



The Alliance

Volume 9.2

April– June 2005

For further information on projects and volunteer opportunities, please contact us.

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www.basinalliance.org

It is that time of year when the cobia run, the flowers are in bloom, the tourists are in droves and CBA staff is busy preparing for its Spring Membership Meeting. On **Thursday, May 5th**, the Alliance will host its Annual Membership Meeting at the Mattie Kelly Estates in Destin, Florida. We invite all of our members, partners or interested parties to attend the meeting for an update on CBA's current actions in sustaining and providing optimum utilization of the Choctawhatchee Basin Watershed. This meeting is an important opportunity for the community to be educated on issues concerning their watershed and to provide valuable input into the future direction of our organization. This year's presentation will have a special emphasis on the final results of our *Choctawhatchee Bay Nutrient Loading Study*.

Additionally, the meeting is a time for the community to get to know the staff, board members and volunteers who make CBA possible. We thrive on public involvement and offer our members the important task of voting for the board of directors that will shape our future goals. A biography of the board members to be elected this year is presented in this newsletter; the official ballot for the membership will be mailed with the invitation to the meeting. CBA is extremely proud of the individuals involved with the Alliance and the direction they are taking the organization. We encourage you to attend this meeting and get to know the people who will be shaping our future.

The meeting is scheduled for **Thursday evening from 6-8 P.M.** It will be a casual atmosphere with a local fish fry, beer and wine to be provided by CBA. The schedule for the evening is as follows:

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6:00-6:30: Guest Arrival/Social

- Membership Voting
- Food/Drinks Served

6:45-7:15: Presentation

- Past, Present and Future Efforts
- Nutrient Loading Study

6:30-6:45: Welcome and Introduction

- Board Members
- CBA Partners

7:15-7:30: Awards

- Partners
- Volunteer

7:30-8:00: Wrap up/Social

Please contact Lizette Lennon at our office (650-9330) to RSVP.

We look forward to seeing you soon!



The CBA office is located at the Mattie M. Kelly Cultural and Environmental Institute of OWC in Destin, Florida. The CBA is a program of OWC.

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 College, provides opportunities for citizens, educators, and technical experts to promote the health of the Choctawhatchee Basin".

New Board Member Biographies

Jerry Najarian

I am a retiree from Eglin AFB as an Electronics Engineer involved in the design and installation of security/ surveillance systems. Over the years I have been active in several community support activities (e.g. Destin Community Center, Destin Chamber of Commerce, and City of Destin).

I am interested in supporting the CBA in any capacity, and would serve as a future board member if elected. In my opinion, one CBA project should be to prepare and publish a book on Choctawhatchee Bay. I would be interested in supporting this project.

Al Wenstrand

Al Wenstrand is the executive director of Florida's Great Northwest, a regional economic development organization representing the sixteen counties in northwest Florida.

In 1999, Al was appointed by Governor Mike Johanns to the cabinet level position of director of economic development for Nebraska. Prior to the appointment, he was the executive director of the Sarpy County Economic Development Corporation. Al's office was located in the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce where he and his staff worked in cooperation with the Omaha Chamber in a four-county, regional economic development effort.

Al received his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Nebraska in 1973. In 1978, he received a Master of Education Degree, also from the University of Nebraska.

Prior to economic development work, Al was a teacher, including eleven years teaching marketing and coaching track and gymnastics at Bellevue West High School. In 1989, the Marketing Education Association named Al the National Marketing Educator of the Year.

Bill DeBusk

William F. DeBusk, Ph.D. -- Dr. DeBusk is a research scientist at the University of Florida's West Florida Research and Education Center in Milton. He has over 25 years of research experience in the areas of water quality, wetlands science, soil chemistry, and watershed assessment and management. He has worked in academia during most of his professional career, in extension (public outreach) as well as research, but also has significant experience in the private sector as an environmental consultant.

Dr. DeBusk has conducted research and environmental analysis of wetlands, estuaries, lakes, streams and various terrestrial ecosystems. He has collaborated extensively with local, state and federal agencies, and a variety of public and private stakeholders including the Bay Area Resource Council (BARC) in Pensacola.

James Ward

James Ward is currently the Co-Owner, Vice-President, and Sec. Treasurer of the Fort Walton Glass Co., Inc. Educated at the Southern Polytechnical State University in Marietta, Georgia, he received his degree in Architectural Engineering Technology in 1965. Some of his past activities include: Membership in the Florida House of Representatives (1976-1986), Chairman of the Correction Probation Parole Committee (1980-1984), Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee (1984-1986), Vice-Chairman of the Northwest Florida Water Management Board (1974-1976), Chairman of the Florida Public Service Commission Nominating Council (1986-1989), and a Member of the Southern Growth Policy Board (then Chaired by Governor Bill Clinton) (1985-1986). He is currently involved in the following activities: Executive Board of the *Gulf Coast Council*, *Boy Scouts of America* (1984-present), Northwest Florida All-Sports Association (1970-present), and Trailboss of the Coldwater Trail Ride (1978-present).

Tom Patton

I have lived in Walton County and Okaloosa Counties for 26 years with my wife Mary. I have been a consultant for the last 10 years. I am currently consulting with Legendary, Inc in real estate development. I am on the Walton County Planning Commission, President of the Friends of Grayton State Park, President of the Redfish Lane Owners Association, Inc. (on a coastal dune lake) and on the Board and Executive Board of the Boys and Girls Club of Okaloosa/Walton. Formerly was the Vice President of Development for Sandestin for 16 years. I coordinated the implementation of the Special tax district for the South Walton Fire District, serving on the elected board for 13 years and 9 years as its Chairperson. I have also served on the Walton County Chamber Board, Governor Graham's Okaloosa Walton Growth Management Committee and numerous other community committee and roles.

Choctawhatchee Bay

Monitoring

Northwest Florida **OYSTER** Project (Offer Your Shell To Enhance Restoration)



The objectives of the NWF OYSTER project are to salvage shell material initially from the restaurant industry and after a drying process to place the shell on suitable areas designated as oyster reef restoration sites. This project is a collaboration of several partners from Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties with the initial intent to restore a quarter acre reef in each county through this pilot project. CBA is teaming up with DEP, UF/IFAS, DACS, Okaloosa County, local restaurant owners and many other partners in a effort to try and restore oyster reef habitat in Choctawhatchee Bay. Oyster activity is very well documented by DACS in Walton County due to the majority of the counties waters being classified as "conditionally approved" shellfish harvesting waters. Oysters are present in Okaloosa County, but poor documentation is attributed to the majority of the waters being classified as "prohibited or unclassified" for harvesting. The focus of this project is to not add oysters for propagation, but to add the shell as suitable substrate for spat, newly attached oyster larvae, and to develop oyster reef habitat for habitat and fisheries enhancement. Redfish, speckled trout, sheepshead and flounder are just a few of the fish species that will reap the benefits of a restored oyster reef. The oysters will also provide a vital service to the local waters via its filter feeding. An adult oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, is able to filter 2.5 gallons of water per hour!

One of the goals of this project and one of the main goals of CBA with any project is public education. The oyster shell is donated by the local restaurant owner, collected by a volunteer, dried in an offsite/upland location and then placed on the restoration site by another group of volunteers. At every point in the chain is an opportunity for public education. The restaurants will be furnished with brochures that explain how their efforts are helping to increase habitat and species diversity in Choctawhatchee Bay that can be read by all their patrons and staff. The volunteers are educated as well as they transport the shell either to the drying site or the restoration site. Education is a key component in any project!

**For more information on the project or to sign up as a volunteer, please call Joy at:
(850) 650-9330.**

Coastal Dune Lakes

Monitoring

The Alliance is making great strides through its Coastal Dune Lake Program to promote the importance of the globally rare and imperiled dune lakes of South Walton County. Some strides have been easy to make because of the community's inherent sense of admiration and respect for the beauty of the open waters of the lakes. However, when it comes to the straggly set of vegetation that comprises the wetlands around these lakes—well, let's just say the same sense of admiration and respect is not as obvious. While it may be true that the aesthetic charm of these unrefined areas only appeals to biologists who spend an inordinate amount of time studying them, it is definitely true that the role wetlands play in maintaining the integrity of the lakes is something everyone should appreciate.



For those who do not spend their life thinking about this issue, here is a very simplified Wetlands 101--- Wetlands are the transitional zone between the man-made activities of our uplands and the delicate habitat of our open waters. Nature uses them as a buffer zone to regulate the materials being deposited in our waters from our uplands, essentially removing harmful elements that can alter the delicate balance of its ecosystems. Consider the wetlands as nature's filtering device. To illustrate the significance of a filtration mechanism the next time you brew a pot of coffee, try it without the filter paper. Then have a heaping cup or two of the joy that unfiltered materials have to offer. If you do not want to try this experiment, then take my word for it—it makes a muddy cup of coffee, and wetlands are absolutely crucial.

The ability of the lakes to remove harmful pollutants is vital because the biggest threat to these ecosystems is the increased pollutant load from development occurring in the uplands surrounding the lakes. Most scientists believe there is some ecological flexibility for nature to deal with this increased pressure. However, if you couple this threat with the removal of nature's ability to deal with it through the filling of wetlands, then the probability that these ecosystems will remain in their historical conditions diminishes greatly.



To continue to enjoy our beloved coastal dune lakes, we as a community must realize and acknowledge the true importance of wetlands. Make it a personal goal the next time you are kayaking on the lakes, fishing off your pier, or hiking along the shorelines, to take a moment to observe the forgotten strand of plants around the shoreline. Maybe through the knowledge of their ecological role, you can begin to see the true beauty of wetlands.

office:
850-650-9330

website:
www.basinalliance.org

Board Officers

Dennis Peters
Chair

Taylor Kirschenfeld
Secretary

Ross Hamilton
Treasurer

Board Directors

Richard Griswold, P.E.

Mike Flynt

Brian Squire

Dan Robeen
Ex officio
(Eglin AFB)

Staff

Lizette Lennon
Administrative Assistant

Joy Brown
Bay Monitoring Coordinator

Phillip Ellis
Coastal Dune Lakes Coordinator

“Striving to Protect and Enhance the Resources of the Choctawhatchee Basin”
Membership Sign up and Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Telephone (H) _____

Telephone (W) _____

E-mail Address _____

Additional Donations:

Choctawhatchee Bay Monitoring Program \$ _____

Coastal Dune Lakes Monitoring Program \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Individual/Family \$25 Annually

Bronze Alligator Sponsor \$250 Annually

Silver Osprey Sponsor \$500 Annually

Golden Dolphin Sponsor \$1,000 Annually

Platinum Sturgeon Sponsor \$2,500 Annually



*Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
100 East College Boulevard
Niceville, Florida 32578*



Welcome
To our new and renewed members

Bobby Dee Toothaker

Ruth Crenshaw

Al Wenstrand

Jim Liufau

William & Susan Von Hoene

George Hoffman

Jerry Najarian

Jennifer Jones

George & Judith Russell

Jim & Margaret Phillips

Robert & Katherine Grete

Tom & Robin Stiles

Town of Cinco Bayou

SAIC -Gulf Coast

Donald Ware

John M. Vaughan

Cynthia & Jeffrey Turner

Volunteer Opportunities

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



**Choctawhatchee
Basin Alliance**

**Okaloosa Walton College
100 East College Boulevard
Niceville, Florida 32578**

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CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!!

Bay Rally program is in need of volunteers to help in the following area:

CBA Destin Team

- Sample once a month
- 4 - 5 hours per trip
- Joe's Bayou to the mouth of Hogtown Bayou
- People & boats are needed!!

Boats best suited for this team would need to be at least 20 feet long

For more information go to the website: www.basinalliance.org and click on the "Bay Rally" link to see the stations for the CBA Destin team.

Call Joy at (850) 650-9330 to sign up or for more information.