE RESOURCE**

The St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association (RMA) and the Clean Water Network of Florida (CWN-FL) held a public meeting on February 18th to discuss the environmental impacts on West Bay and its tributaries surrounding the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport construction site.

“A Model for Economic Development and Environmental Preservation” was the promise of the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, according to Governor Crist, who spoke at the 2007 groundbreaking ceremony. The economic benefits of the new airport are still a hope for the future, but the environmental promise has already been broken.

Stormwater runoff from construction activities has already caused over 200 water quality violations, resulting in nearly \$2 million of proposed fines by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Extensive restoration will be required to repair the construction damage to wetlands and creeks discharging into West Bay.

The violations have continued despite DEP’s stated “zero tolerance” for runoff from the airport site.

About eighty people attended the meeting, intended to raise public awareness of threats to the West Bay watershed due to environmental violations at the new airport and potential damage from further planned development around the airport site. **Kennard Watson, Patrice Couch, Linda Fitzhugh** (RMA) and **Linda Young** (CWN-FL) presented information on water quality and seagrass impacts to West Bay and provided recommendations to protect the watershed from future impacts. Meeting participants assisted with action items to show support of the recommendations, including a post card mailing campaign asking public officials responsible for the airport project to deliver on the promises that were made when the airport was being planned. (Over)

Recommendations included:

1. Use airport fines for environmental projects located exclusively within the West Bay watershed. RMA and CWN-FL recommends the purchase of waterfront parcels as the most effective long-term protection for the impacted area. This would support achievement of the 40,000 acres that were promised to the public as permanent conservation lands (these lands must be purchased from the St. Joe Company). The Bay County Audubon Society supports this recommendation.
2. Increase enforcement actions and penalties for past and future violations. DEP's current approach has been ineffective in obtaining compliance.
3. Postpone further wetlands fill permitting beyond the airport's footprint until environmental impacts of the airport are better understood. This will require a scientific study of the West Bay watershed and preparation of guidelines to ensure that the watershed is protected from future development.
4. Encourage Bay County to adopt meaningful wetlands protection instead of continuing with proposed changes to the local Comprehensive Plan that will weaken the current 30-foot wetland buffer.

Presentations included "Local Voices" featuring video interviews of residents in the areas affected by runoff from the airport construction site. If you would like to view the RMA presentations and video from the meeting, please visit the RMA Baywatch web page Document Library located at <http://www.sabrma.org/baywatch.html>. If you are willing to complete a post card showing your support of the recommendations, please contact Patrice Couch at 850-763-4303.

Last but certainly not least, our sincere appreciation goes to the following people who donated their time and talents to make the meeting a success:
Public Relations and Marketing: **Michael Bamberg, Kennard Watson, Linda Fitzhugh and Bill Wallace.**

Technical Assistance and Photos: **Natali Miller and Don Hodges**
Meeting Planning and Administration: **Linda Young, Kennard Watson, Linda Fitzhugh, Susan Bates, Georgia Beauchemin, Ginge Ketcham, Ellen Whitaker, Bill Wallace, Anthony Miller, Natali Miller, Chris Forman and Emily Ellis**

Special thanks to **Laura Paris** for helping prepare for the meeting and operate the video camera.

US CORPS OF ENGINEERS ISSUES PUBLIC NOTICE FOR PERMIT TO BUILD MARINA AT OLD AIRPORT SITE

The Corps issued a Public Notice describing a proposed marina to be built at northern end of existing Airport Runway 14, with a channel entrance from Goose Bayou. The proposal calls for an enclosed basin for 117 wet slips, with a total of 68 permanent slips that would accommodate vessels 40 to 60 feet in length. There would also be dry storage for up to 230-240 boats. RMA will be making comments on this proposal.

For more details regarding this proposal, visit:

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/pnwebshare/Florida_Public_Notices/20100222-SAJ-2009-03099.pdf

BEST TO HOST EARTH DAY

Lynn Cherry announced that **Earth Day** will be held Saturday, April 17, 2010, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm at Carl Gray Park. Volunteers are needed. Please contact: **Henry Lawrence** at 258-1276.

Earth Day 2010 is being sponsored by **Friends of St. Andrew Bay (BEST)**.

<http://www.friendsofstandrewbay.org/>

A Florida Wildlife Federation Affiliate

www.fwfonline.org

EARTH DAY 40TH ANNIVERSARY

April 20th will be the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. In 1970, 20 million Americans participated, helping pave the way for watershed legislation such as the Clean Air Act as well as the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Since Earth Day went global in 1990, 190 countries and more than a billion people have joined in.

This year continues 2009's campaign, The Green Generation, to rally for advances in climate change policy, renewable energy, and green jobs. There are ways your family can participate. For details, go to: <http://www.earthday.net/node/13475>

BASELINE WATER QUALITY MONITORING OF GOOSE BAYOU AND UPPER GOOSE BAYOU

Baywatch established two new water quality monitoring stations in Goose Bayou and Upper Goose Bayou in December 2009. Goose Bayou, Upper Goose Bayou, and Goose Bayou Marsh are ecologically unique to the St. Andrew Bay System, particularly in North Bay. These areas contain extensive wetland and salt marsh communities mixed with upland habitats including pine islands, shell mounds, and intertidal beaches.

Surrounding seagrass beds serve as nursery areas for a variety of marine and estuarine life and have been designated as Essential Fish Habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. These areas provide significant benefits of economic and ecological value to the St. Andrew Bay System. Coastal development along these bayous and marsh areas is expected to increase in the near future. Water quality is paramount to maintaining the health of these living communities so monitoring is essential to provide baseline data to compare pre- and post-development water quality impacts. Water samples will be collected monthly as part of the regular Baywatch sampling program. This opportunity is made possible by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Friends of Goose Bayou Marsh, and Robert Vickery, the Principal Investigator for the project.

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