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CHOCTAWHATCHEE
BASIN ALLIANCE **owc**

THE ALLIANCE

the newsletter of the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance

volume 9.3, April 2006

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance is committed to sustaining and providing optimum utilization of the Choctawhatchee Basin watershed. Under the auspices of the Okaloosa-Walton College, the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance provides opportunities for citizens, educators, and technical experts to promote the health of the Choctawhatchee Basin watershed.

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

website:
www.basinalliance.org

email:
cba@owc.edu

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850-650-9330

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The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance is proud to announce a new cooperative agreement with the City of Fort Walton Beach and Walton County. The partnership is the initial step in uniting local governmental entities to protect the ecological integrity of the Choctawhatchee Watershed. The agreement is formulated around the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Program mandated to local governmental entities by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). CBA believes it has the unique ability to unify the community's resources in achieving maximum compliance with the NPDES Program. This partnership establishes the foundation for the Alliance's future, and is a major step to enhancing the overall water quality within the Choctawhatchee Watershed.

For those readers out of the loop on current Federal initiatives, the NPDES Program is an EPA mandate, administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), targeted at improving water quality within local municipalities. Essentially, the NPDES Program requires the municipalities to submit a permit that outlines an initial five (5) year strategy on improving water quality through six (6) guidelines:

1. Public Education/Outreach
2. Public Participation/Involvement
3. Illicit Discharge Detection/Elimination

4. Construction Site Runoff Control
5. Post-Construction Runoff Control
6. Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

Under this cooperative agreement CBA will assist the municipalities in providing the services and developing the program required in the NPDES permit. To effectively supply the services outlined in this proposal, the Alliance will build upon established programs and devote a majority of its organizational resources to assisting local municipalities in achieving maximum compliance with their NPDES permit. The Alliance will tailor its services to meet specific needs of a community and will address any and all opportunities for joint accomplishment of the requirements of the NPDES placed on local governments. CBA believes the synergy achieved through community alliances will provide a better environment at the minimum cost for each taxpayer.

The Alliance will use the NPDES Program as the foundation for fulfilling its mission of "sustaining and providing optimum utilization of the Choctawhatchee Basin Watershed." CBA is extremely pleased that the City of Fort Walton Beach and Walton County will be the pioneers of this program. These municipalities will demonstrate to the rest of the Watershed the effectiveness of this partnership on a city and county scale.

who's who:**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:****EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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BOARD SPOTLIGHT:

AL WENSTRAND

Al Wenstrand is the chairman of CBA's Board of Directors and the executive director of Florida's Great Northwest, Inc. His work at Florida's Great Northwest is in regional economic development. While it may seem that economic development and environmentalism are two forces at odds with each other, in fact they are quite compatible, and even mutually beneficial.



In understanding how this can be so, it is important that economic development is not confused with land development. Rather than simply trying to increase the *number* of jobs (and office buildings and roads and commuters) in the area, Al and his organization are striving to bring *quality* economic development to northwest Florida by growing businesses and jobs that will create a higher wage structure here. These tend to be part of knowledge-based industries such as information, manufacturing, or research and development (as opposed to retail, construction, etc.).

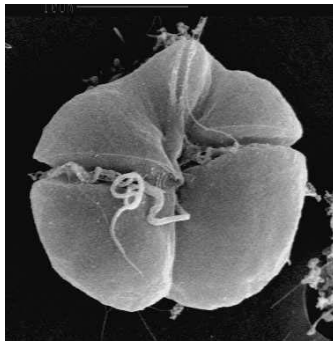
In determining business locations, industries like these are exhibiting a higher interest in quality of life than in the pure cost of setting up shop. They are more concerned with attracting and retaining high-caliber employees -- the most valuable asset of knowledge-based industry -- than with limiting raw production costs. Certainly, the quality of the local environment translates directly to quality of life. An employer's interest and dedication to environmental issues can make them philosophically attractive to potential employees as well.

Even though we can see how environmentalism is woven into the fabric of economic development, Al's personal interest in the environment is primary to any professional focus. As a Nebraska native, Al relishes the unique beauty and recreation offered by Florida's great outdoors. He looks forward to the emergence of CBA as it grows out of its start-up phase and into more visible, significant projects. He anticipates CBA's transition in the next year or two into "a philosophy of having a significant annual impact on the water quality of the bay and the quality of the environment."

CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY MONITORING

Red tide is a term most people in the Florida panhandle are familiar with, especially after the blooms in recent years that have occurred along the Emerald Coast. If you have spent any time near the coast during a red tide event, you have probably experienced watery eyes & a coughing fit. You may know when it is here, but what are the facts about a red tide event? This is the question that was discussed at a public meeting held by Joy Brown of CBA and Scott Jackson of the UF/IFAS Sea Grant Extension Agent for Okaloosa & Walton Counties. During the meeting, we tried to discuss some of the facts and dispel some of the rumors surrounding these events. Topics included Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB's), new technologies utilized in detecting red tide, impacts on our lives, and the role of nutrients & non-point source pollution.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB's) have impacted coastal systems for many years, and their intensity and frequency seem to be increasing in recent years. A majority of these blooms involve dinoflagellates which can release toxins as part of their life



cycle (*The Ecology & Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms*). The dinoflagellate we are most familiar with in our area is known as *Karena brevis*, named after researcher Dr. Karen Steidinger. It is a member of the Kingdom Protista. You may have heard one of the older names for the dinoflagellate, *Gymnodinium breve* or *Ptychodiscus brevis*, which all refer to the same organism.

Two different camps exist to explain the cause of the bloom. Florida Wildlife Research Institute has reported fish kills as early as the 16th century and claim the dinoflagellate bloom is a natural occurrence. Brand, a scientist from the University of Miami, proposes the red tide is caused by the presence of excess nutrients and supports his the-

ory by spotlighting the last 50 years in which he states we've been 25 times more likely to experience a red tide event.

Advances in technology, such as satellite imagery, are making it easier to locate a bloom area and tell where it is moving. Although there is still much work to be done, the advances in technology are incredible. Other areas have advanced in *K. brevis* sensing equipment, such as the Breve Buster from the Mote Marine Laboratory. The submersible can detect the dinoflagellate in the water column and sends the data back to a computer while surfacing.

Human impacts are felt by everyone. Respiratory & skin irritation along with dead fish strewn along the beaches are very apparent to residents & visitors alike. A major cause of concern is Neurotoxic Shellfish Poisoning (NSP) which is caused by the consumption of contaminated bivalve shellfish. Shrimp, crabs & fish fillets are ok to eat during a red tide bloom, but bivalves such as clams & oysters are not. Cooking will not destroy the red tide toxin in the bivalve tissue. The Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (FDACS) monitors the shellfish harvesting waters and will close them during a bloom. The shellfish can purge themselves of the toxin within 2 – 6 weeks.



Everyone can help reduce non-point source pollution. Following proper yard maintenance such as watering, mowing & fertilizing practices can decrease the amount of excess nutrients entering the surface waters.

COASTAL DUNE LAKES MONITORING

The Alliance is pleased to announce a new partnership with Walton County that will significantly strengthen the capability of the Coastal Dune Lakes Program. The agreement represents a considerable advance from the previous partnership by outlining a 4-year strategy to develop a management plan for each of the lakes: defining a prioritized list of projects to enhance the lakes, augmenting the scientific knowledge of these ecosystems, and intensifying our endeavor to document the ecological health of the Coastal Dune Lakes.



Walton County shares CBA's concern with protecting and preserving its fifteen (15) globally rare and imperiled Coastal Dune Lakes. Both entities realize the increasing pressure imposed on these ecosystems by growth management issues makes it imperative for the community to unite and ensure the environmental stability of these local treasures. This agreement will lead the



community through a series of stakeholder meetings to develop a management plan for each of the lakes. The plans will collate the data and public feedback necessary to generate and prioritize a list of projects to improve the lakes. Funding from this agreement will then be leveraged to acquire additional financial support to complete the projects identified in the prioritized list. Concomitantly, CBA will develop additional scientific studies and bolster its current volunteer water quality monitoring program to provide the information necessary to make educated decisions in the management plans. Once the four (4) year timeframe is completed, the Program will assess its results and determine its direction for the future.

If you would like more information about this initiative and want to participate in our online discussion, please visit dunelakes.org.

Photos by Moon Creek Studios.

Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance

"Striving to Protect and Enhance the Resources of the Choctawhatchee River Basin"

Membership Registration and Renewal Form:

Membership Dues:

Individual or Family (\$25 to \$250)
 Lifetime (\$250)
 Bronze Alligator Sponsor (\$250)
 Silver Osprey Sponsor (\$500)
 Golden Dolphin Sponsor (\$1,000)
 Platinum Sturgeon Sponsor (\$2,500)



Please make checks payable to:
Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of OWC

Please send payment to:
 CBA
 Attn: Membership Dues
 100 College Blvd
 Niceville, FL 32578

Total Enclosed: _____

Name: _____ e-mail address: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Thank you to our new and renewed members !!!

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 Jack & Karen Baker
 Jean Blumer
 Holly & Francois Booyse
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 Bryan Bruns
 Tom Church
 Jerry Coker
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To:

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100 East College Boulevard
Niceville, FL 32578
An Equal Access/Equal Opportunity Institution

Return Service Requested

www.basinalliance.org

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES @ CBA

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance wants YOU!

We're looking for a few good volunteers to join our water quality monitoring program.

What qualifications do I need?

Interest in water quality. Willingness and desire to spend time on the water year-round.
Monthly commitment. Geographic proximity to work site, or willingness to travel.

Where does the CBA need volunteers?

Bass Lake (behind the Fort Walton Beach Golf Club): Does not require operation of a watercraft. We are particularly interested in hearing from waterfront residents.

Cinco Bayou: Requires operation of a kayak.

Santa Rosa Beach: CBA has a boat that we currently use for Santa Rosa Beach sampling; we could use volunteers on our boat OR volunteers with their own boats.

Basin Bayou: Requires operation of a kayak.

Choctawhatchee River: Does not require operation of a watercraft.

How do I participate?

Contact Sarah Kalinoski (CBA's Volunteer Coordinator) at
kalinoss@owc.edu or 850-650-9330