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HOMOSASSA
VOICE OF THE RIVER
RIVER ALLIANCE



Spring, 2017

<http://www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org>

Message From the President

Writing about this last year is difficult, I find it impossible to not dwell on the death of Jim Bitter. Jim, a founder of the Alliance, was our neighbor, our friend and in many ways our mentor for becoming a member of the Homosassa community. I grew up in Pinellas County and Diann and I lived there for our first 20 years together. Although Diann had been born in Chiefland we were urban people, city dwellers in our way of life, our values and habits.

Understanding the traditional community was not easy. It was Jim who introduced us to Don Darnell, a multi-generational native, who became our friend and our guide to the “Old Florida” part of Homosassa. Don died in December. Between the two we lost a major part of our “community”.

In the last month it has become obvious that the upcoming year will be one of construction and disruption. The Halls River bridge project has already introduce the travails of single lane traffic. The residents of Riverhaven will have a long year.

The construction of four large stormwater retention areas behind the commercial development on the west side of Hwy. 19 are well underway. This project is intended to limit runoff into our river and coastal lowlands. I watched an 18-wheeler bring in four sections of the 54 inch diameter concrete pipe for moving the water from the highway and commercial development into the ponds. I have no doubt that they will move a lot of water.

With the widening of Hwy.19, the roadbed will be about 18 inches higher than it is now. This will act as a dam forcing the runoff from east of 19 into the new ponds where it will settle and be detoxified by nature. This is the water that will move through the 54 inch pipes.

The relocation of utilities along the highway has started. Soon the actual road construction will be underway. This is a major project and will take many months. We will learn that progress is not always easy. We are going to be inconvenienced in a lot of ways but in the long run our lives and the condition of the river will be greatly improved.

Ron Schultz

CHANNEL MARKERS UPDATE

After one of our members asked us for help back in January 2016 regarding the Channel Markers in the Homosassa River, we were able to contact the right people and get the job started. There were many markers missing and several in the wrong place. We asked the US Coast Guard for their help, since they are responsible for navigation. Channel markers upstream of MacRae's are owned and maintained by Citrus County. Commissioner Ron Kitchen initiated a town-hall style meeting at the VFW for Alliance members, the County, US Coast Guard and the general public.

Along with the input from a group of over 100, we were able to convey to the Coast Guard that there was a serious safety problem with missing markers and floating markers out of place. It turns out that accidents are rarely reported to the Coast Guard, and accident reports are used to determine where money is directed. The Coast Guard provided us with a phone number to call and report any incidents with injury or damage to a boat. Apparently, only 10 have been reported in the last few years. We, the users of the river must report any accidents to the Coast Guard to ensure we receive the resources we need to maintain the river. Please report any accidents, even minor ones, to 352-447-6900. For any fuel, diesel or other petroleum product, call the National Response Center at 800-424-8802.

The St. Petersburg Coast Guard Office did not have enough funds in the budget to complete the project, but the Miami-Dade Office contributed, and

made this happen. Thanks to the Coast Guard, and everyone who attended the town hall meeting, they are almost finished with this safety related hazard.

Terri Auner

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

ANNUAL PICNIC

Where: Bluebird Springs

When: Thursday, April 13, 2017

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Please join us and enjoy an afternoon of friendship and fun. Bring a dish to share. Drinks will be provided. New officers will be installed.

Homosassa River Alliance

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HOMOSASSA RIVER
DESIGNATED AS A SURFACE
WATER IMPROVEMENT
MANAGEMENT (SWIM)
PRIORITY

In recognition of the need to **place additional emphasis on the restoration, protection and management of the surface water resources of Florida**, the Florida Legislature, through the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act of 1987, directed the state's water management districts to "design and implement plans and programs for the improvement and management of surface water" (Section 373.451, Florida Statutes). The SWIM legislation requires the water management districts to protect the ecological, aesthetic, recreational, and economic value of the state's surface water bodies, keeping in mind that water quality degradation is frequently caused by point and non-point source pollution, and that degraded water quality can cause both direct and indirect losses of habitats. **Under the Act, water management districts identify water bodies for inclusion into the program based on their regional significance and their need for protection and/or restoration.** This process is carried out in cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC)

The management committee met on October 12th to discuss projects for the Homosassa Springshed, 84 projects are either currently ongoing or are proposed. The projects are focused on improving water quality, water quantity and natural systems. Those projects

designated as Priority Projects will be first in line for any funding that is available. Septic to sewer system conversion for several sensitive areas are one example of priority projects. The final draft of the Homosassa SWIM report is scheduled to be reviewed by the management committee on February 8, 2017 at SWFWMD, 1pm.

Andy and Terri Auner

2016 FLORIDA SPRINGS
RESTORATION SUMMIT

On September 30 thru October 2, the Florida Springs Institute hosted the 2016 Florida Springs Restoration Summit at the College of Central Florida in Ocala. Over 150 springs advocates and enthusiasts came together at the conference to learn about and share our collective efforts to maintain and restore Florida's springs. Homosassa River Alliance was a sponsor of the Summit.

The topics discussed at the Summit included Springs Discharge Science and Management, Springs Water Quality Science and Management, Ecology and Biotic Science and Management, Human Use and Holistic Springs Management, State and Federal Agency Involvement, Legal Remedies, Legislative Initiatives, and Springs Advocacy. Much more information about the Summit can be found at <http://www.springsrestorationsummit.org/>.

Among the highlights, Honorable Gwen Graham (Sen. Bob Graham's daughter) gave an inspiring speech which can be viewed here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsqBojmsbG8>.

Whitey Markle sang about the Old Ocklawaha

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU1FW3IepdM> .

Renowned springs photographer, John Moran, presented some of his work which can be seen on the Springs Eternal website

<http://springseternalproject.org/springs-eternal-exhibition/> .

SWFWMD's representative at the Summit, Eric DeHaven, stated that underground rivers in FL are a myth <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjccgZyUPqA> . Mr. DeHaven stated that Florida does not have underground rivers, we have conduits. Perhaps Mr. DeHaven has not seen the video of cave divers swimming beneath US 19 from Twin Dees to Weeki Wachee <https://vimeo.com/119748918> . I don't know how Mr. DeHaven defines a river but here is a Merriam Webster's definition "a large natural flow of water that crosses an area of land and goes into an ocean, a lake, etc." "a large flow of something" <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/river> . A fundamental question to Mr. DeHaven – if we do not have underground rivers how can we have springs?

Hydrogeologist, Dr. Todd Kincaid, gave a presentation on the limitations of the groundwater computer models being utilized by Florida's water management district to predict availability of groundwater for Florida's future water needs. Dr. Kincaid made a similar presentation to the Florida League of Women Voters several years ago <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkDKRkzXZv0> . As an example of the misconceptions of Florida's hydrogeology, Dr. Kincaid mentioned the "Pink Underwear Test" <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/b>

[eneath-the-pink-underwear-6347605](#) . I think the "conduit " from Twin Dees to Weeki Wachee qualifies as an underground river by any definition. Similar video documentation exists for Wakulla and other major spring systems in FL.

Brad Rimbey

FERTILIZER

If you live on the water or use the River for recreation you surely have noticed how much it has changed in the past 13 years. It was always amazing how much the clarity of the water changed as we approached the spring headwaters coming from the direction of Seagrass Pub. That has changed dramatically. The river is telling us in the only way it can communicate that it needs our attention. One of the main reasons for the changes are nitrates in the water. One of the worse contributors of nitrates are fertilizers and we all need to think about some changes we can make to bring the river back to what it used to be.

The Citrus County Fertilizer Use and Landscape Maintenance Practices [Ordinance 2016-A29](#), was adopted in 2016 to allow for maintaining healthy landscapes while promoting the future health of our waters.

Seeding & Sodding

Fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus shall not be applied 30 days before or after seeding or sodding a site.

Annual Nitrogen Limit

Nitrogen shall be limited to no more than the following annually:

Nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. per year:

- Bahiagrass 2-3 pounds
- Bermudagrass 3-5 pounds
- Centipedegrass 1-2 pounds
- St. Augustinegrass 2-4 pounds
- Zoysiagrass 2-3 pounds

Maximum Nitrogen Application

Regulations allow a maximum of 0.7 pounds of readily available (soluble) nitrogen per 1,000 square feet be applied at any one time. Citrus County encourages no more than 1 lb. of total nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. be applied at one time. Please take note of this information and if you have a garden professional, consult with them.

Violations of Fertilizer ordinance:

Citrus County Utilities water conservation office: (352) 527-7669. **Report** any spilling, leaking, seeping, pouring, emitting, emptying, or dumping, of substances or materials into storm drains, retention ponds or water bodies to Road Maintenance (352) 527-7610.

Where to dispose of fertilizers, pesticides, weed control products, antifreeze, gasoline, paints, oil, propane tanks, and other hazardous waste: Citrus County Solid Waste Management (352) 527-7670.

RIVER ALLIANCE ENCOURAGES AND SUPPORTS THE HOMOSASSA RIVER RECOVERY PROJECT

The December Homosassa River Alliance meeting was followed by a

presentation by Gator Dredging. This company is making progress removing muck from the Crystal River. At our meeting there was considerable discussion on a similar project for the Homosassa River. Project costs are very high. We felt that there are funding and managing merits to having aseparate organization focused on this kind of dredging operation. It was therefore decided that we would support the new group, headed up by Steve Minguy, to undertake this very important task. The new organization is named "The Homosassa River Recovery Project" (HRRP). We support the efforts of this new organization and the related river recovery project. Let's help Steve make this project successful. Please read the following.....

HOMOSASSA RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT

THE BEGINNING

Representatives from both Gator Dredging Inc. and Save Crystal River were invited to an open community forum held at the Homosassa Community Center. This meeting was held to discuss how both groups are working together to improve Kings Bay in Crystal River and how this same process could be used here on the Homosassa River. Using manatee friendly underwater vacuums and specially designed filtration tanks and polymers, Gator Dredging removes muck and lyngbya algae from the riverbed, seawalls, and dock pilings. The clean and lyngbya-free water is then pumped back to where it was removed. With the muck now gone and the river bed returned to its original sand or limestone, the next step takes place.

Another company, Sea And Shoreline, plants a new type of sea grass within cages. Protected from hungry manatees until established, this new "Rock Star" sea grass has proven to be more tolerant of increasing salinity levels. The new healthy sea grass replaces the lymgbya algae as the dominant plant life, increases oxygen levels and water clarity, improves fish habitats, and possibly helps reduce nitrogen levels already existing in the water. Maintenance and monitoring will be ongoing with changes and adjustments made as needed to achieve success.

WHO WE ARE

The Homosassa River Restoration Project Inc. (HRRP) was formed by citizens and business owners within the Homosassa community with a very basic but difficult goal - to restore and preserve the Homosassa River. Through education and the implementation of existing and developing technologies, this river can once again be the "Outstanding Waterway" the State of Florida has designated it to be. HRRP is a non-profit and staffed entirely by volunteers. We will be working with the Homosassa River Alliance, community groups and local businesses. It is our intention to accomplish what state agencies, mired in bureaucracy and red tape, seem unable to do. That is, move quickly to restore this river.

WHAT WE ARE GONG TO DO

HRRP's citizen education programs will begin immediately with hopes of developing a school curriculum

for the 2017-2018 school year. HRRP also intends to begin the preliminary phase of the Homosassa River restoration operation in the spring of 2017. Gator Dredging will be hired to complete a Feasibility Study and a Bathymetric Survey. This survey will cover an area beginning east of the Fishbowl bridge, extending west to include the canals around the Seagrass Restaurant. Once completed, the next step will be to develop an Action Plan and begin Permitting. The timeline for completion of the preliminary phase will be November of 2017 with actual mobilization and clean up operations commencing spring 2018. The extent of the cleanup and replanting has yet to be determined but will more than likely begin at the headwaters of the river and will proceed downriver as far as the technology and funds allotted allow.

WILL THIS RESTORE THE RIVER?

This project alone will not correct years of misuse and decay. Groundwater nitrates must be reduced for the long-term health of the river. Where possible septic tanks should be connected to sewer. If sewer is not an option then affordable technologies that better remove the nitrates before they go from drainfield to the aquifer must be required in new systems. New septic guidelines and building codes must be adopted and enforced at the County level. Stronger fertilizer restrictions and enforcement also begins with the county.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

All of us must do our part. No one individual or group alone will

restore this river but together we can make a difference. Pay attention to how you can lessen your own nitrate footprint. Email your county commissioners and state representatives and tell them you want a clean and healthy river and that you expect them to help. HRRP will have a website and Facebook page operating soon. Please check them out occasionally and they will keep you up to date on our progress as well as any assistance needed.

IT'S YOUR RIVER!

Steve Minguy
President HRRP

CAST NET RULES

Note: A River Alliance member has witnessed cast netting near the main spring in Homosassa. Please take notice of the following:

CH. 30652 (1955)

Section 1. It is unlawful for any person to take or attempt to take any species of salt water fish by any means other than rod and reel, hook and line or pole and line from the closed portions of the Homosassa River and tributary thereof known as the Halls River.

Section 2. All that territory in Citrus County, Florida, lying between the sources of said river and its tributary and a line running north and south dividing section 31, township 19, range 17 east, which line crosses the Homosassa River at Pine Island near the River at Pine Island near the town of Homosassa shall be governed by the provisions of this act,

Section 3. The provisions of this act shall be enforced by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission through its officers and agents and any local law enforcement officer.

CH. 61-2001 An act relating to Citrus County; prohibiting the taking or attempted taking of fish other than by certain described methods from the Homosassa River or its tributaries; limiting the prohibition to certain waters; providing a penalty; providing for a method of enforcement; repealing Chapter 28840, Laws of Florida, 1953, and providing for an effective date.

Section 1. It is unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to take or attempt to take any fish from the waters of the Homosassa River between the line specified in Section 2 and the source of said river, or in any of its tributaries commonly known as Halls River, Otter Creek and Peterson Creek, by any means other than pole and line, rod and reel, plug, bob, spinner, spoon, fly, troll, or other artificial bait or lure.

Section 2. A line is hereby established across the Homosassa River in Citrus County at a point where a land line running north and south dividing section 31, township 19 south, range 17 east crosses the Homosassa River, said line beginning one-half mile due west of the northeast corner of section 31, township 19 south, range 17 east. All waters upstream or east of the line established by this section shall be subject to the provisions of this act.

Section 3. Any person, firm or corporation violating any of the provisions of this act shall be guilty of a

misdemeanor, and upon conviction be .
punished as prescribed by law.

