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Volunteer Boaters Needed for 22nd Annual Fishing Line Cleanup of Tampa Bay

St. Petersburg, FL – The 22nd Annual Fishing Line Cleanup, organized by Tampa Bay Watch and Audubon of Florida and sponsored by Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund and Restore America's Estuaries, will take place throughout the week of Saturday, September 26 - Sunday, October 4. Volunteers with boats are being recruited to remove tangled fishing line from mangroves and shorelines of specific bird habitat site assignment locations. Advanced registration on tampabaywatch.org allows captains and their volunteer crews to remove fishing line from protected bird colonies that otherwise are off limits to the public. This cleanup, scheduled in the fall when most birds are not nesting, effectively reduces the threat of entanglement for marine animals, including birds.

Abandoned fishing line is a significant mortality factor in bird colonies. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission biologists have identified fishing line as the number one killer of adult Brown Pelicans. "Florida's coastal birds face increasing pressures from habitat loss, human disturbance, and predation; removing fishing line is an easy way to increase their chances of survival," said Audubon Florida Sanctuary Manager Mark Rachal. "Pelicans, egrets, herons and other iconic coastal birds need our help. We are asking for captains and crews to enlist in the 22nd Annual Fishing Line Cleanup and make a difference for Tampa Bay's wildlife." Although estimates of the total annual impact are imprecise, hundreds of birds die annually in Tampa Bay from this unnecessary cause.

Volunteers are provided with equipment and data sheets for removing and documenting fishing line found at assigned cleanup locations. Additionally, volunteers are instructed on how to free entangled live birds they may encounter during the cleanup and where to transport any injured birds. Visit tampabaywatch.org or call (727) 867-8166 x233 for more information on the event.

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, or call 727-867-8166.

Audubon Florida and the National Audubon Society are dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Audubon's national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. For more information, please visit www.audubon.org or fl.audubon.org, or call 813-623-6826.

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-Photo Opportunity- Media is welcome to join us at this event to get pictures of the Fishing Line Cleanup. Please contact Mark Rachal at [813.623.6826](tel:813.623.6826) or mrachal@audubon.org to schedule a time to get on the water with Audubon Florida.