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## **Break a Bat, Plant a Ball!**

### ***Tampa Bay Rays Partner with Tampa Bay Watch to help Restore the Bay***

*St. Petersburg, FL* - Tampa Bay Watch and the Tampa Bay Rays will kick off the fourth year of their partnership entitled "Break a Bat, Plant a Ball" on Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22 at the Rays game versus the Boston Red Sox at 7:10pm. The Rays support Tampa Bay Watch by funding the construction of an oyster ball, also known as an oyster dome, when the first bat is broken in every home game during the baseball season. Prior the game on Earth Day, the Rays will present a commemorative check on field to Tampa Bay Watch for \$6,075, the proceeds of the 2014 season's Break a Bat, Plant a Ball program. Doug Sokolowski, member of the Tampa Bay Watch Board of Directors will throw out the ceremonial first pitch of the game. Additionally, Tampa Bay Watch will man the Rays' Community Corner.

If fans purchase a specially priced seat in the lower level for the Earth Day game, they'll receive a Tampa Bay Rays Earth Day recyclable tote bag for just \$39 (\$65 value). A portion of every ticket sold will support the Break a Bat, Plant a Ball program. Visit [raysbaseball.com/earthday](http://raysbaseball.com/earthday) and enter promo code 2EARTH to purchase your ticket today!

"We value our partnership with Tampa Bay Watch on the Break a Bat, Plant a Ball program and applaud their commitment to protecting and restoring the marine and wetland environments of our region," said Rays Senior Vice President of Strategy and Development Melanie Lenz. "The Rays Employee Community Outreach Team has enjoyed working with Tampa Bay Watch through hands on restoration projects during the past four years. These projects are engaging and impactful, and we encourage everyone to connect with Tampa Bay Watch to learn about different ways to get involved and become stewards of the bay."

"All of us at Tampa Bay Watch are thrilled and honored to partner with the Rays," says Peter Clark, Founder and President of Tampa Bay Watch, "the Break a Bat, Plant a Ball initiative makes a significant impact on our Oyster Dome program and, in turn, on our ability to restore and protect our Bay waters."

Also called Reef Balls<sup>®</sup>, oyster domes help replace oyster populations in struggling habitat areas. By being placed along seawalls and shorelines, the domes minimize shoreline erosion and restore hard bottom habitat. The domes also provide surface area for oysters to attach which ultimately improves water quality. Oyster domes have been an integral part of Tampa Bay Watch restoration programs for years and have been previously installed along Bayshore Blvd., MacDill Air Force Base and the Vinoy Basin. Tampa Bay Watch builds and installs about 1,000 oyster domes each year in at least two large scale projects.

***Tampa Bay Watch*** is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) stewardship program dedicated exclusively to the charitable and scientific purpose of protecting and restoring the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary encompassing over 400 square miles of open water and 2,300 square miles of highly- developed watershed. Tampa Bay Watch involves more than 10,000 youth and adult volunteers each year in hands on habitat restoration projects. For more information, visit [www.tampabaywatch.org](http://www.tampabaywatch.org), or call 727-867-8166.

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**Photo opportunities:**

Media is welcome to come out to Tropicana Field on Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Gates open at 5:40pm and the game begins at 7:10pm. The first pitch will follow the commemorative check presentation at 6:45pm. Peter Clark, President of Tampa Bay Watch and Andy Lykens Tampa Bay Watch Environmental Specialist will be on hand for interviews. For more information, call Rachel Arndt at 727-867-8166 x233 or email at [rarndt@tampabaywatch.org](mailto:rarndt@tampabaywatch.org).