



The Alliance

Quarterly Newsletter of the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance

Volume 5.2

April - June 2001

CBA Staff Grows!

The CBA welcomes Staci Danko, our new Administrative Assistant. Staci has studied at Bowling Green State University where she obtained a B.S. in Biology, concentration in Marine Biology. She has also studied at the University of Southern Mississippi where she concentrated on Marine Ichthyology and Marine Law. Staci is currently employed through the Florida Marine Research Institute as an Ichthyologist researching fishery population. Staci has also been an employee for the University of West Florida as a Biological Monitor for beach erosion projects. Staci has worked at the Bowling Green State University Marine Lab as a Laboratory Assistant in charge of students and educating tour groups on marine systems. We are excited to have this enthusiastic lady working for the conservation of the Choctawhatchee Basin!

MISSION STATEMENT

“The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance is an organization committed to sustaining and providing optimum utilization of Choctawhatchee Bay. The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance, under the auspices of the Okaloosa-Walton Community College, provides opportunities for citizens, educators, and technical experts to promote the health of the Choctawhatchee Basin”.



The CBA Office is located at the Mattie M. Kelly Cultural and Environmental Institute of Okaloosa Walton Community College, 4141 Indian Trail Road, Destin. The CBA is a program of Okaloosa Walton Community College.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 2 & June 6- CBA Board of Directors meeting, 4pm-6pm, Mattie M. Kelly, 4141 Indian Trail Road, Destin

June 6 - CBA Board of Directors meeting, 4pm-6pm, Mattie M. Kelly, 4141 Indian Trail Road, Destin

June 16- “Living with the Bay” CBA Quarterly Program, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, Building K at the OWCC Niceville campus.

Shoreline Restoration Call for Volunteers

Saturday, April 28 - Okaloosa Island Marsh Restoration, 8 am to 5 pm.

Saturday, May 5 - Marsh Restoration on North Shore of Bay, Walton County

For more information, please contact Eglin AFB volunteer coordinator, Jennifer Mathers at 882-4164 x365.

Destin Harbor Marsh Restoration - Date in June to be announced

“Living With the Bay”

June 16, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm; Building K at OWCC Niceville Campus

Introducing the “Choctawhatchee Yards and Neighborhoods” Program
Handouts and Information on Best Environmental Practices for Your Back Yard



Red buckeye

Learn about

- low maintenance native landscaping
- the benefits of installing vegetative buffers along the shoreline
- how to prevent pointless personal pollution



Pignut hickory

**Speakers: Scott Jackson (Okaloosa/Walton Sea Grant Extension Agent)
Larry Williams (Okaloosa County Extension Agent)**

If you would like to be a Sponsor or a Displayer for Choctawhatchee Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please call the CBA Office at 650-9330. We are providing free space for native landscaping nurseries and other environmental organizations to display information.

CHOCTAWHATCHEE BASIN ALLIANCE

Board Officers

Dennis Peters, Chair
(850) 609-3414

Vice Chair
vacant

Secretary
vacant

Ross Hamilton, Treasurer
(850) 729-5239

Board Directors
Richard Griswold, P.E.
(850) 837-6146

Jane Roberts
(850) 863-2727

Mike Flynt
(850) 729-5402

Claude Tankersley, P.E.
(850) 837-7860

Sharon Maxwell
(850) 897-5228

Lonnie Hearne
(850) 865-9302

Michael Reid, P.E.
(850) 897-4612

Shawnae Tallman
(850) 897-5496

Taylor Kirschenfeld
(850) 939-8300

Dan Robeen
Ex officio (Eglin AFB)
(850) 882-6282

Staff

Erica Mitchell, Administrative Officer
Staci Danko, Administrative Assistant
(850) 650-9330

Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
Okaloosa Walton Community College
100 East College Boulevard
Niceville, FL 32578

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Water Quality Monitoring

We greatly appreciate our CBA Deep Water Quality Monitoring Team Leaders for coordinating monthly sample collection and data collection throughout the bay. Currently, there are four water quality teams (we will soon have a fifth team). The team leaders organize the volunteers on their team, schedule a time for sampling, pick up the equipment and schedule boat time. They also ensure that water quality samples to be analyzed by the University of Florida Project Coast Laboratory are properly stored. Our team leaders have been extremely dedicated to the monitoring program and quality control. The team leaders are:

CBA Fort Walton Beach - Mike Nunley. Mike has a Master's degree in Biology and is currently operating the laboratory in the City of Ft. Walton Beach Waste- , water Treatment Plant.

CBA Niceville - David Wolfenden. David is a school teacher at Edge Elementary in Niceville and is very active in conservation groups in our area.

CBA Freeport - George Russell. In addition to being a kayaker and naturalist, George is involved with local conservation efforts through both the CBA and the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society.

CBA Destin - Staci Danko. Staci, our new Administrative Assistant, started organizing the Destin team this winter. Staci is currently working with the Florida Marine Research Institute.



The CBA saw tremendous support for our marsh grass restoration project on Okaloosa Island this spring. We had around 300 volunteer hours over three Saturday mornings in January and February. Thanks to everyone who participated in this worthwhile project.

www.basinalliance.org

The
**CHOCTAWHATCHEE
BASIN ALLIANCE**

*Committed to protecting and preserving the
Choctawhatchee River and Bay*

We are sending out periodic notices on upcoming events and activities to CBA members by email. If you have not received any email notifications and would like to - please send a note to mitchelle@owcc.net.

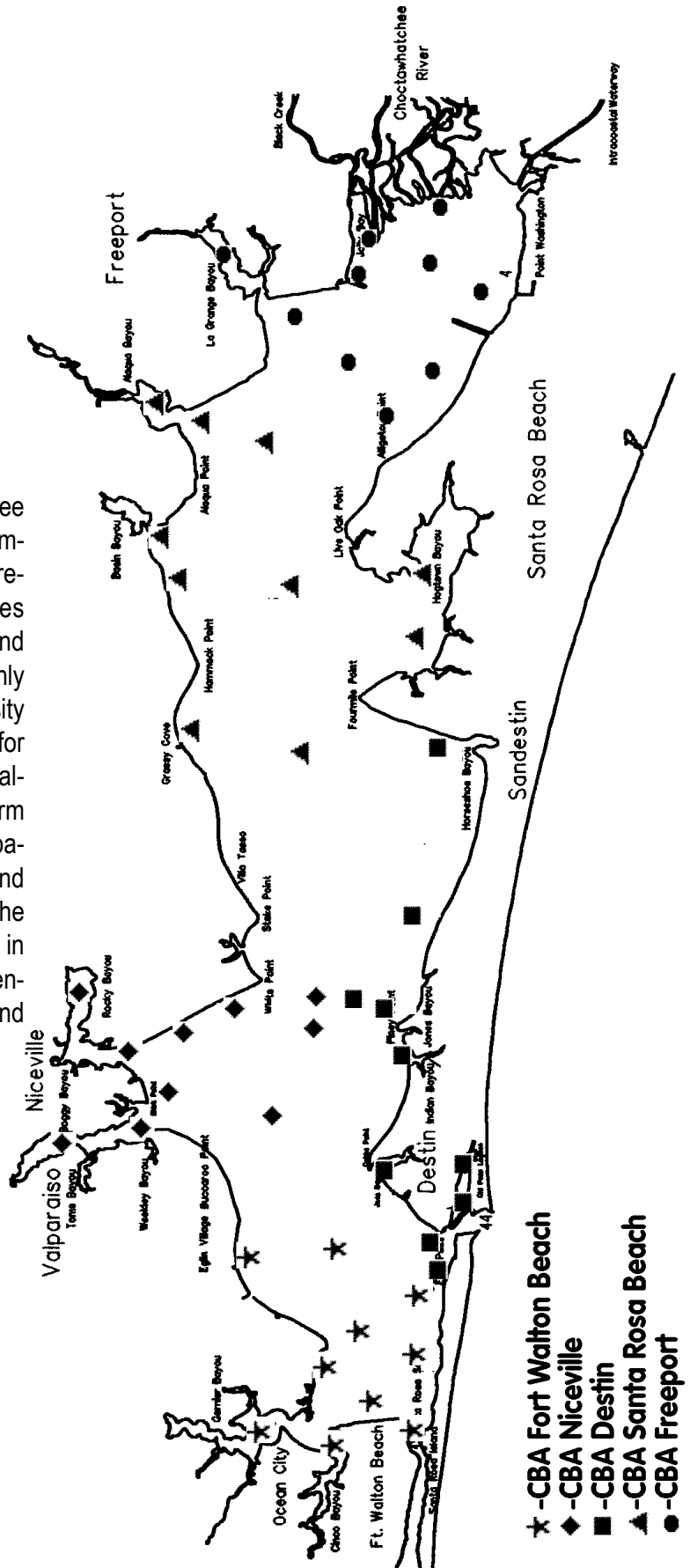
Bay Rally

CBA Deep Water Quality Monitoring Program Sampling Locations

Bay Rally is organized to collect data in Choctawhatchee Bay for the purposes of analyzing human and natural impacts on water quality, marine species habitat and recreation. On-site data collected by volunteers examines changes in temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen and water clarity on the surface and on the bottom on a monthly basis. The Florida Project Coast program at the University of Florida is analyzing samples collected by volunteers for nutrient concentrations (total nitrogen and phosphorus), algae content (chlorophyll) and other parameters. Long-term data is compared to historical studies on water quality parameters previously collected by Dr. Skip Livingston and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The goal of the program is to detect poor water quality zones in the bay, to generate a database of parameters for scientists to determine causes of water quality degradation and to recommend restoration alternatives.



Support provided by
Charles Morgan & Harbordocks



- ★ -CBA Fort Walton Beach
- ◆ -CBA Niceville
- -CBA Destin
- ▲ -CBA Santa Rosa Beach
- -CBA Freeport

Bay Rally

CBA Deep Water Quality Monitoring Program Trip Reports

CBA-Fort Walton Beach

(Mike Nunley)
12/9/2000
1/13/2001
2/10/2001
3/10/2001
4/01/2001

CBA-Freeport

(George Russell)
2/24/2001
3/24/2001

CBA-Niceville

(David Wolfenden)
1/20/2001
2/19/2001
3/17/2001
4/14/2001

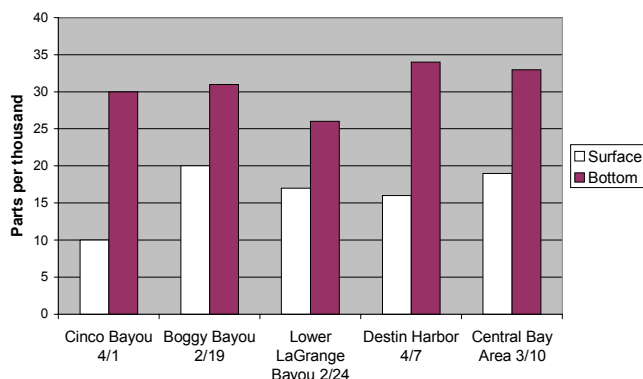
CBA-Destin

(Staci Danko)
03/04/2001
4/07/2001

The charts on this page represent some of the water quality data collected from the **Bay Rally** automated on-site instrumentation. This data is instantaneously recorded as volunteers make trips out to the field. The laboratory analysis for nutrients and chlorophyll from the University of Florida is reported once every six months. The **Bay Rally** program is currently developing database management and public reporting of data trends. **Bay Rally** data will be updated into the Environmental Protection Agency's Storet Database <http://www.epa.gov/storet/>.

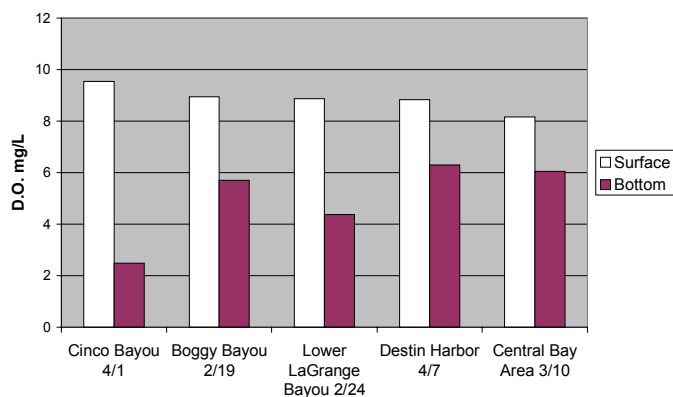


Salinity (ppt)



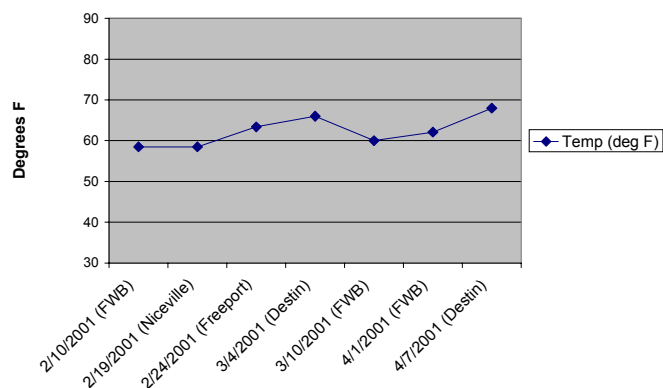
The comparison of salinity levels between surface water and bottom water gives an indication of freshwater inputs into the system and the dynamics of vertical circulation in the water column.

Dissolved Oxygen levels



Dissolved oxygen levels are important for marine life, especially at the bottom of the water column. Critically low dissolved oxygen levels may decrease habitat quality and even cause fish kills. Biological habitat may be compromised when dissolved oxygen levels are below 5 mg/L.

Average Water Temperature



In addition to Charles Morgan and Rally for Recreation, we thank the following supporters:

- Volunteers** – execute all data/sample collection
- West Marine** – donation of VHF radio
- Bill Jolly** – donation to buy a second Hydrolab
- Bluewater Bay Marina** – donation of dry storage space for *RV Scout*

OKALOOSA ISLAND COMMUNITY SHORELINE RESTORATION PROJECT

Shoreline restoration volunteers planted approximately 6,000 emergent marsh and shoreline plants over three planting days during January and February on Okaloosa Island. The site is located approximately ½ mile east of the Gulf Islands National Seashore Park, north of Hwy 98. The volunteers established three different “plots” of vegetation. One plot is adjacent to the previous marsh restoration project conducted in 1999 by the Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserves office. The second plot is west of where the water meets the seawall and is probably the most critical area for restoration. The third plot is on the east side of where the water meets the seawall. The species planted included:

Juncus roemerianus (Black needlerush)
Spartina patens (Saltmarsh hay)
Spartina alterniflora (Smooth cordgrass)
Paspalum vaginatum (Seashore paspalum)
Distichlis spicata (Saltgrass)

Schizachyrium maritimum (Coastal bluestem)
Uniola paniculata (Sea oats)
Panicum amarum (Beach panic grass)
Sporobolus virginicus (Seashore dropseed)

The CBA recently received a state grant to expand the marsh restoration site to the east side of the seawall on Okaloosa Island. Approximately 8,000 more native coastal plants will be installed in the area.

Shoreline restoration refers to the planting and care of emergent vegetation along the shoreline to promote the area of salt marshes within an estuary. Salt marshes around Choctawhatchee Bay offer many values, functions, and benefits to our society. Marsh vegetation provides food, shelter, habitat, and spawning/nursery areas for most of our commercially and recreationally important seafood species. Another important function of marsh vegetation is protecting shorelines from erosion caused by wind, waves, currents, sea level rise, development, and mismanagement.

DESTIN HARBOR SALT MARSH RESTORATION

The CBA is soliciting participation of private property owners in Destin Harbor in a native marsh grass demonstration project. The purpose of the project is to improve and restore salt marshes along Destin Harbor while educating private landowners that the installation of marsh vegetation is an environmentally friendly alternative for shoreline stabilization. The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance has received grant funding from a national foundation to conduct a marsh grass restoration project on private property in Destin Harbor. All costs for the project will be paid through the grant. The following describes the roles of the private property owner and the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance.

Role of the Private Landowner:

- Agree to allow the CBA and volunteers access the property for the installation of native vegetation and to allow access for follow-up monitoring.
- Agree to allow the habitat improvements remain in place without interference for a period of ten years.

Role of the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance/OWCC:

- Purchase the vegetation and marsh restoration supplies
- Perform all project work
- Coordinate all permits necessary to carry out project
- Access the site in coordination with the landowner
- Evaluate potential properties for site selection

Interested waterfront private property owners in Destin Harbor must contact the CBA office at 650-9330 before April 27, 2001 for evaluation of shoreline property for project participation.

THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE BASIN CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP “CROSSING THE STATE LINE”

Environmental groups, academic institutions, businesses and government officials throughout the Choctawhatchee River watershed are coming together to address Choctawhatchee Basin water quality concerns. Mike Mullen at Troy State University is the acting co-facilitator of the Choctawhatchee Basin Clean Water Partnership (CBCWP) which was formed recently. The goal of the partnership is to analyze water quality degradation in the Choctawhatchee River, recommend restoration alternatives, prioritize restoration activities and acquire funding for remediation.

The CBCWP is organizing a steering committee representative of stakeholders in both the Alabama and Florida portions of the basin. The partnership is also organizing education, finance and technical subcommittees, determining what local sub-basin groups may form and discussing how to develop a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS). The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance has been attending CBCWP meetings and has expressed interest in serving on the steering committee.

Excessive erosion rates and excessive sediment delivery to streams and rivers in the watershed appears to be the most widespread problem in the Choctawhatchee River watershed. Excessive sediment delivery increases turbidity and alters the hydrology of the tributary. Sources of sediment delivery are believed to be from unpaved roads, lack of field buffers and grassed watercourses, lack of wide enough streamside buffers, removal/destruction of riparian forests, lack of sediment control during construction activities and widespread lack of exclusion of livestock from streams and riparian areas. The excessive delivery of nutrients is also a problem in some areas of the watershed.

The collection of water quality data in the Choctawhatchee River watershed has been limited in the past, however several monitoring efforts have recently been accomplished. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) has conducted some evaluations of non-point source contamination and poultry farming impacts. The Geological Survey of Alabama has recently conducted monitoring efforts for water supply investigations for the Choctawhatchee-Pea Yellow Rivers Water Management Authority. Local Uni-

versities and volunteer monitoring groups such as the Alabama Water Watch (Troy State University) and the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (Okaloosa-Walton Community College) have recently been collecting data in the watershed.

The CBCWP will be examining data availability and needs for the development of a detailed Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS). The WRAS is a critical tool for water quality improvement and protection in the Basin.



The Choctawhatchee River watershed extends over 5,000 square miles covering parts of Florida and Alabama

COASTAL DUNE LAKES PROGRAM

The CBA is working with Walton County's Coastal Dune Lake Task Force to initiate a Monitoring and Education Program to preserve the Coastal Dune Lakes in South Walton County. The CBA is the project manager and is currently raising state, federal and private funds to accomplish the multi-year program. To date, there has been a total of \$9,000 committed in private funding. If you would like to make a donation specifically towards the preservation of the Coastal Dune Lakes in South Walton County, please make a payment to CBA-Coastal Dune Lake Program or contact the CBA Office at 650-9330 for more information. The program is also looking for volunteers to participate in the monitoring program (please contact CBA for more information).

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance

“Striving to Protect and Enhance the Resources of the Choctawhatchee River Basin”

I am so excited, I want to join now!

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone (Home) _____

Telephone (Work) _____

e-mail address _____

- Individual or Family **\$25 annual**
- Senior Citizen **\$15 annual**
- Full-time Student **\$5 annual**
- Lifetime **\$250**
- Bronze Alligator Sponsor **\$250 annual**
- Silver Osprey Sponsor **\$500 annual**
- Golden Dolphin Sponsor **\$1,000 annual**
- Platinum Sturgeon Sponsor **\$2,500 annual**

Additional Donations _____

CBA T-Shirt (**\$15** by mail) _____

Total Enclosed _____

I am so excited about Volunteer Opportunities! I am willing to assist with . . .

- Marsh Grass Restoration
- Water Quality Monitoring
- Speaker’s Bureau
- CBA Information Booth
- Children’s Educational Activities
- General Education
- Newsletters/Brochures
- Grant Writing
- Fundraising
- CBA Office
- Whatever



Recent New and Renewed Members

- Marcia Allmond, Individual/Family
- D. Hal Averett, Ind/Family
- Ralph E. Byram, Individual/Family
- Reid and Mary Carder, Individual/Family
- Connie W. Curtis, Individual/Family
- Mike Dombrowski, Individual/Family
- Kenneth Frazier, Individual/Family
- Bruce French, Individual/Family
- Lonnie Hearne, Lifetime
- Gloria Hovorka, Individual/member
- Chip Kirschenfeld, Individual/Family
- Viola E. Masters, Individual/Family
- Michael & Gayle Melich, Individual/Family
- Winston Milonski, Ind/Family
- Walt Mirth, Ind/Family
- James C. Orsak, P.E., Ind/Family
- Robert Parson, Esq., Ind/Family

- C.S. Peters, Individual/Family
- Cindy Pettit, Individual/Family
- Tony & Lois Phillips, Individual/Family
- Brad Pickel, Individual/Family
- Devon & Mathilda Ravine, Individual/Family
- James Roberson, Individual/Family
- Gerald Rush, Individual/Family
- Pamela Selton, Ind/Family
- M.F. Spigelmire, Individual/Family
- Marland Thurston, Individual/Family
- Julia Tipton, Individual/Family
- Walton County Board of Commissioners, Lifetime
- Jim & Pauline Waters, Individual/Family
- David Whalen, Individual/Family
- Jayne White, Individual/Family
- David L. Yates, Lifetime
- Willis & Barbara Young, Ind/Family



Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
Okaloosa Walton Community College
100 East College Boulevard
Niceville, Florida 32578

An Equal Access / Equal Opportunity Institution.

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bulk Rate
Permit #28
Niceville, FL



Volunteers Rick Hastings and Bill Newman install native plants at the OWCC Mattie M. Kelly Cultural and Environmental Institute.

Sponsorship and Displayer Opportunities

Become a Sponsor or Displayer for the Choctawhatchee
Neighborhoods and Yards Program (page 1)

Coastal Dune Lakes Program

Become involved in the preservation of South Walton
County (page 6)

Volunteer Opportunities

Call for Shoreline Restoration Volunteers on
April 28, May 5 (page 1)