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Volunteer Boaters Needed for 28th Annual Fishing Line Island Cleanup

St. Petersburg, FL – The 28th Annual Fishing Line Island Cleanup, organized by Tampa Bay Watch and Audubon Florida, will take place throughout the weeks of Monday, October 4 – Monday, October 18. Volunteers with boats are being recruited to independently remove tangled fishing line from mangroves and shorelines of specific bird habitat site 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, reduces the threat of entanglement for marine animals, including birds.

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 28th Annual Fishing Line Cleanup and make a difference for Tampa Bay’s wildlife.”

Registered volunteers will choose their own site locations and will be provided information regarding data submission and monofilament collection. Additionally, volunteers are instructed on how to free entangled live birds they may encounter during the cleanup and given information on local rescue groups that can assist. Visit tampabaywatch.org or call (727) 867-8166 x233 for more information on the event.

“This is a great opportunity to join together as one community for a socially distanced activity that helps prevent wildlife entanglements and sheds light on responsible fishing practices. We’re grateful for our dedicated volunteer base who generously donate their time on their personal vessels to help protect our nesting bird islands throughout Tampa Bay,” said Melanie Grillone, Tampa Bay Watch Environmental Specialist.

Tampa Bay Watch is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary through scientific and educational programs. Incorporated in 1993, Tampa Bay Watch performs habitat restoration and protection activities throughout the year, relying heavily on the efforts of community volunteers. Their programs seek to build citizen awareness, concern, and participation through educational outreach. Tampa Bay Watch opened a second facility at the new St. Pete Pier entitled the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center which opened in July of 2020. The Discovery Center has a public Exhibit Gallery to showcase the economic and ecological value of the Tampa Bay estuary to residents and visitors, and a classroom to expand educational outreach programs to Tampa Bay area schools. For more information, visit www.tampabaywatch.org, or call 727-867-8166.

Audubon protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters, and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire, and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization.

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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 Melanie Grillone at 727.867.8166 x248 mgrillone@tampabaywatch.org or Jeff Liechty at 813.623.6826 jeff.liechty@audubon.org to schedule a time to get on the water with Tampa Bay Watch or Audubon Florida.