



PELICAN POST

A quarterly publication - Weeks Bay Foundation

Fall 2019

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The mission of the Weeks Bay Foundation is to protect land and promote environmental education so current and future residents can enjoy clean water and the seafood, wildlife and outdoor recreation that define our area.

Editor

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On the Cover

Paddlers in the 6th annual Pelican Paddle lining up at the start line!

Photo by Rodney Kilgore

From the Executive Director ...

Where has the summer gone? It is still hot and sweaty, but the beaches are a little quieter and the school zones are a lot busier, and just like that, it is starting to feel like fall. This has been a great summer for the Weeks Bay Foundation.

We laid out and watched the night skies at our first two Star Parties on our Alta Fish River property. We tested our paddling abilities at the 7th annual Pelican Paddle on Weeks Bay. We moved a little closer to completing several large land projects. And, most importantly, we got to do these things with all of you!

This fall is shaping up to bring more great opportunities for community involvement. Bring your binoculars and bird guides for the Alabama Coastal BirdFest in early October. Submit a photo in our annual photo contest. Join us for two more Star Parties to watch the Orionids and Geminids meteor showers, in October and December respectively. And keep an eye out for a volunteer day at our Rangeline property in Theodore.

As the new school year starts, and you are sending kids or grandkids off to new classes, it is impossible not to marvel at how much they have grown and learned. We feel the same way as we look at all the new programs, activities, and land projects that we are working on. And like those students, we wouldn't be here without the guidance of a community that constantly supports us.

Thank you!



Photo by Sophia Haines

GIVE US YOUR BEST SHOT!
For the Weeks Bay Photo Contest!

Deadline Oct. 18. Get details at bit.ly/WBFphotocontest

Margaret A. Davidson graduate fellowship

Weeks Bay Reserve will soon have a fellowship student working on scientific issues that will benefit management of the estuary and the entire Weeks Bay watershed. The Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship is an exciting new program for graduate students at the national estuarine research reserves. One two-year fellowship will be offered at each of the 29 coastal sites, including Weeks Bay Reserve.

Graduate students will be placed at the reserves to address key coastal management questions to help scientists and communities understand coastal challenges. The fellows' projects may influence future policy and management strategies. Specific benefits include cross-discipline research, networking opportunities, professional mentoring, and career-readiness training.

Research reserves represent the summit of estuary science. At these coastal sites around the country, fieldwork, research, and community engagement come together to create the scientific advances that change our communities and our world.



The Davidson Fellowship honors the legacy of NOAA's Margaret A. Davidson. Margaret was a true visionary in the coastal management world, someone who saw the future with clarity, knew how to push for innovation, and, frankly, shake things up. She defined excellence in many categories, always raising the bar with the goal of helping coastal communities thrive. This approach is what NOAA and the research reserves are striving to achieve with this fellowship program.

Pending congressional appropriations, NOAA anticipates a stipend of \$41,000 per student for research and travel, and an additional equipment and supply budget of approximately \$7,000.

For more details about this fellowship, visit coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html.

Meet our supporters

Paul and Rachel Marcinko

For young, growing families like the Marcinkos, finding time to get involved in their community can be challenging. Until Paul and Rachel found a cause that aligned not only with their values and their dreams for their children, but also with their livelihood.

It was a realtor friend, a former member of the Weeks Bay Foundation Associate Board, who first got Paul and Rachel involved. Today, these proud parents of two-year-old JoyLea and another baby girl on the way are active members of the Foundation's Associate Board.

"In the beginning, we did a lot of volunteering," Rachel said. "We live in such a beautiful spot, we want to try to take care of it. There aren't a lot of people in our age group who are involved in protecting our natural resources. We want our children to be able to live in this same beautiful environment, so we got involved."

"We like the idea of people coming together, donating money, to preserve where they live," Paul added.

A professional engineer with JADE Consulting, LLC, Paul said he also sees a relationship between his work and the Foundation.

"We do a lot of low-impact development," Paul said. "Smart conservation is important to us (JADE)—balancing development with maintenance and environmental protection. We are also implementing ideas that we've gathered from across the country."

Paul said he believes the work he does makes for a good fit with the Weeks Bay Foundation. And, he has found a way to mix the two.

Last fall, the Weeks Bay Foundation launched a successful #givingtuesday campaign to raise money for a kayak launch on Weeks Bay. The project has grown exponentially, with the State of Alabama pledging funds toward the project so that it will be ADA compliant and include plenty of parking. Paul is donating his time to the design of the project. Additionally, through Paul and Rachel's involvement, JADE Consulting, LLC, has sponsored Pelican Paddle two years in a row.

The Marcinkos are generously giving their time, talents, and treasure to the Weeks Bay Foundation, and in so doing, they are helping to ensure that their children grow up on a "beautiful Gulf Coast."



Meet our supporters

Hank Miner, Owner, Sportsman's Marine

Last year, a few weeks before Pelican Paddle, Hank Miner contacted the Weeks Bay Foundation office to ask about getting Sportsman's Marine (and Yamaha) involved in the annual canoe, kayak, and paddle board race. Days later, he signed up as an event sponsor and began promoting Pelican Paddle through Sportsman's social media channels and website.

In 2019, Hank invested in the Foundation by being the exclusive sponsor for new stainless cups that were handed out at the 10th Annual Bald Eagle Bash. Plus, he sponsored Pelican Paddle again, doubling his 2018 sponsorship.

A native of Fairhope, Hank has Mobile Bay, Fish River, and Magnolia River running through his veins. His grandfather was "a big boater" and always had boat projects going on, so Hank spent a lot of time with him growing up. He also recalled a local dentist, the late C.D. Harrell, letting him spend the night on the family's pier so Hank could stay up fishing all night.



"I grew up near Fish River, so I spent an enormous amount of time on Fish River and Magnolia River," Hank said. "It's in my blood, so to speak. I've always been drawn to water, so partnering with the (Weeks Bay) Foundation seemed like a perfect fit."

"I think what the Foundation does fits in nicely with my core beliefs—that we have to protect our natural resources."

Sportsman's Marine has been around since 1950, first as a bait and tackle, Evinrude dealer, and small engine repair shop. In the 70s, owner Bob Summerlin moved the shop to Greeno Road south of Fairhope, until the mid to late 80s when he moved it to its present location in Montrose. Hank bought the dealership in 1995.

The Weeks Bay Foundation is grateful that people like Hank, who make a living getting people out on the water, understand the importance of protecting our waterways so that future generations can also have fond memories of a childhood on the water.

Get to know our native plants: Loblolly Bay

by Fred Nation

Loblolly Bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*) is a large flowering shrub or medium-sized tree in the Camellia family. The close family resemblance to Japanese Camellias and Sasanquas is most apparent in the summer and fall, when our beautiful, native Loblolly Bays are in bloom. The shiny, dark-green evergreen foliage is attractive as well. Local plant sales sometimes offer Loblolly Bays as container-grown landscape plants, which should receive the same planting and maintenance care as Camellias. They grow slowly, and can be maintained as shrubs for many years before they become trees.

The native range of Loblolly Bay is from North Carolina, along the Atlantic coastal plain to central Florida, then west to New Orleans. The term "loblolly," by the way, in some areas of the American south is a vernacular term for a mire or a mud hole. Loblolly Bays do prefer wet, silty soils.

Loblolly Bays are rare in the wild. Primarily due to habitat loss, they are listed as "critically imperiled" by the Alabama Natural Heritage Program. We are fortunate to have at least two separate wild populations of these gorgeous native plants in the immediate watershed of Weeks Bay. When they are encountered in the wild, Loblolly Bays should be admired but not disturbed. They are difficult to transplant, and they are best left alone to remain as a beautiful part of the spectacular Weeks Bay watershed.



Squeaky Sneakers keep on squeaking

“Learning about nature where it is, is the best way to remember it and respect it.”

That's Nancy Raia, Community Outreach Director for the Eastern Shore Art Center. Alongside Angela Underwood, Education Coordinator for the Weeks Bay Reserve, Nancy teaches art in the Reserve's Squeaky Sneakers program for youth every summer.

“It's a mixture of science and art,” Nancy said. “We've been teaming up for years (since 2008, to be exact). We call it Squeaky Sneakers because the kids have to wear shoes that can get wet, and when we take them inside you hear a bunch of squeaky shoes.”

This summer, Nancy and Angela invited the Rotary Youth Club to the day-long camp. In years past, they have had groups from the Pensacola Naval Air Station, churches, and other local agencies.

“We start the day with a boat ride, guided by Angela and Eric Brunden, Stewardship Coordinator. The kids will learn about estuaries, different species of marine life, and plants. Then we usually do a plankton tow,” Nancy said. “I might interject how I would sketch the shoreline and how to use different colors. For the younger kids, I might have them draw a simple fish, and then teach them how to apply colors and put the fins and gills in the right place.”

The kids also look under microscopes, see plankton, and then draw them. And Angela guides them through the Reserve, seeing the exhibits inside, then exploring the diverse flora and fauna along the Reserve's boardwalks.

“They get a mix of scientific facts and learning how to draw,” Nancy added. “As I'm teaching them to draw something, I try to tie it in with what we experienced that day. Everyone learns differently, and for visual learners, incorporating an art lesson into a science lesson helps them retain what they learned.”

Whether they've inspired a future marine biologist or an artist, Nancy said both she and Angela believe that by teaching kids how much there is to love in nature, they are preparing future stewards of the environment.





A beautiful day on the water



Getting people out on the water and enjoying the natural resources in their own back yard is the number-one goal of Pelican Paddle, our canoe, kayak, and paddle board race, and this year's race did just that.

It was a picture-perfect day for both the competitive paddlers in the 3.5-mile and 7-mile races, and those who came out for the guided Eco-tour of Weeks Bay. The added benefit, of course, is that the 7th annual Pelican Paddle raised nearly \$7,000 for local conservation.

Race winners are listed below, and we believe the winners and spectators would agree that the awards ceremony (or after-party, if we want to call it that) was the best yet!

With singer/songwriter Emily Stuckey's easy-going vocals and guitar, Serda Brewing with their ice-cold beer, Panini Pete's with their famous beignets, fresh fruit from Allegri Farm Market, plus snow cones and lemonade, folks were more than happy to wait around for the race results in a beautiful setting. Adding to the party were two new vendors—Red Beard's Outfitter and Caribbean Sol—showcasing their wares, plus the great folks from Sportsman's Marine and Tonsmeire Properties who helped underwrite the event.

In between race awards, we gave out lots of door prizes ranging from kayak rentals to a gift basket of "all things Fairhope local." The biggest door prize, however, was a 9' kayak courtesy of Fairhope Boat Company, which also provides the loaner boats for the event. Big kudos to Fairhope Boat Company!

Junior Kayak (13 and under)

1st place	Emmie Booth	1:17:47
2nd place	Sawyer Smith-Megginson	1:27:04

Men's Solo Kayak

1st place	Moke O'Connor	0:36:12
2nd place	Tad Greulich	0:37:55
3rd place	Dan Perkins	0:43:26

Men's Solo Kayak Master Class

1st place	Wayne Berry	0:38:43
2nd place	Dennis Shepard	0:44:51
3rd place	Michael Ellis	0:45:21

Men's Stand Up Paddle Board

1st place	Zach Rounsville	0:35:13
2nd place	Tristan Gregory	0:38:56
3rd place	Steven Aldon	0:40:36

Women's Solo Kayak

1st place	Tara Baxley-Nguyen	0:40:25
2nd place	Lauren Cetin	0:42:10
3rd place	Carol Furman	0:42:36

Women's Solo Kayak Master Class

1st place	Terri Abeln	0:50:58
2nd place	Susan McClure	1:06:00

Women's Stand Up Paddle Board

1st place	Adele Umannova	0:41:56
2nd place	Megan Hensley	0:42:56
3rd place	Jennifer James	0:43:51

Pro Solo Kayak

1st place	Mike Allen	1:08:27
2nd place	Ryan Gillikin	1:25:35

Tandem Craft

1st place	Jeb Berry and Thaison Berry	0:30:23
2nd place	Lynn Buckalew and Wulf Hirschfield	0:31:11
3rd place	Penny Sanburn and Lynn Sanburn	0:33:02

Non-Traditional

1st place	Michael Abeln	0:41:21
2nd place	John Durnin	



Pelican Paddle would not be the success it is without our loyal sponsors. We thank them for supporting land protection and for helping us create an event that gets people outside and on the water.

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Serda Brewing

Photos by Sherry Stimpson Frost, Rodney Kilgore, and Rick Wallace



SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

We were pleased to welcome first-time sponsor, **Caribbean Sol**, to Pelican Paddle. Not only did this maker of natural sun and skin care support the event financially, they also provided door prizes and allowed participants and spectators to sample their products.

Caribbean Sol products are TRULY chemical-free, 100% natural, biodegradable, and eco-sensitive. Their mission statement includes a commitment to meeting the demands of an ever-increasing educated public for toxic-free products that protect not only their bodies, but the marine environment as well. The mission of the Weeks Bay Foundation, to protect land so that current future generations can expect clean water . . . , goes hand-in-hand with the mission of Caribbean Sol. We are grateful for this new partner!



How does land protect water?



The mission of the Weeks Bay Foundation is to protect land.

It is easy to understand how this conserves habitat for birds and mammals. How shaded forests can be places to recreate and learn. How shorelines of reeds and fields of wildflowers are beautiful sites for us to enjoy. These connections are obvious and visible.

But in south Alabama, where we are surrounded by water, land protection takes on a whole new meaning.

We cannot see the filtration of pollutants through the tiny pores in the soils. We don't notice how forested areas slow down heavy rains as they race towards our rivers and bays. Or conversely, how the marsh grasses soften the blow of surging waves from our coastal storms which can damage infrastructure.

Although we are not always aware of these benefits, they are occurring under our feet and outside our back doors every day. Land that is kept in its natural state improves water quality for all of us.

The following are some of the water-quality services that conserved land provides:

Absorption and Filtration

Even small corridors of "wild" land between development and waterways are able to slow down rainwater and filter out the various contaminants that would otherwise enter our waterways.

These may include pollutants from parking lots and industrial sites, excess fertilizers and herbicides from landscaping projects, and sediment from construction sites. Areas with trees, shrubs, and native grasses are much better at absorption than hardened surfaces or manicured lawns.



Fisheries Health

Fishing, crabbing, shrimping, and oyster cultivation are huge parts of life on the Alabama coast. All of our seafood species depend on clean water to thrive. When the runoff from our shores pours into our bays unchecked, it can decimate these seafood species. Oyster beds are silted under from sediment, excess fertilizers cause algal blooms, which in turn result in fish-kills, and we see an overall decline in fish populations. The ability for land to filter and absorb water means that when it reaches the bays and the Gulf, it is cleaner for our fish and shellfish.

Preventing Flood Damage:

We live in the land of hurricanes and coastal storms. Buffers of protected land on our bays help protect inland infrastructure from storm surge flooding. That infrastructure includes drinking water and sewer pipes. When those systems overflow, or are damaged, the result can be contaminated water for entire cities.

Financial Benefit:

Much of our drinking water comes from lakes, reservoirs, and aquifers. The utility companies that manage these water sources spend a great deal of money making sure it is safe for us to drink. By protecting the forests above and around these sources, the utility companies have to spend less time and money making the water ready for us to drink!

The next time you walk along the edge of a wooded lake, or paddle by a natural shoreline, take a moment to appreciate all the things that conserved land does for our water quality.



Photo by Sophia Haines

Our Supporters

May through July, 2019

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National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation
The Conservation Fund
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Weeks Bay Volunteers

* New monthly member

Join the Weeks Bay Foundation today!

Weeks Bay Foundation memberships, renewed annually or in monthly payments, start at \$50. As a member, you are joining a group of people with similar interests and concerns for the places we love. You are protecting land, water, wildlife habitats, and outdoor recreation.

Giving Levels

Legacy Circle	\$5,000 and up
Sustainer	\$1,000 - \$4,999
Steward	\$500 - \$999
Supporter	\$250 - \$499
Friend	\$100 - \$249
Member	\$50 - \$99

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Photo by Kathy Hicks

"The Earth is what we all have in common." - Wendell Berry

Bird and Conservation Expo! FREE!

Saturday, October 5 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Halstead Amphitheater @ Coastal Alabama Community College in Fairhope

RAPTORS! Meet Birds of Prey

Mobile County Environmental Studies Center
11 a.m. & 1 p.m. on the main stage

In the Kids Korner

Build a Birdhouse - Boy Scout Troop 47 & volunteers
Make Peanut Butter Pine Cone Feeders- Coastal Alabama
Volunteers
Story time & Peacock Feather Art- Fairhope Library, Youth
Services
Dissect Owl Pellets & Learn What Owls Eat - Adrienne
Cooper & Schuyler Huff, instructors
Coastal Alabama Community College

In the Conservation Tent

5 Rivers Delta Resource Center | Bon Secour National
Wildlife Refuge | ADCNR Coastal Division
ADCNR Marine Resources | Birmingham Audubon

Meaher State Park Blakely State Park | Orange Beach
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Lunch is Served!

Food Truck!! Beachin Eats Food Truck & Catering
Snow Cones!! at the Weeks Bay Foundation tent

alabamacoastalbirdfest.com