

# **Caloosahatchee River Citizen's Association**

**CRCA Info-Line (941)694-3850      [www.caloosahatchee.org](http://www.caloosahatchee.org)**

## **Spring/Summer 2001**

"I had no idea there was so much stuff out there". That is the comment most often heard from our researchers..... Of course this is the first time any of them has been part of a real scientific study and had to work to follow standard operating protocols. They are the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students at the Lee Middle, Science Technology, Environment and Math (STEM) Magnet School.

The scientific study is the Caloosahatchee Oxbow Restoration & Demonstration project, (CORD). Oxbows are the remnant bends of the original river, which were bisected by the channelization, leaving semi circle shaped water bodies on either side of the channel. These natural areas are quiet, protective habitats which supply the nursery, resting and feeding areas critical to aquatic dependent species from fish to birds.

The objective of the study is to document the environmental condition, establishing a baseline character, for each of the 35 oxbows of the Caloosahatchee between the WP Franklin Locks and the City of LaBelle.

Having completed the first phase of the study in 1997, Riverwatch decided to proceed with the second phase of the project with an outreach component involving future scientists from our community. The study includes the field collection of data ranging from the geomorphic profile of each oxbow, meaning its shape, size and orientation to the river channel, to water quality conditions, vegetative communities, wildlife usage and sampling of the underwater, macroinvertebrates present within the oxbows. Macroinvertebrates are the base of the food chain and include; shrimp, water mites, leeches, clams and snails as well as insect larvae such as dragonflies, mayflies, moths, flies, mosquitoes and beetles.

The field data collection will allow us to document the condition of each oxbow to get a comprehensive snapshot of their health and function with regard to aquatic habitat, water quality, wildlife, sediments, vegetative diversity and benthic macroinvertebrate communities.

Our objective is to analyze the data to select a candidate oxbow which is impaired by degraded conditions that could be restored, allowing the habitat to sustain itself over time in a higher functioning capacity. Conditions in each oxbow are unique; some function very well as they are while others have become degraded by lack of flow and accumulation of aquatic vegetation and sediments. Thus solutions to restore the oxbows function, health and former beauty will need to be customized to the individual oxbows.

To reach our goal we have established a work plan and budget and are looking for volunteers to assist with data collection, partners who can offer shallow draft boats and/or time weekdays or weekends and financial supporters.

If you are interested in getting involved, getting more information or helping out with time, materials or donation of funds, please contact Rae Ann Wessel at her office, 731.7559, and visit our web site: [www.caloosahatchee.org](http://www.caloosahatchee.org).

Recognition and special thanks to the following teachers, students, volunteers and supporters who have contributed so far:

Lee Middle STEM Teacher **Laura O'Brien** and Environmental Ed director **Rick Tully** *Students:* **Lindie Aaron, Jarvis Barnes, Ladwaina Barron, Garrett Becker, Amijo Beecroft, Kaylie Birdsall, Fiera Bradley, Derek Dever, Danielle Ellyson, Kory Kantenga, Lucas Rivera, Michaela VanMed.**

*Volunteers:* **Anita & Mike Buff, Susan Brookman, Mark Chase, Mike Dove, Charles Foster, Jim Hohnstein, Earl Keaton, Rhoda & Henry Spang and Fred Whitehouse.**

*Supporters:* **The Bireley Foundation, Anonymous, Bonita Bay Group, Gordon Romeis, Bob Rutter and Ford Walton, Dept. of Environmental Protection, Keith Kibbey, Lee County Environmental Laboratory, John Cassani, Lee County Hyacinth Control, Dave Ceilley, John Capece**

# **Caloosahatchee Oxbow Research Project**

*Rae Ann Wessel*

RiverWatch, Caloosahatchee River Citizen's Association  
Box 1165, Fort Myers, FL 33902

## **RiverWatch Launches "Don't Dump It" Campaign**

Last fall, Susan Brookman prepared and submitted a grant proposal to the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program on behalf of RiverWatch. The proposal sought funds to expand upon the storm drain stenciling project created by RiverWatch members several years ago. We are delighted to announce that the project has been selected for funding, and our new "Don't Dump It" campaign will debut this spring!

This project is being designed to address the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program priority problem areas of water quality degradation and nutrient enrichment, particularly problems associated with urban runoff, point source discharges and groundwater. Susan has been appointed Project Manager by the RiverWatch Board of Directors, and she is at work now developing a brief (twenty to thirty minute) program about these issues. Once the program has been set, she will contact civic and church organizations, homeowners groups and youth associations to schedule presentations. The community groups will then be asked to join Susan in marking storm drains by "adopting" drains in their neighborhood. As a part of this project, Susan will develop a detailed map of all the storm drains involved in the project.

The placement of permanent placards next to storm drains will alert people to the fate of runoff water and the pollution carried with it from lawns and streets. The message will be highly visible. While this project won't solve all water pollution problems, it is a practical, positive, easy first step toward public education, involvement and support for local watershed storm water pollution prevention.

Studies completed in Wisconsin and Washington show that storm drain awareness campaigns raise citizen awareness of storm drain connections to local lakes and rivers. Over 75% of people who had seen marked drains knew where their water went, compared to about a third of those who had not seen a message about pollution near drains. People are certainly more likely to change their behavior to prevent pollution if they understand where storm water runoff ends up.

According to a recent Roper survey, many people still believe that industry is the greatest source of water pollution. But this is not the case. Officials from the United States Environmental Protection Agency believe that over 60% of our water pollution comes from urban and agricultural storm water runoff (nonpoint source pollution).

Many people believe storm drains connect to sewer treatment systems. In Southwest Florida, whatever enters the drains is discharged directly into a neighboring body of water without benefit of treatment. Community-based volunteer storm drain projects such as ours offer an educational pollution prevention activity with a lasting effect. While the placards will tell people not to dump (and why), our educational programs will give them local options of what we all can do to prevent pollution from used oil, antifreeze, lawn and garden chemicals, pet waste, litter and other materials flushed down storm drains.

If you would like to help with the "Don't Dump It" campaign by scheduling a presentation for a group to which you belong and/or by adopting storm drains in your neighborhood, please give Susan a call at (941) 694-7572.

## CRCA Annual Meeting and Picnic

A new board of directors and officers were nominated and elected at our annual meeting held March 10, 2001. The following officers and new board members were welcomed:

**Officers:**

President—Rob Andrys

Vice President—Russ Ringland

Treasurer—Katy McKenney

Secretary—Steve Shaw

**New Board Members:**

Jim Hohnstein—Bonita Bay Group

Kim Fikoski—Bonita Bay Group

Katy McKenney—Accountant

Steve Shaw—Wilson Miller, Inc.

Maran Hilgedorf — Charlotte Harbour National Estuary Program

We would like to thank our outgoing officers and directors, Steve Boutelle, Steve Brookman and Susan Brookman for all of their excellent work during the years. For a complete list of the directors, please see the next column. We would also like to extend out thanks to Jim Hohnstein, Mark Chase and all the staff at Marina 31 for their work and accommodations for hosting our annual meeting. Thanks especially to Chef Jim Hohnstein for the great food.

- We have never in the past asked our members to donate beyond the membership dues, however we are now asking for any tax-deductible donations that can be given to be used for the oxbow research work. We have already received \$ 2,000 in 2001 specifically for the oxbow study but an additional \$30,000 still needs to be raised to finish the project. Volunteers and in-kind contributions are also being sought for the oxbow study.
- We are currently seeking someone with grant writing experience to help us secure additional funding for our projects.
- Please call 694-3850 to get in touch with CRCA.

# Caloosahatchee Water Quality Monitoring Program

*Rae Ann Wessel*

In May, CRCA will begin a water quality monitoring program in the freshwater and estuary portions of the Caloosahatchee. Working in conjunction with Lakewatch and Coast Watch of Florida volunteers are trained to participate in a long term sampling program monitoring stations established along the Caloosahatchee.

The objective of the project is to generate a data base of water quality over a long period of time to observe changes and trends. This program is separate from but complimentary to the oxbow research project and allows us to take advantage of laboratory sample analysis, paid for by Lakewatch, for Total Nitrogen, Total Phosphorus and Chlorophyll a.

The program requires a long term commitment with sample dates coordinated for sampling on the same day and time at the various stations. We are in the process of locating the specific sample sites and plan to start the monitoring program in late May.

If you are interested in getting involved, getting more information or helping out with time, boat or donation of funds, please contact Rae Ann Wessel at her office, 731-7559, and visit our web site at: [www.caloosahatchee.org](http://www.caloosahatchee.org).

Volunteer samplers:

Steve & Susan Brookman, Anita Buff, Mark Chase, Tony & Nancy Dehntjer, Frank Grieco, Katy McKenney, David Robson, Rhoda & Henry Spang and Fred Whitehouse.

- CRCA has sent a letter drafted by Rae Ann Wessel to Conservation 2020 asking that they purchase the oxbows for preservation.
- Rae Ann Wessel, Jim Hohnstein and Earl Keaton representing CRCA attended an Earth Day celebration in La Belle to inform the public of the oxbow research project.
- CRCA joined in a petition asking that Governor Bush not compromise the health of our state's rivers by rewriting and revising downward the statues regarding water quality as it relates to Maximum Daily Loading (TMDL) of pollutants into our rivers.

Hello from David Robson, Membership Committee Chair. I wanted to update everyone on the status of our membership roster. We currently have 232 members on our mailing roster: 12 are students from the Oxbow Study, 32 are complimentary issues mainly given to government offices, 54 are current members (THANKS!!) that have paid their dues from June 2000. This leaves 134 that after this issue, will fall off the roster. I know you don't want to let that happen. Please look at the date by the your address. If that date is not January 1, 2002, please take a moment and mail in your contribution, we need your help to continue our mission to protect and enhance the Caloosahatchee River. Thank you.

<b>CRCA 2001 Board of Directors</b>	
<b>Officers:</b>	
President	Rob Andrys
Vice President	Russ Ringland
Secretary	Steve Shaw
Treasurer	Katy McKenney
<b>Directors:</b>	
David Robson	Mike Buff
Anita Buff	John Capece, Ph.D.
Keith Kibbey	Kim Fikoski
Jim Hohnstein	Derek Burr
Fred Whitehouse	Andrea Pipinato
Maran Hilgendorf	Catherine Corbett
Earl Keaton	

### **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:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**E Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Level:**  
 Student \$5 \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ Friend \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guardian \$100 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sponsor/Corporate \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ Protector \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ Champion \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_

**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

**WHERE:** Iona House, Calusa Nature Center  
**DATE:** Third Wednesday of every month  
 May 16, 2001  
**TIME:** 6:00 PM