



THE PELICAN POST

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The Weeks Bay Foundation is a non-profit organization whose members work to protect the natural resources of coastal Alabama and to provide assistance and support for the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's goals and programs.

Layout & Design by
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From the Executive Director . . .



Coastal Alabama faces a critical juncture.

Depending how things play out in the next five years, we may witness the preservation of most of the undeveloped marsh and maritime forest remaining in the state. Or, we may watch as more and more of our native shorelines are transformed into condominiums and seawalls.

It all depends how the state decides to spend the hundreds of millions of dollars headed this way from the BP oil spill.

At the Weeks Bay Foundation, we think land acquisition is the best and most important way to spend the money. The land we acquire today will be protected forever, and will help ensure that Mobile Bay and our coastal rivers remain vibrant, beautiful, and wild. Working with willing sellers, we believe the state could buy up all of the remaining undeveloped coastal areas using just a portion of the \$336 million already guaranteed to Alabama.

That \$336 million is coming to the state through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with the other coastal states receiving like amounts over the next five years. That so-called “NFWF money” must be used primarily for environmental restoration. Once the criminal case is settled against BP, another pot of money, known as the RESTORE Act money, will also become available. The RESTORE Act money, which may total billions of dollars, has fewer restrictions on what the state can use it for, meaning it can be spent on economic projects as well as environmental recovery.

Today, we are focused on that first \$336 million. We’ve discussed the importance of buying pristine and wild coastal land with the officials in charge of spending it, and we believe everyone involved, from the state to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation board, are receptive. The Weeks Bay Foundation has a list of areas we believe are the most important to the future of coastal Alabama and we are working to make sure those areas are at the center of the NFWF money conversation.

A few weeks ago, the Weeks Bay Foundation purchased property in a remote area along Mobile Bay, between Weeks Bay and the mouth of the Bon Secour River. The Alabama Coastal BirdFest contributed \$10,000 toward the purchase, which serves as a showcase of the kind of places we want to protect. Beginning at the water’s edge, a fringe of marsh gives way to a wall of giant Rousseau cane. Push through that wall, and a broad swamp meadow opens up before you, with alligator trails winding in between hummocks of sawgrass and arrowroot. Then, about 100 yards from the shoreline, stands a maritime forest, with towering pond cypress and redbay, and a carpet of icy blue iris blooming in every direction. The property is home to all manner of reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and birds.

It is places like this that ensure Mobile Bay thrives, places with marsh and forest up to the water’s edge. Now is the time to protect what remains. We’d love to add your voice to ours as we work to protect the last wild places in coastal Alabama. If you like what we’re up to, join the Weeks Bay Foundation and help save what makes this place amazing.

See you on the water,



New Staff Member at Weeks Bay Foundation

Ryan Wedell, our newest staff member, comes to the Foundation from his hometown of Austin, Texas. In 2011 he received a BS in environmental science from Texas A&M University Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) which is where he discovered the importance of conservation and land management. While taking classes Ryan also interned at The Padre Island National Seashore in the natural resources department and took classes at the oil spill recovery school at TAMUCC. These opportunities occurred less than a year after the Deep Horizon oil spill while cleanup efforts were taking place and helped demonstrate to him the importance of coastal land conservation and management. After receiving his degree, Ryan worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cameroon from 2011 to 2013. He spent his service as an Environmental Extension Agent working with local farming groups to implement sustainable agriculture techniques and bring clean water to rural communities. Ryan has been working as an AmeriCorps VISTA since March of this year and is committed to helping the Foundation and its conservation goals.



A Great Place to Raise Kids by Rick Wallace, Foundation President

According to *Mobile Bay* magazine (April 2014), there are 18 reasons why Lower Alabama “makes for the ultimate childhood.” By my count, six of the reasons are directly related to the mission and activities of the Weeks Bay Foundation.

Five of the six reasons relate to enjoying activities around the water or learning about science through hands-on experiences. Fishing, boating, swimming, and just messing around the water are part of the joys of being a kid in Lower Alabama. In order for kids to have these wonderful adventures and water-related experiences our community must provide clean rivers, productive bays, and some undeveloped areas where children can get a sense of the outdoors.



Chase Diard catches a ground mullet

In conserving coastal lands, the Weeks Bay Foundation protects water quality for swimming and the important nursery areas that produce the fish, shrimp, and crabs that children so enjoy seeing and catching. The Foundation also supports educational activities at the Weeks Bay Reserve. Thousands of school children journey to the Reserve each year to learn about the importance of our bays and bayous while walking through maritime forests and pitcher plant bogs.

The sixth reason was “because we value volunteerism.” The Weeks Bay Foundation is all about volunteerism. Our 480 members, the 100 organized Volunteers who support the Reserve, and our 21 Board members all volunteer their time and resources to make coastal Alabama a great place to raise kids.



Keeping Communities Resilient

by Mike Shelton, Reserve CTP Coordinator

As we have been reminded by Mother Nature, flooding is a risk faced by many counties and communities, and the Weeks Bay Reserve Coastal Training Program is educating local leaders about the tools that help them manage that risk. Over 40 planners, community leaders, and floodplain managers met at 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center to learn more about the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System (CRS), which recognizes and encourages planning and management activities that reduce flooding costs. The one-day course, *Weathering Future Floods: Reducing Costs and Risks through the Community Rating System*, helped participants gain knowledge about the program and the steps needed for membership. The group gained an improved understanding of the cost benefits to their community offered by the CRS, and the future of the flood insurance program. Qualified instructors representing federal, state, and local aspects of the National Flood Insurance and CRS Programs led teaching sessions. **Lannie Smith** from the City of Orange Beach shared his city's experiences with their successful CRS program. The workshops were sponsored jointly by the Alabama Association of Floodplain Managers, NOAA Coastal Services Center, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant, and Weeks Bay Reserve.



Carl Schneider, Smart Home America, and Leslie Durham, AL Department of Economics and Community Development, discuss flood hazards in coastal Alabama at the Community Rating Workshop

Digging for Wetlands

by Mike Shelton, Reserve CTP Coordinator



Sandy Page, NRCS (left), and Louise Duffy, TTL, Inc. (right), use color chart to identify wetland soils in Graham Creek Preserve in Foley during at the Advanced Topics in Hydric Soils workshop



Sandy Page, NRCS, examines wetland soils at the Advanced Topics in Hydric Soils workshop at Weeks Bay Reserve

While looking at the plant community is often the easiest way to identify a wetland, it is also possible to define wetland boundaries by looking at the soil. At the *Advanced Topics in Hydric Soils* workshop, over 30 participants dug a lot of holes and learned the latest techniques in wetland soil identification. In particular, they focused on the signs or indicators that result from saturation by water and the chemistry that results. Soils in an area must have these indicators for the area to be considered a wetland. Knowing where wetlands are located helps agencies and landowners better protect the valuable ecosystems. **Mike Vepreakas** and **Dave Lindbo** of North Carolina State University and internationally recognized experts provided lectures and led



the field exercises. Participants took away a better understanding of the indicators and their use in wetland delineation. Longtime friends of Weeks Bay Coastal Training Program - **Gena Todia** (Wetland Resources), **Louise Duffy** (TTL, Inc.), and **Sandy Page** and **Joey Koptis** (USDA-NRCS) - helped arrange field sites for the class. Training partners at Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, Grand Bay Reserve, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration jointly conducted the training.

Keeping Runoff at the Source Using LID by Mike Shelton, Reserve CTP Coordinator

Excess stormwater running off of parking lots, roof tops, and roadways is one of the largest sources of pollution in our waterways. In nature, falling rain hits the ground and flows across forests and fields, moving through leaves and grasses, and slowly soaking into the ground on its way to wetlands and creeks. But in developed areas, the rain falls on concrete and is channeled into storm sewers, which then funnel huge amounts of water straight into creeks and rivers. Instead of the rain slowly filtering through forests toward a creek, the creeks in our neighborhoods and cities must deal with a large volume of water that arrives suddenly, like a flash flood, cutting into stream banks and causing severe erosion which results in lots of sediment carried downstream to the bay.

Methods for capturing rainfall runoff and the pollution it can carry at the source are fast becoming more popular and better understood. The use of these innovative methods collects rainfall runoff before it leaves a property, and before it has the chance to collect into large volumes. Putting these stormwater management practices to use helps protect the health of waterways and saves money spent on old ways of managing runoff. Planners and engineers commonly call these methods **low impact development** or **LID** practices. The practices go by fancy names like grassed swales and constructed stormwater wetlands, but really, they are common sense solutions for dealing with rainfall runoff at the source.



An engineered swale that includes native vegetation designed to capture rainfall runoff from a parking lot in Daphne, Alabama

LID practices typically reduce the creation of runoff at the individual homesite or business campus, allowing rainwater to slow down, soak into the ground, and get sucked up by plants. In most cases, builders include LID practices while subdivisions and shopping centers are still in the planning stage. Retrofitting locations to trap stormwater also remains an effective way of reducing runoff and the water pollution that sometimes catches a ride.

The Weeks Bay Reserve Watershed Program endeavors to include LID practices and training in the Blueprint for Clean Water in Fish River. The Blueprint for Clean Water in Fish River is under development and could use input from citizens as it evolves. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Auburn University, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and many other partners wrote the new Alabama Low Impact Development Handbook. With Alabama homebuilder and general contractor organizations, the same team hosted the 2014 LID Summit in Clanton. **Mike Shelton**, Watershed Program Coordinator attended the event. All of the people who participated in the Summit left energized with new practices that make perfect sense when adapted to local conditions. Learn more about LID and the Alabama LID Handbook at www.aces.org. Get involved in learning more about LID and helping the Weeks Bay Reserve Watershed Program by contacting Mike at (251) 928-9792.



Alabama Master Naturalist: Coastal Alabama

by Angela Underwood, Reserve Education Specialist

On April 25, 20 participants joined Weeks Bay Reserve staff for an intensive course on Alabama coastal wetlands. This course was just one of eight sessions being held in Mobile and Baldwin counties as part of the Alabama Master Naturalist (AMN) program. AMN is a statewide program whose goal is to promote awareness, understanding, and respect of Alabama's natural world among Alabama's citizens and visitors. The AMN program requires that participants complete a 40-hour basic training course and 30 hours of volunteer service to become a Master Naturalist in Training. An additional 30 hours of advanced course work over three years plus 30 volunteer hours per year must be completed to become a fully certified Alabama Master Naturalist.



In the past, the AMN program has focused on central and northern Alabama. This is the inaugural year for a coastal version of the AMN program. Classes began in February and will continue through July and include topics such as Cultural Landscape of Coastal Alabama, Geology and Soils, Bays and Coastal Waters, and different sessions on Alabama's Birds and Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians, Invertebrates, and Forests. During the Coastal Wetlands session at Weeks Bay, participants enjoyed expert presentations by local scientists on wetland types including bottomland hardwood forests, salt and freshwater marshes, bayhead swamps, Citronelle ponds, and carnivorous plant bogs. Participants were



treated to a relaxing boat ride as they learned about functions of estuaries and enjoyed the beauty of lilies and irises blooming in the marsh. Later, they got wet and muddy as they slogged through a bayhead swamp, listening to the calls of bronze frogs and identifying wetland plants. The day was capped off by a trip to one of the most unique habitats in the world - the pitcher plant bog - where participants learned about the carnivorous habit of several species of plants. The course was well received by the participants.



Weeks Bay Reserve looks forward to our continued involvement in the Alabama Master Naturalist program. For more information, contact the Reserve or visit the AMN website at www.aces.edu/natural-resources/amn/.

BCGIC works with Robertsdale High School

by Margaret Sedlecky, Reserve Education Coordinator



This school year the Baldwin County Grasses in Classes (BCGIC) program worked with Robertsdale High School students with special needs. The students grew sea oats and bitter panicum grasses at the school and recently planted them at Gulf State Park Pier. The students planted 350 plants with assistance from teachers and Gulf State Park and Weeks Bay Reserve staff. After planting, the students were treated to a picnic lunch and a tour of the Park's Nature Center.

Teacher **Keith Grace** coordinates the BCGIC program at the school and uses it as an opportunity to teach horticulture and teamwork skills to prepare students to enter the job market after graduation. Mr. Grace says that the program is a great opportunity for his students to learn valuable life skills while having fun and giving back to the community.

Weeks Bay Foundation Protects Primordial Forest

by Jeff Dute, courtesy of AL.com

With the purchase of a tract of land south of Weeks Bay's mouth, the Weeks Bay Foundation filled a hole in ongoing, multi-agency efforts to completely protect the remaining primordial forests bordering Mobile Bay.



The 30-acre tract sits in the middle of the 615-acre Swift Tract, which is one of the largest chunks of protected, intact, and undeveloped maritime forest left on Mobile Bay.

It is a remnant of the lush and tropical forest that greeted the first explorers arriving in Mobile Bay.

During a recent walking tour of the property, it was easy to step back in time and imagine the awe and wonder those intrepid travelers must have felt after stepping ashore in this strange land.

A towering pond cypress sweeps upward 80 feet from the sucking muck of the swamp. All around it, pale, ice blue iris blossom among blackberries and spider lilies. Slash pines too big to put your arms around are everywhere.

Species of trees, grasses, and bushes too numerous to count let alone identify stretch as far as the eye can see in any direction.

Identical forests probably stretched all the way up the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay to the bluffs of the Ecor Rouge area between Daphne and Fairhope.

The Weeks Bay Foundation, the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the Alabama State Lands Division have worked together for several years to acquire and protect the Swift Tract, but a problem with the deed for this parcel meant it had never been protected and was still available for sale to the public, the Foundation's Executive Director **Ben Raines** said.

"It made a hole in the Swift Tract, this one stretch of the Mobile Bay shoreline south of Weeks Bay that wasn't protected. The Foundation decided to pursue the purchase of that piece because we can be a little more nimble than the state and Forever Wild," Raines said. "We were able to get around the problem in the deed when one of our board members, **Tommy Harris**, sat down in the courthouse and dug around until he found a good legal description of the property. That's the only reason we were able to protect it."

People can explore the forest by boat only since there's no road access, Raines said.

Once there, it's no easy feat making the trek from the shoreline to the forest.

It sits about 150 yards inland from the edge of Mobile Bay, behind a nearly impenetrable bog of sawgrass, Rousseau cane, and arrowroot that begins at the water's edge.

The bog area itself is fascinating, with dozens of other plant species, including cinnamon fern and braken, along with alligators, snakes, frogs, turtles, nutria, and a dizzying variety of dragonflies and other insects.





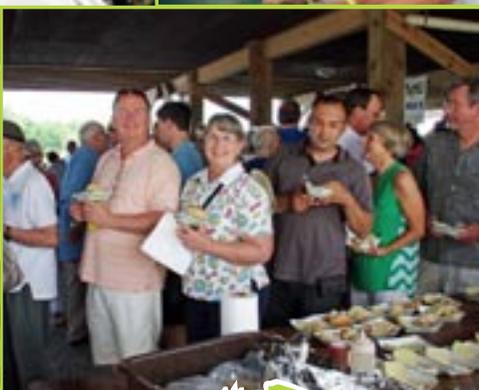
2014 Bald Eagle Bash

The numbers are in. We had more than 1,100 people at the Bald Eagle Bash, our largest crowd yet. The weather was perfect, the band was great, and we raised a lot of money that we will put to work protecting coastal Alabama. A turnout like that helps keep the Weeks Bay Foundation strong, and is responsible for allowing us to step up and protect our area.

If you were one of the crowd who came out to eat shrimp at the Party for Preservation, know that you helped us acquire the latest piece of coastal habitat we've protected, a 30-acre parcel of pristine and undeveloped shoreline and maritime forest on the southeastern shore of Mobile Bay. A turn out like we had lets us know just how generous and friendly the members of the Weeks Bay Foundation are.

If you missed out on the Bash this year, don't worry, we're already planning next year's party. We plan to have more shrimp, more crawfish, and an even better time!

Check out our list of sponsors and restaurants. While you are out and about in the world, please patronize all of our friends included on the list. They are doing their part to help protect coastal Alabama. When you visit them, tell them the Weeks Bay Foundation sent you!



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Weeks Bay Foundation Pitcher Plant Bog Burn

by Ryan Wedell, Foundation AmeriCorps VISTA



The cover photo was photographed by Fred Nation in the little-visited dry, sandy south end of the Foundation's pitcher plant bog. Hairy Wicky is listed as endangered by the Alabama Natural Heritage Program. Classified as S2, there are likely to be less than two dozen populations of this azalea relative in the state.

Some weeks are more exciting than others in the conservation and land management world. While rewarding in its own way, often the task of acquiring and ensuring the preservation of our estuaries and wetlands can mean lots of board meetings and office work. This past April however, the Foundation staff and volunteers were able to get outside and take part in a more hands-on approach to land management. With the help of the Barnwell Fire Department and the Alabama Forestry Commission, we carried out a controlled burn on the Foundation's pitcher plant bog.



Fire is an important component in the natural cycle of many of the ecosystems that occur in the Mobile Bay watershed. However, due to

habitat fragmentation, land cover changes, and, of course, the problems fire might pose to residential areas, that cycle is often broken up. If this interruption is not addressed the entire makeup of a habitat can be greatly altered. The understory of such an environment will become clogged with brush and weeds that will eventually choke out all other naturally occurring vegetation. Fire is also a necessary part of the life cycle of many plants and allows for new growth that would not otherwise occur.

When the Foundation's pitcher plant bog was acquired more than a decade ago, it was clear it had been far too long since it had been burned. This was apparent when one saw how homogenous the bog had become,

and how overgrown with shrubs like swamp titi. Just a few species were really thriving and the overall diversity was noticeably in decline. Ten years of annual burns have transformed the bog and dramatically increased the diversity. To maintain that diversity and keep some of the woody shrubs at bay, we burn the bog once a year in the winter or spring.



So with fire starting tools (e.g. drip torches) from the Forestry Commission and the fire suppressing supplies and guidance of the Barnwell Fire Department, we set out to burn back our overgrown bog in early April. With fire

breaks already in place, we first burned around the perimeter. The immediate blast of heat and flames from accumulated dry pine straw would have been a shock to any unprepared observers. As we worked our way around the edge of our bog we were sure to extinguish any flames threatening to cross the fire break with backpack water pumps and fire rakes. As the initial flames died down we traversed the bog in order to burn the interior. This portion of the burn felt a little less risky than the beginning. With the perimeter of the bog already burned, the fire had nowhere to go but towards the center where it eventually burned itself out resulting in a freshly burned bog ready for new growth.



Thanks to the prescribed burn in April, we will have a more vibrant, diverse, and alive pitcher plant bog this summer. If you would like to see an example of a pitcher plant bog similar to the Foundation's, the Weeks Bay Reserve bog is open to the public. This bog is located east of Fish River on County Road 17, just north of U.S. Highway 98. A boardwalk stretches from the road on one side to Fish River on the other, weaving through the wetland habitat. The Reserve bog was burned in March, and the pitcher plants and showy grass pink orchids are up and blooming.

2014 Alabama Coastal BirdFest

by D. Fran Morley, BirdFest "Nestkeeper"

Plans are well underway for this year's Alabama Coastal BirdFest, scheduled for October 2-4. BirdFest is entering its second decade having attracted visitors from more than half of the United States, as well as from Canada and even the United Kingdom. As we all know, birders will travel a great distance for the chance to see a new bird, and birding trips along our wild and beautiful Alabama Gulf Coast give them a prime opportunity to add to their life lists!

"We love introducing our area to visitors, many of whom are visiting our area or even the South for the first time. For that reason, BirdFest has become a great eco-tourism event. But the primary mission of BirdFest is about protecting and preserving our wildlife habitat," said event founder **John Borom**. "Our coast is popular with the human population but the coastal woods and wetlands are vital to the birds and other wildlife. For many migrants, our coast is their last stop before the 600-mile flight across the Gulf of Mexico. They need the trees and shrubs as a safe haven to rest and eat before completing their journey. That is why we need to ensure that there are wild areas along the coast and not just condos and parking lots."



Dr. Erik Johnson, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Louisiana / National Audubon Society, is the keynote speaker for the Friday dinner for this year's Alabama Coastal BirdFest

This year's Friday night speaker knows all about the need to protect habitats. **Dr. Erik Johnson**, Director of Bird Conservation with Audubon Louisiana, will talk about his work to engage citizen-scientists to help monitor birds and implement conservation measures for species of concern across the Gulf Coast. Dr. Johnson has a diverse background in ornithology, having studied birds on three continents, including in the rain forests of Brazil and Australia. He has played critical roles in developing large-scale monitoring efforts to document the impacts of the BP oil spill on Gulf Coast birds and to understand the value of isolated forest remnants on bird populations. A passionate lifelong birder and academically trained ornithologist, he will provide guests with expertise in bird identification and ecology.

This year's poster artist, **Spence Harrison**, has had a lifelong appreciation for the natural beauty of our Alabama coastal regions. "My early work features landscapes, but I now concentrate my efforts on the wildlife, flora, and fauna of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and other local shorelines and wetlands," Harrison said, noting that he often shoots from his kayak to obtain unique perspectives. "I really like to try to capture the spirit of the place and time that makes it

unique. If my photos generate a response from the viewer of admiration and awareness of the environment, then I've done my job." Harrison's photos will be featured in this year's "Nature Through our Lenses" presentation at the pre-BirdFest Orientation/Reception on Wednesday, October 1, at 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center.

This year's BirdFest will feature repeats of favorite trips and a few new trips, including a new sunset cruise on Weeks Bay. Registration will be open by early August. "Once again, there will be some special 'online only' trips, so participants are encouraged to register online, which is fast, safe, and convenient," Borom said.

5 Rivers Delta Resource Center in Spanish Fort is the site of both evening events and the staging location for all bus and carpool trips. The free, family-friendly Bird & Conservation Expo takes place Saturday, October 4, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the grounds of Faulkner State Community College in downtown Fairhope. Trip information and other details will be posted on www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com as it becomes available.



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Weeks Bay Volunteers

Become a part of the Weeks Bay Foundation!

Giving Levels

Legacy Circle	\$5,000 and up
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Join us by returning the
enclosed envelope
or look for the link on
our home page at
www.weeksbay.org.

Donate to the Foundation through the Combined
Federal Campaign, Code 37621

SUMMER 2014 CALENDAR

July

**1 Citizens Advisory
Committee Meeting for
the Weeks Bay Watershed
Project.** Tonsmeire Weeks Bay
Resource Center, 6:30 p.m.

4 Independence Day Holiday.
The Visitor Center will
be closed. All trails and
boardwalks will remain
open for your walking and
sightseeing pleasure.

August

2 Pelican Paddle. Check out
the Weeks Bay Foundation's
website, www.weeksbay.org,
or Facebook page for details.

**The deadline for the Weeks Bay
Photography Contest has been
moved to October 18, 2014. Look
for updates and the entry form
on the Foundation's website,
www.weeksbay.org.**

**Registration for the John L. Borom
Alabama Coastal BirdFest opens
early August. Look for updates at
www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com.**



Volunteer Opportunities

by Maureen Nation, Reserve Volunteer Coordinator

Weeks Bay Reserve has several interesting and rewarding new opportunities for our volunteers. Reserve staff will play key roles in the assessment, conservation, and long-term management of the recently acquired 685-acre Meadows Tract, which is located on County Road 1 near Mobile Bay, to the southwest of Weeks Bay. Prior to any restoration, and in order to responsibly manage the site, surveys and inventories of the existing flora and fauna will be conducted, and our volunteers will be offered opportunities to assist with inventories, surveys, and installation of monitoring devices. We expect that volunteers will also substantially assist with some of the actual restoration work that will be done after the surveys have been completed.

With substantial assistance from the Baldwin County Master Gardeners, a longleaf pine forest is being developed on the Safe Harbor site, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Visitor Center. Volunteer help is needed for maintaining the trees that have already been planted, as well as planting trees in future areas we plan to incorporate. There is a savanna area on one end of the pine forest that already contains some bog plants. We would like to restore a pitcher plant bog on this site. Both the longleaf pine forest and the savanna area will function as demonstration projects, which will include documentation of all restoration activities as they occur in these important endeavors.

Many of our volunteers have requested outdoor, research-oriented opportunities, and these are two very deserving and interesting projects that need your help. If you would like to volunteer or learn more about what volunteers can do for the Reserve, please contact **Maureen Nation** by calling the Reserve at (251) 928-9792.



The Meadows

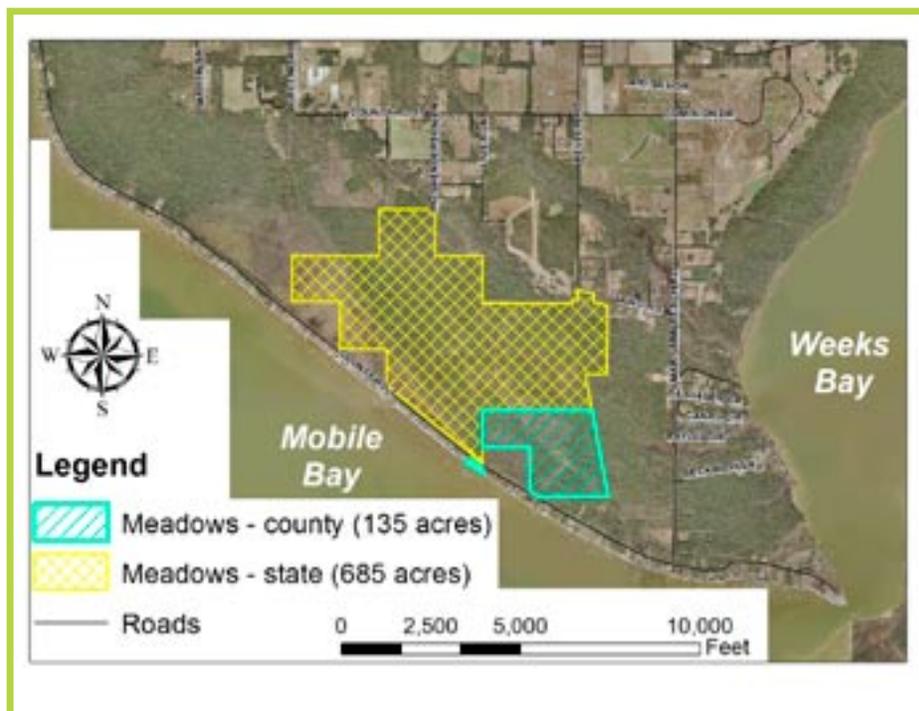
by Eric Brunden, Reserve Stewardship Coordinator

Paralleling County Road 1 between Mary Ann Beach Road and Mullet Point, the Meadows Tract was named for its historically open herbaceous areas. Within and around the Meadows Tract, access roadways and drainage structures have been created to facilitate timber harvesting, residential development, and access to waterways. These landscape alterations have significantly altered the development of natural communities within the tract, and the flow of water through the wetland. cursory observations indicate that natural communities on the tract are fragmented, there has been an expansion of fringe habitat, non-native species have been introduced, and niche habitats that might not otherwise occur have been created.

To further understand how landscape changes have influenced community composition within the tract will

require a suite of on-site investigations, including a survey of species present. Thanks to a generous donation from the Weeks Bay Volunteers an investigation into the species present on the site has begun.

A herpetological investigation has been initiated to determine what reptile and amphibian species are utilizing tract habitats. Led by expert taxonomists **Smoot Majors** and **Joel Borden**, and assisted by Weeks Bay Reserve staff and volunteers, the survey is scheduled to be completed by the end of July. The results of this survey will provide insight into the ecological health of the tract as well as determine if any “herp” species of concern are present.



Longleaf Pine Restoration Project

by Maureen Nation, Reserve Volunteer Coordinator

In November 2012, Weeks Bay Reserve, in partnership with the Baldwin County Master Gardeners, began a long-term longleaf pine restoration project on a 5-acre site in the Safe Harbor area, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Visitor Center. The “L-shaped” project area transitions gradually from live oaks and rather dry, sandy soil, to a lower, moist area that is populated by plants normally seen in pine savannas and flatwoods.



In the nearly two years since the site was planted with 500 containerized longleaf seedlings, the project has been actively maintained by Reserve staff and the Master Gardeners. In February a workday was scheduled; each seedling was located, reflagged, and competing vegetation was mechanically removed from the area around the seedlings. In early March fire lanes were cut, and a controlled burn was conducted as a crucial management practice for the restoration

and maintenance of fire-dependent longleaf pine ecosystems. Surveys conducted after the fire reveal that the pines are in excellent condition; some are beginning to bolt upright into the candle stage, which is the second developmental phase after small seedlings are planted,

Since the controlled burn, several new species have been observed in the restoration flatwoods area. Of special interest are carnivorous bladderworts and butterworts, which strongly suggest that the area may be a historic pitcher plant bog! A detailed inventory of the area will be conducted as soon as possible, as researchers monitor and track the restoration of this small piece of the economically, historically, and ecologically important longleaf habitat.



Weeks Bay Foundation

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Photo by John Borom

Great Egret
Ardea alba

"Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries." - Jimmy Carter

Pelican Paddle

The 2nd annual Weeks Bay Foundation Pelican Paddle Canoe and Kayak Race will be held on August 2, 2014.



Last year, we had 90 paddlers turn out for the Weeks Bay Foundation's first-ever Pelican Paddle Canoe and Kayak Race around a three-and-a-half mile course in Weeks Bay. This year, we'd like to see twice as many racers. We plan to give out 27 medals in nine categories, including stand up paddleboards, non-traditional crafts, canoes, men's and women's kayak, and junior kayak. We will have a drawing for prizes, including our grand prize of a new kayak. Once again, we'll provide a hot dog lunch (veggie dogs available as well) for all participants and spectators. It's a great chance to get on the water with family and friends. We will also have a limited number of canoes and kayaks available for racers who don't have their own boat, but you've got to reserve them ahead of time.

Registration forms can be downloaded from the Foundation website at www.weeksbay.org. They are also available at the Weeks Bay Reserve Visitor Center and the Foundation office, and in Fairhope at Fairhope Boat Company, Underwater Works Dive Shop, and Papa's Pizza.

For more information or to reserve a canoe or kayak, call the Foundation office at (251) 990-5004.

