



Newsletter

Friends of St. Joseph Bay Preserves

January, 2017

Winter Bay Day and Live Auction Are Coming! Feb. 4 and Feb. 2

Winter Bay Day, Saturday, Feb. 4, 8:00-3:00 ET, is going to be big! We'll have the Low Country Shrimp Boil, of course, five Tram Tours, lots of nature-oriented exhibits, a bird walk, other nature-related activities, and a Silent Auction of items donated by local merchants and craftsmen. Live music will be by Crossroad Bluegrass Band; they played for us at the Fall Bay Day and we loved it.

The Live Auction will be Thursday evening, Feb. 2, 6:00-9:00 ET. At the Live Auction you can bid on some of the biggest and best donations from local businesses, such as time at vacation houses, boat charters, gift certificates. Plus, we serve free wine, beer, cheese, and snacks. It's a great time to socialize and just enjoy a fun evening out.

Annual Membership Meeting, January 7

First, the nearly 30 members present voted by acclamation to install two new Directors on the Board. They are Linda Palma and Tim Nelson. Both Linda and Tim spend a lot of time volunteering at the Buffer center, helping with ongoing projects and creating new enhancements for the Visitor Center. Among their many contributions, Linda has recorded a self-guided audio tour of the exhibits by Sandra Chafin, now available any time in the Visitor Center. Tim and Allix North have produced a beautiful drone fly-over tour of the Buffer Preserve. You can watch it on the television in the Visitor Center.



A \$500 check from the Florida Scallop and Music Festival of Port St. Joe was presented by Guerry Magidson, Chairman of the Board of Gulf County Chamber of Commerce, to Friends President Lynda White.



Buffer Preserve Manager Dylan Shoemaker presented a PowerPoint talk on the issues facing the Buffer Preserve this year. He reminded us that the mandate of the Preserves is “To Conserve and Protect.” Six current issues were discussed:

- I. Restoring the hydrology (natural water flow) within the Buffer’s three watersheds. The focus now is on the Money Bayou watershed.
- II. Protecting plant and animal resources.
- III. Controlling invasive species, both plants and animals.
- IV. Protection of the 18 cultural and historical archaeological sites in the Preserve.
- V. Promoting conservation and responsible use of the natural area by the public. **The Preserve has recently added a new staff member, Shana Hale, who specializes in education and outreach.**
- VI. Promoting scientific research that contributes to conservation and protection of native ecosystems.

Central Panhandle Aquatic Preserves Manager Jonathan Brucker presented a talk about current projects of the Aquatic Preserves. Volunteer opportunities were emphasized. Aquatic Preserves volunteers are needed to help with water quality monitoring in the four bays, St. Joseph Bay, Apalachicola Bay, Alligator Harbor, and St. Andrews Bay. The water is tested for nutrients and for harmful algal blooms. **Volunteers may also help with seagrass monitoring** at around 25 sites in St. Joseph Bay and others in Alligator Harbor and Apalachicola Bay. If you want to volunteer, please email

Jonathan.Brucker@dep.state.fl.us , or

call the Aquatic Preserves, 850-670-7723.



Several important restoration projects are underway in the bays of the Preserves. Seagrass restoration is an important one since many marine animals depend on the seagrass. Scars in seagrass beds will be filled in using a sediment tube method, beginning this summer, and 49 buoys have been

deployed to prevent motor boats entering shallow areas of the bays. Other restoration projects include oyster clutch replacement and the Living Shoreline Project, funded by BP oil spill payments, which will add beneficial vegetation along shorelines.

Public education events are an important part of the Aquatic Preserves' work. They include Bay Day, Estuaries Day, Earth Day, and school programs for the children of Franklin County.

Volunteers at the Buffer

Cliff and Barbara Boughton are on-site volunteers through January. They have been staying at the Buffer since December. You might meet Cliff if you take a Bay Day Tram Tour; he often drives. We also have **Fritz and Carol Maiser**, who arrived in January and will stay until the end of February. The Buffer benefits greatly from the many hours of work the site volunteers put in each week.

Thank you to Gene Cox for working to get the native plant garden in front of the Visitor Center looking healthy and pretty!

Splash Trash Tour to Visit

Splash Trash Tour and Pop-Up Show will be at the Buffer Visitor Center Mar. 31-Apr. 9. This touring exhibit, with activities for all ages, aims to raise awareness about how detrimental beach litter is to the water quality of the oceans. You can learn more about the Tour and Pop-Up Show at www.splashtrashtour.com. The exhibitors plan to make art from beach trash as part of the show. **They ask us to help by collecting beach trash and saving it for them.**

The 2017 Board of Directors of Friends of St. Joseph Bay Preserves

Alford, Dusty
Ard, March – Sec.
Blaylock, Dewey
Brucker, Jonathan
Chafin, Sandra
Chafin, Sonny - Treas.
Cox, Gene
Ehrman, John -Past Pres
Hughes, Lillian
Nelson, Tim
Palma, Linda
Ross, Jeff
Shoemaker, Dylan
Thomson, Nancy
White, Lynda - Pres.

The next Friends Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, Feb. 21, at 4:30 p.m.** All Friends of St. Joseph Bay Preserves members are welcome to attend and observe.