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Tidings

The Newsletter of the Friends of Perdido Bay

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Earth Day, Every Day

Earth Day this year will be celebrated on April 21 at Bayview Park in Pensacola. Friends of Perdido Bay will be there. This is always a good day to take stock of our life styles and decide how we can be more gentle on our earth - use less energy, use less water, eat less food, live in smaller houses, drive less, consume less, and exercise and recycle more. Switching over to LED light bulbs or installing solar panels, keeping the thermostat set low in winter and high in summer, installing more insulation in your house are all ways to save on electricity. A compose bin and recycling has really reduced my garbage. I also drive less by using Amazon, but I am not sure this saves energy. All the packaging which Amazon uses I am sure is helping to keep paper mills in business, including the mill in Cantonment, FL. Converting a small space in your yard to growing tomatoes or vegetables can save on your consumption of pesticides and also provide healthy food which you don't have to run to the store to buy.

Use of pesticides has increased dramatically in the U.S. and other countries in recent years. With modern high intensity agriculture, pesticides are almost a must for growing crops. As a person who grew pecans for 30-years, I know the importance of pesticides for making money. Without sprays for fungus, aphids and other insects, I probably would never have made a crop of pecans over the years. Fighting the weather is hard enough, but fighting both the insects and the weather is impossible. Fortunately (or unfortunately), the chemical industry has come up with an arsenal of chemicals to fight the bugs. Some of the very dangerous chemicals have been taken off the market but agricultural chemicals are still dangerous, especially to the person who applies the chemicals to the fields. An acre of the same crop is an invitation for the bugs to begin eating and many of the plant diseases have become resistant to some of the pesticides.

I am sure the use of herbicides, like Roundup and other glyphosates, has risen dramatically over the past 30 years. Farmers no longer wait for their corn, soybeans and wheat to die; they kill them with herbicides. It is faster and more certain. Of course there are "waiting requirements before harvest" which farmers must follow, however these limits on time before harvest are "average times". If you are looking at losing thousands

of dollars due to an upcoming rain storm or harvesting early before the time limit is up, you will harvest early. Hence, I am sure there are residues of herbicides on many of the grain crops. That is the reason I have begun buying organic flour and other grains.

The government has less and less resources to test for pesticides in food, and more and more lobbyists to spread doubt about the harm of pesticides. Therefore, I think all the public is at risk. A not-for-profit research group called Environmental Working Group or EWG tests food and drinking water for pesticides. They recently put out a list of fruits and vegetables which are contaminated with residual pesticides. Strawberries topped the list of most contaminated fruits and vegetables. Spinach, nectarines, apples and grapes were next most contaminated. Fruits which needed to be peeled like oranges and bananas were not on the list. More and more the protection of human health and the environment has been taken over by not-for-profit environmental organizations, like Friends of Perdido Bay. Government bureaus which should be protecting the public interests, have been cooped by special interests and are poorly funded. It is an alarming trend of today's government.

Upper Perdido Bay is Impaired for Bacteria (*Micrococcus*) and Nutrients (*Chlorophyll a*)

As I attack the government for lack of oversight and protection, there is always something government does which proves me wrong. Last Fall, Florida's Department of Environmental Protection published a list of bays and waterways not meeting Florida's water quality standards. The assessments and lists are published every five years. For years, Friends of Perdido Bay have tested Upper Perdido Bay for coliform bacteria, and found very high counts. Florida's environmental agency never said Upper Perdido Bay was unsafe for swimming; only, don't eat the oysters and clams (which don't live anymore in Upper Perdido Bay).

Coliform bacteria are the bacteria which are found in intestines of animals, and may indicate contamination from fecal material. Coliform bacteria grow in areas of high organic material and low dissolved oxygen, such as the treatment ponds of paper mills and sugar cane processors. Because the paper mill in Cantonment treats its wastes only partially, and then discharges the wastes to a wetland and then Perdido Bay, Perdido Bay ends up doing the rest of the treatment. This means that the partially treated wastes are food for bacteria and bacteria will grow. This is the reason the coliform counts were so high in Perdido Bay. The installation of the wetland has helped cut back on some of the organic matter and the bacteria, but a lot is still coming out.

Florida never found high levels of fecal coliform, so they never put a warning on swimming. Recently however, Florida is testing for a new bacteria - *Micrococcus*. They are finding high levels of *Micrococcus* in Upper Perdido Bay. Maybe this means we should not swim? We will see what limitations the state is going to put on our bay. Because there is no easy test for *Micrococcus*, Friends of Perdido Bay has not begun testing for this organism.

The other problem Florida DEP found in Perdido Bay was with nutrients, but only in Upper Perdido Bay. Upper Perdido Bay has the highest allowable limit on Total Nitrogen and one of the highest limits on Total Phosphorous in the state of Florida. These are not the limits which are being violated. You would expect lots and lots of algae blooms with these high levels of nutrients (think East Coast of Florida, algae slime). But no! Why? Because the paper mill chemicals are herbicidal. These high levels of

nutrients being dumped into our bay won't cause algae blooms because paper mill chemicals are herbicidal and the algae won't grow. So how did the algae grow (chlorophyll a is an indicator of algae growth)? I don't know. Maybe DEP took samples in front of the Perdido River or over on the Alabama side of the bay where there is a lot of dilution of paper mill effluent. But wonders never cease. Maybe they found high levels of algae growth just to show paper mill effluent was not herbicidal (a lie and fake news). This is what I suspect.

A New Permit for ECUA's Bayou Marcus Wastewater Plant?

Last month, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection notified Friends of Perdido Bay that they were going to reissue a new permit for ECUA to discharge up to 10 Million Gallons a day (MGD) of sewage to the Bayou Marcus wetlands. Currently ECUA is discharging about 5.5 (MGD) to the wetlands. To ECUA's credit, Bayou Marcus has operated rather smoothly, but domestic wastewater contains plant nutrients, nitrogen and phosphate, and other chemicals. The wetlands along Blue Angel Parkway do further polish the effluent BUT, the effluent does not end up as pure water.

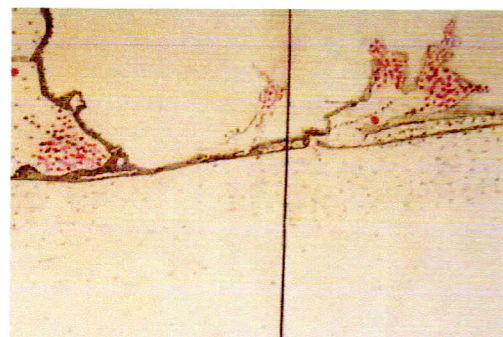
It doesn't seem to make much sense to discharge nutrients to a bay which is already over enriched, and already having blooms of algae. Perdido Bay is already receiving wastewater from ECUA's Central Wastewater Treatment plant over on Escambia Bay via the IP wetlands. IP is using 5 MGD in their treatment process and another 2 MGD as dilution water and sending it into their wetlands. ECUA can pump up to 8 MGD (limited by size of the pipe) from the Central Wastewater Plant on Escambia Bay into the Perdido Watershed. This would be a total of 18 MGD which can come from Escambia County into Perdido. I believe this is wrong. When we first heard about this project, we heard about ECUA's wetlands in the northern part of Escambia County. This is where this effluent should be going - not into the Perdido watershed. It is also costing ECUA and their rate payers money to pump all this sewage around.

Some citizens in Upper Perdido Bay have been notified and have asked for a hearing so DEP can explain how they are going to allow more nutrients into an already over enriched bay. If you want to read DEP's DRAFT permit to ECUA, go to our website. It is on the first page.

Still a Disaster Waiting to Happen

Several times over the past 30 years, we have reported on the flooding which occurs to homes built in the watershed of Eleven Mile Creek, specifically Bristol Park, Bristol Creek, and Ashbury Hills neighborhoods. Two or three times, residents living along Eleven Mile Creek have experienced severe flooding of their homes with paper mill effluent. In the most recent flood on April 29, 2014, 317 homes were damaged by the roaring waters from Eleven Mile Creek. Eight defendants filed a lawsuit against International Paper for negligence to maintain their storm water dam at their treatment ponds about 2 miles up the creek. IP had gone to piping their 24 million gallons per day of effluent to a wetland along Perdido Bay. I saw pictures of the dam after it broke during the heavy rains. It was wrecked. Whether IP had maintained the dam or not, is not known. But having over 10 acres of exposed ponds collecting water is endangering people along the creek. This has become pretty obvious.

After a week-long trial, the jury found that IP had not been negligent in the design or maintenance of the dam. I don't believe negligence was the correct claim. But nevertheless, most people who live in the endangered area along the creek will not sue IP again. This is similar to Perdido Bay folks who lost the last lawsuit against IP. IP will not be sued again even though IP has ruined our properties with their toxic effluent. But the folks living along Eleven Mile Creek who were flooded can still sell their properties to Escambia County. Escambia County has two, or maybe more grants from RESTORE (remember the BP oil spill) money to buy properties along Eleven Mile Creek and "restore" the flood plane of Eleven Mile Creek. To date, ten parcels have been acquired and demolish and the county is negotiating with six more (out of 317 homes originally damaged). People are reluctant to sell because of low appraisals. Even though IP sends their effluent to the wetland in a pipeline, when it rains more than 0.45" per hour, the quantity exceeds the capacity of the pipeline and the excess water goes back into the creek.



1883 Survey of Oyster Bars

No Foam, No Life

With the advent of low taxes, it looks like IP decided to install foam control equipment. We have not seen foam in the past several months, but we have not seen life improve in the bay either. So no clean-up! One of our members sent us a document done by the Navy in 1883 of a survey of oyster beds in Gulf of Mexico (the figure is also on our website). Yes, there were oyster beds in Perdido Bay - all in the Upper Bay. This map agrees with testimony of Mr. Resmondo, who testified at the 1988 hearing for the Perdido Bay Environmental Association that there were oyster beds in Upper Perdido Bay until the paper mill started operating. Other animals which have since disappeared from the Upper Bay include shrimp, blue crabs, clams, mullet and most of life. It is a tragedy. The chart of the toxic chemicals IP puts in Perdido Bay is on our website. COD is the main culprit - 40,000 pound per day of toxic chemicals which are not regulated by environmental agencies. There is also approximately 80 pounds per day of chlorinated chemicals including dioxin.

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.

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