



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

October 2018

Volume 31 Number 5

Jackie Lane -Editor

www.friendsofperdidobay.com

Your Support Has Helped Us Remain Active

Without the support of our members, Friends of Perdido Bay would have folded long ago. Your dues and donations have allowed us to stay active and hopefully kept you informed of what is happening on Perdido Bay. We have also been able to do limited testing so that we will be able to fight any attempt by the environmental agencies to give International Paper a valid permit for Perdido Bay. The paper mill in Cantonment Florida, now owned by International Paper, has not had a valid permit to operate and discharge their wastes into Perdido Bay since citizens got involved in the late 1980's. Since the 1980's, the environmental agencies have issued two permits to the paper mill in Cantonment Florida with Consent Orders meant to bring the paper mill in compliance with state standards. As of this date, 2018, the pulp and paper mill has yet to meet standards and never will. Without citizen involvement, the environmental agencies would simply have ignored the violations and issued permits. Citizen involvement has been critical in keeping our government honest. Thank you for your help.

Am I Dreaming or What?

In September, I was lucky enough to go salmon fishing in Yakutat, Alaska. I went fishing with a guide in a world-class trout and salmon fishing river, the Situk River. The river was surrounded by forests, some of them old-growth forests. People came from all over the world to fish in this river. In many ways the river reminded me of the Perdido River, wild and beautiful. While I was out on the river I started to think about Perdido Bay. There is no reason Perdido Bay could not be a world class fishing bay, where speckled trout and red fish abound, except for the pollution put out by the paper mill. The paper mill and their chemicals have killed just about all life in our bay, especially the upper bay (See report on biology of the Upper Bay). I remember the days when we could go out and catch at least one legal red fish and speckled trout. Mullet were abundant and flounder could always be found in the summer on the bottom. All that has disappeared.

I know several family who moved to Perdido Bay so that they could live on the seafood they caught out of the bay - mullet, blue crabs, shrimp and even clams could be found in sufficient quantities to feed a family. Ester and Weldon Johnson were one

family who tried to live off the life in the bay. It is no wonder that Ester along with JoAnn Allen and others fought valiantly for Perdido Bay. Many of those old-timers have passed away, but a few of us still live here and remember. I have not given up hope of our bay once again being filled with life. I just have to think back to January 2017 when the paper mill exploded, to know that our bay can come back. In less than two weeks, Perdido Bay had responded to lowered levels of pollution to once again be filled with life. We are still hopeful.

Land Ownership

As I traveled in Alaska, I saw thousands of acres of fur and spruce trees - perfect for pulp. I thought there must have been a paper or pulp mill some where in Alaska to utilize this vast resource. Upon investigation, I found that there had been two pulp mills in Alaska, but both had closed in the 1990's when stricter requirements were put in place to control dioxin. So there were zero pulp mills in Alaska. I began to understand why. Most of the vast forests in Alaska are national forests or parks and not privately owned.

Here in the southern part of the U.S., so much of our forests are privately owned. These forests are grown as a crop and are a large part of local agriculture. Most of these pine forests are grown for pulp wood. The paper companies used to own much of the land on which pine trees grow, but that changed. In the mid-2000's paper companies sold much of their timberlands to investment companies or sold their paper making operations and just held onto their timberlands and became Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT). International Paper (IP) sold their timberlands to a wall street investment firm whereas Wehayuser held onto their properties and sold their pulp mills, most to IP. Locally, the St. Joe Company, which was a subsidiary of Dupont, owned vast acres in North Florida and was once the largest land owner in Florida. St Joe closed it paper mill in Port St Joe in 1995, and decided to turn their properties into real estate investments. Unfortunately, after the housing downturn in 2008, the properties did not sell well and St Joe sold much of their land to the Mormon Church. I imagine Hurricane Michael did quit a bit of damage to the timberlands of Northern Florida.

Because these timberlands are privately owned and a large part of the local, agricultural economy, there is huge political pressure to keep the timber crop worth something. Growing timber is a long term investment and requires pulp and paper mills to keep the crop viable. To demonstrate just how much timber, paper mills use, we will use the IP mill in Cantonment Florida as an example. Currently IP is making approximately 2500 tons (dried) per day of pulp. It requires 3 to 4 times as much wood (usually in the form of chips) to make 2500 tons of pulp a day; maybe 100 tons of pine trees. Quite a lot. So all these local pines trees are a cash crop for somebody. And those "somebodies" carry a lot of political weight. Ted Turner, media mogul and owner of CNN, is the second largest individual landowner in the U.S. He manages his lands for ranching and timber. He owns a large plantation near Lamont, FL in north Florida. T.K. and Virginia Wetherell own about 1000 acres near Ted Turner's ranch. T.K. Wetherell was president of Florida State, and Speaker of the Florida House from 1990 to 1992. His wife, Virginia, who is from Pensacola, was head of the Department of Environmental Protection from 1991 to 1998. She was appointed to her post by the late governor Lawton Childes. Virginia Wetherell was the Secretary who merged the Department of Environmental Regulation with the Department of Natural Resources to form the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which is what we have today. The new

department was supposedly a “kinder more gentle” department, or in my thinking, a permit mill, which gave up enforcement.

A Correction

In the August Newsletter, I wrote that the money which had been earmarked for the estuarine program in Pensacola and Perdido Bays had been spent on a Pensacola port project. Just after the August newsletter came out, the Pensacola News Journal carried an article announcing that the EPA had awarded a \$2 million grant to create the Pensacola/Perdido Bay estuary program. The money was awarded to the Bay Area Resource Council to create a comprehensive management plan for both bays which will be supported by community and sound science. These announcements sound wonderful, but if past management grants for Perdido Bay can be used as guides, the results produce little useful cleanup.

In the late 1980's and 1990's, monies from both the EPA and the Florida and Alabama legislatures were given to environmental agencies to develop a management plan for Perdido Bay. Citizens were involved. For several years, citizens went to a variety of workshops and meetings. We heard about dirt roads and leaky septic tanks. Joann Allen would show up and make statements about how this was all just a waste of time and a coverup to point the finger away from the real culprit, the paper mill. In the end, the committee of citizens and government which was assigned to draft a report, voted on the most pressing environmental problems in Perdido Bay. Number One most pressing problem was the paper mill and its discharges. Number Two was non point source pollution - pollution from runoff, etc.

So have these suggestions helped to clean up Perdido Bay? Not really and Perdido Bay appears to be worse. In its attempt to try and get a valid permit, the paper mill, owned by IP, removed its discharge from Elevenmile Creek and went to an overland discharge through a partial wetland. They also increased production significantly, from 1600 tons of bleached pulp per day to 2500 tons of bleached and unbleached pulp per day. Nutrients were deemed to be a problem, but when nutrient limits for Perdido Bay were established by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Upper Perdido Bay had the highest allowable level of total nitrogen in the state and one of the highest for total phosphate. Much of the monitoring of non-point source pollution (nutrients) was turned over to the local governments. Escambia County now has a 6 or 7-man environmental department which has been monitoring the local tributaries into Perdido Bay for nutrients. Developers are required to retain the first inch of runoff, and maybe this has helped. But in the end, the citizens' wishes and the management plan were not followed. Perdido Bay is worse and the government agencies have simply stopped testing to see how bad it is.

Yes, it is bad

When Friends of Perdido Bay first started our fight against the paper mill in 1988, we were able to use much of the data collected by the state's environmental agency, then DER (now DEP) against the paper mill, then owned by Champion. There had been trend stations in the bay which had been tested by the state biologists on a quarterly basis since the mid-1970's. Both water quality and benthic samples were obtained, and showed degradation from the paper mill. It was this data which was used to push for an

administrative hearing in 1986 and 1987. The state of Florida quickly stopped taking data at these trend stations and in the end, abolished its program of state biological sampling, except for the Total Maximum Daily Load Program. Dr. Livingston, a Florida State biology professor and consultant for Champion Paper Company, took over sampling the trend stations and other stations in Perdido Bay from 1988 to 2007, when he was fired by International Paper. He also found degradation throughout the bay but blamed it on outbreaks of a toxic algae *Heterosigma*. According to Livingston, excessive nutrients put into the bay by the paper mill, caused these outbreaks of toxic algae. We never believed the story of toxic algae killing life in the bay, although the toxic algae was found and verified by several scientists. We saw no evidence of dying fish or other types of life as would be expected from an outbreak of toxic algae. As Livingston described it “the bay just silently slipped away”.

Livingston was fired by IP in 2007 and testing was taken over by another consultant for IP - Nutter and Associates. Most of Nutter’s work was in the wetlands and not in the bay. The only sampling which IP did in the bay were plankton samples taken at five different places in the Upper bay. It was from this data that the state regulators told me that Upper Perdido Bay was perfectly “healthy”. This was nonsense. To demonstrate to Florida’s environmental agency that Upper Perdido Bay was not “healthy”, a professional biological sampling firm was hired to do benthic sampling at the two trend stations in Upper Perdido Bay and at two stations in the wetlands in Tee and Wicker Lakes. A fish trawl was also done. To determine the health of bottom samples as well as trawls, the state uses an index of the diversity of species caught in the sampler. This results in an index number. Usually an index of less than two is considered poor. To make these indices valid statistically, at least 300 individual animals must be collected. At all four bottom stations, very low numbers of animals were collected (less than 300) and the species indices were less than 2.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Membership and Renewals</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> New</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Renewal</p> <p>Amt. Enclosed\$ _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Name</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Address</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone (_____) _____</p> <p>e-mail _____</p> |
|---|---|

The trawls in Upper Perdido Bay, from midbay to the mouth of Bayou Marcus Creek were even worse. Of the seven trawls made, one caught nothing at all; several caught some fish and one trawl caught over 3000 little “spot”. Diversity indices for all trawls was 0.04. This is very sad, and without a doubt not indicative of a “healthy” bay.

