



# THE PELICAN POST

A quarterly publication - Weeks Bay Foundation  
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Orange-crowned Warbler on the Fairhope campus  
of Coastal Alabama Community College - Photo by Kathy Hicks



Executive Director	2
The Bentley Legacy	3
Clara Zubrick	4
Davis Calametti	4
Bald Eagle Bash	5
Volunteers Clean Waterways	6
Conservation Projects	7
Welcome Aboard	8-9
Honeysuckle Azalea	9
Donors	10-11

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**Executive Director**

Connie Whitaker

Our mission is to protect land and promote environmental education in south Alabama so current and future residents can enjoy clean water and the seafood, wildlife, and outdoor recreation that define our area.

Cover photo by  
 Kathy Hicks

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## From the Executive Director . . .



Who would have ever imagined that my first note to you would be written with the challenging effects that COVID-19 is having on all our lives. What was routine a month or even a week or two ago is far from routine now. Even sending our kids to school is not currently an option. In no way is it business as usual for any of us as we navigate through these difficult times.

For me, personally, some of the places where life feels the most normal is walking on the beach, or through the nature park by my house or at the Weeks Bay Reserve. Based on the number of people I saw enjoying these resources over the weekend, it seems as though I am not the only person who feels this way. In fact, there is evidence to show that it's safer to be outside than inside when it comes to disease transmission, as long as you are following health department guidelines. Getting fresh air and a few minutes of moderate to brisk activity can help boost your immune system and your mental attitude! So that's what I will continue to do – both for my physical and mental well-being. It's amazing what watching a beautiful sunset can do for the psyche!

Along those lines, what a pleasure it is to work with such committed staff, board members, and community partners who are so passionate about protecting this beautiful place we call home. We enjoy an outdoor quality of life that others envy, but this can come at a price. The more I see how quickly we are losing our beautiful coastal lands to development, the more I see the urgency in protecting them for future generations. That's what the Weeks Bay Foundation is all about.

While none of us can predict the extent or severity of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Weeks Bay Foundation remains committed to our long-term mission. This year we are on schedule to protect more than 1,000 acres of critical lands and habitats in south Alabama and open two nature preserves.

I can't thank you enough for your ongoing support and passion for our mission. We could not do what we do without you!

Connie Whitaker



## The Bentley legacy - conserving Magnolia River



When William Carey Bentley, Jr. passed away on December 24, 2019, six weeks after his 100th birthday, his family immediately decided to honor his legacy and his love of Magnolia River by establishing the Carey and Billie Bentley Magnolia River Conservation Fund with the Weeks Bay Foundation.

Carey, as he was known to friends and family, and his wife Billie lived for many years on Magnolia River in their retirement. Carey served on the Foundation Board of Directors from 1997 to 2009 where he chaired the Membership Committee. The Bentleys were also regular volunteers with the Weeks Bay Reserve before moving back to Chattanooga in 2016 to be near family.

“Carey was a capable, well-organized, and dependable volunteer for Weeks Bay Reserve,” Fred Nation, a long-time volunteer with the Reserve, said. “He was the treasurer of the Reserve Volunteers for about 25 years, and kept immaculate records. I met Carey at the first fall plant sale, where he and Billie were two of the six people who did all of the loading and unloading, labeling, watering, and selling.”

Mike Shelton, Coastal Training Program and Watershed Coordinator with the Reserve, said Carey was active in leading the Weeks Bay Watershed Project from its inception in the mid-1990s.

“He was a constant, working with three watershed coordinators and several renditions of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC),” Mike said. “Several times over the years, Carey chaired the CAC and led public meetings that guided the writing of one of the first watershed management plans in Alabama.”

Mike went on to say that even with all of his service to the Weeks Bay Reserve and the Weeks Bay Watershed Project, he thought he would most remember Carey’s faithful water testing at his dock on Magnolia River.

For more than 10 years, Carey participated in Weeks Bay Water Watch, keeping an eye on the health of the Magnolia River. His data contributed to securing the Outstanding Alabama Waters classification.

Murry Bentley, one of the Carey’s two sons, shared a story about his father and the water testing.

“Early in his Weeks Bay efforts, Carey began taking periodic water samples from the Magnolia River, testing for temperature, turbidity, oxygen content, pH, and so forth,” Murry said. “This involved a trip by boat out into the river, with gear for gathering water samples at depth and performing chemical assays. As with all scientific work, controls were in order, so the samples were taken regularly, always from the same place in the river, and at the same several depths.

“On one occasion, he went out in a boat with a friend who joined in the testing effort. They arrived at the standard sampling site and weighed anchor. As it splashed, and the line fed over the side of the boat, the two turned to gathering water samples and performing their tests. After a while, they noticed they were drifting downriver from the site, and they puzzled over how that could happen. Had they forgotten to toss the anchor? Soon enough they discovered the line to the anchor was nowhere to be found, and realized it had not been attached to the boat....they had thrown the anchor overboard and it had disappeared into the river, along with its line, somewhere upstream of their present location.”

Murry said that on telling the story, his father laughed and noted that, somewhere in the middle of the Magnolia River lies an anchor and a line, but with no boat attached to the other end.

“Today, with mullet jumping above, that anchor and line silently bide time on the river bottom in durable testament to Carey’s diligent performance of his volunteer duties and acknowledging his substantial, important legacy at the Weeks Bay Foundation,” Murry added.

The Foundation is developing a plan to utilize the funds in a way that is consistent with the family’s wishes. Donations to the fund can be mailed to Weeks Bay Foundation, 11404 US Highway 98, Fairhope, AL 36532, or given online at [weeksbay.org/donate](http://weeksbay.org/donate).



## Get to Know: Clara Zubrick Education and events assistant, Weeks Bay Reserve



Originally from Houston, Texas, Clara Zubrick, education and events assistant with the Weeks Bay Reserve found her way to Alabama by way of Huntingdon College in Montgomery. She later transferred to the University of Mobile where she received a bachelor of science in marine biology.

Today, Clara assists the Reserve's education coordinator with the Reserve's K-12 program, including scheduling, teacher outreach, and leading field trips. She also assists with teacher workshops and professional development.

"I also get to do a fair bit of citizen science," Clara said, "like the 'Track the Tides' effort on Fish River that allows us to track nuisance flooding events. We gather and report data so we can give the information to residents on the river."

In her events assistant role, Clara handles event scheduling for the Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center. "This is a new and exciting role," Clara said, "and although we are already renting the space for various state agencies and non-profits, we are still working out a lot of the details for other uses."

## Get to Know: Davis Calametti System-wide monitoring program technician, Weeks Bay Reserve

Luck has been on the side of Davis Calametti recently. After the Auburn graduate completed a season with GulfCorps, a citizen conservation program that provides approximately 300 short-term jobs for local citizens who receive training and field experience with ecological restoration, he was hired by the Weeks Bay Reserve for maintenance labor. Eight months later the Reserve had another opening—biologist aide—and Davis "was in the right place at the right time."

Today, Davis is the system-wide monitoring program technician for the Reserve. As such, Davis collects and manages water quality data and sends that data to the Centralized Data Management Office of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, an online database used for monitoring water and water quality.

"The research is used to help people on the front lines better manage their wetlands, determine the value of wetlands, and the effects of the wetlands on the watershed," Davis said.

Although he started college as an engineering major, he quickly realized it was not a good fit and transferred to environmental science. He wanted to work outside.

"I didn't know at the time that I'd be getting into the conservation side, but working with GulfCorps, I realized how much I enjoyed it and cared about it," Davis said. "I worked hard at it, and I think people noticed. It feels great to have a job in my field and to be able to use my degree for what I want to do."





## We thank our sponsors, partners, and community for the support



Following the recommendations of the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concerning public gatherings the Weeks Bay Foundation canceled the 11th Annual Bald Eagle Bash, currently scheduled for April 25.

The Bald Eagle Bash is the Foundation's biggest fundraiser, and supports the work to protect land, water, and habitats in south Alabama.

"During times such as this, donations naturally taper off and we all rightfully turn our attention to those in need," Ellis Allen, M.D., chairman of the Foundation's Board of Directors said. "As your local non-profit land trust, we rely on fundraising events, memberships, donations, and grants to sustain this important work throughout the

year. While we are asking staff to review all expenses and operate on as lean a budget as possible, our mission of protecting your natural resources will not change."

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## 2020 Bash Restaurants

*Please support these fine restaurants by checking their website and Facebook pages for take-out and curbside meals.*

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Wok by the Bay



## Volunteers remove 1,563 pounds of debris from waterways



(Left to right) Robin Luce, Riley Hutchinson, Leigh Martin and Brien Martin pose for a photo after volunteers filled the JubileeScape truck with the 1,500 pounds of trash. Many thanks to JubileeScape for providing the truck and hauling the debris to the landfill.



Father and son, Edgar Garcia and Edgar Garcia-Caldera, made a great team!



Nancy Tuttle is a regular volunteer with the Floating Cleanups!



Renie Kennemer of the Thompson Engineering Eco-Team gathers the trash she and her team collected.

Trash clean ups, where volunteers pick up debris along beaches and roadways, provide an invaluable service to the communities they serve. But cleaning up along shorelines, where the trash cannot be reached on foot, requires volunteers in canoes, kayaks, and motorboats that assist as floating “dumpsters” for heavy materials.

On a cold and breezy morning in February, volunteers collected more than 1,500 pounds of trash during the Weeks Bay Foundation’s 4th annual February Floating Cleanup! With the help of our friends from Osprey Initiative, the Thompson Engineering Eco-Team, and JubileeScape, volunteers gathered trash and recycling from the banks of Weeks Bay and Fish River.

This was the second year in a row that we focused 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.

Now that we’ve cleaned that area two years in a row, boaters and fishermen should notice a positive change along the banks of those waterways.

Recent research shows that the majority of trash in our waters is plastic. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (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 small 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.

Several volunteers focused on the Foundation’s Crescent Point property, 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. Others focused on the eastern edge of Weeks Bay, across from the boat launch.

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## Long-term land: a tale of two conservation projects

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As many prepared for Christmas and the new year, the Weeks Bay Foundation was busy bringing two big land projects to closing. These two properties are very different, but they both border important waterways, and their conservation means those waterways will also be protected.

### Owens Bayou

Between the heavily developed GlenLakes Country Club and the tidal waters of Wolf Bay in south Baldwin County, runs Owens Bayou. This small tributary carries water from Muriel Lake and the adjacent home sites out to the bay. Along the way, the channel widens and meanders. It slowly moves through the wooded wetlands south of County Road 12. During that time, it has the chance to deposit sediment, pollutants, and excess nutrients. If the land surrounding Owens Bayou were to be developed, the waters would move more swiftly, lessening the chance of filtration and increasing the sediment and other pollutants reaching Wolf Bay.

With the protection of 42 acres along the bayou, this is no longer a concern. The landowner, 68 Ventures, has donated the property for conservation. With their vision and financial support, the Weeks Bay Foundation now owns the Owens Bayou Tract and will protect it forever. The beautiful ferns, the gum trees, the crawfish burrows, and even the snakes will live without disruption!

### Williams Family Preserve

In early 2016, the Weeks Bay Foundation began talking with Mr. Ed Williams, Jr. about protecting his family's land at the mouth of Weeks Bay. This property, directly across from the Pelican Point boat and fishing access, had been a priority for preservation for more than 30 years.

The Williams family was open to the idea of protecting the property and the Foundation had the opportunity to submit the property for funding from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill settlement. Over the next three years, the Williams family patiently waited for the project to be selected for NRDA (Natural Resource Damage Assessment) funding and passed through a number of reviews and public comment meetings. Fortunately, our partners at the Weeks Bay Reserve were able to bring nearly \$500,000 in NOAA matching funds to help move the project along.

On December 30, the purchase of the property closed, putting 165 acres of critical coastal habitat into conservation. The property contains a protected tidal stream with documented cases of Diamondback Terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*). It has acres of salt marsh, which serve as feeding and breeding ground for numerous wading and shore bird species. This land is now a protected Alabama State Lands property that will be maintained for these conservation values. It is also a lasting legacy for the Williams family.

Projects of this magnitude are impossible without patient landowners and supportive partners. It would have been easy for the transaction to fail at a thousands different points along the process. However, everyone involved knew that the preservation of this important habitat was worth compromise, communication, and commitment. We thank the Weeks Bay Reserve, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the NRDA Trustee Implementation Group for their partnership and support. Lastly, we thank the Williams family for trusting the process and sticking with us through nearly four years of deliberation.



# Welcome Aboard!

The Weeks Bay Foundation Board of Directors was pleased to welcome six new directors in 2019.

**Chesley Allegri** -- Chesley Allegri serves as a Financial Advisor and Certified Investment Management Analyst with the Radcliff-Schatzman Group at Morgan Stanley. As a Certified Investment Management Analyst, Chesley offers another layer of depth and experience to help meet the evolving goals of clients. She uses a modern wealth management strategy to offer first-class service and financial analysis to clients in today's technology-driven society. She is responsible for preparing financial plans, servicing corporate retirement plans, and business development. After growing up in Fairhope, Alabama, Chesley obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Finance and Economics from Auburn University. Over the years she has cultivated comprehensive knowledge and experience in investment products and consulting. She has worked in the financial services industry for over 11 years. Her roles on the Weeks Bay Foundation Board of Directors includes member of the Development and Communications and Bald Eagle Bash committees. In her free time, Chesley enjoys reading, yoga, fishing, paddling, and gardening. She is actively involved in Point Clear Rotary, Impact 100 Baldwin County, Mobile Baykeeper Young Advisory Council, and the Eastern Shore Chamber. She currently resides on Fly Creek with her yellow lab, Rudder.

**Coley M. Boone** -- Born and raised on Fish River, Coley Boone attended Christ the King and Bayside Academy before graduating from Fairhope High School in 2003. She achieved a Bachelor of Science from Auburn University. She moved back to Fairhope to work for the family business, Merritt Oil, beginning January 2008 and was hired by McPherson Oil to aid in the acquisition in 2009. Coley left McPherson in 2012 to work for Slidell Oil as they were growing into Alabama. In 2013, she took a job with AlaCOMP to be the marketing rep for south Alabama, a position she continues to hold while managing the remaining convenience store properties owned by her father and his partner. She also has a real estate license and recently moved her license to Bellator. Coley serves on the Thomas Hospital Foundation Board where she serves on the Finance Committee. She is a member of the Weeks Bay Foundation's Land Acquisition Committee. When campaign season is in full swing, Coley assists her husband, Scott, by keeping the books for his political consulting business. She enjoys boating, fishing, and spending time with her husband and two children, Lucy, 5, and Michael, 2.

**Jordan Collins** -- Jordan Collins is an environmental professional with management and compliance experience working in complex industrial environments. He has worked in all areas of the environmental field, including wetland delineations, air quality, water quality, and waste/recycling. Jordan holds an undergraduate degree in Biology from Huntingdon College and a Master of Science in Environmental Management from Samford University. Jordan lives in Silverhill on Fish River with his wife, Jordan, and their children, Daniel and Henley. In his spare time he enjoys golfing, fishing, and spending time with his family.

**David Green** -- David Green is a lawyer and entrepreneur experienced in environmental disaster recovery, contracting, and real estate investment and development. David knows, through decades of contracting and consulting, that helping people and their communities is an opportunity to problem solve with a purpose. Prior to founding GreenCo Services and other businesses, David served as an Assistant District Attorney, member of a real estate development company, and lead in-house counsel for two disaster recovery contracting firms where he was instrumental in the procurement, management, and performance of hundreds of millions of dollars of environmental recovery services contracting throughout the United States.

David earned a Bachelor of Arts from Auburn University, and a JD from Cumberland School of Law, where he was a member of the Negotiation Team. David is an avid outdoorsman and multi-Ironman finisher. He loves travel and spending time with his wife, Cristina, and their three children--David Jr., Alexander, and Andrea. The Greens are active members of Daphne United Methodist Church. David is a member of the Alabama and Baldwin County Bar Associations. In addition to serving on the Weeks Bay Foundation Board of Directors, David serves on the Executive Board of Directors for the Mobile Area Council of the Boy Scouts, and the Board of Directors of the Holmes Medical Museum.





**Mary Jane Ruch** -- Mary Jane Ruch is a resident of Perdido Beach, Alabama, where she and her husband live on Palmetto Creek. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of The University of Tennessee, her professional background is in corporate communications, editing, advertising, and public relations. She began her career with the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, and later worked in marketing for Union Planters National Bank, American National Bank (Sun-Trust), and Chattanooga, Tennessee's Riverbend Festival. She served on the Board of Directors of The Volunteer Center of Chattanooga and is a former member of the International Association of Business Communicators. On the Weeks Bay Foundation Board of Directors, Mary Jane serves on the Bald Eagle Bash Committee. She is an outdoor enthusiast, enjoying boating, fly fishing, wildflower identification, and quail hunting.

**Julie Wiggins, DNP, PNP, PMHS** -- Julie is a native of Fairhope, Alabama. She earned a Bachelor of Science in nursing at Troy State University. She earned a MS degree from South Alabama, as well as three master's certificates. Her background in children with special needs eventually led her to pursue a terminal degree in mental health that specialized in children with autism spectrum disorders. She completed her doctorate from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

In 2013, Dr. Wiggins opened the first privately-owned, inter-professional, developmental clinic in Alabama, Eastern Shore Developmental Clinic LLC. The clinic provides developmental and behavioral evaluations for infants and children with developmental differences. She has a long commitment to her community, having served on numerous community agencies and foundations. Dr. Wiggins recognizes the quality of life we value in south Alabama and understands the importance of conserving land for generations to come.

## Honeysuckle Azalea by Fred Nation



Honeysuckle azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*) are a delight for the senses as the pink or white fragrant flowers begin to bloom in the early spring. The large shrubs, up to 10 feet tall, lose their leaves in the fall and the flowers develop as the new foliage begins to form in late winter. Principal pollinators are bees, and later in the season swallowtail butterflies can be seen, busily "working" the sticky, fragrant flowers for their nectar.

The honeysuckle azalea is a popular landscape shrub. Container-grown plants are available from nurseries, garden centers, and plant sales. Native azaleas prefer moist, well-drained, sandy

soils in the "high shade" of large trees. Pine straw is an ideal mulch; as it decays it contributes to the soil acidity which native azaleas require to grow and remain healthy.

*Rhododendron canescens* is the most frequent native azalea in the Southeast, and it is thought by many to be the most beautiful. In March these magnificent native plants can be seen in their glory on the boardwalk behind the Visitors Center at the Weeks Bay Reserve!

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Lloyd and Beth Turner  
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#### **TRIBUTE GIFTS**

*In Memory of Ellen Glasscock*  
Robert Glasscock

*In Honor of Gina Walcott*  
The Staff of Walcott Adams  
Verneville Architects

*In Memory of Mrs. Margaret Luce*  
Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Horst

*In Memory of Carey Bentley*  
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Susan and Willie Heredia  
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Eve, Will, Chloe and Hank Brantley  
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Rick and Susie Wallace  
Billie, Larry and Murry Bentley  
Keith and Ann Eischeid  
Leslie Weeks  
Jeffrey and Elizabeth Grad  
George and Nancy Valadie II

*In Memory of Jack Edwards*  
Elizabeth Brinkley  
Suzanne Simms  
Harris and Fran Morrisette

*In Honor of John H. Martin*  
Robert and Pat Meaher

*In Honor of Christine and Kirby Erickson*  
Martha and Kenny Muscat

*In Honor of Dr. Elaine Klotz*  
David and Melinda Mercer

*In Memory of Henry A. Wise V*  
Johnny Wise

*In Memory of Harold C. Miller*  
Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Horst

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# Weeks Bay Foundation

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Rangeline Property

Photo by Diana Brewer

*"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." - William Shakespeare*

## You've helped the cause of land conservation!

### *Recent Weeks Bay Foundation accomplishments:*

The Williams Family Preserve, long in the works, closed in December adding 165 acres of critical coastal habitat to the lands protected by Alabama State Lands. Together with the Weeks Bay Reserve, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), this property will be a lasting legacy to the Ed Williams, Jr. family.

Forty-two acres of wooded wetlands surrounding Owens Bayou, a small tributary that runs into Wolf Bay in south Baldwin County, was recently added to the Weeks Bay Foundation's list of protected properties.

The Foundation is moving forward on the restoration of two public-access nature preserves—Rio Vista in Baldwin County and Rangeline in Mobile County. These will open to the public in late 2020.

Dozens of volunteers removed more than 1,500 pounds of trash from the water and the water's edges in and around Weeks Bay in February, making this navigable body of water safer for boaters, swimmers, and fishermen.

