



# PELICAN POST

A quarterly publication - Weeks Bay Foundation  
Spring 2019  
Volume 34, No. 1



Restore Rio Vista - Longleaf Planting  
Photo by Stephen Savage

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*The Weeks Bay Foundation protects land and promotes environmental education in coastal Alabama so current and future residents can enjoy clean water and the seafood, wildlife, and outdoor recreation that define our area.*

**On the Cover**

Tom Yeager and Bradlee Roske take a break after planting longleaf pines.  
Photo by Stephen Savage

Editor  
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## *From the Executive Director . . .*

For me, spring has always been the season to get my hands dirty, tenderly pat the soil around young plants, and clean out the debris and weeds of winter. This only makes sense, as spring is a season of action! You cannot step outside without seeing frenetic nest building and jubilant blooms pushing stubbornly skyward.

The Weeks Bay Foundation community has embraced this energy as well, giving their time and dirtying their hands with several amazing volunteer days. Whether planting trees in near freezing temperatures or battling the wind on Weeks Bay to gather trash, they were troopers. You can read more about the work our volunteers did at Rio Vista and in our Floating Cleanup in this edition.

Spring is also a time for celebration—the end of cold days, the start of a new growing season, or, for us, the conservation of our coastal lands. As we plan our 10th annual Bald Eagle Bash, we look back at all the Foundation, Reserve, and our supporters have accomplished. Then, we host a great “Party for Preservation” to celebrate with YOU!

We hope to see you this spring, on the bay, in the bog, or at the Bash!




Kathy Hicks



## Weeks Bay Foundation celebrates 10th annual Bald Eagle Bash!

by Diana Brewer, Development and Communications Coordinator

Ten years of partying for preservation. Ten years of the area's best restaurants serving fresh Gulf shrimp and delectable desserts. Ten years of awesome local music. All this while watching beautiful sunsets at one of the best spots along the Alabama coast — Weeks Bay.

The 10th annual Bald Eagle Bash, set for Saturday, May 4, from 4-7 p.m. at the Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center, is the Weeks Bay Foundation's largest event. Since the first Bash in 2010, the event has raised more than \$400,000 to save vulnerable coastline so we have clean water for boating, fishing, and swimming, to protect wildlife, and to promote environmental education and awareness through volunteer activities.

This "Party for Preservation" brings more than a dozen area restaurants together to create dishes based on delicious Gulf shrimp. Our chefs serve up everything from fried shrimp, stuffed shrimp, shrimp and grits, and shrimp ceviche, to their own unique creations. In addition to the seafood, several restaurants serve delectable desserts, while Fairhope Brewing Company serves a signature beer — Bald Eagle Blue—created especially

for "the Bash." And there's always a great selection of wines from local wine distributors.

And while food and drink are the main attraction, the local music is always a big draw.

This year, the popular and highly sought-after Red Clay Strays will be performing at the Bash for the first time, and just two weeks before they perform at Hangout Fest, also for the first time. From the far reaches of rural south Alabama, the Red Clay Strays channel southern music's heyday, showcasing their wide range of influences that create a combined style of country music and southern rock. Lead singer

Brandon Coleman, with vocals

that bring to mind a young Elvis, is the heart of their high-energy show, along with Drew Nix on rhythm guitar, Zach Rischel on lead, Andrew Bishop on bass, and John Hall on drums.

Tickets are now available online at [baldeaglebash.com](http://baldeaglebash.com), and will be available beginning March 18 at Page & Palette in Fairhope, Serda's Coffee Company in Daphne, and Serda Brewing and Red Beard's Outfitter in Mobile. Tickets are \$45 in advance and \$50 at the gate. Children 10 and under are free. Free parking is available at the Weeks Bay Foundation site, with shuttles providing transportation to the event.



Red Clay Strays

**For more information, call 251-990-5004,**

**visit [baldeaglebash.com](http://baldeaglebash.com), or find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.**



## Planned Giving – save the land and water you love for the people you love

by Diana Brewer, Development and Communications Coordinator

**A lasting way to provide for the protection of coastal Alabama’s extraordinary beauty is to include the Weeks Bay Foundation in your estate plans.** As a land trust, we are in the business of being around forever; in other words, land trusts and legacy giving are a perfect fit.

Several years ago, **Pete and Martha Wiese** named the Weeks Bay Foundation in their wills. Upon each of their deaths, the Foundation received a substantial gift, which allowed us to purchase a 124-acre high-priority property on upper Fish River. Because the Wiese family was committed to conservation and land protection, the Foundation named the property in their honor—The Wiese Family Tract.

An estate is any property, money, or personal belongings that you have at the time of death. Most people leave an estate when they die, even though they may not have a great deal of wealth. You can arrange to make a gift from your estate—a legacy gift—in several different ways:

- You can set aside a specific amount, such as a cash gift;
- You can leave a percentage of your estate;
- You can leave assets, such as real estate, art, jewelry, qualified retirement plans, paid life insurance policies, or other financial investments such as stocks or bonds.

In the case of the Wieses, they each chose to leave a percentage of their estate to the Foundation.



**Gifts of real estate** is another way to support land and water protection, and make your gift go farther.

**Gaye Lindsey**, a long-time supporter of the Weeks Bay Foundation, donated a small piece of property north of Stockton, Alabama, to the Foundation to honor her late father.

“My father had a lot of little pieces of land,” she said. “He liked to go out on the land and spend time there, just walking and enjoying nature. He had a strong relationship with the Foundation, so I wanted to do something to honor him.”

Gaye said she knew the property she donated did not have conservation value, but that by giving it to the Foundation, the Foundation could sell it and her gift would go farther than if she had sold the property and donated the proceeds. Because the Foundation was able to sell this “trade land,” we could put those funds toward buying high-priority lands that had greater conservation value.

Legacy giving, whether it’s through a bequest or through gifts of real estate, is a great way to ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy the unique characteristics of coastal Alabama.

Planned gifts may also come with certain tax and income incentives that can benefit your family.

If you have already made a provision for the Weeks Bay Foundation in your estate plan, we appreciate it so much. Please let us know so that we may acknowledge your gift.

However you choose to give, we are grateful for your investment in coastal Alabama’s future. In the next issue of *Pelican Post*, we will discuss gifts of stock, as well as charitable contributions with proceeds from your retirement account.



## Become a monthly member and your donation will protect more land

by Diana Brewer, Development and Communications Coordinator

**What is the #1 way you can help the Weeks Bay Foundation today?** Become a monthly member. Monthly members are Foundation supporters who choose to make their membership donation monthly instead of once a year. Monthly giving is the most cost-effective way to contribute to the Foundation in manageable amounts while making a lasting contribution to protecting land and open space, local water resources, and our area's unique marine and wildlife habitats.

### Why become a monthly member?

- Your donation goes farther! Annual renewal letters take more time and cost more money in resources like paper and postage.
- It allows you to increase your support and spread your dues throughout the year. Suppose you gave \$100 last year. This year, if you sign up for \$10/month, you might not feel the difference, but your annual total will be \$120. That's a 20% increase in land protection power!
- It provides the Foundation with a dependable income so we can work year-round to protect land and water forever. Your steady support will help us plan.
- It's easy, automatic, and convenient. Your connection to the Foundation will stay current. You'll be advancing conservation every month!

### How does it work?

- It's simple. You can start your monthly membership through our secure online form where you will choose "monthly" after selecting "recurring donation," or fill out the giving envelope in this issue authorizing us to charge your credit or debit card every month.
- You decide your monthly gift amount.
- You are free to cancel at any time.

### What does this all mean?

- We can use more of your membership dues to protect and restore land!



To access the online form, visit [weeksbay.org/donate/membership](https://weeksbay.org/donate/membership).

## About Membership

Weeks Bay Foundation annual memberships start at \$50. As a member, you will receive mailings and newsletters about Foundation events and current news, as well as volunteer and outreach opportunities.

Legacy Circle	.....	\$5,000 and up
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## Plant 1,700 longleaf pines in under three hours? Yes, we did!

by Yael Girard, Executive Director

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***It was a dark and stormy morning.*** No, really, it was! With grey skies, temperatures in the mid-thirties, and a stiff breeze whipping through the bare trees, I waited for our restoration volunteers at the Weeks Bay Foundation office. To say I was a little nervous that no one would show up is an understatement. Who in their right mind would spend their Sunday morning planting trees in the mind-numbing cold?

A little backstory. When the Weeks Bay Foundation purchased the Rio Vista property in 2017, we acquired an amazing piece of property with some big challenges. Although the tract had over 2,000 feet of frontage on Fish River, beautiful sandy riverbanks, and thriving pocket wetlands, there were also areas that weren't doing so well. The uplands in the property had been logged before we acquired it, and had more bare ground than trees on it. We were starting to see erosion problems and a surge of invasive plant species.

Through funding from the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, the Daniel Foundation, and Baldwin County Sewer Service, the Foundation started the process of returning the property to a healthy, balanced ecosystem. The end goal of the habitat enhancement is to create a public preserve. As we talked about steps forward, we knew community engagement was important. Getting our neighbors involved would help them feel invested in the project and connected to the land, land that would eventually be theirs to enjoy for recreation and education. This idea formed the basis of the "I Restored" campaign.



On January 20, I watched in awe as people from all over our coastal area filtered into the Foundation parking lot to carpool to the site and become part of the first “I Restored” volunteer day. Bundled in jackets, scarves, and gloves, they were surprisingly eager to help us plant baby longleaf pine trees. Fortified by hot apple cider and warm donuts, they gathered bags of tree plugs and tools and scattered across the 23-acre property.

Walking through the planting, it was amazing to see the wide array of volunteers. Students from the University of South Alabama Marine Sciences Club worked alongside families from Daphne. The National Charity League members planted beside a Mobile Bay harbor pilot. Participants ranged in age from two years old to early seventies. One young participant was there with his mom, brother, and grandma. His birthday was a month away. He chose one of the young pine trees, and as he carefully put it in the ground he said, “This is my birthday tree! Once this is a park, I will come back and check on my birthday tree. I will be much bigger then, and so will it.”



As we dusted off our hands and piled the empty tree bags and muddy tools into the truck several hours later, there was a consensus that despite the weather, the brambles, and the hard work, it had been a great day. In two and a half hours, 60 volunteers planted 1,700 longleaf pine trees. And each volunteer could proudly say,

***“I Restored Rio Vista.”***



## A cleaner community . . . by kayak and canoe

by Yael Girard, Executive Director

Three years ago, the Weeks Bay Foundation saw a need for a different kind of trash clean up. Many events pick up debris along beaches and on roadways, but there were not many efforts to remove trash along the shorelines where it cannot be reached by foot. This was the start of the “February Floating Cleanup.” The floating cleanup is done entirely from canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards, with motorboats assisting as floating “dumpsters” for heavy materials.

Partnering with our friends from the Thompson Engineering Eco-Team and community volunteers, we have consistently picked up over 1,000 pounds of trash and recycling from the banks of Weeks Bay and Fish River. For our 2019 cleanup, we added a great new partner, JubileeScape. Lead by **Robin Luce**, JubileeScape brought 10 volunteers and a trailer to haul the collected trash to the dump.



This year, we moved the cleanup to the mouth of Weeks Bay to focus on the area around Pelican Point/Big Mouth. This part of the bay sees a lot of traffic, with the boat launch, fishing pier, and access to Mobile Bay. That means it also sees a lot of trash! Some of this trash blows out of boats and truck beds. Some of it floats off docks and piers during high tide or storms. And, unfortunately, some of it is dumped by people who do not understand the damage it does.



Recent research shows that the majority of trash in our waters is plastic. According to the NOAA Marine Debris Program, “Most commonly used plastics do not go away in the ocean, and instead break down into smaller and smaller pieces.” These pieces are called “micro-plastics,” and they are absorbed into the food chain through algae and filter feeders, such as oysters. Larger creatures eat these smaller ones and the plastics persist in each animal. Cleanup efforts that remove trash from the shorelines keep that waste from becoming part of our food chain.

Some of the clean-up participants focused on the Foundation’s Crescent Point property, which is home to Clapper Rails, Soras, and other shore birds. The property also contains protected salt marsh sloughs, which are critical nursery habitat for shellfish and fish species. This year the cleanup had 35 volunteers who brought in nearly 1,400 pounds of trash from the edges of Weeks Bay. After removing the trash from the water, the team also sorted plastic bottles and aluminum cans to be recycled at local facilities. Huge thanks to all who participated!



Robin Luce with JubileeScape Employees

## SWMP intern position a win-win in 2018

by L.G. Adams, Reserve Manager

The System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) internship at the Weeks Bay Reserve was definitely a win-win in 2018. SWMP is an effort across reserves nationwide to track and record what’s happening in our waterways. Intern **Shannon Walker** gained invaluable experience as a future environmental scientist, and the Weeks Bay Reserve gained the efforts of an enthusiastic, hard-working assistant for 12 months.

As a SWMP technician, Shannon assisted and led monitoring program operations, and worked with educational groups. A graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, Shannon has now headed to Virginia Commonwealth University for graduate school.

In the monitoring program, Shannon collected water-quality and meteorological data, maintained equipment, and prepared data for submission to the Central Data Management Office in South Carolina. Without a SWMP



technician, these duties would be split between the Reserve’s research and stewardship coordinators.

Shannon assisted **Eric Brunden**, Reserve stewardship coordinator, GulfCorps team members, and Weeks Bay Foundation interns in identifying key plants in the marsh plant community. She also assisted **Angela Underwood**, Reserve education coordinator, with more than 25 school groups, including taking students seining for juvenile fish in the estuary. They also offered marine debris seminars for local teachers, and collected plant samples for DNA analysis with Fairhope High School students.

In conjunction with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, Shannon helped start a Citizen Science Microplastics Monitoring Program. This program will have citizens from the community collect and analyze water and beach samples for microplastic debris in the Weeks Bay watershed. This tiny form of marine debris—only 5.0 to 0.3 millimeters in diameter—is pervasive in coastal environments. This program will reveal the types and amount of microplastics in the watershed.

The technical skills Shannon acquired have made her confident and competent in the lab and in the field. Interacting with local, state, and federal organizations gave her a sneak peek into what it takes to work as a coastal ecologist.

“I’ve been growled at by ‘gators, stung by insects, showed students their first pufferfish, paddled a boat with a broom, and had one of the best experiences of my life,” she said. “This internship would not have been possible without support from the Weeks Bay Reserve staff, the Weeks Bay Volunteers, and the Weeks Bay Foundation.”

The SWMP internship was funded by the Weeks Bay Volunteers, the Weeks Bay Foundation, and a grant from the Mapp Family Foundation.



## Get to know our native plants: Southern blue flag iris

by Fred Nation

Southern blue flag, *Iris virginica*, is a native perennial wildflower in the Iris family. The distribution is large, from Texas through Florida, north to New York, and west to Minnesota. It can be found as a native species in wetlands throughout Alabama, including Baldwin County and the marshlands at the Weeks Bay Reserve.

The leaves are semi-evergreen, about three feet long, sword-shaped with sharply pointed tips, and they usually extend above the flowers. The dried roots of *Iris virginica* were harvested in late summer or early fall by southeastern Native Americans and used as liver and kidney detoxifiers, salves for open wounds, and treatments for pain. When handled, the roots and rhizomes (underground stems) can cause skin irritations.

The handsome flowers are frequently seen in May and June in marshes near the water’s edge on Magnolia and Fish Rivers, and near the shoreline of Weeks Bay. They are various shades of bluish-purple, with yellow patches on the three large sepals. Botanically, these patches are called “signals;” they function as flyways, to attract and direct bees and other pollinators to the pollen and nectar, which are hidden within the flowers. Blue flags are sometimes available from plant nurseries and garden centers. They are easy to grow in wet, sunny areas and, with a little extra water during the hot part of the year, they can be grown successfully in well-mulched flower beds in home landscapes.



It is nice to know that our wildflowers, including the beautiful *Iris virginica*, are conserved in their native habitats to brighten the days of future Weeks Bay visitors.



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Photo by Kathy Hicks

Snowy Egret family  
in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta

*"I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown,  
for going out, I found, was really going in." - John Muir*



**Saturday, May 4**  
4 - 7 p.m.

Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center  
Featuring **FRESH LOCAL SEAFOOD**  
prepared by the area's finest restaurants, and a  
signature "Bald Eagle Blue" by Fairhope Brewing.

Live Music by

*Red Clay Strays*

Tickets \$45 in advance / \$50 at the gate  
Kids 10 and under FREE

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Weeks Bay Foundation office, Weeks Bay Reserve,  
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