

# **RIVERWATCH**

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**CRCA Info-Line (941)433-4636 ext. 2722**

**www.caloosahatchee.org**

**Spring 2000**

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## **A Letter from Our President**

### **Rob Andrys**

Once again spring is here, a time to start afresh with the things in life that give passion to the soul. Never far from my heart are planting the garden and adding more trees to the landscape. This year I've planted nine cypress trees along the bank of our property on Bedman Creek to help stabilize the shoreline and give it that 'Old Florida look'. The re-establishment of native trees and bushes along our creek banks is an important step in making Florida's waterways productive and green.

RiverWatch has been promoting the planting of native vegetation along the Caloosahatchee and its waterways. We will be demonstrating the best methods and species selections at the upcoming Earth Day celebration at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium in Fort Myers on

April 22nd. Board member Russ Ringland will be giving demonstrations throughout the day on a mock-up riverbank. Along with the demonstration we will be handing out information packets showing the best way to plant along the river and many more details. Cypress and Red Maple trees will be available for a small donation.

RiverWatch will also have a booth highlighting the history of the river and the people who called it home at the Earth Day celebration. The legacy of the river is rich in colorful characters and gives an insight into how people lived along its banks, "when riverboats were the only means of transportation and fish were so plentiful you could almost walk across them".

RiverWatch is a proud co-sponsor of the Earth Day celebration. We believe it is vitally important to demonstrate how individual people have influenced the river and can continue to have an impact on the health of the Caloosahatchee in a positive way.

The next several years will be critical in terms of how the Caloosahatchee is affected by the Everglades Restudy. We encourage you to attend the Earth Day celebration to learn how your life will be affected by these coming changes and have some fun along the way.

See you on the River!



## Top Ten Directives for the Caloosahatchee River

The following are directives that the Board of Directors of the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association feels should guide the work of policy-makers responsible for the management and oversight of the Caloosahatchee River. We believe that if these directives were adopted, the quality of the river and of life in Southwest Florida would be greatly improved. As a member of this organization we urge you to review them and comment to the Board on your opinion.

**1. Water Quality:** The Caloosahatchee River should be of a quality that supports both aquatic and terrestrial life. Non point source pollution, runoff, dumping, and water discharges from Lake Okeechobee and other sources must be carefully monitored and controlled.

**2. Erosion Control:** In many places, the shoreline is eroding into the river, creating excessively high sediment loads which limit the growth and health of submerged aquatic vegetation, a crucial part of our fisheries. Policies must be implemented to prevent erosion and improve turbidity.

**3. Terrestrial Habitat Improvement:** Along some parts of the shoreline, turf grasses extend all the way to the river's edge, while in others; invasive exotic vegetation has created monocultures along the riverbanks. In still other places, steep banks preclude vegetative growth of any kind. We must reintroduce Cypress trees, swamp maples, wild coffee plants, wild grasses and other native species back to the shoreline.

**4. Fishery Enhancement:** C-43 (the name the Army Corps has given the Caloosahatchee River) and its tributaries must be managed as the river system that they are naturally meant to be. Reintroduction of native aquatic vegetation, restoration of riparian shorelines to more natural conditions (fewer seawalls) and the addition of artificial structures to compensate for lost habitat are essential steps to help ensure a healthy fishery.

**5. Oxbow Restoration:** The oxbows are unique remnants of the old crooked river that have great value as wildlife habitats and can serve as effective holding areas for watercraft during hurricanes, but they are steadily

silting closed. The research that began several years ago on the oxbows should be completed, and the plans for management of the oxbows developed and implemented.

**6. Enhanced Recreational Areas:** Existing public lands along the river should be evaluated for public use or as preserves, and additional parcels should be acquired for such use.

**7. Restoration of River Basin Storage Capacity:** Heavy development is occurring throughout the Caloosahatchee River Basin. Management efforts must include provisions for aquifer recharge and greatly increased storage of water to provide for the needs of the natural system and its inhabitants, including, but not limited to, humans.

**8. Sand and Pollution Filters in Urban Areas:** Some municipalities have reduced urban pollution loads entering their river systems with low cost stormwater filters. Similar filters would benefit the Caloosahatchee River.

**9. Restoration of Inland Swamps:** Swamps that used to be part of the inland tributary network have been drained and subdivided for development. Their real value is storage and cleansing of the water prior to flowing into the river. One such area is the Greenbrier swamp in Lehigh Acres. It and many like it should be left as wetlands, and not sold to unsuspecting visitors.

**10. Increasing the Setbacks From the Rivers, Creeks and Streams:** Homes may be built 25 feet from the edge of rivers, creeks and streams in Lee County, and this puts them in the flood plain. When flooding occurs, as it does periodically in Florida, yard debris including gas cans, old batteries, fertilizers, weed killers and other toxic substances end up in the water. Flooding happens regularly in some parts of the county, and will start to include more areas as development moves east. We do not have to let a flood become an environmental catastrophe — our codes should be changed to keep developments out of the flood plain.

## Manatee Speed Zones

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission passed new boat speed regulations in November as way to provide increased protection to manatees in Lee County. Signs to mark the zones will be in place throughout the County this spring.

Good, bad, or indifferent, the fact is that the Florida Power and Light plant which takes water from the Caloosahatchee and discharges warmed water into the Orange River has made the Caloosahatchee one of the most critical areas for manatees in the entire state. In recognition of this fact, many new restrictions are in place along the river. All of the oxbows below the Franklin locks are now year-round slow speed zones, as are areas outside the ICW channel from the power plant to the Edison Bridge. The winter idle speed zones near the power plant have also been increased. There are also major changes to the speed limits at the mouth of the river near Shell Point, where everything is slow speed outside the ICW channel, and boaters need to be very cautious within the often congested 25 MPH channel.

All the new speed zones, as well as many useful pointers for boaters are detailed in the updated *Boaters Guide to Lee County*. This is a free publication published by the Lee County Natural Resources Division and is available now at all local libraries, community centers, and many bait and tackle stores.



## Catch Something New

Recreational anglers will want to take the time to "catch" the new fishing opportunities around Fort Myers. Thanks to Lee County, a new fishing pier has opened in North Fort Myers and the Centennial Park pier is scheduled to see some major improvements. The new pier recently opened at the northwest end of the Caloosahatchee Bridge, US41, at the spot affectionately known as Yankee Beach. It is in an area frequented by several popular game fish, including snook and tarpon. This beautiful new facility is free and will soon be enhanced by placement of special artificial reef materials.

The Centennial Park pier will also be seeing improvements in the form of new artificial reef material. This pier, which has been popular for years with many downtown anglers, is also scheduled to get new lighting and educational signs to help people improve their fishing success and do so in a responsible manner. Those improvements should be completed by this summer. Be sure to add both these spots when you think about ways to experience the Caloosahatchee.



### Is It Time to Renew Your Membership?

If so, please take a moment to fill out this form and then return it to us with your check. If not, pass this form on to a friend and ask them to join! As you know, the Caloosahatchee River Citizen's Association (RiverWatch) needs your continued support to make sure that good things occur on our river.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Level:

Student \$5 (\$2.50) \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$10 (\$5) \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$20 (\$10) \_\_\_\_\_

Friend \$50 (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_ Guardian \$100 (\$50) \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor/Corporate \$250 (\$125) \_\_\_\_\_

Protector \$500 (\$250) \_\_\_\_\_ Champion \$1,000 (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please note that all memberships expire at the end of the calendar year. Members joining from July through October should pay the amount in parentheses.

#### Volunteer Interests:

Clerical \_\_\_\_\_ Technical \_\_\_\_\_ Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_

Projects and Events \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity/Communication \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form and send it with your check to: CRCA, Box 1165, Fort Myers, FL 33902

# CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER RIDE



We held our third annual River Ride bicycle ride last fall on Sunday November 21st. The ride started at Caloosahatchee Regional Park near Alva and took country roads to Port LaBelle and back. Seventy four participants rode a total of 3,144 miles! Routes of 17, 28, 40, and 62 miles were available. The 62 mile (100Km) route was the most popular distance with 27 riders. We had great weather and food for the third straight year. Caloosahatchee Regional Park provided an excellent place for the start and a wonderful place to relax after the ride. Our thanks go to Ride Director Keith Kibbey and all the volunteers and sponsors who helped to make this event such a great fund raiser and friend maker for River-Watch!



## **Caloosahatchee River Citizen's Association**

### **Officers::**

President	Rob Andrys
Secretary	Patricia Tofflemire
Treasurer	Steve Boutelle

### **Directors:**

Steve Brookman	Susan Brookman
Anita Buff	Mike Buff
Bill Hammond	Keith Kibbey
Russ Ringland	David Robson

