



**Court to decide if
county abused
power by rejecting
2008-approved
Pitchford's Landing**
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FREE

Martin County **CURRENTS**

Volume 6 Issue 1 • March 2016

A state of emergency

**Unprecedented onslaught of water threatens
estuaries and livelihoods** pg 11

A black plume of water from a combination of basin runoff and Lake Okeechobee discharges heads south from the St. Lucie Inlet to Jupiter Island. Photo: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch

Mass Exodus Results In Alarming Overtime



Your firefighters recently sounded an alarm to the residents about the critical condition of your fire-rescue department because of a mass exodus of trained fire rescue employees. Now we want to make sure our tax paying public is aware of the connection between the alarm we sounded previously and the significantly higher overtime levels the department is experiencing. A responsible action by the elected leaders would be to identify why overtime levels are skyrocketing, talk about the practical realities, and proactively manage the situation. During our negotiations with the county commissioners, we have attempted to offer real world solutions to the overtime expenditures with no increase to the budget. We have not had a response. An interim report of overtime expenditures indicates we have already expended 107% of the overtime budget. Why are overtime levels so high? Have we experienced these overtime levels in the years immediately preceding this? Residents deserve answers!

The primary factor in these significantly higher overtime expenditures is the fact that we have an increasing number of highly trained Firefighter/Paramedics leaving for better employment opportunities in neighboring communities. The resulting vacancies cannot be filled immediately without ensuring new employees can function at the higher level of performance that your department prides itself in. Newly hired applicants must spend their first 12-14 months training to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency. In this training timeframe, overtime is currently maintaining your level of service. Consequently, Martin County taxpayers are losing their investment into public safety and neighboring communities are reaping the dividends. Other departments in need of Firefighter/Paramedics know that if an applicant can perform at the level required in Martin County, there is a high likelihood they will prove to be a valuable asset. These experienced employees have been the key ingredient to our higher level of service. This level of service is now being threatened. We are currently on track to lose 20% of our experienced employees by May of 2016. Your safety is at risk if this trend continues.

Contact your County Commissioners and encourage them to save your fire department before it's too late.
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 Ed Fielding (772) 288-5421
 Anne Scott (772) 221-2357
 John Haddox (772) 221-1357
 Doug Smith (772) 221-2359
 Sarah Heard (772) 221-2358

Respectfully,

Chad Michael Cianciulli
 President, Martin County Firefighters & Paramedics



Martin County CURRENTS

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County still does not account for underpaid TIF funds for CRAs

End-of-year amendments to fund balances approved by Martin County Commissioners at their Feb. 9 meeting transferred slightly more than \$4.2 million in Community Redevelopment Area funds to a "restricted funding" account, but does not include the \$4.6 million in TIF funds previously collected from CRA properties and not allocated to appropriate CRA budgets.

The county commission, sitting as the Community Redevelopment Agency, will decide March 8 what projects will be funded, and they will hear a quarterly report on the CRAs by Kate Parmalee, of the county's Office of Community and Strategic Partnerships, which replaced the former Community Development Department led by Kevin Freeman.

The pre-set agenda item will be at 3 p.m. in the County Commission Chambers of the Martin County Administration building on Monterey Blvd. in Stuart.

The CRA program was designed to address the needs of old neighborhoods within each county that fail to meet the standards of the newer neighborhoods surrounding it, not only in meeting infrastructure needs, but by revitalizing these areas to promote healthy small business growth and combat urban sprawl. In Martin County, these areas are the county's most historic.

Instead of levying an additional tax, the funding to revitalize these areas and address the historic lack of infrastructure investment from both government

and private enterprise comes from 75 percent of the increase in property values annually for the life of the program, which in Martin County is 30 years. (The maximum allowed for TIF is 95 percent, and the minimum is 50 percent of the taxable increase.)

The program was first adopted in Martin County in 1998, and by 2002, the county had seven designated CRA areas, including Golden Gate, Indiantown, parts of Port Salerno, Jensen Beach, Rio, parts of Hobe Sound, and Old Palm City.

CRA funds collected from properties within CRA boundaries, which by state law are supposed to be expended only within those boundaries as Tax Increment Finance funds, were underpaid until 2014, due to an error in the Property Appraiser's Office. Those funds have not been reconciled, according to the county Budget Office.

State law requires that all TIF funds be assigned to specific projects at the beginning of each budget year, which has not yet happened for the county's 2016

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CRAs continued from PAGE 3

budget year. The county commission majority of Ed Fielding, Anne Scott and Sarah Heard rejected some of the projects selected by the members of the Neighborhood Advisory Committees for their neighborhoods last fall.

The fund transfers may differ from the final CRA budgets due to monies expended on projects already underway, according to Parmalee, thus she declined to release the final budget numbers until the county commission meeting March 8.

The fund transfers give an approximation of the current budget, and are as follows:

Port Salerno CRA is \$260,592, with an additional \$1.163 million not yet allocated. Hobe Sound CRA had \$1,475,114 transferred, with an additional \$1 million not yet allocated. The Rio CRA fund transfer was \$595,843 with \$860,000 unallocated.

Old Palm City CRA had \$1,429,317 transferred with more than \$440,000 still owed. Indiantown CRA had \$12,220 transferred, with more than \$440,000 still owed. Golden Gate CRA had \$252,170 transferred with more than \$350,000 in unallocated funds. Jensen Beach CRA had a fund transfer of \$151,232 and is owed more than \$300,000 in unallocated funds.

Some of the funds earmarked for the CRAs went improperly into the general fund, instead of into the Community Redevelopment Trust Fund. If the funds collected are not spent (or earmarked) for a particular CRA project within three years of collection, they revert to the county's general fund. ■



All the AAF locomotives (now called Brightline) will be yellow, with an assortment of colors for the other cars.

Anti-train rally planned for April 9 in Memorial Park

Civic activist K.C. Traylor, founder of the grass-roots group Florida NOT All Aboard, announced a public rally at Memorial Park in Stuart on April 9.

"Please help us throw the biggest rally to date and send a clear and strong message to All Aboard Florida/Fortress," Traylor said. "We are not going

to let AAF steamroll our communities!"

The rally, which will feature music and guest speakers, is in support of the Martin County Commission's unanimous commitment on Feb. 9 of an additional \$850,000 to continue its legal battles through 2016 against All Aboard Florida.

Commissioner Doug Smith warned that the additional \$850,000 would cover the county's expenses, including any outside counsel, expert witnesses, and additional studies required for current litigation only through 2016, and—depending on whether challenges to issued permits can be made—taxpayers should expect additional expenditures in 2017.

"I think (this fight) is important," Smith concluded. "We have a chance, and I think it's the right thing to do."

The commissioners had already committed \$1.4 million last year, which is on parity with the amount spent thus far of the \$2.6 million committed at the same time by Indian River County.

"We have to weigh expending taxpayer dollars very carefully, regardless of the issue," said Martin County Commissioner John Haddox, whose motion to increase funding was unanimously approved.

Nothing has changed, the commissioner continued, regarding the "severe and immediate threat to our quality of life" that AAF's proposed 32 added trains daily represent, including the possible threats to public safety, the loss of revenue from devalued properties, damages to the marine industry that will harm the economy, the added costs of maintaining 29 double-tracked crossings in Martin County, and the harm to wetlands and the environment.

Although the county lost its first two lawsuits, another two lawsuits are pending, and the Army Corps of Engineers told AAF officials in early January not to proceed without providing more information regarding railroad's impact to wetlands in India River and Brevard counties. In addition, AAF had to seek an extension of time to sell its state-approved Private Activity Bonds for the \$1.3 billion project, which seems unsupported by the market.

"This is not the time to waver or to demonstrate any sign of weakness," Haddox added, calling for "firm resolve" to stand against AAF and "in solidarity with thousands" of

Martin County citizens who oppose the project, which is under construction in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

The county's pending legal action is against the U.S. Department of Trans-

'I think (this fight) is important. We have a chance, and I think it's the right thing to do.'

— Doug Smith
Martin County Commissioner, District 1



The Tech Center, formerly Dutcher's Cove, a project approved in 2008, started constructing a retaining wall that will hold fill to support the weight of a three-story building. In the foreground is the Pitchford's Landing property, which was not permitted to construct a seawall due to resident protests.

Construction part of Pitchford's project?

Construction activity at the foot of the Jensen Beach Causeway on Indian River Drive is adjacent to, but not part of, the contentious Pitchford's Landing redevelopment project in Jensen Beach, which was rejected by the Martin County Commission in July 2015.

The construction on site is not a seawall, as many residents have asked since a seawall permit for the Pitchford's project was pulled due to resident protest. It is a retaining wall along the Indian River Lagoon on the one-quarter-acre parcel that will support the weight

of a 10,000 sq-ft, three-story building, according to construction crews. approved in 2008 as Dutcher's Cove.

The first floor will be primarily parking spaces for tenants, with one office or retail space, according to the final site plan, with a combination of office spaces and condominiums on the second and third floors. The building permit has not yet been issued, according to the Martin County Building Department. The new owner, Ben Sharfi of Sewall's Point, must meet a January 2017 deadline for completion of the project. ■

portation (a federal case) and against the Florida Development Finance Corporation (FDPC). The county also filed a detailed response to the Federal Rail Administration's (FRA) draft Environmental Impact Statement in September 2014, using some of the previously allocated funds for studies that contradicted the conclusions in the draft EIS.

Among the studies is one that may affect the rules being composed now by the Coast Guard for operation of the St Lucie River bascule bridge in anticipation of AAF's addition of 32 trains daily, plus additional freight traffic by FEC. The study verifies the county's claim that

the EIS did not take into account the significant boat traffic, now verified at more than 250 boats daily from March through August, with slightly more than 200 boats other months.

The county also has asked the Coast Guard to ensure that they consider the type and variety of boat vessels, as well as the tidal and current conditions unique to the St. Lucie bridge due to its proximity to two other bridges. The new rules should include a requirement to keep the bridge open to boat traffic for a minimum of 30 minutes per each hour, according to the county, and having an onsite bridge tender.

In spite of previous, well-documented observations and studies by the county, the Final Environmental Impact Statement was issued in August 2015, but the FRA has yet to issue a Record of Decision on the FEIS, a formal action that creates an opportunity for an administrative challenge, according to Assistant County Attorney Amy Petrick.

Other permits that could lead to additional legal challenges, Petrick added, are still to come from the South Florida Water Management District, depending on the permit language, as well as the Army Corps and the Coast Guard. ■

County's legal battle with Pitchford's Landing begins

The first court hearing in the Pitchford's Landing breach-of-contract lawsuit against Martin County will be heard April 6 before Circuit Court Judge Shields McManus.

Attorneys for Martin County have asked that the suit, filed by Reily Enterprises of Jensen Beach on July 29, 2015, be dismissed, following the collapse of mediation efforts that ended in an impasse in January 2016.

Reily Enterprises filed the lawsuit after nearly 10 years of delay of the county's original 2007 approval of the 17.7-acre redevelopment project in Jensen Beach. That original decision resulted in lawsuits filed against the county by Stuart attorney Ginny Sherlock, representing the Jensen Group, a small group of Jensen Beach residents who contended that construction of any condominiums or apartment buildings in Jensen Beach threatened the area's quality of life.

The Pitchford's Landing project experienced further delays as the result of the Great Recession, personal lawsuits filed against the members of the Jensen Group and countersuits, bankruptcy

proceedings, and outspoken objections by county commissioners Sarah Heard, Ed Fielding and Anne Scott.

Reily Enterprises filed the legal action on the same day that the Martin County Commission rejected their Final Site Plan, 4-1—required as the final step prior to obtaining building permits—which would transform their 158-unit RV park into an 83-unit subdivision of Key West-style single-family homes and two-story condominiums between Skyline and Indian River drives.

The Reilys also own property on the east side of Indian River Drive, which currently is occupied by an operating restaurant. Plans call for the restaurant building to be renovated, and a boardwalk and fishing pier be constructed along the Indian River Lagoon for public access to the waterfront.

According to court records, Martin County filed a motion to have the Reily suit dismissed on the grounds that the rules governing a Planned Unit Development are not contractual, but rather they are part of the "police power" exercised by the county commission as a

zoning agreement; therefore, they could not have breached a contract with Reily Enterprises.

Ironically, the county attorney's office investigated Pitchford's Landing for breach of its development contract in 2014. In February 2015, the investigation was completed, and Assistant Attorney Krista Storey reported to the county commission in a public statement that the Pitchford's Landing development was not in breach of its development contract with the county.

The project owners had been granted one county and two state-mandated time extensions during the recession, all of which were filed in a timely manner, according to Storey. The county staff had also investigated several complaints from residents, and there no violations, except a minor one that had been "immediately remedied," Storey reported to commissioners.

With their final deadline for Final Site Plan approval in August 2015, Reily Enterprises began working with the county's Growth Management staff to update their Final Site Plan to seek approval to begin construction.

The renewed movement by Reily Enterprises also renewed the objections and more charges of violations of their

PUD order by members of the Jensen Beach Group, led by Stuart attorney Virginia Sherlock, who had filed the original lawsuits against the county in 2008 and counter-suits against the Reilys, who had filed a tortious interference suit against members of the group that, after two years of litigation, was settled out of court.

The unrelenting public comment resulted in the unprecedented requirement that county staff provide updates to commissioners of any contact and/or interaction with any owner or any representative of Pitchford's Landing as part of every county commission meeting throughout 2015. Even restaurant reviews in the local newspaper were included in staff reports to commissioners.

Commissioner Anne Scott also publicly directed the county staff to find any reason they could to force the redevelopment project to "start over from Square One," which would cause their current development order to be null and void and force Reily Enterprises to submit a redesigned and re-engineered Master Site Plan to give the current commissioners an opportunity to approve or deny the project.

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County commission candidates square off April 7

The candidates seeking Martin County Commission seats have been invited to participate in the first political forum of the election season by the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, April 7, at the Hobe Sound Bible College. Doors will open at 6 p.m., and the event is free to the public.

The forum will focus primarily on commission candidates, according to Angela Hoffman, executive director of the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce. Those candidates will take the stage to answer questions, however, other political candidates will have the opportunity to set up booths and network before and after the forum.

"We have had a great deal of interest expressed by our residents and chamber members in the county commission race for Districts 1, 3 and 5," Hoffman said, "therefore, our board of directors decided that the Hobe Sound Chamber should provide an opportunity as soon as possible for all of us to become better acquainted with all our commission candidates."

The candidates, who all are Republican, include:

District 1 (Jensen Beach area) – Incumbent Doug Smith, being challenged by attorney Henry Copeland and Sewall's Point Commissioner Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch.

District 3 (Hobe Sound area) – Incumbent Anne Scott, being challenged by business owner and State Republican Committewoman Darlene Fuggetta.

District 5 (Palm City area) – Incumbent John Haddox, being challenged by former Martin County commissioners Donna Melzer and Ed Ciampi.

All commissioners are elected in a countywide vote. Since all are Republicans, unless either a Democrat or Independent candidate emerges prior to the filing deadline, the primary election on August 30 will decide the winner of the seat.

The Hobe Sound Chamber County Commission Forum will be in the Schulz Dining Center of the Hobe Sound College, 11295 SE Gomez Avenue, and is free and open to the public. Doors open at 6 p.m., the forum will be 6:30-8:30 p.m., followed by networking for 30 minutes, until 9 p.m.

The public is invited to submit questions in advance at www.HobeSound.org. The Hobe Sound Chamber plans additional forums during the summer, according to Hoffman, that will feature other political races.

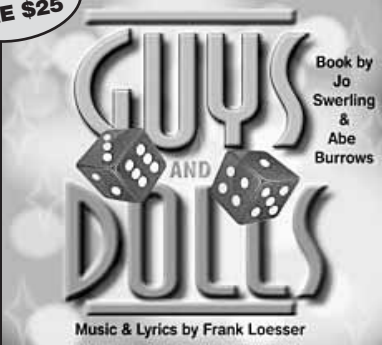
"All candidates for all offices are welcome to purchase a display booth for campaigning at the forum," Hoffman said. For information or to reserve a table, go to www.HobeSound.org. ■

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PITCHFORD'S continued from PAGE 5

During the July 2015 coimmission meeting, the Growth Management staff recommended to the county commission denial of the project's Final Site Plan, citing more than half a dozen instances that the Pitchford's Landing site plan did not meet all the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan rules.

During the previous six months, the Pitchford's Landing engineers, designers and attorneys had met with county growth management planners to incorporate the most recent Comp Plan rules into their Final Site Plan, until they discovered that by doing so, their Final Site Plan would no longer match their Master Site Plan, thus forcing Reily Enterprises to "start over from Square One."

As a result, the altered plan on which they had been working was withdrawn, and Reily Enterprises submitted a Final Site Plan for Pitchford's Landing that matched their original Master Site Plan approved in 2007, which was rejected by the county commission. The Reilys have asked for a jury trial. ■

County kills city-county road project

The contentious divide between the City of Stuart and the Martin County Commission grew deeper with the county's rejection Feb. 9 of a long-standing interlocal agreement between the city and the county to extend Willoughby Boulevard three-quarters of a mile to US 1 at the ABC Liquor store.

The county staff was directed by the commission majority of Ed Fielding, Anne Scott and Sarah Heard to return \$560,000 the city paid to the county for its share to build the extension identified as necessary to relieve congestion on U.S. 1. Although construction was not likely to begin prior to 2021, the county put the agreement on "indefinite hold."

Commissioner Doug Smith encouraged commissioners to anticipate the need 10 years in the future, rather than current conditions, because of the length of time required to obtain state grants; however, Fielding insisted that Central Parkway, which is already built, will serve the same purpose.

City officials reported at their City Commission meeting Feb.16 that they had not been notified of the decision, but learned about it by reading *The Government Reporter* by Betty Smith.

There is an active FDOT grant for \$1,056,000 that expires June 30, 2016 and requires a combined match from Martin County and City of Stuart for an additional \$1,056,000. The county had not identified any funds in its budget for the \$500,000 match, although the Willoughby extension is a roadway project in the Martin County Capital Improvement Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan.

The city had already made investments of around \$260,000 in stormwater treatment and infrastructure improvements in anticipation of the road.

"The county does what it wants; they don't live up to the agreements they make," said City Commissioner Thomas Campenni. "It's very disappointing that we can't work closer with the county." ■

CBRE: sell golf course, waterfront and move the fair

With approximately 44,000 acres of county-owned land—550 parcels inside the urban services districts and 5,400 outside—the county commission voted last summer to spend \$115,000 to contract an outside commercial real estate firm, CB Richard Ellis of Chicago, to study county properties and leases and make recommendations.

The commissioners pared down CBRE's original proposal, which would have cost \$600,000, to the issues of most immediate concern, including a determination of the top 10 most valuable pieces of property and an analysis of the county's administration building and county-owned golf course. The report was released in January.

"The CBRE report confirmed that the fairgrounds not only is valuable land," said Commissioner John Haddox, who has for more than a year proposed selling the land to encourage the location of light manufacturing or industrial sites at the Dixie Highway location that would provide high-paying jobs to the area, "but that it's even more valuable than I had guessed."

The land is valued at \$1.5 million, according to the CBRE report. The Martin County Fairgrounds Association, a non-profit association, pays \$20 per year to lease the property, and is currently investigating other county-owned parcels of land suitable for a large-scale expansion of the fair.

The CBRE recommendations included not only the relocation of the fairgrounds, which currently has 10 years remaining on its lease with the county, but a more controversial recommendation that the county should consider the sale of a portion of the golf course to a housing developer, or to sell the golf course in its entirety to a professional golf course developer.

They also recommended the sale of the county's waterfront properties, which are the county's highest-valued properties and to build a new administration building on county-owned land, consolidating offices that currently are leasing space, instead of investing in repairs of the current building on Monterey Road. To repair the current building at a cost of nearly \$11 million still would not reduce the cost of leasing space for other departments currently

not housed at the Administration Building, according to the CBRE report.

The replacement or repair of the Administration Building has been a topic of on-going debate among commissioners for a number of years, leading to the rejection of a proposal to purchase an empty Wachovia bank building, as well as the rejection of a gift of land from the City of Stuart across from the current Elections Office on Martin Luther King Blvd. in order to build an office large enough to house the Property Appraiser's Office currently in the Tower Building on US 1 and the Utilities Department in Cedar Pointe Place.

A 2013 economic analysis by CBRE, which cost \$10,000, showed in 2013 that the county should build a facility to house those offices.

Even earlier, the commission had considered building a facility to house some county government offices, even

obtaining a \$5 million bank loan in 2011 at 3.5 percent interest, according to county records. Had the county proceeded then, they would have paid \$136,800 in interest by 2016 instead of the \$768,000 they paid for leasing office space, plus had an additional equity build-up of \$294,000. ■

Legal fees to battle Lake Point will top \$1 million this year

The Martin County Commission agreed in February to a request by the County Attorney's Office to transfer \$800,000 from the county's emergency reserves to cover the anticipated costs of the upcoming Lake Point trial, scheduled to begin in September in District Court.

The monies will help cover the cost

of hiring outside attorney Edward de la Parte of Tampa in a case that has required the expenditure of nearly half a million dollars since February 2013 in outside legal fees. The previous attorney assigned to the case, John Fumero, was from Boca Raton.

The lawsuit was filed in February 2013 by Lake Point Phase I and Phase II, a 1005-acre mining operation that began life as an equestrian development, then changed to rock mining and water restoration after the housing market collapsed. The county commission levied code enforcement fines in 2013 against the project as a housing development, alleging the project was mining rock outside its housing site plan.

The county did not acknowledge Lake Point's permits from the state as a water restoration and mining operation per the county's 2008 agreement with Lake Point, because Lake Point did not ask the county to revoke its housing development order until January 2013.

Lake Point, an operation near Indiantown, had been pursuing an agreement with American Water, one of the nation's largest utilities, to cleanse water from the C-44 canal to its north by conveying it through its limestone rock pits and sending it south to the L-8 canal for re-distribution to reservoirs, either at West Palm Beach or other points south, as determined by the South Florida Water Management District, which con-

trols the flow of water in south Florida.

Lake Point would have been paid by Palm Beach County.

The mining and water restoration operation's lawsuit alleges that Hurchalla took clandestine actions—including sending private emails with allegedly false information to county commissioners and to other officials—resulting in a public outcry claiming that Lake Point was “selling Martin County water and destroying wetlands,” thus causing the county and the SFWMD to terminate its agreements with Lake Point.

Lake Point had agreed to deed the project to the SFWMD with the understanding that Lake Point would still be able to use the property to generate revenue for 25 years. Lake Point also agreed to pay the county an environmental assessment fee, as well as a rock mining fee, for every ton of rock hauled off the property, as well as to donate 150 acres of land to Martin County for conservation.

Lake Point's estimate of its lost revenue and costs associated with the legal battle now total \$65 million, according to court records, which it is seeking from Martin County, Hurchalla and the SFWMD.

The jury trial has been set to begin in September 2016 in District Court at the Martin County Courthouse before Judge Shields McManus and is expected to last two weeks. ■

PLF joins Lake Point public records appeal against Martin County

The Pacific Legal Foundation, known for fighting government overreach that impinge on citizens' rights, joined Lake Point's appeal of a lower court's ruling in its public records suit against Martin County.

PLF attorney Christina Martin filed an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief Feb. 18 in the Fourth District Court of Appeals case reviewing the District Court's ruling Sept. 3, 2015, that Martin County did not violate public records laws.

As a result of the ruling, in which Judge Shields McManus noted that the disappearance of Commissioner Sarah Heard's emails was “curious” and “remained unexplained,” Lake Point was blocked from collecting attorney fees and costs to obtain the public records it sought.

“Seemingly everyone values government transparency,” Martin said in a written statement released the same day the PLF brief was filed, “but some government officials' actions speak otherwise—and not just high profile officials with presidential aspirations.”

Martin was referring to the actions of commissioners Heard and Ed Fielding in the Lake Point Phase I and Lake Point Phase II lawsuit against Martin County, the South Florida Water Management District and Maggy Hurchalla, filed in district court in February 2013.

The same day the lawsuit was filed, so, too, was the first of several public records requests by Lake Point attorneys, which took more than 12 months for the county to fulfill, and then were only partially fulfilled, according to court documents. The county's response to the public records requests included what appeared to be altered documents and conflicting statements as to the whereabouts of the notes of Commissioner Sarah Heard, according to court records.

The county attorney's office had determined that the commissioner's notes were not public records, thus did not preserve them, required for public records; however, Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb asserts that the county had an obligation under the law to ask a judge to review the notes first within 30 days to determine whether they did or did not need to be preserved as public records prior to their destruction.

According to court records, Lake Point attorneys also say that Heard's notes actually were a script prepared by former Martin County Commissioner Maggy Hurchalla for Heard to follow during a commission meeting to consider terminating the Lake Point agreement.

Lake Point also filed a suit for tortious interference against Hurchalla.

A key to Lake Point's case against Hurchalla not only are Heard's notes, but emailed correspondence among Hurchalla, Heard and Fielding. Fielding's emails eventually were retrieved nearly 12 months after the first request was filed, but the majority of Heard's were not, as a result of her Yahoo email account being “hacked,” according to Heard's court testimony. All of her emails were lost, she said.

“The Public Records Act does not make exception for sloppy or even honest and reasonable mistakes,” Martin said, referring to McManus's ruling that the failures of Martin County to protect its public records were inadvertent. “Government should not be excused from its duties simply because it is inept.” ■

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Editorial: A royal nickname gets resurrected

When former Jupiter Island Commissioner Anne Scott first ran for the Martin County Commission in 2012, her critics dubbed her “Queen Anne,” inferring that her wealth would impede her understanding of the issues facing the county’s middle-class majority.

We scoffed at the characterization at first, but now it appears those critics nailed it.

Chairwoman Scott leads the county commission less like a people-centered governing board, as she should, than a heavy-handed monarchy.

We’ve grown somewhat used to her habit of imposing her own rarefied beachfront living standards as the measure of what the rest of us should aspire to, but in February, she went even further. She declared that county rules need to be changed to suit her own circumstances in order that access to our beaches be limited and that alcohol and shark fishing be banned. Next is something else she’s pushed for: charging for parking at our beaches.

Over the past 12 months, Scott has complained loudly and often about a 3-day shark tournament in February 2015 that encroached on her privately owned beach adjacent to the Hobe Sound public beach. Pushed by Scott’s near hyste-

ria over what she considered a “threat to public safety,” her fellow commissioners agreed to pass an ordinance banning all shark fishing—except from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. at night and not within 3,000 feet of a public beach—eliminating any possibility that shark fishermen will reappear on her Jupiter Island beach.

She also tried to limit the hours that beaches are open, but failed. At least, for the time being.

Limiting access, banning alcohol and charging for parking (part of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan) all will be coming back before the commission.

Scott has talked often about strangers being on the beach “all hours of the night.” They should not be there, she says, because the “beach after dark is a scary place.” Almost as an afterthought and because we are an ecologically aware constituency, she added, “These people disturb turtle nests, and we need to protect our turtles.” Raccoons and fox probably are what disturb the turtle nests, but that’s not the point.

The point is if we’re truly ecologically minded, we should insist that the shark tournaments be allowed to continue. Scott’s outcry about fishing for sharks was the result of the NOAA-sanctioned Blacktip Challenge Shark

Tournament, a catch-tag-release tournament that takes place each February as thousands of blacktip and spinner sharks migrate south along our coast.

The tournament works in partnership with NOAA’s Apex Predator Program to teach fishermen how to tag sharks, even when fishing casually. The Blacktip Challenge also partners with scientists from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and has collected oral flora samples for Nova Southeastern University and St. Mary’s Medical Center to aid research in antibiotic treatment of shark attack victims.

No doubt about it, most of us fear sharks, but as an ecologically minded populace, we also should recognize sharks’ critical importance in maintaining equilibrium in marine ecosystems. That requires research.

These large congregations of sharks are not being attracted to the beaches by any feeding behavior or by shark tournaments, contrary to Scott’s assertions, but instead are following an annual migratory mating behavior. The Palm Beaches are closed to the public, as reported by Parks & Recreation Director Kevin Abbate, because the continental shelf brings these migrating sharks even closer to the

coast there than anywhere else in Florida—not because of fishermen.

Scott also tried hard to get the beaches closed after dark, too, and to ban all alcohol, using the statistics Martin County Sheriff Will Snyder provided regarding the increase of alcohol-related incidents on Jensen Beach and, particularly, at the Jensen Beach Causeway Park.

She needs to take a lesson or two from Commissioner Doug Smith. He heard residents’ complaints about the Jensen Beach situation, and he contacted the sheriff, who responded by adding “community policing” to the causeway park. The number of incidents dropped immediately and significantly, Sheriff Snyder reported to commissioners.

Seeking a specific solution to a specific problem identified by residents is the way government is supposed to work. That’s citizen-centered governing. Scott also could have simply asked the offending shark fishermen to vacate her property.

We do not need Her Royal Highness stomping her foot and pushing through laws countywide, affecting 150,000 residents, just so she can get what she wants on her little square of paradise. ■

—Barbara Cloudus

Letters to Editor

To the editor:

It is so uplifting to view the hand-crafted, mosaic benches and bike racks in Rio made possible through a generous grant by the Community Foundation of Palm Beach and Martin Counties to the Martin County Education Foundation and crafted for Rio’s Creative Place Making program. Special thanks to Linda Fasano, of Martin County’s Art in Public Places program, for securing the grant and coordinating the execution of the benches and bike racks with artists Mia Lindberg and Sue Lampert.

We also are grateful for Kate Parmalee, of the Martin County staff, who played an important role in enlisting the interest of the Martin County Education Foundation in being a partner in this project. These are the people who made this all possible, along with some talented Martin County school students.

What you have accomplished for Rio is especially important and meaningful at this particular time in our redevelopment program. Your creations have kick-started Rio’s place-making program and set a high threshold for the quality of public art in our future. The benches and bike racks will serve our

community for the next 50 years. The colorful designs prepared by youth and crafted into benches and bike racks reflect Rio’s spirit and character. One can’t help but smile and feel happy when seeing your mosaic and metal work permanently displayed.

It was heart-warming to see the student-designers. They were glowing with pride knowing that their community participation in public art is so worthwhile. Ms. Fasano has guided them towards an appreciation for art and civic interests.

I hope that all who attended the recent ribbon-cutting, including our pub-

lic officials, felt the strong community support and appreciation shown by the Rio community. The benches and bike racks are such a useful addition to our new roundabout pocket parks. Everyone involved made the event a celebration to remember -- many thanks!

Please, help our community find ways to add more of your beautiful benches and bike racks to the entire Dixie Highway corridor through Rio, thereby making our neighborhood a completely walkable community for all to enjoy.

Julie Preast
Rio Civic Club

A plea to ensure future of county's nonprofits

Martin County Commission Chair Anne Scott’s insistence that the county needed to have an official written policy for non-profits that lease county-owned property nearly sidelined a request by the Children’s Museum of Martin County to extend their lease by 15 years in order to obtain a major contribution. The commission approved the lease extension with Scott and Commissioner Fielding dissenting. The issue will resurface again as the commissioners deliberate lease options, as will county grants to non-profit agencies that currently total \$260,000 annually. Commissioner Sarah Heard expressed her

interest in ending all grants to non-profits; Commissioner Ed Fielding expressed his desire to “freeze” the current list of recipients and amounts at the 2016 level, so the issue will resurface again sometime this fall in preparation for the 2017 budget talks. Among the dozens of eloquently comments offered by residents in support of Martin County’s nonprofits was the following:

“Good morning, I am Nancy Turrell, executive director of the Arts Council of Martin County. I am here to support the on-going dialogue to create a clear and effective set of policies to guide the county’s decision-making process as it relates to partnerships and other financial support of the vital non-profit community. Governments at all levels in the United States provide support to nonprofits. Since the early Corn Tax, through which the Common-

wealth of Massachusetts financed Harvard College, government has cooperated with nonprofits to pursue publicly valued purposes.

The arts are integral to the lives of our citizens. We appreciate them for their intrinsic benefits – their beauty and vision, and how they inspire, soothe, provoke and connect us. They provide bridges between cultures. They embody the accumulated wisdom, intellect, and imagination of humankind.

Government and private-sector support are essential to promote full access to and participation in exhibits, performances, arts education, and other cultural events regardless of family income. In the rapidly changing and challenging times in which we live, the arts are salve for the ache.

Both military and civilian populations have long relied on the arts for

inspiration, to hold up morale, to fight anxiety, and to express our democratic values. Arts leaders are strong partners, especially in tough times. During the Nazi blitz on London, Winston Churchill was asked to close the theatres by his military leaders. His response was, “Good God, man, what the hell are we fighting for?”

In closing, I encourage you and county staff to use the resources in the community to gather input and best practices from other communities to create the policies for grant making, lease agreements and other partnerships with nonprofits, and I offer my assistance as need be as the dialogue continues forward. I also encourage you to reach out to experienced grant-makers in our community including the Community Foundations and United Way in this dialogue.”

Lessons to be learned from others in our shoes



Barbara Clowdus

Unfiltered

The engineering jobs in south Florida that had supported our family suddenly dead-ended with the '70s Arab oil embargo. Like nomads, we left our home to go wherever necessary to feed our children and pay the mortgage. We found the concept, which we thought universal, was an alien one among our new neighbors.

Most West Virginians we met had lived on the same mountain for generations. If jobs left, they stayed, no matter how burdensome, thus they resented those "outsiders" who took "their" jobs. We eventually pushed through the ostracization to earn their tolerance, if not acceptance, and some even embraced us, bringing us not only into their homes, but inside their lives.

We slipped into lessons we didn't know we were learning. We marveled at the re-purposed objects dotting every room, and the intense cold flowing like rivers from their windows across the floor—yet their warmth radiated inside,

along with their pot-bellied stoves, driving out the cold.

We learned you can be poor and still possess dignity, joy and love. Being poor was not a failing; it simply was a condition, and circumstances change—at times for the better, at times, for the worse.

They often referenced "back when times were hard." When could they have been harder? They told us, "before coal." They had timbered the forests for little pay, no benefits, horrific injuries and a long winter with no work. They were grateful for coal mines that had eased the strain on their lives, even as negligent mine operations poisoned their rivers.

Along with a national interest in their coal-infused mountains, however, came an intrusion of strangers to live off their lands, seeking serenity in their woods, creating pots, baskets, and leather goods for sale at craft fairs. Befuddled that anyone would willfully choose poverty, the coal miners largely ignored the artists—considered hippies, whether they were or were not—until those artists became environmental activists.

Who could blame them for that, really? The outsiders had stumbled upon this nearly untouched wilderness laced by pristine streams—a treasure greater than gold, certainly greater than coal. As passionately as newly smitten lovers,

they began a vocal fight to preserve the environment for themselves, for West Virginians, for all posterity and simply were astounded that their West Virginia neighbors did not seem to understand the urgency.

Coal miners, already besieged by a downward market following the Arab embargo's swift end and increased mechanization that relentlessly spewed mining jobs onto spoil piles, felt that no one treasured their land as much as they, and no outsider had the right to interfere with their ability to care for their family, merely because they mined what was there naturally.

As West Virginia's unemployment rose to double digits, the vitriol erupted on both sides, neither side listening to the other. Violent protests, vandalism and torched homes caused many activists to retreat, even to move away. A few stayed, however, and one of them, Cindy Rank, who had come to the mountains with her husband, Paul, stepped into this simmering cauldron with a genuine desire to know her neighbors and to understand their perplexing point of view.

She took up their causes, worked tirelessly to improve their lives, and saw the same issues through less judgmental lenses. She was approachable. She listened. She demonstrated that the most

durable road to significant change is the one built on a foundation of respect, and, by osmosis, her mantra of "preserve and protect" seeped into the lives around her.

Over time that same West Virginia community—including its coal miners—who had once vilified Cindy Rank, named her Citizen of the Year, and many joined her work monitoring the mountain streams that carry toxic mining effluent, underscoring the lesson we all know but seldom follow: We can accomplish much more working together than we ever could pulling apart.

It's a lesson we have yet to learn in Martin County, where activists disagree with scientists over cause, effect, and remedies for our water pollution. Engineers and scientists disagree among themselves. Farmers, ranchers and homeowners south of the lake get branded an enemy of coastal peoples for working their land and wanting to protect their homes, and even a county commission candidate demonizes anyone who follows a different path than she. Yet all of them want clean water, clean rivers, and healthy estuaries.

Nothing kills a cooperative effort more effectively than disrespect. We could accomplish so much more, perhaps even solve the conundrum of our estuaries, if we'd just take some lessons from Cindy Rank. ■

We must work together to tackle water issues



Charles Gerardi

Guest Columnist

As business leaders, the Economic Council of Martin County will continue to keep the health of our local waterways atop our priority list. We think it's time we follow the science—science that has been all but ignored for nearly two decades—and get to work together as a community in creating a solution.

Cleaning up our own backyard from harmful nutrients is not the only water quality issue facing Martin County. The Economic Council continues to advocate for completion of the approved and funded CERP and CEPP (Everglades restoration) projects, and for restoration efforts that impact Lake Okeechobee and the Herbert Hoover dike. Further, we support continued efforts to clean and store water flowing from the north into the lake, critical to stopping the harmful discharges from Lake O.

Risks from excessive nutrient loads aren't unique to Martin County. In the 1970s, Tampa Bay was experiencing a similar dilemma due to poorly treated sewage, unrestricted dredging and untreated stormwater run-off. The common pollutant: nitrogen. A "60 Minutes" seg-

ment eventually brought national attention to the situation. Citizens there demanded action; and 45 government, regulatory and industry entities, along with local residents (the Tampa Bay Nitrogen Management Consortium), collaborated to develop voluntary caps on harmful nitrogen loads from septic tanks, fertilizer and other sources. Decades later, caps have been incorporated into permits, and 90% of the nitrogen has been eliminated. Water quality in Tampa Bay has dramatically improved.

At the Economic Council's Rivers Symposium last fall, panelist Anthony Janicki, PhD, an expert on the Tampa Bay recovery efforts, warned, "If you're going to get things done, you're going to have to work together." Florida House Representative Matt Caldwell (District 79, Lee County), another symposium panelist, added: "You have to have a shared vision, a common vision, of how to solve these issues. If you disagree on what success is, you'll never get it done."

It's time for us all to admit that we're at least part of our own problem, and get to work before it's too late for our lagoon.

Since the 1990s, the county's Utilities Department has made good progress in reducing the number of septic systems polluting our basin. Recently, Martin County Commissioner Ed Fielding invited residents to join in the conversation on the septic-to-sewer conversion issue. All parties—government, business and industry leaders, environmental concerns, and citizens—must work col-

laboratively to develop a common vision, define a realistic goal, and get to work on a long-term solution.

How to fund this effort will be a key issue. In a recent unanimous vote by the Martin County Board of Commissioners, county staff was charged with drafting a mandatory implementation policy for the septic-to-sewer conversion over the next decade. Commissioner Fielding wants to find a way to "level the playing field" for all residents who would be affected—with special consideration for those who have recently installed a new septic system. We applaud this decision, and agree that we should explore all potential funding options—including the State Revolving Fund and other grants, and pursue the availability of low interest loans—to relieve as much of the burden as possible for taxpayers.

The county should contribute its fair share; with the balance coming from assessments and by other means.

Human waste is contributing an estimated 2 million pounds of nitrogen to our lagoon each year; causing harmful algae blooms, suffocating seagrass and killing fish and wildlife. A 2015 Martin County Septic Study from FAU Harbor Branch's Dr. Brian Lapointe and Laura Herren concluded that groundwater nitrate and phosphate levels are significantly higher at monitored residential "hot spot" sites in Palm City and Golden Gate than at two other reference sites. Further, sucralose detected in the ground and surface waters provides ad-

ditional evidence of human wastewater impacts. This is data we've been aware of for nearly two decades.

As early as November 1997, an investigative report by John Tuohy for Florida Today warned, "Septic-tank pollution has become perhaps the most contentious issue facing the (Indian River) Lagoon. There is growing evidence that contamination from septic-tanks is damaging the estuary—evidence that could force homeowners to switch to sewer lines." The newspaper also reported that "fecal coliform bacteria from human waste... (is) a serious threat", and that "algae blooms triggered by nitrogen and phosphorus—two nutrients found in high levels in human waste—are choking areas of the lagoon, robbing the water of oxygen, and killing fish and sea grass beds."

Martin County is fortunate to have strong representation and a track record of support for waterway restoration efforts in Tallahassee from Senator Joe Negron and Representatives MaryLynn Magar and Gayle Harrell. Our best chance to garner their continued support will come if we can put down our swords and speak with one voice on the septic-to-sewer conversion issue. As South Florida Water

Management District Governing Board Vice Chair, and lifetime Martin County resident, Kevin Powers said at our Rivers Symposium, "This community is too small, and this issue too big, for us not to work together to solve it." What are we waiting for? ■



Samantha Capaldo, of Palm City, left, asks questions of Nicki van Vonno, county growth management director, and Darryl Deleeuw, environmental administrator, regarding Costco's environmental plans following a winter staff meeting with Costco representatives.

Costco continues to look at settling in Palm City

Aside from the AAF rail plans and the Lake Okeechobee discharges, nothing else has brought residents out of their homes and businesses quite like the proposed Costco store on Martin Highway in Palm City.

Most residents who attend town hall meetings and county staff meetings live in Palm City, and most object to the additional traffic the wholesale giant will bring to its proposed location on 28 acres at the southeast corner of High Meadow Avenue and Martin High-

way—in spite of the store's high starting wages and significant impact on county tax revenues.

Commissioner John Haddox, whose district includes Palm City, met with Costco officials shortly after they submitted their application in October to discuss other possible locations, including the B&A Flea Market on U.S. 1 or the fairgrounds on Dixie Highway. Costco rejected all but the Martin Highway location as not "meeting company objectives."

Commissioner Anne Scott objected to Haddox meeting with store representatives, challenging the District 1 commissioner that he was violating state Sunshine Laws. The county attorney's office, however, confirmed that Haddox had taken steps to ensure that the meetings were made public, and no other commissioners took part in Costco's tour of potential sites.

In December, the county found fault with the project's traffic study, its building design and its wetlands and stormwater treatment plans, which Costco representatives will need to address prior to resubmitting their application for a final review.

Since there are no zoning changes being sought, the application will move quickly through the required growth management process, according to county staff. After the final review by county planners and around 15 department heads, the project will go before the Local Planning Agency for a public hearing, which may submit its own rec-

ommendations prior to being submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for a second public hearing and a final decision, expected some time in the late spring or early summer. ■

District Court rejects county's denial of Martingale Commons plan

The owner of 33 acres at the juncture of Martin Highway and I-95 missed a timetable extension filing deadline in 2010 by four days—a mistake overlooked by Martin County Growth Management staff, who compounded the mistake for four years and through six county staff reports.

Growth Management staff worked on the Martingale Commons industrial development plan with owners as if the timetable requirements had been properly met, even assuring a potential buyer that the development was in full compliance with the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

Not until after the purchase of the property by HM Property Investments for \$1.8 million and an additional expenditure of \$510,000 for improvements was the mistake discovered by Growth Management Director Nicki van Vonno. She reported to Martin County commissioners at a public hearing in the fall of

2014 that the county should not be held liable for the mistake due to indemnification language in her 2010 acknowledgment letter to the applicant.

At the public hearing, Commissioners John Haddox and Doug Smith disagreed, voting to approve the development's Final Site Plan, in spite of the long-running error by county staff and the substantial investments by the owner; however, the opposing votes of Commissioners Ed Fielding, Anne Scott and Sarah Heard prevailed.

"Equitable estoppel, I believe, is going to apply here," Haddox said, which states that when an owner, acting in good faith, incurs extensive expenses based on some act or omission of government that it would be highly inequitable and unjust not to allow the property to be acquired.

"I have zero legal training," he added, "but my common sense tells me we're going into this one fighting a losing battle."

The 19th District Appellate Court agreed Feb. 25 that it was a case of equitable estoppel, according to court records, and overturned the county commission's 2014 vote to deny approval of the project's final site plan to allow construction to begin.

The county has an opportunity now to request a rehearing prior to awarding applicable attorney fees and costs to HM Property Investments LLC, who was represented by attorney Scott Konopka of Stuart. ■

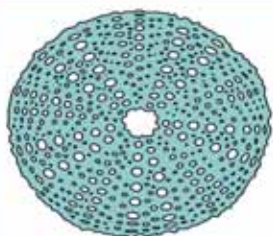


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State's response to emergency began as dark as discharges

Tim Kenney of Port St. Lucie never expected to be thrust into the spotlight regarding the effects of Lake Okeechobee discharges on river-based Martin County businesses, yet that's where this owner of the Stuart bait-and-tackle shop, Tackle for Less, suddenly found himself over the past two weeks.

He stood on Stuart's Riverwalk stage Feb. 26 to speak at a news conference intended to draw attention to the plight of water-related businesses. He spoke out at a recent Rivers Coalition meeting. He's been quoted in articles by Tyler Treadway of The Stuart News, and he's been interviewed by area television news stations.

Ordinarily, all this news attention would be a boon to a small business, but not this time, Kenney says.

"My business is down 65-70 percent since the first of February," he adds, "so you can get all the publicity in the world, but the reality is, it's tough fishing around here and that's where my customers live. No amount of advertising is gonna help now."

A retired police officer, Kenney and his wife decided to open a small, friendly neighborhood bait-and-tackle shop across from the Sheppard Park boat ramp, but he runs it like a well-established, full-fledged business, not as a hobby, which many people expect when he calls it a "neighborhood" business.

One of his favorite expressions is, "I work 80 hours a week, so I don't have to work 40," which he revealed to his classmates last fall in the Business Accelerator Program at IRSC, arranged and sponsored by the Business Development Board of Martin County.

The 36-hour course of business classes over 12 weeks, offered by IRSC for a \$25 fee, culminated in a student presentation before a panel of business professionals to compete for a \$5,000 investment in the winner's business.

"I won that prize and bought a live shrimp well with it," Kenney says. "My business was going like a bat out of hell in December...I actually had cash in my pocket for the first time since we opened up (two years ago), but then the discharges started coming in January.... There's no salt in the river. It's 100



(LEFT) The fishermen, the families, the businesses hurt by Lake Okeechobee discharges gathered on the Riverwalk stage in Stuart on Feb.26 to raise awareness of their plight. In early January, Deb Drum, Martin County's ecosystem manager, invited engineer Jeff Kivett, of the South Florida Water Management District, to the County Commission for an update that gave a chilling prognostication: El Niño rains have been primarily south of Lake Okeechobee, and if those rains shift to the north, there's no place for the water to go except through the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers. Shift, they did, with the wettest January on record since 1932. When Drum returned to the County Commission in February, she reported that more water was already being discharged in February 2016 than had been discharged in April of 1995, a season far worse than even the summer of 2013, resulting in algal blooms, fish lesions and dolphin deaths. The commissioners agreed it was time to prepare a resolution to ask the governor to declare a state of emergency in Martin County; however, Commissioner Doug Smith pushed to have Commission Chairwoman Anne Scott personally call the governor immediately, then send the resolution after it was finished. "Why should we wait for a resolution to be prepared," he asked. "I believe it's entirely appropriate for our chair to call the governor immediately." Three days later, the governor declared a state of emergency for three counties.

percent fresh water. There are no fish in the water to catch....they've all been washed out."

He's worried that the same will happen to his business, which was built on the precept of marketing exclusively within a two-mile radius of his shop to ensure the "neighborhood" ambiance was maintained.

Kenney felt hopeful, he said, after the governor declared a state of emergency for Martin, St. Lucie and Lee counties the last week of February, citing an intent to help businesses suffering "extensive environmental harm" and "severe economic losses" due to the discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers, but then noth-

ing happened. For days.

The state agency named by the governor to respond to the crisis, the state Division of Emergency Management, reported to callers that its director was in Louisiana for a conference, so they were in "observation mode."

"You know what that means, don't you," Kenney said. "'Observation Mode' is government rhetoric for 'your government is doing nothing,' and I told people, 'Folks, remember this on election day.'"

But Kenney did not sit around and wait. He started calling those legislators and emergency agencies.

"I have been on the phone every day, all day," he says. "I called every single one of our elected officials. I called the Office of Emergency Management. I even called my district commissioner....three times, I called him!"

Finally, Kenney got a call back from Marco Rubio's office on March 2, and while he was on the phone to Rubio's office, he got a call from the governor's office, announcing that the State Emergency Response Team had activated the Florida Virtual Business Emergency Operations Center to assess the impact of the discharges and start the process of encouraging businesses to apply for emergency loans and other disaster relief programs.

The county office for Kenney's district, Commissioner Doug Smith of District 1, emailed him the Business Damage Assessment Survey that must be completed and submitted to the state's Department of Economic Opportunity.

"It's a step in the right direction," Kenney says, "but this (disaster) is going to have a long-term, much wider impact on other businesses besides those that are located directly on the water and have the first, most immediate impact. I don't think people realize that everyone's going to be hurt by this ... We have to fix the cause, so it won't keep happening." ■

--Barbara Clowdus

Workshop planned to aid business owners

Since government paperwork required of Martin County businesses seeking assistance from the state's Emergency Response Team can be daunting, the Business Development Board of Martin County is working in partnership with the county's Council of Chambers and the Martin County Emergency Operations Center to create a workshop to aid business owners in the process.

But business owners do not have to wait for the workshop.

Those local businesses that have suffered losses since the discharges began in January are encouraged by the Board of County Commissioners to complete a Business Damage Assessment Survey that can be obtained at: <http://flvbeoc.org/index.php?action=bda> (select the "Lake Okeechobee Discharge" event). The Florida Virtual Business Emergency Operations Center will assess the impact that the discharges have had on local businesses to determine what is an appropriate response.

The intent of the BDBMC workshop will be to help business owners not only in filling out the form, according to Jill Marasa of the BDBMC, but in determining what type of loan or other assistance is best suited to their business.

The details of the workshop will be announced most likely on March 4, or go to www.BDBMC.org for more information. ■

Two new reasons to visit Fish House Art Center

Two new artists recently opened studios in the Fish House Art Center in Port Salerno. Their personalities are opposite, yet both unite in their passion for art and admiration for their surroundings.

Danuta Rothschild, who named her studio Danuta's Den, is as flamboyant and bold as our sometimes shockingly red and orange Florida skies. The other artist, Gail Naomi, evokes the subtle vibrations of earth and soil, especially fitting for a potter.

They both say they feel that having their studios at the old fish house on Manatee Pocket—now converted to an artists colony with local commercial fishermen occasionally strolling through—is an exceptionally beautiful place to nurture their creativity.



Jewelry of hand-crafted clay beads are favorites of Clay Space visitors.

ter." The place fit her vision perfectly, Naomi says, giving her space to expand her working and classroom areas, near potential markets for her commissioned works, having retail space to sell her work, all while being peaceful enough that she can hear her inner muse.

Barely settled in her new space, word is beginning to spread through the county of this "new" talent. She is one of

the local artists who will take part in Stuart's ArtsFest, and she was tapped by Women Supporting the Arts to offer a class in pottery for children at the Building Bridges to Youth non-profit in East Stuart.

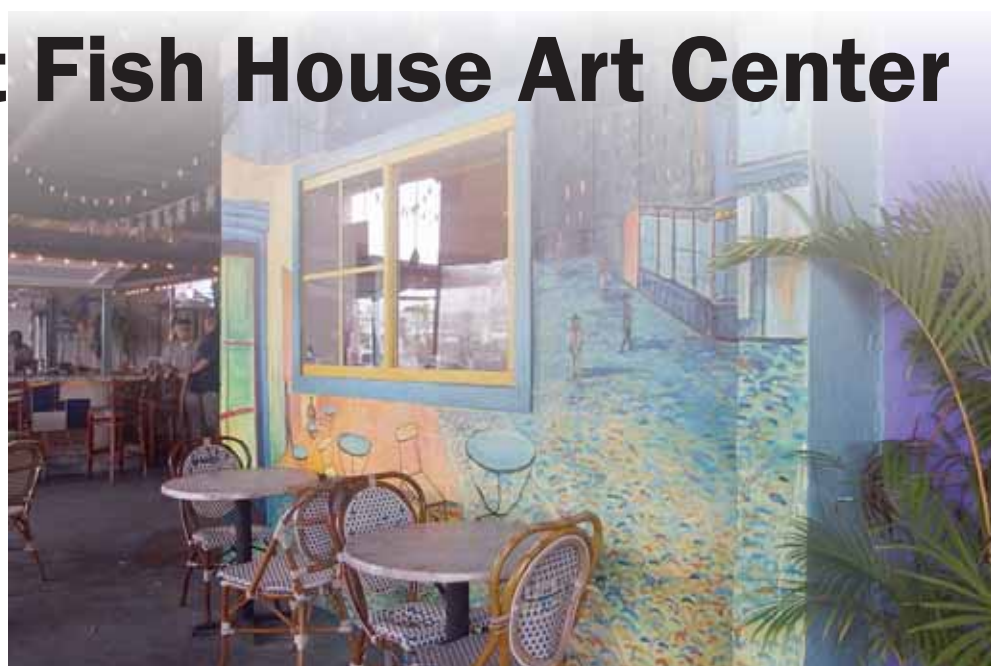
"I am also very interested in taking custom commissions," she adds. "I've worked in local private homes creating site-specific work." She also created 3-D murals and sculptural reliefs for community centers in Palm Beach and Okeechobee counties.

Although at her studio "nearly every day," Naomi encourages people to call her to tour her studio or to inquire as to a class. She has no set teaching schedule, and takes students on a rolling basis.

"I am busy, here and elsewhere," she adds, "so to be sure to catch me here, please call for an appointment." The Clay Space phone number is 561.762.4527.

DANUTA'S DEN

A fine artist's talent lies undeniably beneath the whimsical creations in Danuta's Den by Danuta Rothschild. Born in Poland, she was trained at the Academy of the Arts in Warsaw, and



Artist Danuta Rothschild with one of her whimsical works of art that feature politicians, musicians, actors and actresses.



Danuta also refinishes antiques in unexpected, delightful ways.

they understand that experience..."

Putting even non-artists in touch with that mysterious creative force is one of Rothschild's passions, and she offers a class in creating personal

visioning boards, pointing to her own vision board created years ago on which, she says, everything pictured came to pass. Under her guidance, she shows her students how to create true works of art, however, not just bulletin boards.

She also offers a different kind of painting glass, "Sip & Paint," where the emphasis is on sharing an experience rather than

learning a technique. "But they will create a painting by one of the great masters," she explains, "as they follow me. I will show them, stroke by stroke, and when they're done, they'll have their own masterpiece!"

She supplies the paints, the brushes, the canvasses, as well as the directions, and they can purchase a glass of wine or a craft beer at the Grove Dock Bar just outside her door. "With live music in the background," she adds, "the evening is just so much fun, so relaxing, because the experience takes you to a new place."

She can be reached at 772.233.6020, or: danutastudio@yahoo.com. Online: www.danutastudio.com. ■

--Barbara Clowdus



THE CLAY SPACE

Gail Naomi can be found along the boardwalk, around the corner of Danuta's Den, in the space once occupied by a glassblower and now dotted by waist-high tables, a potter wheels and two clay kilns. She named her studio the Clay Space.

"On my first visit here, I was truly pleased to see what a lovely space this is," Naomi says, gesturing toward the marina outside her door. She has spent "the past 20 years or so" as a ceramist, dividing her time between North Carolina and Palm Beach County.

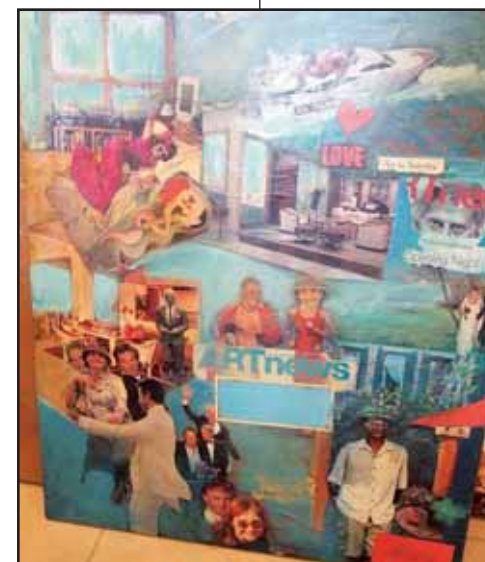
"I started spending more and more of my time in Florida...then I heard that the Fish House was looking for a pot-



Artist Gail Naomi at work in her potters studio, Clay Space.



The Clay Space makes room for students also to sell their work.



A visioning board that takes a turn toward artistic expression.

Port Salerno heritage on display each January

Port Salerno old-timers still talk nostalgically about the Friday-night community fish fries of decades ago, where the fishermen themselves cleaned and fried their catch to share with a few hundred friends and neighbors.

The last weekend in January, Port Salerno again hosted a fish fry, where the fishermen themselves again cleaned and cooked their catch for the community, but that's about all that's the same today as the fishermen's gatherings of the '70s and '80s, and even earlier.

More than 30,000 visitors attended this year's Port Salerno Seafood Festival, hosted by the Port Salerno Fishing Dock Authority. The one-day event included three stages for live bands, more than 30 food vendors, 120 artisans surrounding the star of the event—fresh seafood caught offshore—in a picture postcard setting on the Manatee Pocket, sprinkled with two dozen sequined mermaids and swashbuckling pirates.

Each year, festival-goers clamor to increase the popular event to two days, but organizers have steadfastly opposed an expansion, since their own fishermen would be unable to provide all the fresh



Fishermen haul their catch from the Atlantic to clean and cook themselves for the Port Salerno Seafood Festival.

fish required for a two-day event.

"The festival really is intended to highlight our fishermen," says Butch Olsen, Jr., president of the Port Salerno Fishing Dock Authority, "and we don't want to start importing fish from other places." Olsen decries the fact that 80 percent of the "fresh" fish sold in the US comes from outside US boundaries, and 50 percent of that is farm raised, he says, requiring antibiotics to keep them alive.

Port Salerno is one of the state's few remaining working waterfronts, and the



Commercial fishing boats have historically lined the Manatee Pocket in Port Salerno.

festival allows visitors to stroll the boardwalk along the 30 or so commercial fishermen's docked boats. In their heyday—prior to the state ban on gill nets in the mid-'90s—around 200 fishermen hauled their catches out of the Atlantic, bringing them to half a dozen fish houses in Port Salerno. The community fish fries died along with Port Salerno's fishing industry.

When the last working fish house was sold, it became an artists' colony, born of an idea by former commissioner Elmira Gainey and implemented by owner John Hennessee, which is open

year round and features eight working artists and a two-story art gallery.

At around the same time the fish house was sold, the residents rallied to rescue their community from further decline and launched the Port Salerno Revitalization Committee. The

fishermen's community fish fry was revived, but on a larger scale that would include bands and artists. They expected around 2,500 at their first event 10 years ago, but 7,500 walked through their gates. Now they expect no fewer than 30,000 each year.

"The festival is bigger and better than ever," Olsen says, who reminds festival goers often that most of what is sold to eat was caught within days of the festival, "but it's even more important that we keep our heritage alive and keep our folks working." ■

--Barbara Clowdus

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WRAC presenter targets nitrogen loads in river

Nitrogen loads to the St Lucie River were addressed at the Feb. 4 meeting of the Water Resources Advisory Council meeting, otherwise known as WRAC, an advisory group of stakeholders from throughout south Florida, who meet monthly to discuss and give input regarding the area's water challenges being faced throughout the region.

"This month's meeting was packed full of information, with presentations about everything from future water supply needs, a discussion on how planning to meet those needs might affect Everglades Restoration projects, to how birds, turtles, and fish affect water-testing efforts," said Nyla Pipes, of One Florida Foundation. "The presentation that most caught my attention, however, was an update on the nitrogen water quality conditions throughout the region managed by South Florida Water Management District."

The presentation by Stuart Van Horn, P.E., chief of the Water Quality Bureau, was offered because the South Florida Management District often is asked by residents about the quantity of nitrogen being moved to and from Lake Oke-



Much of the focus has been on reducing phosphorous levels in the St. Lucie River, but reducing levels of nitrogen also are important, a recent topic at the Water Resources Advisory Council meeting.

chobee and the estuaries via the SFWMD canal system.

"The St. Lucie River is a nitrogen-limited waterbody. A limiting nutrient is a chemical necessary for plant growth," Pipes explained, "however, if you have an abundance of that nutrient, algal blooms will expand, thus it is important to have

the right amount of the nutrient—enough for plants to grow, but not so much that the ecosystem is out of balance."

The St. Lucie River Basin Management Action Plan, or BMAP, set a Total Maximum Daily Load target of 0.72 mg/l of nitrogen.

"We are nowhere near that target,"

Pipes added, "so it is important to understand where nitrogen is entering the river. This is where the presentation at WRAC became very interesting."

Most residents assume that since we get Lake Okeechobee discharges to the St. Lucie River, that the river's over-abundance of nitrogen comes from the lake, according to Van Horn. In reality, 21 percent of our water came from Lake Okeechobee between water year 2011 and water year 2015, and 21% of its nitrogen load came from the lake during that same time period. In comparison, 79 percent of the water came from our basin and it carried 79% of the nitrogen entering the St. Lucie River with it.

"Once again, we must pay attention to our local watershed," Pipes said, "and work harder to reduce the nitrogen inputs."

For more information on the St. Lucie River Basin Management Action Plan: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/watersheds/docs/bmap/StLucieRiverEstuaryBMAP-APR-2015.pdf>

To access Stuart Van Horn's Presentation: <http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xweb%20about%20us/meetings>. ■

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Solutions emerge to tackle our water conundrum

Most people of South Florida want this for our water: Stop the Discharges, Clean the Water and Send Water South. However, these issues contain a host of constraints, from a 100-year entangled problem to changing priorities every 20 years to local advocates with dogmatic stances.

In the 1920 -1940s, the priorities to address included: flooding from the Kissimmee basin and Lake Okeechobee. In the 1940-60s, the priorities were: flooding, rebuilding the Lake into a reservoir and creating an inland port connection from Ft. Myers to Stuart. Currently, the priority is, "Send the water south."

Historically, 15 counties along with Martin County wanted the flooding stopped. Martin County was interested in the inland port idea and championed the connection to the east fully knowing this made the river the major drain for Lake Okeechobee. It is nearly impossible to un-ring that bell after all these years. The population has doubled and will double again in the next 20 years. Action is required this session. Hopefully, with Joe Negron as Florida Senate president, action is what we will get.

The primary goal of stopping the discharges requires a process in place to store, divert or otherwise slow down 1.6 million acre-feet of water so it does not



**Capt.
Don Voss**

*One Florida
Foundation*



Capt. Don Voss speaks in Tallahassee in favor of regulating plastic bag use, describing his experience as a volunteer diver cleaning the Indian River Lagoon and finding sea turtles trapped in the bags. He told them also that fish eat the bags, then humans consume the fish.

overwhelm Lake Okeechobee's fragile dike. Any water discharged east is just as harmful to the estuary, whether cleaned or polluted. The enemy is a significant decrease in salinity over a pe-



The youngest attendees at the recent Everglades Conference at the Biltmore in Coral Gables, Annie and Steffanie, discuss with Captain Don Voss and Nyla Pipes, founders of One Florida, how to best reach younger adults. The young women said not to stereotype them as only a shallow, social media driven generation. They suggested we talk to them face-to-face, like human beings.

riod of more than 2+ weeks that will result in algae blooms.

Water quality must meet the federally mandated water quality standard of 10 parts per billion of phosphorus before entering the Everglades. Current testing places the water quality in the Kissimmee River at 200-400 PPB.

There are huge constraints to sending water south. The system is no longer able to receive rapid amounts of water, even if water quality standards are met. Water takes time to move through the STAs and EAAs to filter properly. Recent reports indicate that over the last two years, an average of 800,000 acre-feet of water has moved through the EAAs and was filtered to the mandated levels; however, these 800,000 acre-feet of water trickled through these filtering areas at the rate of 6,600 acre-feet per day.

Solutions to address most constraints already exist. Water storage sites are being developed. The northern Kissimmee Basin is scheduling to hold back more water and seriously reduce the water flow it contributes to Lake Okeechobee. Numerous water farms and retention areas are being tested around the Lake. Renewed research and tests on deep injection wells have begun. Serious consideration is being given to dredging the navigation channels of Lake Okeechobee where additional water could be added to the refitted and upgraded Lake structures.

Using Lake Okeechobee for additional storage is the optimum solution as we already own that area. Many canals and other flow ways are currently being rebuilt or upgraded. Septic systems have finally appeared on the mainstream's radar and are now part of the conversation. The stronger fertilizer ordinances of 2013 will allow for testing across the lagoon communities. Results should be noted by next year. Other pollutants are being identified and addressed.

Water is also becoming a necessity north of Lake Okeechobee. As aquifers deplete, wells dry up and salt water rises and intrudes into areas previously holding spring waters. Surface flow water will be needed to supplement mu-

nicipal drinking water supplies. We cannot just send ALL the water south.

Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson is America's preeminent astrophysicist. He states, "The most interesting fact about science is that individuals do not need to believe in it for it to be correct...it just is." Prudent research, independent scientific reports and public input will greatly aid full transparency and a knowledgeable and well-informed population can better address future needs. We need to use Lake Okeechobee and other water retention areas in coordination with water storage while filtering and slowing the flow of our water to stop any discharges.

A cacophony of concerns has been aired regarding northern storage, septic systems and agricultural runoff, and those who introduced the concepts. The time has come for people to work together to embrace and implement these workable solutions.

So far, the current version of the Water Bill and Everglades restoration conversations seem promising. The Legislature, with normal budget items and Amendment #1 funding available, also has the University of Florida Water Institute's Negron Report and One Florida's STOZE Report to use as guidelines for projects that will address the problems. Water cannot go south until it is cleaned, so we stress cleaning our water, storing our water and protecting the wetlands that help filter it to mandatory levels.

The two Federal water projects, CEPP and CERP will be completed around 2036. Those projects will clean 400,000 acre-feet. In the meantime, a growing number of local projects will help stop discharges for years—up to and beyond 2036. ■

Capt. Don Voss, nationally recognized for his environmental initiatives to improve the water quality of the Indian River Lagoon, will be a regular contributor to Martin County Currents. All advertising on these pages will benefit One Florida Foundation, dedicated to addressing water issues throughout the state.

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16 counties working to benefit our waterways



Nyla Pipes

One Florida Foundation

Locals often speak with resignation about the destruction from polluted discharges to our waterways: "Well, at least it isn't as bad as 1998. Do you remember the fish kills?," they'll say. During an especially heavy rainy season, like the "Lost Summer of 2013," the community is rightfully in an uproar; however, as the wet periods dry out, and the discharges from the numerous canals and from Lake Okeechobee lessen, so does the fervor.

The 2013 event gets marked on a graph, alongside years 2004-2005--"When all those hurricanes hit, and the estuaries took years to recover"--that shows clearly that the rain events are cyclical. Over time, people tend to move on with their lives...until the next heavy rain event, as we're experiencing now with our El Nino winter, which yet again raises awareness. The solutions are challenging, expensive, and very long term, so it appears on the surface that "nobody is doing anything."

That simply is not the case.

Among those who work tirelessly toward solutions are our commissioners who sit on the 16 County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee. For Martin County, this is Commissioner Sarah Heard; for St. Lucie, it's Commissioner Frannie Hutchinson.

The stated purpose of the County Coalition is this:

"The County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and Lake Worth Lagoon is a multiple County-based advisory group organized primarily for the purpose of providing the general public, the South Florida Water Management District, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Legislature, and various groups and committees with a body which will present a variety of issues dealing with the health and welfare of the lakes, estuaries, and riverine systems consisting of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and Lake Worth Lagoon, and all of the bodies of water connected thereto."

The coalition holds a public meeting quarterly in Okeechobee at the historic Hendry County courthouse. In regular attendance are commissioners from Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, Lee, Palm Beach, Hendry, Glades, Highlands, and Osceola counties. They bring with them concerns from their own constituents for consideration, and they ask questions of experts from the Army

Corp of Engineers, South Florida Water Management District, Fish and Wildlife Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, and others, primarily from the scientific community.

Discussion can become lively, but the goal is to collaborate and fine tune priorities that all can agree on to present in Washington D.C. and Tallahassee legislators. In March 2015, the coalition determined current legislative priorities to be:

- Securing continued appropriations for completion of Kissimmee River Restoration.
- Funding of the C-44 reservoirs/ Storm Treatment Area, and the entire Indian River Lagoon South Project, including the C-23, C-24, and C-25 canals.
- Funding of the C-43 canal on the Caloosahatchee.
- Protection of local fertilizer ordinances.
- Protection of local wetland protection ordinances.
- Opposition of any preemption to regulations, particularly in water control districts created and pursuant to chapter 298, Florida State Statutes.
- Continued support of the recommendations of the Senate Select Committee on Indian River lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin.

The next meeting will determine this year's priorities and is tentatively scheduled for March 11. You can view past meetings and handouts at the following website: www.co.okeechobee.fl.us. Select the "Meeting Portal" tab. Scroll by date or do a search for "Lake County Coalition."

The 16 County Coalition meetings are an opportunity to learn more about our water and what's being done to improve the situation. I strongly encourage all residents to attend these meetings and stay engaged, even when the river "looks" better and there are no discharges.

The meetings provide an opportunity to see our rivers as part of a much larger ecosystem that was altered generations ago in order to drain the land so we could live, work, and play here. With a series of canals, locks, and pumps, the water is put where man thought best--THEN--with little regard to the needs of our estuaries and lakes.

This draining process alters salinity levels, killing seagrass, oysters and fish. Lowered salinity, high temperatures, the nutrients from varied sources also cause harmful algal blooms. Different parts of the ecosystem respond in different ways, but none are desirable, and only consistent, committed civic involvement will give us the results we all want--clean waterways. ■

Nyla Pipes is a founder of One Florida Foundation, which addresses water issues throughout the state.



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Hobe Sound works hard to remain distinctive

Ask just about any Hobe Sound resident: Life in Hobe Sound definitely lives up to the Tourism Office's definition of "quaint."

Although the Martin County Commission majority vote last year undermined the Hobe Sound Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) revitalization plan—15 years in the making—volunteers and nonprofit organizations work hard, contributing time, energy and resources, to bring a distinctive cultural and artistic flair to this unincorporated village in the southern end of the county.

"Hobe Sound boasts a reputation of small town charm, pristine natural attractions and the utmost respect for the surrounding environment that residents are proud of," says Hobe Sound Chamber Executive Director Angela Hoffman, "and our historic community also has become a hub for unique boutiques, artists and events that attract statewide attention."



Mural artist Nadia Utto, left, works with student artist Abigail Dunworth of Hobe Sound on the 20th mural in the unincorporated village of Hobe Sound.

The Hobe Sound Chamber recently concluded its annual Hobe Sound Festival of the Arts with record attendance, which also coincided with the launch of Landmark Arts' most recent murals project on the south side of the Amazing Things artists collective building north of Pettway Street on Federal Highway.



The mural is the 20th in Hobe Sound.

"The Hobe Sound Chamber is proud to partner with Landmark Arts to offer guided mural tours showcasing the outdoor gallery," Hoffman says, "while also sharing the spotlight with local businesses and the 39 professional guest artists and 48 community volunteer painters that contributed to the works of art."

The two-hour tours are led by a knowledgeable artist on an air-conditioned van that stops at each mural for a close-up look. Participants are provided with a checklist, since each mural has a hidden picture somewhere within the design. The fee is \$15 per person, limited to 30, and includes refreshments upon conclusion.

Amazing Things is a new nonprofit organization in Hobe Sound with a goal to empower families and children to have access to cultural programs, wellness information, and gardening opportunities, and to serve as a liaison among residents and regional organizations.

Another star in Hobe Sound's crown is the recently restored Apollo School, originally the only two-room school in Martin County, that offers a roster of cultural events, including a winter series of lectures.

The next Apollo Foundation lecture will be Thursday, March 10, at 7 p.m. a

living history talk by Andrew Foster, the great grandson of Capt. Charles Coe, a 19th century newspaperman, naturalist, explorer, author of *The Seminole Story* and editor of *The Florida Star* in 1877. Admission, which includes light refreshments, is \$10.

"One of our most popular events is the Hobe Sound Stroll, on the second Saturday evening each month during our winter

season," Hoffman says. "The sidewalks of our historic downtown come alive with artists, crafters, musicians and all our wonderful boutiques stay open late, offering special sales and door prizes."

Part of the stroll, which will begin at 6 p.m., March 12, at the Taste restaurant at the corner of Bridge and Dixie highways, is the Hobe Sound Art Gallery, which offers an eclectic collection of fine art, as well the work of local artists.

For more information about any of the Hobe Sound events, contact the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce office at 772.546.4724 or go to www.hobesound.org. ■



Hobe Sound Festival of the Arts volunteers Al and Lois Dillaire of Hobe Sound head home with their festival "goodies."

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Musings inspired by a walk in Halpatiokee Park

On the one hand, Florida is deep and mysterious, both enchanting and dazzling with a yet-to-be-discovered landscape that no narrative can truly capture. On the other is her postcard image, glossy and hedonistic, sold by travel agents and realtors to consumers nationally and around the world. An American poet, Wallace Stevens, reacted to his first visit to Florida by writing, "O Florida, Venereal Soil" in 1922, alluding to her epicurean, pleasure-seeking side.

The travel agent's kitsch and highly elaborate poem paradoxically match; however, those who grew up in the former Soviet Union, as I did, never had those postcard images of the Sunshine State. Our only references to Florida were through the study of literature—Hemingway's Key West, a must-know topic at school in the '70s, Wallace Stevens' famous poem, "The Idea of Order at Key West," and the Irish-American writer Thomas Mayn Reid, who wrote the adventure novel, *Osceola the Seminole, or, The Red Fawn of the Flower Land*.

Written in 1858, Reid's novel was devoured by most Soviet kids at a very young age, thus that's when our lifetime romance with Florida began. No other writer has ever portrayed Florida so vividly and romantically.

You should know also that the proverbial Iron Curtain never banned American literature. In fact, it was studied, loved and cherished by Soviet students. So when one of those students moves to south Florida with such romanticized perceptions in her mind, she finds herself, at first, sort of suspended between two different worlds – the imaginary one and the one you see daily as you go to work, run errands and live here.

The latter certainly did not look as pristine and wild as first expected.

This gap, this uncertainty in perception in the beginning, first appeared fearsome, lacking the comfort zone I needed to feel secure. Then... an interesting epiphany emerged after brooding over the situation. Why should anyone try to get rid herself of this empty space between two chairs at all, if that's ex-



Maya Ellenson
Art
Kaleidoscope



One of the squirrels that lived in the oak tree outside of the About Time shop in Hobe Sound.

actly where you can drop the veil of pre-conception to step out of the discourse that initially influenced you?

According to author and physician Deepak Chopra, uncertainty is a fertile ground for creativity and freedom, where a field of pure potentiality resides. Maybe that's the reason so many amazing artists live in south Florida, many of whom are not deep-rooted natives. They don't force the space between two chairs to disappear, but rather nurture and embrace it, for that's where the hidden, formless content is pulsing, dubbed by Ernest Hemingway as the "iceberg principle" that empowers the whole story.

Living in south Florida also teaches you the difference between settling and grounding. Settling is sliding into what one believes is a comfort zone with its alleged sense of security, and grounding is about fully immersing yourself in the moment and embracing the uncertainty with an open mind.

That said, the gap between two chairs, occurring on various occasions, does not have to be unnerving. For instance, when my husband, Gabe Ellenson, who owns the About Time shop in Hobe Sound, moved his business from



An alligator basks in the sun at Halpatiokee Park.

Edwyn Street to Bridge Road, the move felt unsettling and risky. At the same time, however, he was grounded and ready for change.

Perhaps he owes the effortlessness of his move to his beloved squirrels, which he had been feeding over the past two years, up to the last moment before he left. The magnificent oak tree outside his office window that housed the squirrels seemed almost magical, full of life, displaying the wisdom inherent in attachments and detachments in a marvelous flow of nature's daily spectacle.

It also showed that time can be epic and multi-dimensional all at once. When Gabe fixes clocks and watches, his focus is all about time with its clockwise sequence of gears and springs, but when he was feeding these perky creatures from his hand, his focus was all about the squirrels. When he began creating his

signature sea glass jewelry, he etched in silver the tree of life, paying tribute to the squirrel time that had so enriched his life, then passed.

Florida offers depth and dimension to those willing to go beyond its admittedly accurate postcard trappings, or even when its magnificent landscapes serve as the subject of paintings and poems. As Wallace Stevens said of Florida, "the sea was not a

mask," a lesson you can learn also by watching a sleepy gator in one of Halpatiokee Park's lagoons. He demonstrates perfectly how to view nature beneath the mask, abandoning all reference points, whether commercial or poetic.

Living in Martin County with its thousands of acres of preserves and parks provides an exceptional opportunity to develop your own eco-consciousness, born from interacting with the environment by being fully in sync with it — even when all you're doing is watching sleepy gators or squirrel tails. ■

Russian-American Maya Ellenson, who holds M.A. and PhD degrees in Russian language and literature from Moscow State University, has lived in Martin County for eight years. A free-lance writer, she has a particular interest in world culture and art.

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Hap Harrington leaves legacy of fighting falls

Many who knew him felt that Hap Harrington surely would round the century mark propelled by sheer will and a perpetual smile. It did not happen. He died at age 89 on Jan. 24, 2016, finally succumbing to cancer associated with atomic bomb radiation exposure as a young soldier during WWII, complicated by diabetes, heart disease and, finally, multiple strokes before he closed the book while under hospice care at The Terraces in Hobe Sound.

He had written dozens of chapters in his life story filled with adventure, family, entrepreneurship and politics, all brimming with a characteristic zeal for life, an impatience to accomplish more, and an intolerance for anyone who might want to slow him down.

Just three months prior to his death, Harrington appeared before the Martin County Commission to receive a proclamation for the organization he founded in 2010, Floridians Fighting Falls. Although he declined to speak other than to thank the commissioners, his face beamed buckets of pride as board members addressed the commission, including FFF board chair and physician,



PHOTO: GEORGE KLEINE

Barbara Harrington, always at her husband's side, called Hap Harrington, "my hero." He was, indeed, to many.

James Harrell. Harrington's assistant and FFF executive director, Audrey Burzynski, and other FFF instructors, performed Tai Chi balance movements in the commission chamber aisle.

Teaching a modified version of Tai Chi is central to the FFF mission of preventing falls and improving seniors' quality of life, which has been Harrington's singular focus for the past five years. He organized the non-profit organization after chatting with his neigh-



PHOTO: BARBARA CLOWDUS

Audrey Burzynski, executive director of Floridians Fighting Falls, leads volunteers in a Tai Chi demonstration during a Martin County Commission meeting under the proud gaze of FFF founder, Hap Harrington, in wheelchair.

borhood firefighters, who revealed that their most frequent calls came from seniors who had fallen inside their homes, even though their coverage area included U.S. 1, I-95 to the turnpike.

Stunned by what he had heard, Harrington found statistics compiled by the Florida Department of Health saying that if all falls by seniors could be prevented, the number of injury deaths would decrease by more than 40%, injury hospital admissions would decrease by nearly 75%, and injury emergency department visits would decrease by more than 50% among those age 65 and older. "This is all preventable," he said.

After discovering also that no organization focused exclusively on preventing falls, Harrington felt called to do something concrete. He set about "preaching the gospel" of preventing falls, making hand-made signs with hand-painted logos, giving speeches and recruiting people to join his cause, including co-founder, Well-Med. They based their organization on the Satellite Beach firefighter's fall prevention program.

"That's the beauty of me," he often said. "I know how to bring the right people together, to 'use' their strengths to build the whole."

He also was a salesman, skills he had honed with a long career as a national-brand candy salesman, based first in Massachusetts, where he was born, then Michigan and, eventually, in Miami. After his move to Michigan, Harrington used his sales skills to run twice for Congress in his 40s. "I never lost a primary," he would brag, "and never won an election."

At age 50, he'd had enough of Michigan winters and taking orders, he said, so he quit his job and took his wife, Eileen, to Miami's Dinner Key to buy a boat and gear for a sailboat and snorkeling tour business in the Florida Keys. What did he know about sailboats and snorkeling? "Nothing ... absolutely nothing ... and after four years, I lost everything," he said, "but I would not trade those four years for anything in the world."

Always seeking the positive side of life, Harrington had earlier adopted the nickname "Hap," simply because he

liked its "positive vibration," especially in contrast to his given name, William, or Bill. His wife, though, refused to call him Hap. "So I refused to answer her." She finally gave in, he said.

After his business failed, Harrington and Eileen sold their boat and equipment; he went back to being a candy salesman in Dade County for school fundraisers, then retired again, this time to a manufactured home in Ridgeway, a quiet subdivision with a Martin County fire station at its entrance in Hobe Sound. Eileen died suddenly, unexpectedly, before she could move to their new home.

Harrington was alone for only a year before meeting and marrying Barbara Rankin nearly 20 years ago, yet he always called her "my bride" and the "wind beneath my wings," and indeed she was. They were active members of the Ridgeway and Hobe Sound communities, serving on boards, traveling on weekends in their RV, and joining the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce. He also relished his membership in the Republican Executive Committee, and once served as chair of a political campaign committee for a local candidate.

One of his favorite possessions, in addition to his beloved models of sailing ships, was a framed photo of him at the World War II Memoria taken with Martin County Commissioner Doug Smith, who served as his official "guardian" for the Southeast Florida Honor Flight project. A Navy veteran, Harrington told new office visitors that "Commissioner Smith is MY commissioner," he'd say. "You can have just about anything else in here, but don't touch that picture."

Smith recalls that trip to Washington D.C. as his fondest memory of Hap Harrington. "We had a great time," Smith says, "and I laughed all day at Hap's many, many stories."

Not everything stayed on the up side of life for Hap, in spite of his name, his gregarious nature, or his broad smile. A faithful member of the Hobe Sound Toastmaster's, he once was put on the spot to describe extemporaneously one event that had changed the course of his life. He did not hesitate to answer—the death of a son. Although it had taken place more than half a century previously, Harrington's emotions were as raw as if it had happened only the previous week.

"My son was only 19," he said with a shake of his head, as if still disbelieving. "I think of him every day, and I carry the pain inside only a parent who's lost a child can ever know," his fist slowly pounding his chest. With tears starting to well and his normally booming voice softening almost to a whisper, he added, "I was never the same after that, and I'll never forget."

Neither will his fellow Toastmasters, friends, and colleagues soon forget Hap Harrington.

A celebration of his life was held at the Stuart Congregational Church in Stuart in mid-February. Attendees were asked to continue their support of Floridians Fighting Falls, to ensure the legacy of Hap Harrington lives on.

—Barbara Clowdus

“If I could just see a five percent reduction in falls, I'd die a happy man.”

— Hap Harrington, Founder
August 27, 1926 - January 24, 2016



Floridians Fighting Falls is committed to achieve his goals.

Tax-deductible contributions in the name of Hap Harrington may be made to
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Hope for new beginnings after painful ending



Rich Vidulich
Pompano Reporter

In December, I dreamed my Santa Pompano (yes, I DO believe) would push "The Godzilla El Niño" off a south Florida escarpment, making the same wish I made in December 2014: "Dear Santa, all I want for Christmas is for the pompano to return!"

Now in January 2016, I'm making the same wish, and with the sea temps off Juno Beach finally dropping below 80 degrees, there is hope—except that now the Lake Okeechobee discharges are going to foul the water.

But let's go scientific here: Finding the right water temps is the first step to locating these quite edible jacks. My standard procedure? I Google the internet for sea surface temps and find my friend NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association), scroll to the SST charts for today's date, and there it is!

North of the Canaveral Inlet to Ormond Beach it's 69 degrees. To verify the data, I'm ready to speed dial my most experienced anglers ... but don't! Realizing the northern Florida weather patterns and turbid water conditions are quite different than those in our area, I revisit the web.

We certainly don't want to be embarrassed by calling the "Super Surf Legends of the North" and find out their beaches are unfishable! So, I go to www.magicseaweed.com for the swell and wind direction data. Then off to the live beach and surf streams at www.surflife.com. This internet safari takes just a matter of minutes. Everything checks out, so I ring Larry "Fishman" Finch.

My call is answered with no voices, just the sound of wind and surf! Me, like a dippy, is requesting an answer: Hello?

"Hey Rich," he answers. "Get ya a room in Smyrna. Gotta go. Got another one on." Hmm, I'm yearning for a few more facts, the real low down, so I call Capt. Dave: "Lots and lots of hungry poms and whiting ... Shoot, I just Face-booked a 6.2 pounder my son caught today ... Gotta giddy-yap ...



Okay, so it's not technically a pompano, but a 42-pound permit ain't bad, caught by Manuel Orge on Juno Beach.



The best way for teens to spend their time? Fishing from the Juno pier! From left: Dylan Real, Morey Pinard, Leore Genoune, Christian McGregor, and Eytan Genoune. Photo submitted.

Come on up, and don't forget to bring big, live fleas ... If you can't get 'um, then bring a bunch of live blue crabs."

Well, you know, I get a kick out of being scientific, and tossing about a few facts does put some credibility into being a fishing reporter, but our really good friends know we don't have to prove anything. We belong to a circle of knowledgeable, serious anglers who respect each other.

By the way, as secretive as pompano fisherman are (and I don't blame them), they should enjoy catching poms for those brief visits that these fish make. If the current conditions don't change, I will definitely jump into the Pompano Safari truck and spend a few days with select friends.

The biggest schools of poms come from the north, and are obviously temperature driven. From Eau Gallie south to Sailfish Point, the river has offered both spotty and good catches. The Stuart and Jensen relief bridges have provided the jig and quill fisherman some nuggets in the cooler. The poms have staged inside the St. Lucie Inlet and opted to move

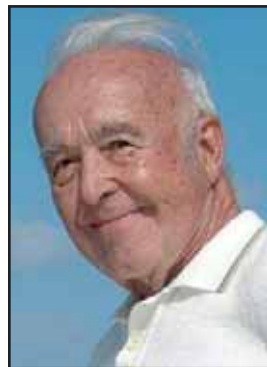
into the Hobe Sound public beach, providing our locals really good catches. Thank goodness we have our resident offshore and inshore populations of pompano.

The holidays were made complete with a great surf-spun family story! The Genoune family, lead by Meir Genoune (brother of Captain Mike Genoune owner of the "Florida Sport Fishing" magazine and TV show) has grown a family around the beaches, piers and inlets up and down the Florida coast,

touring the surf with Leore and Eytan chasing redfish, snook and pompano. The clan is a fishing machine.

Meir has started what he calls, "The Neighborhood Pompano Surf Club." He just picks up their friends and takes them to where the fish are biting. Just look at the picture on this page, and you can see they are successful!

On an entirely different note, we featured a picture of 92-year-old pompano fisherman Emmanuelle on Jupiter Beach. We misspelled his name, which should have been, Manuel Orge. It's very hard for me to write the following, because I've never had to do this before! Manuel took his last breath on Dec.



Manuel Orge

4, 2015. He fished Jupiter and Hobe Sound beaches for 30 years.

As some of us know, he was a master watchmaker, but his passion was surf fishing for pompano and only pompano. He loved to get to the beach earlier than anyone else and cast his long poles into the sea, and mingling with his retired friends on the beach. He'd fix their watches for free and give them extra fish in total contentment.

He was physically involved with the ocean every day. Raking fleas, casting 14-foot rods and never sitting down, we never contemplated his pacemaker would suddenly give out. He was 94, and we will miss him immensely. We feel his presence every time we go to the beaches he fished.

I want to thank all the folks who have contacted me through Facebook, and those who have participated in a beach charter this year. My wife, Lynn, and I thank you for your friendship, and we wish everyone a Happy New Year and tight lines! ■



Surf casting for pompano probably helped give Manuel Orge his long life. Certainly one of the oldest fisherman on the beach, Manuel Orge died in March 2016 at age 94.

Rich Vidulich, a commercial pompano surf fisherman who traverses the beaches of Martin County and points north for his "golden nuggets," lives in Jupiter. Send comments or questions to Pompano@MartinCountyCurrents.com.

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Weekend through March 6 St. John Chrysostom Greek Festival

Nothing's better than the delicious aromas of Greek food and delicious sounds of Greek music happening now at the St. John Chrysostom Greek Festival on Federal Highway in Hobe Sound, next to the Hobe Sound Library. Open at 11 a.m., the festival is free on Friday and only \$3 for adults on Saturday and Sunday, children 12 and under are free. The festival ends Sunday at 7 p.m., so stop by for some great spinach pie! For more info, call 772.546.8180 or go to www.st.john.fl.goarch.org

Thursday, March 10 Audubon at the Blake Library - Barn Owls

The world of barn owls, their habits and habitats, will be the topic for a lecture by Dr. Richard Raid of the Everglades Research and Education Center, University of Florida (Belle Glade), at the Blake Library on Thursday, March 10, from 3-4:30 p.m. The lecture is free. The mission of the Everglades Research and Education Center is to conduct research and extension programs in southern Florida that explore and promote profitable and sustainable agricultural systems.

Thursday, March 10 Stuart Stroll

Stroll historic downtown Stuart and get to know the great shops and restaurants that make up the city's quaint downtown. Tickets are \$10 each, and you may enter for a chance to win one of five \$100 shopping sprees. Tickets may be purchased at Kilwin's Chocolates & Ice Cream, Stuart Coffee Company, Gumbo Limbo Coastal Chic, Rare Earth Gallery, Harbor Wear, The Clam Shell, April Daze and the Seacoast Bank branch location on Colorado Avenue in Stuart.

Friday, March 11 Coffee with the Conductor

Coffee with the Conductor will be Friday, March 11, from 10:30-11:30 a.m., presented by The Arts Council of Martin County and Atlantic Classical Orchestra at the Courthouse Cultural Center, 80 SE Ocean Boulevard, Stuart. There is no admission charge, but space is limited, so call to make reservations for this popular event. 772.287.6676.

Now until April 6 Octane & Opulence at the Elliott

Grand touring cars have a glamor that few other items can equal, and now the public may experience 10 of the most elegant touring cars from the 1950s to the present at the Octane & Opulence exhibit at the Elliott Museum now through April 10. The cars are showcased

as art. Regular admission fees apply. Check the website for details. The Elliott Museum is at 825 N.E. Ocean Blvd. Hours are daily from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Thursday evenings until 8 p.m. For information, call 772-225-1961 or visit ElliottMuseum.org.



Saturday, March 12 Second Saturday Stroll in Hobe Sound

The Hobe Sound Chamber hosts a free stroll through its historic Dixie Highway downtown from 6-9 p.m. on the second Saturday of the month, which this month is March 12. The stroll begins at Taste Casual Dining and features live music and more than 15 vendors as part of a "big, old-fashioned, Hobe Sound block party," organizers say. A deejay will spin oldies next to Chez Bim's Boutique, and a local live band will be featured on Apollo Street. Vendors will showcase their hanging plants, wind chimes, jewelry, skin care products, nautical decor, hand-made table runners and purses, pet products, Blue Flame candles, and local shops and galleries will remain open with special selections, sales and activities. A face painter is on hand for kids. "We're asking local residents to help support these shops and restaurants in order for them to survive and thrive in this small town," says Angela Hoffman. "I encourage everyone to invite a friend from outside of Hobe Sound to come along and enjoy the evening" For more information call the Chamber at 772-546-4724. To reserve a booth call Susan Janes at 772-545-3411.



Saturday, March 12 Twisted Irish Festival

Before you take your stroll through Hobe Sound, stop by Port Salerno, where you'll find another free event, the Twisted Irish Festival on the parking lot in front of the Twisted Tuna restaurant on the Manatee Pocket from noon until 7 p.m. Produced in association with Celtic Heritage Productions, the afternoon will be filled with live music by traditional Irish bands, including Marcille Wallis & Friends and West of Galway, all in honor of St. Pat's Day.

Saturday, March 12 All Saints Episcopal Church Live Auction

A special afternoon for a special place, All Saints Episcopal Church in Jensen Beach, the oldest church in Martin County will be Saturday, March 12, from 3-7 p.m. Professional auctioneer John Crawford will entertain the crowd as he auctions a selection of fine art, furniture, antiques, designer handbags, and first edition books. A silent auction also will take place with an assortment of arts and craft items. Tours of the church and finger foods will be available for those who wish to know more about this unique place. 2302 NE Seaview Drive in Jensen Beach. For more information, call 772.334.0610.

Saturday, March 12 Florida Native Medicinal Plant Workshop in Indiantown

The historic Seminole Inn on Warfield Blvd. in Indiantown will host a "Florida Native Medicinal Plant" workshop on Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon. The workshop will include the "Usnea" and the "Prickly Poppy" plants, where they grow, how and when to harvest and how they are used medicinally. There will also be a hands on project. Lunch is included with the price of the workshop. Tickets are \$40 when pre-registered, and \$50 on the day of the workshop. To register, call the Seminole Inn at 772.597.3777.



Sunday, March 13 St. Patrick's Day Parade & Festival in Jensen Beach

Go east on Jensen Beach Boulevard to historic Jensen Beach to enter the land of the Irish on Sunday, March 13, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Vendors line the sidewalks at 9 a.m. and the parade starts at 3 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15 Birding at Green Cay Wetlands

The Hobe Sound Nature Center will conduct a birding trip on Tuesday, March 15, at 10 a.m. to Green Cay Wetlands, leaving the wildlife center in Hobe Sound at 9 a.m. Bring binoculars for a hike along a boardwalk, observing a variety of water birds and other wildlife. Reservations are required to attend and numbers are limited. For reservations and details, contact the Nature Center at 772.546.2067 or at www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com.

Thursday, March 17 A Land Remembered

One of the most beloved books for readers of all ages, A Land Remembered, the magical historical recollection of Florida, will be discussed by Patrick Smith Jr. in a tribute to his father, the author of the book. "Patrick Smith's Florida is a Land Remembered" is part of the Wilmington Trust Lecture Series at the Elliott Museum. It will take place at 7 p.m. on March 17 and is sure to be sold out, so reserve your seat early. Books will be available for sale and signing. Tickets are \$10 per person for members and \$20 for non-members. Learn more at ALandRemembered.com /Elliott-museum. Reserve your seat by calling 772-225-1961.

Thursday, March 17 Super Predators, Exotic Reptiles

The Hobe Sound Nature Center will host Matt Jenson and Jamie Carmody from SUPER PREDATORS: EXOTIC REPTILES for a special presentation on Thursday, March 17, at 7:30 at the Hobe Sound Nature Center on Federal Highway in Hobe Sound. Their organization educates the public about exotic reptiles, amphibians, and some arachnids through up-close and personal encounters. While most of their live collection consists of invasive species, the importance of native wildlife here in Florida also will be discussed.

Saturday, March 19 Free Family Farm Tour at Kai-Kai Farms

Want to know more about where your food comes from, or perhaps you want your children to learn about vegetables and how to grow them without pesticides? Kai-Kai Farms, a "Community Supported Agriculture" farm where community members purchase a subscription to a box of seasonal produce each week, offers a free farm tour twice a month through the growing season. The next tour is Saturday, March 19, at 3:30 p.m. and is a mini-course on gardening the Kai-Kai way. Walking distance is about 1/2 mile so wear walking shoes suitable for sand and bring a hat. Refreshments are provided. Kai-Kai Farm is at 8006 SW Kanner Hwy, Indiantown.



March 19 TurtleFest at the Loggerhead Marinelife Center

Loggerhead Marinelife Center invites the public to attend the area's favorite, free ocean-themed festival, TurtleFest! on Saturday, March 19, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Loggerhead Marinelife Center and Loggerhead Park in Juno Beach. The event will feature art, shopping, games, crafts, a rock-climbing wall, gymnastics, giant slide, live music, and up-close interactions with threatened and endangered sea turtles. There will also be various food and beverage vendors offering delicious tastes from around the globe.

Monday, March 21 Spaghetti Dinner in Indiantown

It will be the best \$5 you ever spent for a meal! A spaghetti dinner will be Monday, March 21, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Indiantown Civic Center on Osceola Street to benefit the Indiantown Veterans Post, and all donations will go to veterans.

Saturday, March 26 17th Annual Easter Fair in Downtown Stuart

The day starts early—at 8 a.m.—at Flagler Park in downtown Stuart on Saturday, March 26, but the activities last until 1 p.m. and include an ongoing egg hunt. The First Baptist Church of Stuart sponsors the event that includes gems, food, and music, too. For more information, contact Colleen Highstone at 772.287.7422, ext. 108.



Saturday, March 26 Special Activity Day at the Coastal Center

The Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center will offer a family Special Activity Day on Saturday, March 26, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., highlighting the theme of "Gamefish." Visitors will take home a "crafty" creation and enjoy a themed storytime, in addition to stingray feeding, a sea turtle program, and gamefish feeding at the lagoon at 2:30. Regular admission applies.

Saturday, March 26 Hooked on Music Festival in Ft. Pierce

Head to the gorgeous Ft. Pierce City Marina Square for the 8th Annual Hooked On Music Festival, an all-day, family-friendly event on Saturday, March 26. Two stages along Avenue A and Melody Lane will hold live performances by six popular bands. There will be local cuisine and arts and crafts vendors, in addition to a large kids' activities area including face painters and Busch Gardens wildlife. Free to the public events are created in order for both the public and the businesses involved to succeed.

Monday, March 28 Tarzan of the Loxahatchee at the Blake

Park Ranger Barry Richardson, of Jonathan Dickinson State Park, will give a historical look at Jonathan Dickinson State Park and Trapper Nelson, "Tarzan of the Loxahatchee," on Monday, March 28, beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the John F. Armstrong Wing of the Blake Library, 2351 SE Monterey Road in Stuart. The presentation is free, and no reservations are required.

Wednesday, March 30 "Inspired By" ... Peter D. Cummings lecture

Part of Cultural Conversation series, "Inspired By" ... Peter D. Cummings lecture to benefit the Arts Council of Martin County will be Wednesday, March 30, from 7-9 p.m. at the Court House Cultural Center, 80 E Ocean Blvd. in Stuart. Arts Council members are free, non-members \$15 per person. Purchase tickets online at MartinArts.org. For information, call 772.287.6676, ext. 4 or email nturrell@martinarts.org.

Thursday, March 31 Growing Up & Old with Literature at the Elliott

Professor Robert Van Dellen, Ph. D., discusses Growing Up & Old with Literature at the Elliott Museum on Thursday, March 31, from 6-8 p.m. He will discuss what great literature teaches us about growing up and growing old – how we love, live and mature through literature. Classic European, British and American authors will be discussed. \$14 per person, \$12 for seniors, free to Elliott Museum members. Reservations required. Call 772.225.1961 or visit www.ElliottMuseum.org.

Thursday, March 31 South Florida Indian Folklore at House of Refuge

Patrick Messmer will talk about south Florida's Indian Heritage as part of the Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge Lecture Series on Thursday, March 31, at 7 p.m. Refreshments will be served as you relax and learn in the beautiful setting at Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge, 301 S.E. MacArthur Blvd, in Stuart. Individual tickets are \$15. Seating is limited and no member discounts apply. To register, call the House of Refuge at 772.225.1875 or email: lgeary@elliottmuseum.org. These lectures sell out fast!

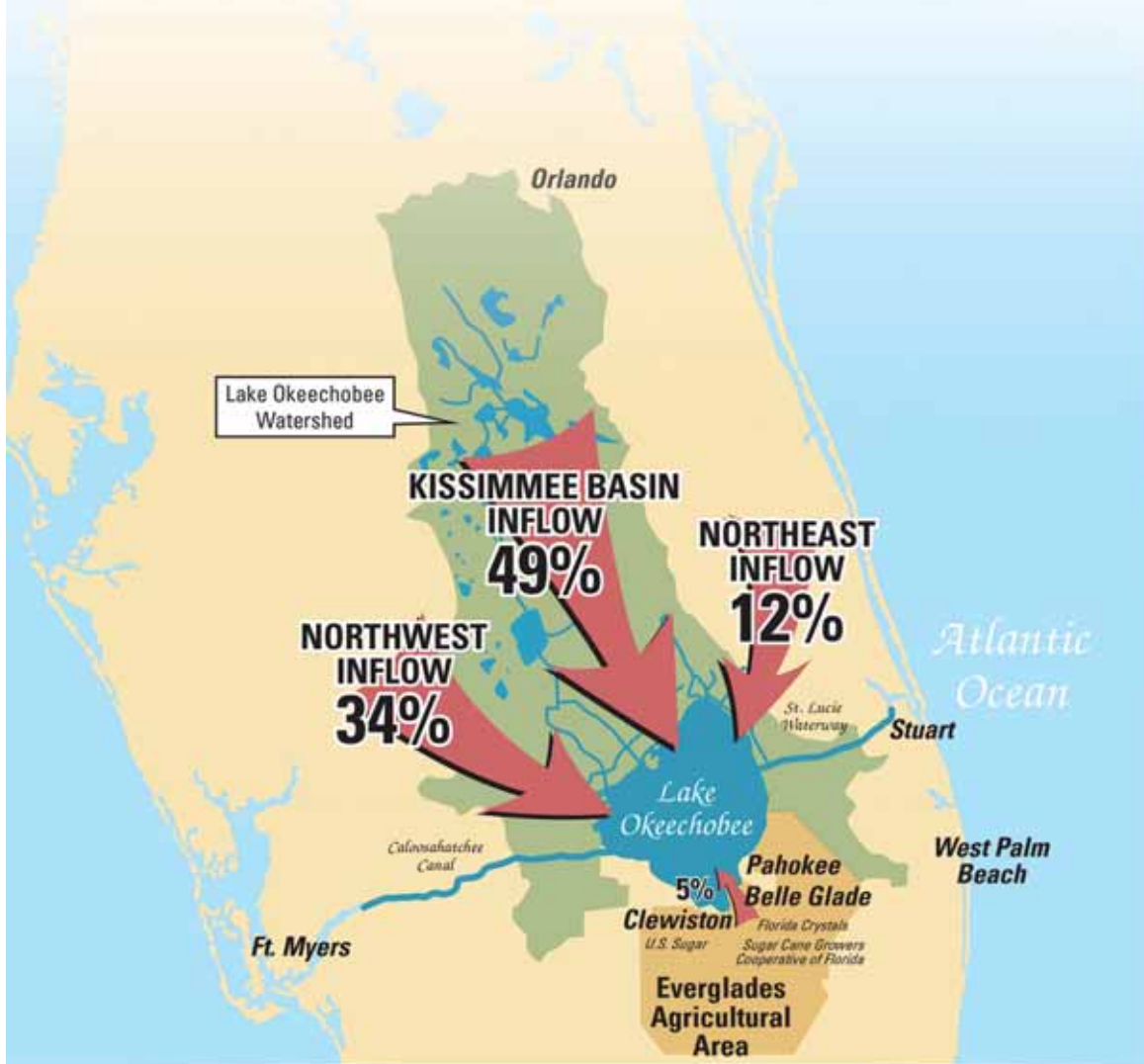
Saturday, April 2 Spring Festival at the Ground Floor Farm

The Second Annual Spring Festival at the Ground Floor Farm in Stuart will be Saturday, April 2, featuring a food and artisan market, a live music stage showcasing local favorites and new faces, an expanded indoor family area filled with creative kids activities, fascinating in-depth farm tours from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., with music on stage until 9 p.m. The Treasure Coast Food Bank also will conduct an on-site food drive. Come get acquainted with this unique urban farm at 100 SE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Stuart.

Saturday, April 2 Night on the Loxahatchee

The annual benefit for the River Center, Night on the Loxahatchee, will be Saturday, April 2, from 7pm – 9:30 p.m. The proceeds will fund the environmental education programming the River Center offers to all ages throughout the year. This year's "Shipwrecked in Paradise" themed event will transport ticket holders back in time, passing through the River Center's doors to find themselves on an adventurous voyage where weather and pirates are just some of the challenges that travelers might face. Landlubbers and privateers can try their hand at pirating while enjoying their "booty" of culinary delicacies and socialize with other travelers. Traditional hallmarks of this event such as raffles, door prizes, and a silent auction with fabulous prizes from local businesses will be enhanced by the incorporation of fascinating expert speakers, engaging storytellers like Allen Balogh, historical fiction author of Blacksails 1715, and other unique entertainment. Tickets are \$60 per person with \$10 discount for members of Friends of the Loxahatchee River. {Limit 2 tickets at discounted rate per membership. Tickets \$70 after March 22, 2015. For information about the event, sponsorship opportunities, the River Center, or to purchase tickets by phone, call 561.743.7123.

Where Is All the Water Coming From?



Our local waterways contribute more than \$639 million a year to the local economy. Addressing local septic drainage and completing these four projects will make our waterways and our economy healthier.

Kissimmee River Restoration

Herbert Hoover Dike (Lake Okeechobee) Restoration

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Projects (CERP)

The Central Everglades Preservation Projects (CEPP)

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Sources: University of Florida Water Institute Independent Technical Review, March 2015
Florida Atlantic University Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute study by Dr. Brian Lapointe

95% of water flowing into Lake Okeechobee comes from the NORTH. Storing water north of the lake and restoring the Kissimmee River could stop much of this water from ever reaching our local estuaries.

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of sewage nitrogen is estimated to enter the Indian River Lagoon each year from septic tanks. This nitrogen promotes the growth of algae, suffocating the seagrass needed to sustain lagoon life.

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