



Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No.1013
Foley, AL 36535

Friends of Perdido Bay
10738 Lillian Highway
Pensacola, FL 32506
850-453-5488

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Tidings

The Newsletter of the Friends of Perdido Bay

April 2011

Volume 24 Number 2

Jackie Lane -Editor

www.friendsofperdidobay.com

An Interesting Meeting

The League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area sent Friends an announcement of an interesting, up-coming meeting. On May 7, at the New World Landing in Pensacola at 11:30 AM, Dr. Riki Ott will be speaking about “Changing the Endgame: the Real Gulf Story and America’s Consequences of our Oil Addition”. This is a luncheon meeting and the cost is \$17. Make your reservations by May 5 by calling 850-937-7769. You can also send a check to: LWVPBA, P.O. Box 2023, Pensacola, FL 32513.

According to the League announcement, Dr. Ott will share her views on the BP oil spill in the Gulf and then place the story within the larger perspective of America’s energy future and the consequences of our oil addition, including privatization, globalization, militarization, the climate crisis and corporate personhood. This sounds like Dr. Ott will cover it all.

Big Pipes Coming Our Way

If you are driving along Blue Angel Parkway, just north of the intersection with Lillian Highway, you may have noticed big pink pipes and a road being cut through the wetlands. This is the beginning of ECUA’s (Emerald Coast Utilities Authority’s) expansion into the southern portion of its wetland discharge. ECUA is currently permitted to discharge 10.25 million gallons per day (MGD) into wetlands surrounding Perdido Bay. The southern portion which is now under construction is permitted to take 2.9 MGD of the 10.25 MGD. However, the pink pipes are 24" in diameter, which can handle a lot more flow than 2.9 MGD. Jim Lane, an engineer, estimated that 24" diameter pipes could carry approximately 9 MGD as a conservative estimate. An engineer for ECUA said that they had to make the pipes big enough to handle peak flow and reduce head loss in the pipes. There is a lot of daily and seasonal variation in the amount of flow which the wastewater plant processes. The 2.9 MGD is a yearly average, not a daily maximum amount. The daily maximum flow may be twice the yearly average. Nevertheless it is obvious that ECUA is planning on expanding their flow to the Bayou Marcus wetlands in the future.

The other big pipe is coming down from IP to wetlands surrounding Perdido Bay. Friends of Perdido Bay has been unable to stop the pipeline project. According to IP's first quarter 2011 report, construction of the 48" pipeline is 55% complete. The pipeline has crossed Mobile Highway, Nine Mile Road and I-10. The pipeline still must be built in the northern portion near the mill and a portion between Nine Mile Road and Mobile Highway. This 48" pipeline is designed to handle a peak flow of approximately 39 MGD. IP is building the pipeline however ECUA is paying for 20% of the cost. ECUA plans on using approximately 20% of the pipeline capacity.

ECUA has built a 30" pipeline from their new Central Waster Reclamation Facility up to Highway 29. From this 30" pipeline, ECUA has a 16" pipeline to IP. This 16" pipeline can carry up to 7 MGD of ECUA's effluent to IP. According to an ECUA engineer, IP may or may not use this water in their processes. It is IP's choice. Currently, ECUA is sending between 0 and 2 MGD of water from their Central Wastewater Treatment Facility to IP. Who knows whether IP is actually using this water in their process. This was a slight of hand by ECUA and IP to make the public believe this project was "in the public interest". The truth is, it is only in IP's and ECUA's interest. This ECUA effluent is passing through IP's wastewater treatment system and currently going into Elevenmile Creek. This is diluting IP's effluent which makes it less strong but at the same time there is more of it. Another particularly bad omen is a future ECUA pipeline from IP's mill around their treatment ponds to the 48" IP pipeline running to the wetlands. This is a bypass of IP's reuse requirement and simply a way of getting 7 more MGD of ECUA effluent into Perdido Bay. It also means that ECUA is paying for some of the pipeline. So ECUA effluent is coming from many directions into a bay which is already impaired due to nutrients. Even more effluent is planned for the future.

More access

If you are not a property owner on Perdido Bay and wanted to swim or boat in the bay, you might be out of luck. There are several areas, near the Gulf in both Florida and Alabama where boat ramps exist, but few in the upper bay. In Florida, there is one small boat ramp on Heron Bayou which runs into Perdido Bay. There is a small swimming beach along Lillian Hwy at a place called "the Pilings" and there is access at the Highway 98 bridge going from Florida to Alabama. The Navy has a boat ramp at the Bronson Field recreation area, but that is for Navy personnel only. Both Escambia County Florida and Baldwin County Alabama are trying to make more access to upper Perdido Bay. But it isn't easy. To find a suitable location at a price the county government can afford is difficult.

In Baldwin County, the county commission bought the property in Lillian which was once the old Kit's Marina. This property had been bought by AIG-Baker and was going to be a luxury yacht club until the big recession. Because the property had been a marina, there is plenty of parking space and the boat launching area is deep enough. The only problem now, is finding money to build the boat ramp and launching facilities. Use of BP money has been rejected by an official.

Escambia County Florida has not been so lucky at locating an access. The boat ramp on Heron Bayou is small and the county is trying to expand the launching facility at this location. According to Robert Turpin, Escambia County's Marine Resource person, Escambia County has authorized a due diligence on two pieces of property north of the Hwy. 98 Heron Bayou Bridge. However several residents on Heron Bayou are resisting this purchase of property for a public boat ramp. Apparently, they don't want anymore boat traffic even though the whole bayou is a "no wake" zone. Escambia County was successful at opening up a small launching facility for kayaks and canoes at Hurst Hammock where Perdido River discharges into Perdido Bay. Escambia County is also opening a public boat ramp on the Perdido River near Hwy 90.

The public pays for access points to our bodies of water through boat licence fees. If you want to have some input into how your boat license fees are spent in Escambia County Florida, attend the monthly meeting of the Marine Resource Advisory Committee. It meets the 2nd Monday of each month at 5:30 PM at Escambia's new office building (3363 West Park Place) off Fairfield Drive in Room 104.

Escambia's Marine Resource Department has built a snorkeling reef off Pensacola Beach and is planning on building a snorkeling reef off Perdido Key. These recreational reefs are excellent additions to our beaches.

Externalizing Costs

As the U.S. struggles to keep jobs in this country and convince industries to stay here or move here, more and more of industry's costs are being passed off to the U.S. public. Our fight to clean up Perdido Bay is an excellent example of how industry has used its job leverage to pass its costs onto us. I would say that this paper mill in Cantonment may have been a poster child for how the U.S. intended to keep jobs in this county. To begin with, the regulatory agencies became very passive. Violations were ignored. Permits were allowed to expire without any fines. Loopholes, allowing water quality standards to be violated, were entered into the rules. The regulatory agencies stopped doing testing of waterbodies. If testing was done at all, it was done by industries themselves. There was no independent verification of industries' results.

The environmental agencies ignore their own rules and do what ever is best for business. A good example was the permit which was issued to Champion and expired in 1994. The agencies allowed this permit to be administratively continued for 15 years with no fines. A recent example of how DEP blatantly ignored its own rules occurred during the recent permit fight. Two weeks before the administrative hearing began, the Florida DEP withdrew two portions of the permit and significantly changed the permit. By Florida's own rules, this was a significant change to the permit and the permit should have been re-noticed. It wasn't. When we requested more time so that we could assess how this change affected us, it was denied. The whole process was a railroad job by DEP to give IP a permit.

Recently, an article in the Pensacola News Journal revealed that Escambia County Florida has granted a property tax exemption to International Paper Company. This tax exemption was granted in 2007 for a 10-year period. The amount of money which Escambia County is losing and IP is saving - \$1.4 million *per year*. This money was not used to attract a "new" industry, but to keep an old, polluting industry in Pensacola. At one time this mill employed more that 2000 people. Today it employs, at most, 250.

As years have gone on, IP has reduced its operating costs by passing those costs onto us. Perdido Bay has become a nearly dead bay because IP has been allowed to save money on its treatment processes and increase production. It cost money to run aerators to achieve maximum treatment. There is a linear relationship between the horsepower used to aerate the treatment ponds and the amount of treatment. Friends of Perdido Bay has visual proof from aerial photographs of the reduction in the aeration. We have showed those pictures to the DEP regulators. We were told they didn't need to have so much aeration. When we showed the DEP all the dead clams in 2000, we were told that it was salinity that killed the clams. Those clams have not returned. The EPA and the Florida DEP have been running interference for this polluting industry.

Back in the late 1990's, IP and Escambia County made a deal - IP would accept the landfill gas generated at Escambia County's landfill and the landfill would accept boiler ash from IP. This boiler ash had been accumulating in a huge ash pile at the mill. Every time it rained, this ash would wash into the treatment ponds and then into Perdido Bay. This ash contains heavy metals and barium which would then end up in Perdido Bay. Now, the ash is taken to the

Escambia County landfill, and the county does not charge IP for disposing of its ash. According to the landfill, this ash makes great landfill cover. IP no longer uses the landfill gas: Gulf Power is using the gas. Free use of Escambia landfill saves IP lots of money and landfill costs.

IP's plans to go to an overland discharge is just another way of saving money for IP and not really helping Perdido Bay. Currently, IP has four ponds in their wastewater treatment system - two are treatment ponds with aerators and two are settling ponds. All these ponds must be dredged occasionally because they fill up and the solids flow out into the bay. The paper mill does not like to dredge out these ponds. It costs money; it is messy; and then they have to maintain a landfill to dispose of these solids. Another bad feature of these ponds is that ammonia and low dissolved oxygen is generated by the decaying solids in these ponds and causes IP to be out of compliance with the state standard in fresh water. The "improvement" IP is making to their ponds is to remove two of their ponds from the treatment process. Because there will be two fewer settling ponds, there will be two fewer settling ponds to dredge. It will save a lot of money. But where will the solids which normally settle in these ponds go? Simple, they will settle in the wetlands, behind the berms. Once the solids go into the wetlands, IP no longer has to worry about these solids. Nature will take care of these solids. That is the theory. Since the compliance point for meeting state standards occurs before the wetlands, any ammonia which is generated in the wetlands is not IP's problem. Any low dissolved oxygen from the decay of these solids, is not IP's problem. Any turbidity or toxicity or nutrient enrichment will occur in the wetlands or in Perdido Bay. But it will no longer occur in IP's ponds prior to their compliance point or in Elevenmile Creek. Their effluent will dribble out of the wetlands after a 12-hour trip through the wetlands. All the problems which this effluent causes will be attributed to "non-point" source pollution, not IP. Yes, the wetlands are a solution for IP. It will save landfill costs and permitting problems. But the wetlands are not a solution for Perdido Bay's problems.

Further, the government is trying to "educate" the public to make them believe that point source pollution like IP and other industries are no longer the cause of the decline of our water bodies. I saw a paragraph in a recent Alabama publication which exemplifies what the government wants people to believe. "Nationally, federal legislation in the 1970's and 80's effectively addressed point source pollution, leaving atmospheric deposition and non-point source pollution as major sources of surface water pollution." Unfortunately this statement is not true in Perdido Bay, nor, I suspect, in other bodies of water.

Happy Earth Day!

Membership and Renewals

Tidings is published six times a year by Friends of Perdido Bay and is mailed to members. To keep up with the latest news of happenings on Perdido Bay, become a member or renew your membership. For present members, your date for renewal is printed on your mailing label.

Membership is \$10.00 per year per voting member. To join or renew, fill out the coupon to the right and mail with your check to the address on the front.

Friends is a not-for-profit corporation and all contributions are tax-deductible. Funds received are all used for projects to improve Perdido Bay. No money is paid to the Board of Directors, all of whom volunteer their time and effort.

New

Renewal

Amt. Enclosed \$ _____

Name

Address

Phone (_____) _____

e-mail