

LEMON BAY NEW S L E T T E R CONSERVANCY®

Fall 2017, Volume 47, Issue 1



President's Letter: Jim Cooper

Welcome to the 2017-2018 season! We hope this finds you well and enjoying life in the Sunshine State. In our efforts to protect and improve the treasures of our local environment, Lemon Bay Conservancy is active on many fronts.

In this newsletter, you'll find an update on our major habitat restoration project at Wildflower Preserve, on upcoming "citizen science" opportunities in our juvenile tarpon research at Lemon Creek, and on our latest Elsie Bracken

Scholarship recipient. We'll also introduce you to three of your neighbors who are among the many volunteers who lend time and effort to our important work.

As we begin our 47th year, our mission to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive lands has become more urgent than ever. The recent hurricane season took a severe toll on Florida and the Gulf states. One of the Conservancy's primary functions is to advocate for sound environmental practices to protect vulnerable coastal lands. This includes maintaining a close watch on the regulations enforced by county governments that directly affect the safety and well-being of our coastal communities and ensure prudent development.

There is a movement within Charlotte County to remove many specific protections of the County Comprehensive Plan that do this. Please pay close attention to the article "What's Up in the Watershed" in this newsletter. The threat to our wetlands and wildlife habitats is real, as is the threat to our homes and communities from the weakening of protective regulations.

In the final pages of this newsletter, you'll see a request to renew your membership for 2018 and an opportunity to contribute to our special Giving Tuesday "Step Forward for Wildflower" fundraising campaign. Your contributions will help us preserve our corner of paradise for future generations. What better legacy can we leave our children? We thank you for your support and hope to see you at our nature walks and special events this coming winter season!



Our Goal:

The **preservation, protection and acquisition of natural areas** important in **maintaining the ecological balance of Lemon Bay and adjacent waters**

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A New Office and a New Office Manager!

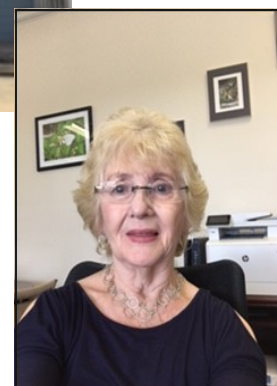


Above: Our new office located at :

150 S. McCall Rd., Suite 2
Englewood, FL 34223

Right: Our Office Manager

Sharon Olford



The 2017-2018 season will be one of new challenges, new projects and a new venue for Lemon Bay Conservancy. On October 1, 2017 we moved into our new office at **150 South McCall Road, Suite 2, Englewood, Florida 34223**. Our address has changed but our telephone number remains the same: **941-830-8922**.

Located just off Dearborn Street, our new digs will provide much needed space for our business operations and will allow room for board and committee meetings.

Our office manager **Sharon Olford** just completed her 1-year anniversary working with Lemon Bay Conservancy. Sharon is a recent transplant from Colorado. She is pleased to trade snow and cold for the warm climate of Florida and has enjoyed getting to know her new hometown.

Sharon's professional background is in small business ownership and management and real estate sales and property management. Her wide and varied experience has given her the flexibility to become the Jill-of-all-trades in our office. Sharon is enjoying her position here at LBC and getting to know the board members and many of the wonderful volunteers. She feels privileged to have the opportunity to be involved with the important work that LBC does in conservation and in the preservation of this beautiful area.

We hope you will stop by to visit Sharon and our new office when you are in the area. We are open for business Monday-Thursday, 10-2. Schedules sometimes change, so please call ahead to make sure Sharon is available to meet you.

2017 Scholarship Winner



Katie Redmann is a 2017 graduate of Lemon Bay High School and the winner of this year's **Elsie Bracken Environmental Scholarship**. While at LBHS, Katie was active in the STEM program. She has continued her interest in science as a freshman at the University of Florida, majoring in Microbiology and Cell Sciences with a minor in Anthropology. Following her undergraduate studies, Katie plans on attending medical school to become a Forensic Pathologist.

During her time in high school, Katie was heavily involved with several on-campus organizations including Science National Honor Society, National Honor Society, and Friends of Fisher House. Katie was also a student athletic trainer for the school football team and a puppy raiser for Southeastern Guide Dogs. We look forward to following the achievements of this capable young woman.

Juvenile Tarpon Research News

I am excited to begin this season's tarpon net pull events in Lemon Creek at Wildflower Preserve, and I am looking for a few good men and women to join our dedicated crew of adult volunteers, local STEM students and teachers, and researchers from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. The data gathered from our tarpon pulls is vital to monitor the health of our marine habitats and our surrounding waters. I invite all interested parties to join us in this meaningful work. On-the-job training is available to newcomers, so please don't hesitate to give it a try!

Teams of at least 6 volunteers meet one Saturday a month during "Snowbird Season" at 8:00 a.m. at the equipment shed at Wildflower Preserve. After loading the seine net and equipment onto the boat, we head to WF Tarpon Pond 1 or 2 to begin seining at 8:30. Fish are counted, measured, recorded and tagged (if needed) and re-

leased safely back into the creek system. All volunteers should wear comfortable clothing that they won't mind getting wet and protective footwear, such as sneakers, water shoes or boots to provide secure footing and traction. Volunteers pulling the nets in the ponds should wear waders. This is fun, messy and exhilarating work, and oh so important to the future of our fisheries.

Our first Net Pull will be Saturday, November 4, and then the 3rd Saturday every month, December 16, 2017 thru May 19, 2018. You may attend any or all sessions. Please mark your calendars now and let me know what dates you will be attending. Email me at jcoop43@comcast.net or call the Conservancy office at 941-830-8922 to sign up. I look forward to working with you!

Best wishes, Jim Cooper
LBC President & Net Pull Coordinator

LBC Volunteer Profile: Captain Becca deRosa

A long-time member of Lemon Bay Conservancy, Becca grew up fishing and boating in Lemon Bay area waters and is passionate about the preservation of our marine resources. She is the resident licensed boat captain in the LBC tarpon program. Becca describes her experiences with the program as an amazing adventure in marine biology that has provided the opportunity to work with many scientists, researchers, and committed volunteers along the way.

Becca is a high-energy volunteer who does it all; from running the boat, setting the 600 ft. seine net, and collecting water samples, to donning her chest waders to pull in the net. She encourages anyone interested to give it a try! Net pulls are scheduled once a month on Saturdays from November to May. See the article above this one for details.



What's Up in the Watershed

by Percy Angelo

Charlotte County is continuing its efforts to amend its Comprehensive Plan to weaken wetland protections and allow movement of additional density to the coasts.

The efforts have two tracks. On the first track the County acted in June to adopt changes to the Future Land Use section of the Comp Plan to enable easier transfer of density. Density is the amount of residential units allowed per acre. While in the past transfer of density was allowed only in order to protect natural resources, to increase hurricane safety, or to eliminate substandard platted lots, the 2017 changes eliminate most of the restrictions on movement and significantly increase the ability to move density to vulnerable areas, such as the coasts and wetlands. Many residents who come from other parts of the country are surprised to learn that density is not fixed. Here in Charlotte County, that's not the case.

One improvement in the density transfer rules was made. The Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA) in the County is defined by storm surge zones. Experts believe that the greatest hurricane risk comes from storm surge, not necessarily from wind. The CHHA includes coastal areas and covers much of the County west of the Myakka. Under the amendment, transfers of density cannot be made from a less to a more restrictive storm surge zone or from a less to a more restrictive FEMA flood zone.

This is a good thing. The problem is that the storm surge areas as mapped by the State are being expanded as storm surges are expected to be higher. This has the perverse result that more properties will now be able to transfer their density within the CHHA. Citizens in West County asked the County to limit the ability to transfer density to that allowed under the older maps, but the County did not agree.

Other adopted changes allowed properties with existing development to transfer their so-called "excess density" (density they didn't use even though they may have developed years ago) and cut back protections against transfer of density to properties with wetlands.

The Friends of Cape Haze, Inc. has appealed the problematic parts of the changes, and a hearing on the appeal is scheduled for November 29-30.

Meanwhile, the County is pursuing reductions on the wetland protections in the Natural Resources section of the Comp Plan. Two roundtables have been held at which developer reps have questioned whether the County needs any wetland protection rules at all for West County and whether it makes sense to protect wetlands when there are storm-water control provisions which can be assumed to control flooding.

Even if the flooding argument made any sense (after Hurricane Harvey the pretense that flood predictions are reliable or that one can ignore the consequences of covering wetlands with buildings and concrete is pretty ludicrous), the developer rep arguments entirely ignore the habitat value of wetlands and the importance of coastal wetlands for protection against storm surge and rising sea levels.

The County and developer reps also argue that state and federal wetland rules are sufficient and County protections are simply duplicative. This is not true. State and federal rules tell you how you can impact wetlands. They are permitting rules. It is up to the County to tell you where wetlands can be impacted and where they should be protected, as a matter of planning, not permitting. And coastal wetlands and wetlands bordering rivers where they have special importance for habitat and flood management need protection as a matter of smart planning.

Further, state and federal permitting rules allow wetlands to be destroyed as long as the destruction is "mitigated" by replacement of the wetlands in a wetland mitigation bank. There is no such bank in Charlotte County and none that would serve the same function as the Charlotte County coastal wetlands, so the result of mitigation is that Charlotte would steadily lose its wetlands with no replacement.

Unfortunately, the development interests in the County usually have the strongest voices in this discussion and holding hearings and roundtables over the non-snowbird season limits the voices of citizens.

The next roundtable is scheduled for November 15 at 1:30 in Room B-106 of the Charlotte County Administration Center in Murdock. Anyone interested can email Beth Scott at the County and ask to be put on the email list. ... *Continued on page 5*

LBC Volunteer Profile: Dave Clayton



Dave has had a life-long love of biology and natural history. After completing undergraduate studies in zoology at UMass Amhurst and graduate work in plant physiology at Purdue University, Dave spent his professional life working with computers. However, he remained a naturalist at heart, maintaining a small farm in Rhode Island that served as a living laboratory for observing the natural world for nearly thirty years.

Dave enjoys sharing his extensive knowledge and passion for the environment. He serves as a volunteer naturalist and trail guide for Lemon Bay Conservancy, the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, as well as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Rhode Island. Dave's enthusiasm for the science of the natural world is clearly evident during his guided tours of LBC's Wildflower Preserve. After a walk with Dave, visitors will come away with new insights into the interrelationship of plants and animals and how we all fit in. The 2017-2018 schedule of guided walks is available on the LBC website at LemonBayConservancy.org. Plan to join us!

LBC Volunteer Profile: Lucia Schatteleyn

A native of the Netherlands, Lucia Schatteleyn now splits her time between Florida and Canada. Lucia has been actively involved at Wildflower Preserve since its earliest days. After spending more than 40 years in a nursing career, Lucia was looking for meaningful activity in her retirement. Her love of the outdoors and natural athleticism have proven to be a good fit for her volunteer position as the coordinator of the trail workers at Wildflower Preserve. This able group enjoys all aspects of working around the Preserve; from helping in the butterfly habitat, to planting native trees, grasses and bushes, to maintaining the trails and ponds.

As Lucia says, the restoration of Wildflower from former golf course to nature preserve has been a challenge, but the camaraderie of the volunteers and the satisfaction of preserving a bit of nature for future generations has made it all worthwhile. Volunteer trail workers gather at the Preserve on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 9:00 a.m. throughout the season. Everyone is welcome--call the LBC office to sign up! 941-830-8922



What's Up in the Watershed *Continued from Page 4*

Her email id is: Beth.Scott@charlottecountyfl.gov. You should also ask for copies of prior emails, including the agendas and minutes of prior roundtables, to see how the discussions have gone.

Friends of Cape Haze, Inc. appealed a prior version of both of these proposals when they were included as a single package. The matter was scheduled to go to hearing in the summer of 2015, but the County withdrew them, right before hearing. It then immediately began to re-propose them in three separate proposals so that citizens would be required to appeal three times. It's always something.

Wildflower Preserve Habitat Restoration Project Update

Lemon Bay Conservancy is continuing to work in partnership with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on our major habitat restoration project at Wildflower Preserve.

Our partners have committed funding of **\$1,247,500** to help Lemon Bay Conservancy restore and improve the Preserve!

Adding in our LBC funds, collectively we're investing more than \$2 million to restore Wildflower!

The project design phase began in December 2014 and was completed last year.

| Wildflower Preserve Restoration Partners & Funding | Land Purchase | Design | Construction & Monitoring | Management & Improvements |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | 2010 - 2011 | 2015 - 2016 | 2016 - 2018 | Ongoing |
| Lemon Bay Conservancy | \$750,000 | | \$75,000 + 2,065 <i>volunteer hours</i> | tbd |
| Southwest Florida Water Management District | | \$200,000 + <i>project management</i> | \$625,000 + <i>project management</i> | |
| National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration | | | \$422,500 | |

The first implementation phase, the removal of invasive trees and shrubs from 50 acres of uplands in the preserve was completed in the fall of 2016. Quarterly treatment of the cleared areas to minimize invasive re-growth has continued since then.

| | Project Elements | Target Timeline |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Grant Funding | 0 Project Design | Completed |
| | 1 Upland Invasive Species Removal | Completed |
| | 2 Wetland Improvements & Expansion | 2018 * |
| | 3 Native Wetland and Upland Plantings | 2018 * |
| LBC Funding | 4 Monitoring Programs | Ongoing thru 2020 * |
| | 5 Maintenance | Ongoing |
| | 6 Preserve Enhancements | Ongoing |

* Timeframes dependent on SWFWMD bid cycle.

Next up are two major project implementation phases that will be completed under a single major contract: the wetlands improvement & expansion work and the planting of native species throughout the property. We had initially expected these phases to be completed during 2017, but the work has been "on hold" while we awaited release of the formal request for bid documentation from SWFWMD.

We're excited to report that the Request for Bids package was released by SWFWMD on October 13, 2017 and bids are due on November 16, 2017.

After the bids are received, SWFWMD will analyze the responses, select the winning bidder, complete contracts, and set a

construction start date. Our SWFWMD project manager anticipates that the construction work will begin during the first quarter of 2018 and be completed by year-end.

In parallel with the habitat restoration work, LBC is planning for a trail network through the restored habitats. One important element of the proposed trail system is a new pedestrian bridge over the new east-west channel in Lemon Creek. If we can get our funding in place soon, we will be able to complete the pilings for the new bridge before the new creek channel is flooded. That will make it easier for the contractor to access the area and help reduce construction costs.

As you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter, we are asking for your help in a special "Step Forward for Wildflower" fundraising campaign to raise the necessary funds for the bridge and the new trail network. Please lend your support to this effort!

Your Support is Vital!

Lemon Bay Conservancy is always fundraising: Giving Tuesday, fundraising events, annual memberships and donations. Every dollar we spend is a dollar we must raise. For 47 years, LBC has worked to preserve and protect our coastal environment. Your donations and membership dues will help ensure that future generations have these lands to enjoy and that the remarkable species that live here will continue to thrive.

By mailing the membership form below, you'll save us the expense of mailing you additional membership renewal requests in the weeks ahead. You can also use this form to send us your special Giving Tuesday donation as part of the "Step Forward for Wildflower" Campaign described on page 8 in this newsletter.

Lemon Bay Conservancy Membership / Donation Form

To join or contribute online, go to www.LemonBayConservancy.org.

Primary Address and Contact Information:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Name: | |
| Address Line 1: | |
| Address Line 2: | |
| City, State, Zip: | |
| Email: | |
| Telephone: | |

Alternate Address (if applicable):

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Address Line 1: | |
| Address Line 2: | |
| City, State, Zip: | |
| Months at this address? | |

My Membership Contribution:

☐ New Member ☐ Membership Renewal

☐ \$35 Individual ☐ \$50 Household ☐ \$100 Patron ☐ \$250 Benefactor
☐ \$500 Conservator ☐ \$750 Trustee of the Land ☐ \$1,000 Keeper of the Land
☐ \$2,500 Guardian of the Land ☐ \$5,000 Steward of the Land

My Donation: \$_____ ☐ Apply this donation to LBC's special "Step Forward for Wildflower" campaign!

Form of Payment: ☐ Credit Card ☐ Check (Please make payable to Lemon Bay Conservancy, Inc.)

Credit Card Information: ☐ Visa ☐ Master Card 3-digit security code: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Thank You! Please send your completed form to:

Lemon Bay Conservancy, Inc.
 150 S. McCall Rd, Suite 2
 Englewood, FL 34223

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#GIVING
TUESDAY

STEP FORWARD
FOR WILDFLOWER!

This year, Lemon Bay Conservancy is joining the international **#GivingTuesday** movement with a special **"Step Forward for Wildflower" fundraising campaign**. Giving Tuesday is officially the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. This year, that's November 28th.

Following the frenzies of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the idea behind Giving Tuesday is to step back from buying and focus a day on giving.

Your donation to Lemon Bay Conservancy's **"Step Forward for Wildflower" campaign** will support the creation of a new trail network for Wildflower

Preserve, including the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over Lemon Creek for access to south-western sections of the preserve.

Two generous sponsors have "stepped forward" to offer a 1:1 match for the first \$4,000 in Giving Tuesday donations received by LBC in support of this campaign. That means your "Step Forward" campaign donations received on or before Giving Tuesday, November 28th, can have double the impact!

Are you ready to "Step Forward for Wildflower"? There are three simple ways to contribute. And, you can give any time between now and Giving Tuesday.

1. Call our office at 941-830-8922 between now and November 28th and make your donation.
2. Contribute online on our website at LemonBayConservancy.org/step-forward.
3. Use the form on page 7 of this newsletter to mail in your donation.

Thank You for supporting Lemon Bay Conservancy and Wildflower Preserve!