

Bay Post

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An e-newsletter
featuring Tampa
Bay news and
updates from
the Tampa Bay
Estuary Program
www.tbep.org

“Pooches for the Planet” Comes to Manatee County

From August through October, anyone adopting a dog from participating animal shelters in Manatee County will receive a free “Pooches for the Planet” adoption kit filled with valuable information and free goodies.

The kits are eco-friendly shopping totes that contain a “Bags on Board” bag dispenser that clips to a leash, a pet waste cartoon CD, and other informational materials, as well as toys, treats, and great discount coupons for pet supplies and services donated by area businesses.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program and its sister program in Sarasota Bay are jointly coordinating this special program to increase awareness of the importance of picking up and properly disposing of pet waste to protect water quality and public health, while encouraging people to adopt shelter dogs.



Participating Shelters:

Manatee County Animal Services

305 - 25th Street West

Palmetto, FL 34221

Phone: 941-742-5933

<http://www.petfinder.com/shelters/FL426.html>

Humane Society of Manatee County

2515 14th Street West

Bradenton, Florida 34205

(941) 747-8808

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

You do not have to be a Manatee County resident to adopt a pet from these shelters, so if you've been thinking of providing a home to a deserving shelter dog this is a great time!

Check out our expanded “Pooches for the Planet” information at

<http://www.tbep.org/help/scoop.html> and take our online pledge to receive a free Photo Pal magnet to display a photo of your furry friend.

VOLUNTEER TO “GIVE A DAY FOR THE BAY”

Volunteers are needed to help pick up trash along the shores of Weedon Island Preserve in St. Petersburg on Saturday, October 10 from 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Wind and tides have blown a variety of floating trash, including glass and plastic bottles, tennis balls, and Styrofoam pieces, into the mangroves lining the shore at Weedon, and we need your help to clean up the mess. Volunteers receive free lunch and a TBEP reusable water bottle.

Contact colleen@tbep.org to sign up.

Limited to volunteers 13 years and older, please.



Save The Date for the 2009 Estuary Academy

The 2009 Estuary Academy will be held on Saturday, October 24 at Weedon Island Preserve in St. Petersburg, from 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.

This popular annual "Science for the People" program features lectures and workshops on the habitats and inhabitants of Tampa Bay. This year's theme is "Tampa Bay: Beneath The Surface" and will highlight plants and animals that live in the bay itself. Registration costs \$10 and will be available online through the TBEP website in September.



Bay Managers Tracking Large Algae Bloom

Scientists are keeping tabs on a large algae bloom in Tampa Bay this summer. The bloom stretches more than 14 miles from Safety Harbor to just south of the Gandy Bridge, and makes the water appear visibly rust-colored. Blooms also have been observed in Hillsborough Bay off Bayshore Boulevard and in McKay Bay.



Photo taken July 24 by Dorian Aerial and Architectural Photographics

TBEP will hold a special Technical Advisory Committee meeting on Thursday, August 13th from 1:30- 4:30 p.m. at the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council to discuss the blooms and methods to better monitor and assess such occurrences.

Algae blooms typically occur in the summer – when long days and warm temperatures fuel the growth of algae – but the size and duration of this bloom is worrisome. Additionally, this is the second summer in a row when a large, persistent bloom has fouled the bay's waters. Unlike in 2008, this year's bloom has not yet caused fish kills, but scientists caution that could happen if the decaying algae cause dissolved oxygen levels in the water to plummet.

Algae blooms are frequently caused by excessive nutrient pollution -- including stormwater runoff flowing into the bay from heavy summer rains. Stormwater carries lawn fertilizers, pet waste, sewer overflows and even exhaust from automobiles into the bay, leading to a nitrogen overload that causes microscopic algae to multiply rapidly.

Reminder: Bay Mini-Grant applications are due October 1, 2009. Learn more about this community grants program and download an application online at <http://tbep.org/bayminigrants.html>

Children's Book Teaches Responsible Aquarium Ownership

TBEP is proud to be a partner in a new children's book that promotes responsible aquarium stewardship in a style reminiscent of Dr. Seuss!

"A New Home For An Old Friend" tells a story, in rhyme and clever illustrations, about a family's search for a new home for their pet lionfish when a move requires them to empty their aquarium.

The book explains why aquarium fish shouldn't be released into the wild and presents eco-friendly alternatives. It is designed for Pre-K through 2nd grade learners.



The book was conceived and coordinated by University of Central Florida professor Linda Walters, and University of Southern California Sea Grant Extension agent Susan Zaleski with a grant from the National Sea Grant Program. TBEP contributed to development and printing costs. Several lesson plans also have been created to enhance the book's value to classroom teachers.

Since children are often directly involved in caring for home aquariums, we hope they will pass on the important messages in the book to their parents, to prevent their aquatic pets from becoming invasive pests. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, dumping of home aquariums is responsible for one-quarter of all the non-native fish currently found in our waterways.

TBEP will provide copies of the book to school media centers, public libraries, environmental education centers, and aquarium hobbyist clubs. For more information about what to do with unwanted aquarium fish, reptiles or plants, please visit <http://www.habitattitude.net/>

TBEP Receives National Climate Change Grant

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program is among eight recipients of \$75,000 assistance grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to implement projects that help estuaries prepare for climate change.

TBEP will use its grant to develop a Guidebook for Gulf Coast communities considering climate change in habitat protection strategies. The Guidebook will incorporate results from upcoming TBEP research projects, as well as other projects that showcase effective ways to accommodate climate change in habitat restoration efforts. Partnering with TBEP in the project is the Coastal Bend and Bays Estuaries Program in Texas.

Specifically, the guidebook will offer a "toolkit" of options for ensuring the continued success of publicly financed habitat restoration projects even with rising sea levels. Already in Tampa Bay, water levels have been rising about an inch a decade since the 1940s, when record-keeping began, and that rate is expected to increase in the future. How this increase will affect habitats is not well understood, but changes could include loss of existing oyster bars, marshes and mangroves, for example, with associated declines in fish and wildlife species dependent on those habitats.

Managing coastal wetlands for resilience to climate change is important because these habitats serve as natural defenses against storms, and provide critical nursery areas for fish and wildlife.

To read more about this project, [click here](#).

It's Scallop Search Time!

TBEP is pleased to again be a sponsor of the Great Bay Scallop Search conducted by Tampa Bay Watch.

This year's Scallop Search will be held Sat., August 22 at Fort DeSoto Park. Volunteers will snorkel in the seagrass beds of lower Tampa Bay, hoping to find more than last year's record 624 scallops. This event is one of Bay Watch's most popular and is already full!



The Scallop Search helps to track the recovery of Tampa Bay's scallop population. Because scallops need clear water and abundant seagrasses to thrive, they are a great barometer of the bay's overall health. Scallops virtually disappeared from the bay in the 1960s, but have been making a slow comeback in recent years with improving water quality and intense restocking efforts.

TBEP To Continue BMAP Assistance

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program will continue to help its local government partners develop comprehensive cleanup plans required to meet new water quality requirements in waterways considered impaired for a variety of pollutants.

TBEP recently participated in a multi-year effort for Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa that resulted in agreement on a far-reaching Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) to address sources of bacterial contamination in the heavily urbanized Lower Hillsborough River. TBEP staff served as facilitators for this process, successfully bringing diverse stakeholders together to identify key management strategies needed to reduce bacteria levels in the lower river.

At its most recent meeting, TBEP's Policy Board agreed that facilitating development of similar BMAPs for other Bay Area counties and cities would be an appropriate role for TBEP staff, who have earned a reputation for successful facilitation of contentious and complex issues. The City of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County already have expressed interest in TBEP's services.

The state is requiring that local governments and private companies contributing to waterways that have been designated as "impaired" develop BMAPs to reduce loadings of key pollutants such as nutrients and bacteria. The BMAPs will spell out specific strategies to ensure that levels of these pollutants do not exceed the Total Maximum Daily Loads established by the state for the waterways.

Waterways may be designated impaired for one pollutant, or multiple pollutants. The BMAPs will provide a watershed-based approach to restoring these waterways to health.

Summer Teacher Workshops



Thirty teachers participated in TBEP's two "Tampa Bay: Living Legacy" Workshops held in June. The teachers enjoyed field



activities such as exploring seagrasses at Robinson Preserve in Manatee County (left) and conducting plant and insect surveys at Brooker Creek Preserve in Pinellas (right).