

Congress Gives NEPs a Financial Boost

Recognizing the value of the collaborative, science-based approach embodied in the 28 National Estuary Programs, Congress has authorized an additional \$200,000 in funding for each NEP in the fiscal year beginning October 2010.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program will use its additional funds to begin implementation of a major research and management effort to improve water quality and seagrass growth in Old Tampa Bay. This northernmost segment of Tampa Bay is lagging behind the rest of the bay in seagrass recovery and some sections have ongoing water quality issues such as recurring algae blooms. Additionally, a thick layer of muck has accumulated in the bay near Safety Harbor.

In November, TBEP's Policy Board directed staff to use the extra federal funds to begin developing a master plan to improve Old Tampa Bay.

Since 1996, TBEP has received between \$400,000 and \$600,000 in federal funds annually. The \$200,000 appropriation is in addition to the \$600,000 TBEP is receiving this year from Congress through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"Florida's Congressional delegation was very instrumental in bringing about this additional infusion of funds, and we appreciate the strong support they have shown the Tampa Bay Estuary Program over the years," said Holly Greening, TBEP Executive Director. "The NEPs provide a tremendous return on investment for local communities and Congress recognizes their value."



University of Tampa students helped collect invasive air potatoes in November at Rocky Creek Trails Nature Preserve in north Tampa.

Volunteer Season In Full Swing

Three "Give A Day For The Bay" volunteer workdays already have been completed this fall and winter, with three more scheduled before April. Volunteers conducted a shoreline cleanup at Weedon Island Preserve in October, removed invasive air potato plants at Rocky Creek Trails in November, and planted native scrub plants at McKay Creek Greenway in December.

To learn more about upcoming workdays or view photos from past workdays, visit www.tbep.org/giveaday.html



25 Community Groups Awarded 2010 Mini-Grants

TBEP has awarded more than \$123,000 to 25 community groups for projects that directly involve citizens in restoring and improving Tampa Bay. [Click here to read about the winning grants.](#)

This year's Bay Mini-Grant program attracted 40 applicants. Members of TBEP's Community Advisory Committee ranked the grant proposals, recommending 25 for full or partial funding. The maximum amount awarded is \$7,500.

Mini-Grant funds come from sales of the Tampa Bay Estuary license plate – also known as the “Tarpon Tag.” Our license tag has generated more than \$1.1 million for community grants in the last decade.

BASIS 5 Conference Looks Back, and Forward

More than 150 scientists and bay managers gathered in October for the 5th Bay Area Scientific Information Symposium in St. Petersburg. They heard 75 talks summarizing what we have learned about the bay since the first BASIS conference was held 25 years ago. Among the new information presented:

- Evidence that tidal tributaries are even more important than previously believed for snook, one of the bay's premier gamefish. Recent studies have documented up to 36 times as many snook in tidal creeks as in other bay habitats.
- Surveys of manatees in the bay may be dramatically undercounting the number of animals due to visibility issues in deeper waters.
- Tampa Bay may experience as much as a 1-meter rise in sea level by the end of this century.

[Click here to view pdf files of the BASIS presentations.](#)

A lively discussion on the final day of the conference identified some key goals for bay managers for the coming five years, among them:

- Bay managers need to buy endangered lands now when prices are low, even if no money is available to manage or restore them yet.
- Scientists must do a better job of communicating their research to policy makers, the media and the public.
- Collaborative approaches to improving the bay, such as TBEP's Nitrogen Management Consortium, should be encouraged.
- Sea level rise should be incorporated into planning efforts now.

Coming soon: A 4-page public summary of highlights from BASIS 5.



The Tampa Bay Estuary license tag costs \$27 the first year and \$17 to renew after that. Hook one today at your local tax collector's office!

Revenues for all specialty tags have declined in the past year. If you are considering a specialty tag for your auto, boat trailer or RV, please buy one that helps preserve our environment. Visit buyaplate.com to learn about Florida's 18 environmental/wildlife plates, including the Tampa Bay Estuary tag.



Bow WOW! Pet Waste Posters Now Available

Help spread the word about the importance of picking up after your pooch with one of our colorful new 11 x 17 posters. These posters were created for us by the Southwest Florida Water Management District to support our “Pooches for the Planet” education campaign. Posters are available free for schools, businesses, community clubhouses, vet offices or other facilities. Email saveit@tbep.org and we'll send you the poster of your choice. Let us know whether you want “Man and Dog,” “Kids with Dog at Beach,” or “Dogs by River.”

While you're at it, [take our online pledge](http://tbep.org/help/scoop.html) to properly dispose of pet waste, and we'll send you a free Photo Pal magnet to display a favorite pic of your 4-legged companion.

Start the New Year with a New Best Friend

It's not too late to take advantage of our “Pooches for the Planet” promotion with animal shelters in Pinellas County. Until the end of January, anyone who adopts a dog from the [county shelter](#) in Largo or the [Humane Society shelter](#) in Clearwater will receive a free reusable tote bag filled with toys, treats, coupons and valuable information for new dog owners. This promotion is being funded by the Pinellas-Anclote Basin Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.



Among the items in the kit are “Bags on Board” pet waste bag dispensers, Fruitables dog treats, and a CD containing dog care and training advice, and a variety of discount coupons for pet sitters, vet exams, and other services. See [a list of our generous donors](#) on our website, and read our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about Dog Poop.



Boomer was among the lucky dogs adopted during the kick-off of our special promotion with Pinellas County Animal Services.

Estuary Academy 2009

A record crowd of 100 adults and teens attended the 2009 Academy held on October 24 at Weedon Island Preserve.



Pinellas County high school teacher Corinne Coviello and several of her students enjoyed the fish sampling workshop.



Benthic workshop students collected and identified animals that live in the bay bottom.



Fisheries scientist Angela Collins gave a fascinating talk about her research on the life history and behavior of goliath grouper, the "Super-Sized Sea Bass of Tampa Bay."



Marcel Jones, center, discussed how remotely controlled submersibles are used in marine research. Then, attendees designed, built, and tested their own miniature Remotely Operated Vehicle.



Participants in the "Manatee: CSI" session examined case studies of manatee deaths and assembled a manatee skeleton.