

## Florida Sea Grant - Marine Extension Newsletter

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### Highlights of Recent Activities

**Maia McGuire** -- The Southeastern United States has been experiencing drought conditions for the past several years. Each person in Florida uses about 120-150 gallons of water per day; more than half of this is used outdoors on lawns and landscapes. Many Florida residents are not aware of the many simple ways that they can conserve water. The Northeast Florida Sea Grant Extension Program offered an adult day camp program called "Exploring our Environment—From the Ocean to the River" in 2008. During this program, participants learned about water conservation methods ranging from capturing cold shower water to use for watering plants and animals to using rain barrels for non-potable water. In December 2008, 62 participants who have taken the class over the past five years were asked to complete an online survey. Of the 21 adults who completed the survey, sixteen (76%) stated that they had changed their water use practices as a result of participating in the class. These changes included reducing their water use in the shower, toilet or sprinkler. Three participants reported saving money on their monthly water bill—from \$50 to \$240 per year. One person reported a reduction in water use of 10%. Twenty participants reported that they have made changes that will reduce their contribution to storm water pollution or marine debris. Eighteen people reported that they now pick up trash when they visit the beach; 17 stated that they now use reusable bags instead of plastic bags when shopping.

**Doug Gregory** -- The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Keys Seafood Festival, a partnership between UF/MC Sea Grant Extension and the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association was held in Key West on January 17. Over 4000 locals and tourists attended and consumed 1200 lbs of lobster, 700 lbs of golden crab, 600 lbs of stone crab, 3000 lbs of fish, 60 gallons of conch chowder, thousands of conch fritters, 12 gallons of wine and 51 kegs of beer! The event grossed about \$120K for the fishing association and will probably net them about \$90K which they will use to maintain operations for the upcoming year. By any measure the event was a success! We did have a small educational booth this year with video and pictures depicting the local fisheries and their historical importance to the Keys culture & economy (next to the wine & beer booths of course). The educational component of the event needs to be strengthened but currently it appears that since the local SG agent is esteemed to be either the most trustworthy of the bunch or of not much use for anything else, he is tasked with money collections throughout the day and is unavailable for more academic endeavors. This annual effort is a major contribution toward helping to sustain the financial and political viability of the local fishing industry which is the most valuable in the SE US. Many businesses throughout the community and Miami contribute to the event.

**Betty Staugler** -- Keep a Clear Head (KACH) recently won first place in the Interlux Waterfront Challenge for the Southeastern Region of the United States, which includes the States from South Carolina to Texas. Quality of water on a national level prompted Interlux Yacht Paint to create "The Waterfront Challenge", a competition to encourage people and organizations to improve their local waterfront environment. Responding to that challenge, the Charlotte County Sea Grant agent, working as a team member of the Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance created an innovative program to encourage boaters to use pump out stations. We call it "Keep a Clear Head". Now, when boaters use a pump-out station, they receive a reward card which gives them special discounts when presented to 11 different marine-related businesses. Our program won because it educates the boating public regarding problems related to illegally discharging holding tank waste into surface waters; provides incentive for boaters to

act responsibly; increases utilization of pump-out facilities; involve the entire boating community including boaters, marinas, and commercial enterprises that service everyone; will result in improved water quality; is easy to sustain; provides measures to success; and can be easily replicated in other communities. The KACH team will be recognized at the Miami Boat Show on February 12th.

**John Stevely** -- Approximately 75 artificial reef program managers, fisheries scientists and managers met at the Manatee Co. Extension Office in Palmetto met on January 8<sup>th</sup> to share and discuss recent advances in our understanding of goliath grouper biology and status of the stock. Although there is evidence that goliath grouper stocks are increasing, due to lack of sufficient data there is still a great deal of uncertainty in predicting when they will be fully recovered. One important outcome was that local artificial reef monitoring programs will be able to increase the quantity of goliath grouper abundance data by working in collaboration with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

**Bob Swett** -- In December 2008, the Boating and Waterway Management Program completed a 5-year strategic plan for the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND), the mission of which is “to preserve and enhance the commercial, recreational, and ecological values of District Waterways.” The District comprises four counties and contains 8% of Florida’s population and 12% of its registered boats. The significance of the strategic plan is that the District serves as a “laboratory” for developing and implementing innovative waterway planning and management methods and policies. Examples include the *Regional Waterway Management System* and the trailblazing regional environmental permits established with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The District has been a “friend” of innovation since the 1990s: one measure of which is the \$1,100,000 in Florida Sea Grant projects it has funded.

**Russ Watkins, Charles Sidman and Bob Swett** -- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) needed a scientifically defensible and transparent method to evaluate recreational boating safety risk. Florida Sea Grant developed a GIS procedure using geospatial data and input from subject matter experts. The outcome was a numeric weighting and ranking of waterway segments based on risk to recreational boating safety. Results from this decision support system were used during public workshops in Martin County, resulting in adoption of a Florida Administrative Code rule specifying the locations, types, and characteristics of boating regulatory areas in the Intracoastal and Okeechobee waterways. Partners included FWC and PBS&J.

**Bryan Fluech and Joy Hazell** -- In January the Collier and Lee County Sea Grant agents coordinated efforts to host two workshops that focused on new Gulf of Mexico reef gear and gag grouper regulations for recreational anglers. The workshops were held at Rookery Bay Reserve in Naples and Bass Pro Outdoor World in Ft. Myers. The agents demonstrated the proper use of the required gear and provided details about the regulations. FWC law enforcement also assisted the agents in answering enforcement-related questions. Post-workshop surveys indicated that 98% of participants increased their knowledge about the new regulations.

**Bill Mahan** -- “Shellfish School – Oysters & Clams - What Buyers Need to Know to be Successful” was held in Apalachicola, FL - October 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The Shellfish School is a one of a kind educational program that brings major seafood/shellfish buyers & distributors from around the U.S. to Franklin County to learn about current local, state, regional and national issues impacting the oyster and clam industries. The program was a collaborative educational effort offered in conjunction with Florida’s shellfish processors, state and federal regulators, the FSG Seafood Specialist, Steve Otwell, FSG Marine Economist, Chuck Adams and University of Florida Extension Agents (Leslie Sturmer, Bill Mahan) & researchers (Anita Wright, Victor Garrido). The school offered a complete and informative workshop that included lectures and hands-on sessions. The workshop featured a wide range of topics

from safety concerns to sustainable harvest and production of shellfish (oysters and clams) in the State of Florida. In addition to the knowledge gained by the school's 24 participants on shellfish safety & quality; one local processor as new major account due to meeting the buyer at the Shellfish School.

**Chuck Adams** -- I have assisted in helping to demonstrate the viability of cultured sunray venus clams as a new, candidate species for Florida's hard clam growers. The effort was funded by Florida Sea Grant. Sunray venus clams were grown in Levy and Franklin Counties. Market sized clams were provided to chefs in four restaurants, one each in Cedar Key, Bronson, Gainesville, and Apalachicola. The market tests occurred during the fall of 2007. The effort addressed the need to help find a candidate species that would allow current commercial hard clam growers and processors to help mitigate production and market risks associated with culturing and selling only a single species. The audience includes hatcheries, growers, wholesalers, distributors, restaurants and the general public. The approach used for the market assessment was a restaurant patron survey, implemented in conjunction with the restaurant owners/managers/chefs. Collaborators included IFAS Shellfish Aquaculture Extension specialist Leslie Sturmer and HBOI research scientist John Scarpa. The notable outcome is that virtually all survey respondents found sunray venus clams to be a highly acceptable product. Restaurant owners and managers are anxious to obtain commercial supplies. We have demonstrated a viable, latent market exists. The next step will be to assist the development of this market by providing the culture industry the necessary training to ensure a high quality product is introduced into the local, regional and statewide shellfish markets.

## Upcoming Events

**Maia McGuire** -- According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), over 400 non-native fish and wildlife species have been documented in the state. The greatest pathway by which non-native fish and wildlife species find their way into Florida's habitats is through escape or release by pet owners. The Flagler/St Johns County Sea Grant Extension Agent received funding in 2008 to begin the implementation of the "Don't Release Your Pet" campaign in Florida. The agent is taking the lead on this program, and is partnering with extension faculty Eleanor Foerste and Steve Johnson for program implementation. The program aims to educate pet owners about the environmental problems that can be caused when people release unwanted pets and aquatic plants into Florida's natural areas. Extension faculty statewide will help distribute posters and informational cards to pet stores. These posters and cards will outline the problems caused by release of non-native plants and animals into Florida's environment and will provide a list of alternatives to pet release. Extension faculty and partner agencies (FWC, The Nature Conservancy, Tampa Bay Estuary Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service) will also distribute materials at outreach events. Pet store staff will be asked to help ensure that customers are aware about the needs of the pets that they are purchasing so that they can make educated choices when selecting a pet. Pet store customers will receive informational cards, which will lead them to an online survey to assess their knowledge about and attitudes towards non-native species in Florida. They will be asked to take a pledge not to release their pets as part of the survey. If they choose to provide their name and address, they will be mailed a picture frame-magnet which reiterates the message about not releasing pets into the wild.

**Doug Gregory** -- During the month of February the MC Sea Grant Agent will be teaching a 40-hour nationally certified class on Solar Photovoltaic Installation Procedures to local tradesmen, building inspectors and interested homeowners. In March, at least 3 1-hour consumer oriented workshops for the general public on solar energy (photovoltaics) will be presented at the local events, including the 4<sup>th</sup> Green Living and Energy Education (GLEE) Expo, a local community education effort started by Extension in 2005. In addition to the lectures I will construct two demonstrations of using solar energy to power a fountain and a satellite radio system. Current GLEE activities can be reviewed at [www.keysglee.com](http://www.keysglee.com).

**Tom Ankeron, Bob Swett, Russ Watkins** -- In May 2009, there will be a Florida Sea Grant Work Action Group (WAG) meeting to plan for boating and waterways related extension activities and products. In addition to FSG Extension faculty, participants will include local government counterparts working on similar issues, as well as staff from the FWC Boating and Waterways Section. The meeting goal is to develop an implementation plan that will consist of projects and products that further boating and waterway management in Florida. In addition to outcomes and impacts related to the implementation plan, the meeting will further develop synergy between FSG, local government, and our state partners.

**Bryan Fluech and Joy Hazell** -- In an effort to expand outreach and education efforts to Hispanic audiences, the Lee and Collier Sea Grant agents are collaborating with partners from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Florida DEP, Lee County Extension, and Charlotte Harbor NEP to host a series of community workshops in four Hispanic communities in Southwest Florida. Workshops will address water, wildlife and sustainability issues and will be conducted in Spanish. Facilitated break-out sessions and surveys will also be used to assess methods to more effectively reach out to Hispanic populations.

**Bill Mahan** -- "The Economics of Florida's Inshore Shrimp Industry;" The Franklin County Agent is currently working with FSG Marine Economist, Chuck Adams to assist Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Staff Economist, Alex Miller contact key inshore shrimp industry representatives. Mr. Miller is in the process of putting together an economic survey for the inshore shrimp industry throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The purpose of the study is to collect economic data on the inshore shrimp fleet in order to determine the economic performance of the industry as well as to understand what the economic contribution of the industry is to the local and regional economy. The information will allow the Gulf State Marine Fisheries Commission do a better job managing the fishery. I have assisted Mr. Miller by identifying and setting up meetings for him to meet key shrimp industry representatives in Gulf, Franklin & Wakulla Counties. Mr. Miller is scheduled to visit our area on February 8 – 9, 2009.

**Chuck Adams** – The assessment of the FWC and WCIND-funded study on the economic impacts associated with artificial reef use in SW Florida is scheduled to be completed by October 2009. During early 2009, three large surveys will be implemented for the various segments of the general boating public and commercial for-hire sectors that utilized artificial reefs. The need to be addressed will be providing for a better understanding of the economic role that artificial reef programs play in coastal economies. The audience will be county and statewide reef managers, related industry sectors, and the general boating public. The approach used will be survey implementation and IMPLAN analysis, which will utilize the survey data to determine the economic impacts. Collaborators will include UF faculty (Bob Swett and Sherry Larkin), FSG marine agents in Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, and Pinellas Counties, and the county reef coordinators in the target counties. The primary impact will be to educate local and state-level decision makers regarding the benefits associated with investing in artificial reefs.