

Summer 2022 Issue

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Celebrating an Epic Earth Day (and Night)!

LIVING SHORELINE PROJECT AND INAUGURAL FUNDRAISER

We commemorated Earth Day (April 22) this year with habitat restoration volunteer opportunities, family-friendly eco-activities, and an inaugural fundraiser in the evening.

55 volunteers participated in our living shoreline project on Earth Day at Lassing Park, in partnership with the City of St. Pete. The group shoveled 10 tons of shell to create approximately 200 square feet of reef, deployed 97 oyster reef balls to complete this component of the project, and planted 2,000 smooth cordgrass plugs. This multi-year project is an effort to mitigate the erosion on the northern shore due to wave and wake action. The goal

of our efforts is to restore lost habitat by promoting new oyster growth, ultimately improving water quality and providing food sources and habitat for many species.

150 guests enjoyed a successful Earth Night event at the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center, raising \$54,550! Renowned local author Randy Wayne White shared colorful stories of his life in Florida and signed copies of his latest release, *Crocs*. Guests were welcomed by Deputy Mayor of St. Petersburg Stephanie Owens, our President and Founder Peter Clark, our CEO Dwayne Virgint, and event sponsors. Many attendees generously donated funds to support the Discovery Center's efforts to share Tampa Bay Watch's work with the public and provide meaningful learning opportunities for children in our region.

A heartfelt thanks to Climate First Bank, Salt Palm Development, and Legacy Vacation Resorts for sponsoring our inaugural Earth Night celebration.



Did you know...

Not only are living shorelines cheaper to build and maintain than concrete seawalls, they offer benefits of improved water and air quality, erosion control, flood prevention, and carbon storage.



Upcoming:

- JUNE 13** First Day of Summer Camp
- JUNE 21 & 28** Outreach Training
- JULY 9** Summer Coastal Cleanup
- JULY 14** Tampa Bay Watch at Rays game



School Year Wraps Up

Our education programs were in full swing over the 2021-2022 school year since students were able to participate in field trips again due to policy changes in the COVID-19 pandemic. Our educators were excited to offer hands-on immersive experience at both Tampa Bay Watch locations with trawling, plankton encounter, and more. 2,265 students and 973 teachers and chaperones visited the Auer Marine Education Center in Tierra Verde for 101 onsite field trips. 46 of these field trips were to Title I or academically at-risk schools. At the Discovery Center, 10,023 participated in our public programs and 584 students and 188 teachers and chaperones came out for a total of 51 field trips.

Our education teams are looking forward to a fun-filled summer of marine science camp! Both locations are sold out with 126 campers set to participate. We are still working on filling 28 scholarship spots in order to provide high-quality, inclusive programs for all of our community's youth.



Skyway Cleanup Results

On March 28, our crew collected 24.9 pounds of debris composed of 292 lead weights, 341 hooks, and just under 24,000 feet of fishing line from the South Skyway decommissioned bridge. This span is a portion of the old bridge that sits parallel to the current fishing pier and is a spot where cast lines are often caught and severed, creating a dangerous scenario for wildlife, especially birds. Keeping an eye out to remove hazardous fishing line when boating around is just one way to help reduce risk of wildlife entanglement and ingestion! Anglers, remember you can dispose of your old fishing line and tackle into monotubes located throughout the Tampa Bay region, which will then be sent off for proper recycling.

A big thank you to the SeaWorld Conservation Fund for supporting our marine debris initiatives.



Katie is Our Hero

TAMPA BAY WATCH RECEIVES COMMUNITY HERO AWARD FOR KATIE MASTENBROOK, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Watch the award presentation:



We are pleased to announce that Katie Mastenbrook, our Director of Education, has received the 484th Lightning Community Hero award! This signature philanthropic initiative of the Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation honors local heroes who make positive impacts on their community through good works and volunteerism. Katie received a \$50,000 grant from the Lightning Foundation and the Lightning Community Heroes program, presented by Jabil, which will solely support Tampa Bay Watch's Estuary EDventures program at the Auer Marine Education Center in Tierra Verde. The award festivities were enjoyed by TBW staff at the April 4 game.



Cownose Ray

RHINOPTERA BONASUS

AVERAGE WIDTH: 3 feet

DIET: bottom-dwelling invertebrates and fish

HABITAT: shallow, brackish water

Cownose Rays are related to sharks and skates, and they get their name from their uniquely shaped snout. Although they do have poisonous stingers, cownose rays are generally shy creatures that pose a minimal threat to humans. These rays also tend to swim at the surface, reducing the risk of humans stepping on them.



Corporate Members Support Bay Restoration and Education

Our corporate members are active partners in restoring Tampa Bay through their generous support. Our unique estuarine environment helps drive the local economy, provides habitat for a variety of important wildlife, and is a primary factor in the quality of life for the region. Contact Molly Robison at 727-867- 8166, x232 to become a corporate member!



Thanks to our corporate members for their support:

- | | |
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Discovery Center Welcomes New Leadership



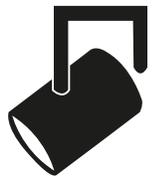
The Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center welcomes two new leaders to its team. Leah Biery joined as Discovery Center Director in March, and Zoe Caraffi was promoted to Education Coordinator in April.

Biery's background is in marine conservation, environmental education, and nonprofit operations. She has a master's degree in fisheries management and has worked with numerous nonprofits in Florida and abroad to promote ocean health. "I am thrilled to join the Tampa Bay Watch team," she said. "The Discovery Center provides a unique opportunity to encourage environmental stewardship and educate the public about this organization's incredible work."

Zoe Caraffi has been a Discovery Center educator since the facility opened in 2020. She played an essential role in developing the outreach programs that are currently offered. With a master's degree in environmental education, she is passionate about inspiring future generations to care for Tampa Bay's ecosystem.

CORPORATE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Freedom Boat Club



In addition to Freedom Boat Club of Tampa Bay being a new corporate member, their staff frequently volunteers with us, as seen [at left] from our Earth Day living shoreline project!

Freedom Boat Club is an affordable alternative to boat ownership with over 650 boats and 30+ locations.

They've expressed why they've chosen to support us: "As we continue to grow, we understand the impact that boating has on our waterways, and we want to do everything that we can to minimize that impact. We look forward to continuing to work with Tampa Bay Watch to help protect the bay for generations to come."





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OUR MISSION:
Tampa Bay Watch is dedicated to fostering a healthy Tampa Bay watershed through community-driven restoration projects, education programs, and outreach initiatives.



Thank you to **George and Isabel Adams** for their sponsorship of the Bay Watch Log!

Discovery Center Receives *Future of the Region* Award

We're proud to announce that our Discovery Center on the St. Pete Pier recently received a Future of the Region award from the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC).

The award was in the Community Service category and acknowledged our goal to help people better understand the importance of the Tampa Bay estuary, its role in their daily lives, and its interconnectedness to the surrounding environment. The public programs and educational offerings provide experiential programming opportunities for all.

Our ultimate goal is to help to ensure Tampa Bay remains a healthy, sustainable ecosystem for future generations.



Wren Krahl, TBRPC Deputy Executive Director (far left), and Sean Sullivan, TBRPC Executive Director (far right) present Future of the Region award to Serra Herndon, Habitat Restoration Director and Peter Clark, Tampa Bay Watch President and Founder.

The Bay Watch Log is a quarterly newsletter designed to inform and educate the volunteers, members, partners, and sponsors of Tampa Bay Watch about environmental events, restoration opportunities, agency activities, and other environmental stewardship information.

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