

Don Sweat, Retiring Marine Extension Agent, Earns National Sea Grant Career Leadership Award

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(GAINESVILLE, Fla.) – Don Sweat, the recently retired Florida Sea Grant marine extension agent for a multi-county region on the state’s West Coast, has been awarded the national William Q. Wick Visionary Career Leadership Award in recognition of his career achievements in Sea Grant Extension.

Don was the first extension agent hired in Pinellas County by Florida Sea Grant’s then-fledgling marine extension program in 1977. Upon his retirement in 2010, he served as marine extension agent for Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, Citrus and Levy counties.

His accomplishments in aquaculture, commercial fisheries and marine education still resonate with coastal residents today. He is credited with helping found The Pier Aquarium in St. Petersburg, changing state regulations that govern the state’s marine sponge industry and playing a principal role in research efforts that resulted in the re-opening of the recreational scallop fishery off Citrus and Hernando counties.

“It’s difficult to begin to explain the impact and vision of a person that helped lay the foundation for the research and extension services provided through the Florida Sea Grant program on the west coast of Florida,” said Michael Spranger, the associate director for Sea Grant extension and education.

“When Don started work, there was no template or path to follow, but his experience, talent and concerns regarding a variety of coastal issues, and



Mike Spranger (left), Sea Grant extension program leader, congratulates Don Sweat on the receipt of the Wick Award, presented at National Sea Grant week in October.

coming up...

Brown-bag
Webinar Series:

Florida Seafood Safety and Sustainability

12:15 PM to 12:45 PM EST

Date Topic

01/19	Why Local Seafood?
02/16	Grouper
03/16	Shrimp
05/18	Snapper
07/20	Spiny Lobster
09/21	Stone Crab
11/16	Oysters

*The webinars are **FREE**, but you must sign up by contacting Bryan Fluech at fluech@ufl.edu*



A newsletter that highlights Florida Sea Grant extension’s response to the ebb and flow of Florida’s dynamic coastal communities.

his desire to help others have forged an approach that still serves the entire Sea Grant program,” said Steve Otwell, Sea Grant’s seafood technology specialist.

The Wick Award is given every other year by the extension program leaders of the 32 Sea Grant programs nationwide to recognize retired or soon-to-retire individuals for outstanding achievements in extension programming or administration.

Don began his Sea Grant career based in St. Petersburg, providing extension programs to the Greater St. Petersburg area and several coastal counties north.

In 1988, he became a founding board member of The Pier Aquarium to help provide educational experiences. Don was also instrumental in establishing the aquarium’s annual Kids’ Fishing Tournament, teaching responsible fishing practices to hundreds of youngsters each year.

He spent more than 20 years as part of the UF team that documented the sustainability of the state’s commercial sponge fishery, with far-reaching implications for the industry. Among the outcomes, the research showed that if spongers changed from tearing to cutting sponges loose from the sea floor, the remaining sponge tissue could nearly double its ability to regenerate to a harvestable size. The change was endorsed by both the sponge industry and state regulators, and is now law.



John Stevely (left), Manatee County Extension, was recently awarded the inaugural Don Sweat Sea Grant Extension Award. County-based Sea Grant Extension faculty are eligible for this award, presented to an agent who has made a difference to one of Sea Grant’s clientele groups. John’s name has been added to the permanent plaque on display in the Florida Sea Grant state headquarters.

Updates from Sea Grant Legal Specialist

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UF Law will again offer a one-week Spring Break field course in marine and coastal law and policy at Marineland and the UF Whitney Lab in Flagler County. The course has been approved as a permanent addition to the UF Law Curriculum. A program development grant from Florida Sea Grant helped to create substantive content based through a series of policy papers, three of which are being published by law reviews. Richard Hamann and I are the course instructors.

The UF Law Conservation Clinic and Costa Rica Program has begun working with the Sea Turtle Conservancy on a USAID-funded project to improve cooperative management of sea turtle populations in the Western Caribbean within the framework of the Inter-American Convention on the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles.

The UF Law Environmental and Land Use Law Program and Conservation Clinic have received funding from the Florida Climate Institute to establish a Climate Law fellowship for students pursuing a Master’s in Environmental Law at UF and participating in the Conservation Clinic. In the first year of the fellowship the student will assist me with a project examining the efficacy of legislation passed in 2006 that requires all beachfront real estate transactions to include notice to the purchaser if the property is on a critically eroding shoreline. A program development Grant from Florida Sea Grant will assist with the development of empirical data associated with the project, utilizing the services of the Florida Sea Grant Boating and Waterways Program.

Other Programs of Interest. The UF College of Law will host the annual Richard Nelson symposium on local government law on Feb. 11. Outstanding speakers from within and outside the state will discuss legal developments that affect Florida’s coast, such as global warming mitigation, ocean acidification, oil spill response, and the Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in Stop the Beach Renourishment.

Scheduled speakers include Georgetown University law professor Peter Byrne, Stanford University law professor Barton H. “Buzz” Thompson, Jr., University of Washington law professor William

Rodgers, Florida Solicitor General Scott Makar, and UF law professor Michael Allan Wolf. More information will be available on the College of Law website at <http://www.law.ufl.edu/news/events/>.

The UF College of Law will also host the 16th annual Public Interest Environmental Conference from Feb. 24-26. This year's theme is "It's Not Easy Going Green: Florida's Energy Future." Although not explicitly directed to marine and coastal issues one panel will focus on the Gulf oil spill and natural resource damages assessment and another will address the current regulatory framework for the consideration of sea-level rise in the siting of nuclear power plants on the Florida Coast. The latter issue was a project of the UF Law LLM and Conservation Clinic student James Choate. For more information and an agenda go to <http://www.law.ufl.edu/piec/>

Marine Fisheries Regulations Workshop Attracts Large Crowd

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In January, Joy Hazwell (Lee County) and I teamed up with FWC law enforcement for a second year to host the Southwest Florida Marine Fisheries



The second annual marine fisheries workshop attracted approximately 50 participants from local, state, and federal agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations. (photo: Bryan Fluech)

Regulations Workshop. The workshop was intended for park rangers, resource managers, and informal educators who commonly interact with fishermen.

The workshop was designed to educate staff about marine fisheries regulations, so they could increase their ability to communicate with anglers about these rules. At the same time, we are increasing the local network of agency staff capable of identifying and reporting marine fisheries violations.

Workshop topics included a summary of 2010 state regulation changes, goliath grouper management, overview of federal gag grouper regulations, proper handling and release practices, oil spill impacts on regional fisheries, and discussion of local FWC law enforcement activities.

Waterway Access Survey Completed in Taylor County

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During the past year, the University of Florida Sea Grant Boating and Waterway Management Program has partnered with Taylor County Cooperative Extension to conduct surveys to determine local coastal and waterway access needs. The survey's final report is due out this February.

Taylor County residents, who were identified from county tax rolls, were mailed a survey to gain public input on where improvements to waterway access infrastructure, such as boat ramps, should be considered. In addition to the resident survey, 12 boat ramps were visited from November 2009 to September 2010 to record the number of vehicles and vessel trailers, to collect tag registration information, and to distribute a second survey to boaters using these ramps.

At the request of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, preliminary resident and boater survey results were provided in letters of support for several FWC Florida Boating Improvement Program grant applications submitted by the Taylor County Board of County Commissioners. Taylor County was recently awarded \$100,000 to construct coastal-friendly parking with pervious pavement materials that will double the current trailer parking available at the Keaton Beach Boat Ramp and alleviate some of the crowding issues reported by ramp users.

The Keaton Beach boat ramp, adjacent to a planned Keaton Beach coastal park, was identified by



The recently completed survey will help Taylor County determine coastal and waterway access needs. (photo: Florida Sea Grant)

survey respondents as a high-use area which suffers from overcrowding and inadequate parking. Creation of this new park infrastructure will increase public safety by helping to prevent over-capacity parking on the public right-of-way, and will eventually lead to the creation of a unique park facility with nature trails, educational kiosks and other public access benefits.

Another grant request is currently under review; if awarded, the funds will be used at a newly purchased waterfront property (Ideal Marina) in the town of Steinhatchee, where the board of commissioners is planning a public boat ramp.

Aquatic Species Collection Permit Workshop Held

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In December, I instructed and certified 31 formal and informal marine and environmental educators so they could obtain their Aquatic Species Educator Collection Permit through the Florida Marine Science Educators Association and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

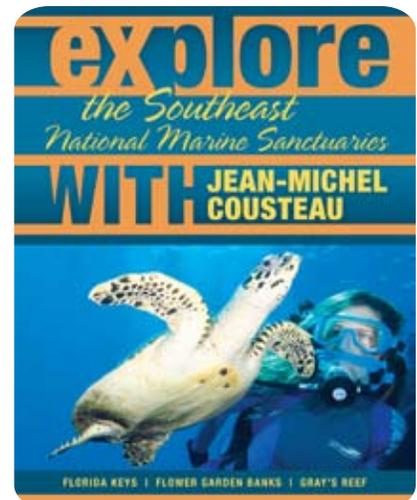
During the training workshop participants discussed benefits of collecting live specimens, alternatives to collecting, collection and transport techniques, methods to minimize environmental impacts, restrictions imposed by their collection permit, and useful resources.

The permit is good for three years and recipients are eligible to collect specified aquatic species for educational purposes that would be restricted under fishing license guidelines. Since becoming a workshop facilitator this past spring, I have taught three workshops and certified a total of 51 educators.

McGuire Edits New Book on Marine Sanctuaries

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A book that I edited has now been published. The book is the first in a 4-book series (see <http://www.oceanpublishing.org/explore-book-series.html>) that provides an introduction to the National Marine Sanctuary system. Each book profiles the sanctuaries within a specific geographic region. For each sanctuary, there are sections describing the sanctuary, explaining why it was selected for designation, profiling important habitats and species, outlining research going on within the sanctuary, emerging environmental issues, and info about visiting the sanctuary. It's a compilation of information from the NMS system and from Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society. The books are published by a local Flagler Beach publisher, who is the one who approached me about compiling the materials for the books.



Explore the Southeast National Marine Sanctuaries, edited by Maia McGuire, has recently been published.

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