

SFAS Conservation report 10-08-09

Biologist Jim Beever surprised members of the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management with the news that the red cockaded woodpecker is no longer endangered in the Estero Bay watershed. It's gone.

The Coral Reef Protection Act, which went into effect on July 1, 2009, increases the protection of Florida's endangered coral reefs by helping raise awareness of the damages associated with vessel groundings and anchoring on coral reefs. It also authorizes penalties for the destruction of reef resources and provides for efficient repair and mitigation of reef injuries. I am hoping that this act can be used to prevent massive destruction to the coral reef in the widening of the Port Everglades entry channel.

After more than five years of work by Oceana and others, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved a plan to protect more than 23,000 square miles of known deep-sea coral, from North Carolina to Florida, from destructive fishing gear. It's believed to be the largest contiguous distribution of pristine deepwater coral ecosystems in the world. The decision will now be sent to NOAA for approval, and new regulations will likely take effect by the end of 2009.

The U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Environment Subcommittee has approved the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2009 to control Harmful Algal Blooms. This bill requires federal agencies to create a comprehensive and integrated strategy to address and reduce harmful algal blooms and hypoxia (inadequate oxygen in the water).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced Sept. 28 the award of a construction contract that will replace one mile of the Tamiami Trail with a bridge. This will remove a key portion of the most formidable barrier to fresh water flows to northeastern Everglades National Park and will lead to benefits for the entire Everglades ecosystem. Projected completion of the bridge and road-raising construction is 2013.

A 2000+ acre property known as the Parkland Wedge has been ceded by Palm Beach County to Broward County and the City of Parkland, making the Hillsboro Canal the southern boundary of Palm Beach County. Arguments were that the Wedge property would be more properly developed within Broward County, and specifically within the City of Parkland, than in Palm Beach County.

Although largely unpopulated, the "Wedge" area requires some roadway access, utilities, drainage maintenance and emergency services that can be provided by Broward County without crossing the Hillsboro canal. This area is difficult to reach due to its remote locale, and access to the area from Palm Beach County is only available by traveling south on State Road 7 into Broward County. This is

the only bridge over the Hillsboro Canal in the area. Conveying the property gives Palm Beach County a more regular, geographically defined southern boundary.

Audubon President John Flicker applauded the introduction of the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, September 30, by Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer and Senator John Kerry.

Flicker said the legislation, "would make a huge difference by requiring dirty power plants to clean up their acts and by establishing strong short-term emission reduction targets. Big polluters will have to slash their contributions to global warming, while the plan will help repower America with clean energy, create new jobs and cut our dangerous dependence on oil.

Although SFAS had formulated an agreement in principle with Port Everglades officials regarding the deeding of a conservation easement over the existing mangrove stand and the new area to be developed as a mangrove stand in Port Everglades to FDEP and a third party to be determined, at the meeting of October 2nd, Phil Allen stated that he would not have such a conversation with Secretary Sole.

I stated that SFAS would have such a conversation with Secretary Sole on the premise that without the third party control, SFAS would withdraw its support for the expansion plan. Without third party control, there is no assurance that the Port Everglades administration and the BOCC would not develop more of the stand at some future date.

I am asking for board approval to draft a letter to Secretary Sole to that effect. In the event that we receive no satisfaction from Secretary Sole, I am further requesting approval to draft a letter to County and State environmental groups to stand with SFAS in opposition to the expansion plan.

Written by Grant Campbell