



Summary 2008

Roberts Bay North Watershed

*Our creeks and bays:  
love 'em or lose 'em!*

# Roberts Bay North

Watershed Management Plan

Public Workshop  
9 – 11 a.m.  
March 15, 2008

### Welcome

Judy LaMee  
*Facilitator*

### Presentations

Kelly Westover  
*Sarasota County*

Tony Janicki, Ph.D.  
*Janicki Environmental Services, Inc.*

Rob Wright  
*Sarasota County*

### Group Discussions

All

### Discussion Summary

Facilitator and All



*Support through the  
Southwest Florida Water  
Management District  
was made possible with funding  
from the Manasota Basin Board's  
Cooperative Funding Program*



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## Meeting goals

There were many goals for the workshop.

- Engage resident stakeholders in watershed management planning and help them to become watershed champions.
- Explain the project.
- Encourage open dialogue and examine together the possibilities that will improve Roberts Bay North.
- Explain things individuals and organizations can do.
- Frame discussion in non-scientific terms.
- Find ways to involve the community.

Guests were greeted by staff and team members as they entered, then were seated auditorium style for the opening session, which included introductory remarks, a PowerPoint presentation with three speakers, and a breakout session. Linda Larsen asked guests how they learned of the meeting. All but one indicated they learned through the newspaper, one by invitation.

After the PowerPoint presentation and a question and answer period, attendees were divided into four breakout groups to rotate among four stations, representing the four areas of focus: water quality, water supply, flood protection and natural systems. County staff and/or consultants led the small groups in brief discussions about their specific areas. Attendees voted with a single dot at each station for the topic they considered most important. It was noted that more than one commented they needed more dots, as each area was important to address.

## Attendance

- Approximately 33 members of the public attended.
- We now have e-mail addresses for 20 interested parties.
- One media representative attended, for the Herald-Tribune. Roger Drouin indicated his newspaper would be interested in a larger article once actual work begins. He wrote an article prior to the meeting, but distribution was limited to the South Sarasota section of the paper. It was not available online.

## Meeting debrief notes

At the meeting's conclusion, staff and consultants met to debrief. Included in the discussion were Kelly Westover, Rob Wright, Jack Merriam, Hans Zarbock, Tony Janicki and Judy LaMee. Observations offered:

- Many of meeting goals were met.
- Audience was generally well informed.
- Good job putting materials together.
- Could do better explaining "dot" voting method.

## Questions/issues raised by attendees:

- All topics in breakout sessions are important. Need to do them all.
- Need to increase public education campaign regarding enforcement.
- Get landscapers to comply with regulations regarding fertilizer and yard waste.
- Attendee wants to know where to find rain barrels, cisterns.
- Surtax funds: can they be used for stormwater reuse, perhaps in the form of citizen rebates?
- Press: If I put in bioswale, will the county haul the dirt away? Perhaps the county can find use for it.
- Roger Drouin, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, will write on sedimentation and monitor the results of meeting follow-up.
- Hans wants to get the historic 1974 report on hydrology of Grand Canal System mentioned by one of the attendees. Wants to post it to Water Atlas website.
- Pond near fire department on Siesta Key needs NEST approach/solution. This could easily become a demonstration project.
- One attendee wants to do volunteer monitoring of chlorophyll.

## Follow-up

- Need to keep connected with meeting attendees. Get back to this audience with:
  1. Meeting proceedings.
  2. What you can do regarding the dots.

## Logistically

- South Gate Association meeting location was convenient, appropriate. Can accommodate approximately 100.
- Need bell or microphone to avoid shouting at audience.



**Feedback**

- Most attendees stayed to participate in the breakout discussions.
- Survey summary follows in Table 1 - Meeting survey results.
- Comment card notes included in bullet list below.
- Online survey results begin on page 4.

**Table 1 - Meeting survey results**

Statement Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I now understand more about watersheds and watershed management than I did before the meeting.	14% (2/14)	72% (10/14)	14% (2/14)	
The speakers were well prepared.	72% (10/14)	28% (4/14)		
The information was clear and easy to understand.	57% (8/14)	43% (6/14)		
The meeting place and time were convenient.	64% (9/14)	29% (4/14)	7% (1/14)	

Survey comments from attendees:

- Well presented. The individual breakout Q&As were probably even more helpful. Good handouts also.
- Please have the appropriate staffer contact me regarding labeling storm drains “runs into the bay.” Thank you!
- Very well done. Great to see the county involved in this area. Keep it up. Would like to see the county involved in rain barrel program.
- The workshop was very informative. It’s encouraging to know things are being done to improve the bay and the watershed.
- Have real concerns about sediment buildup in Phillippi Creek.
- Good presentation. Hope there is follow through.
- Very good start for me. Hope the county puts some clout into lawns being over-watered especially if there is a well. Where can I purchase a barrel – plastic?
- I’m pleased that you want to improve the quality of runoff. I would like to help to establish the canal system to more than an open sewer.
- LID standards – where are they? What’s taking so long?
- My interest is in the grand canal of Siesta Key. It was originally for passing artesian well water to Roberts Bay. There is very little artesian wells today and so impossible to go back. The question is what should be are [our] goals for the canal system.
- We’re members of NEST and are doing many things talked about today because of that. Why are you using Styrofoam cups?
- Introduce some type of medical prescription disposal-like site at doctor offices or drug stores.

**Table 2 - Breakout session votes**

Attendees voted on which topics they considered most important with red dots, one dot per topic. The most popular topic is bold.

Topic	Number of Votes	Facilitator(s)
<b>Water Quality</b>		John Ryan and Tony Janicki
• Monitoring	8	
• Nutrients and runoff	8	
• Low impact techniques	11	
<b>Natural Systems</b>		Mike Jones and Aubrey Phillips
• Natural lands	6	
• Florida Yards and Neighborhoods	7	
• Aquatic habitat conservation	7	
<b>Water Supply</b>		Tony Dawood
• Drinking water sources	3	
• Conservation	11	
• Stormwater reuse	5	
<b>Flood Protection</b>		Scott Woodman and Hans Zarbock
• Increase porous surfaces	12	
• Capital improvement program	5	

Workshop attendees' comments and votes centered on low impact development techniques, managing sediment, protecting habitat and conserving drinking water to protect the creeks and bays in the Roberts Bay North watershed.

A three-question survey was posted at [scgov.net](http://scgov.net) beginning Feb. 8, 2008 as an additional way to gather input from the community. Individual responses follow in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Online survey comments**

1. What are your concerns?

- Saving wildlife and humans
- I am interested in increasing the reduction of fertilizers, pesticides, and sewage from entering our waterways. I would like to see more improvements in the area of storm water ponds, the reduction of exotic plants and the continued purchasing and protecting wetlands via the county's ESLPP program.
- The fish species has gone down over the past 20 years. Higher quality fish species have given way less desirable ones.
- What's happening to Midnight Pass project?
- Fertilizer runoff!
- Pollution and access for county residents.
- Stormwater going directly into Phillippi Creek and the poor resident fish population
- Pollution and access for county residents.



### Table 3 - Online survey comments

#### 1. What are your concerns? (cont.)

- 1. Fertilizer run-off (Commercial and home owner) [County Ordinance was a great move, now education, monitoring, and enforcement are necessary], 2. Pesticides applied adjacent to -or- to ditches, canals, creeks, and other connected water features. [County IPM ordinance should aid in reducing amount and choosing better herbicides for County maintained areas. But, what are other individuals/communities doing? How can they be incorporated in the process of making the best choices], 3. Parrot feather, wild taro, waterlettuce, water hyacinth and other exotics seem to be increasing in this watershed (as well as the county as a whole). Additionally, Brazilian Pepper(as well as invasive grasses) use the canal/ditch/creek banks that are repeatedly cleared as a reservoir that they spread from. A more coordinated effort to reduce invasives could increase natives, improve stormwater issues, and water quality as it moves toward the bay. 4. Keep with better designed mitigation projects and continue with purchasing quality wetlands (ELSPP). [County has been making a great effort in this but with budget concerns may consider doing less. But, it is worth it to spend more to have a better watershed]
- I was born here/raised here....you are doing rock rip/rap on a bird island, saying it is caused by boats...where are your heads at... that island has been diminishing in size since Midnight Pass closed. The shear volume of water going in/out of Big Pass and Venice Inlet has caused the erosion...who are you guys who figure this out?
- pollution/run-off
- Code enforcement is in disarray and ill trained. County rules force people to build eco-destroying structures in order to get a permit. IE. Since I replaced a 20 year old rotting boat slip lift with a kayak dock on my own property I am told that I must take it down and must now place the dock out into the canal or replace it with another motorized boat lift. Or, I can extend the seawall and fill in the old slip with dirt, or I can build a new dock to 25% of the distance across the canal(app23ft) right of way. Does this make sense? This is county-wide. The rules need to be green friendly and not punish the green group, or the fish and wildlife.
- Everything in this county is being done for the wealthy & attracting the wealthy. LARGE condo's on the water, leaving no public access! They are being built right up to the water! We're losing mangroves too. The county even allows industrial parks right up against the "supposed wild" areas, like the bird preserve. Obviously, those that plan our county aren't the brightest lightbulbs in the box!
- Taxes
- I live one block from the bay on Vamo Drive which dead ends at Little Sarasota or Roberts Bay (not sure which). I have lived here since 1992 and have seen the bay become more and more polluted due to both fertilizer runoff and the lack of tidal action to name two factors. What has happened to the proposal to reopen Midnight Pass? Surely enough studies have been done by now to determine that it would benefit our stagnant waters between New Pass and Venice Pass to dredge it out.
- There are not enough boat launches ( and parking spaces for trailers ) for all those who want access to the bay. The bay should be available to all of the Sarasota County residents....not just the wealthy.
- The fish are disappearing along with places to fish from the shore
- I am a partner in a company called Get Microsolutions based in Co. We have two products called Get Green and Get Growing that the residents of Sarasota County can spray on their lawns and have green grass with no!! pollution. The products consist of selected natural microorganisms that will not pollute the environment! We call them people, pet and planet safe! If you want your county residents to be able to do something about the water pollution that you are experiencing you need to talk to me and let me demonstrate how our products Get Green and Get Growing can eliminate pollution that occurs when synthetic commercial fertilizers are applied to lawns in your county. My challenge to you is to do something by calling me and allowing me to bring these products to the lawns in your county. We offer a 100% money back guarantee on our products because they work. You get green grass without pollution! Thanks for your time and consideration! I hope that you are serious about your concern and effort to protect your water resources from pollution and will give me a call.

### Table 3 - Online survey comments

#### 2. What are you doing now for the watershed?

- N/A
- My family and I are trying to use the least amount of water needed to water our grass and plants, watering at night and only on certain days. We also make sure we only use the least harmful fertilizer out there, and even with that, we use the smallest amount needed.
- Not using fertilizer.
- I reduced my grass areas down to 10 percent of my yard.
- Use no fertilizers. Minimal use of pesticides and never near waterfeatures.
- Use Florida friendly and Native plants that require less resources.
- Participate in coastal clean up efforts.
- Speak to local groups/ attempt to educate others about these issues.
- Contributing to the discussion on Midnight Pass. Not using lawn fertilizer. Voting out the Republicans!
- Being more mindful of when to use "enhancements" on my lawn.
- Why should I when you do not spend my 30k in taxes well....who are you?
- I have a green yard and kayak dock of ecofriendly wood (the dock on 21 yr old pilings from a 1987 permitted boat lift in my own yard boat slip) (which the county insists I must take down) I use no fertilizer and have about 5 yrs ago planted Florida-friendly plants within 10-20 ft of the canal. Nothing from my yard will enter the canal. I generally eat from my no-pesticide garden.
- My family never pollutes. Never water our lawn, that's for snooty people that want to impress their neighbors! We actually clean up others messes around area ponds, etc. We do not use chemicals of any sort on our lawn either. Once again, too many people trying to keep up appearances, ruin it for everyone.
- In the years that I have lived on this property I have never used any commercial fertilizers nor insecticides (my property is nearly an acre of mostly native plants). My yard has been organic for so long that dragonflies take care of the mosquitoes and ladybugs eat whatever aphids appear. Though I have and have had a well I only hand water sparingly when I have new plantings.
- Pay taxes
- Eliminated all lawn chemicals
- I enjoy being there as often as possible, and support any efforts to improve or preserve it
- Not polluting the ditches and swells that lead to it.

#### 3. What would you be willing to do?

- Perhaps a county marketing education campaign explaining if "you dump you drink" and post signs along watersheds and creeks for awareness.
- Reduce use of grass area/fertilizer even further. This is OUR county, and we need to keep it beautiful, so I would most likely be willing to do whatever's needed.
- More of same
- Volunteer. Sacrifice. Pay higher taxes.
- I am willing to what I am currently doing and more. If the county can lead with more programs and work with other agencies to make the watershed better, I will support it in every way I can.
- Use them less often.
- I will support ANY effort to open Midnight Pass again. I was on a jetski last year after a lot of rain....the bays are all interconnected as you know--but when I taste the water in Little Sarasota Bay and it is FRESH tasting....I do not know what to say...estuaries? Jeez, we had more shrimp in the Midnight Pass then we could catch in the '70's, my question is WHAT WILL YOU DO !
- I would be willing to work with a green education group in an attempt to educate folks re the dangers of not protecting the environment. I would also like to help a committee rewrite the county regulations to be more eco-friendly and to reward the folks who try to protect the environment, rather that punish them.

### Table 3 - Online survey comments

#### 3. What would you be willing to do? (cont.)

- Applaud when those waterside mausoleums are torn down. And also when our waterways are acceptable to the “masses” and accessible for those that aren’t filthy wealthy & greedy!!! I’d really like to see equal amounts of public access as there are private. THAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST MISTAKE THIS COUNTY HAS EVER MADE. CATER TO THE SNOBS!!!!!!
- Sell them some swampland for 5.1 million
- Support storm water improvements.
- How can I help?
- Educate the public about how they hurt our waterways even if they don’t live near them

Survey responses centered around the following topics:

- Conservation of habitat and wildlife.
- County and private landscape management.
- Stormwater runoff pollution and the effect on water quality in estuary.
- Public access to water.

Some of the ways Sarasota County is working to address conservation of habitat and wildlife is through the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program and by encouraging residents to create native buffers along water courses. Florida Yards and Neighborhoods principles are promoted throughout the county through the Cooperative Extension Office to increase native plants and reduce stormwater pollution from our yards. Sarasota County has partnered with the Southwest Florida Water Management District to develop a Low Impact Development Manual for new and redevelopment in our area to change the way we build things today.

Many participants expressed an interest in volunteering to protect the health of our creeks and bays. The Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team Program (NEST) works with residents every day to protect and improve our watersheds. Contact Rob Wright at 941-861-0929 or [rwright@scgov.net](mailto:rwright@scgov.net).

#### Next steps:

Participants can stay updated on the watershed plan development by going to [scgov.net](http://scgov.net), clicking on County A-Z, and click on “W” for “watersheds”. On the watershed page, click on the Roberts Bay North watershed on the map.

All workshop materials will be available for download on the website.

Please contact Kelly Westover, Project Manager, at 941-861-0526 or [kwestover@scgov.net](mailto:kwestover@scgov.net) with any questions on the Roberts Bay North Watershed Management Plan.

The next meeting is expected to take place sometime in the fall of 2009.

### Meeting publicity

- A three-question online survey was posted to scgov.net Feb. 8.
- E-mail blast from Neighborhoods office was sent on Feb. 19.
- Invitations were mailed to homeowner associations on Feb. 29.
- FYI video scripted, shot and aired two weeks prior to meeting. Dave Hannon produced.
- Guest column, authored by Jack Merriam, appeared in Sarasota Herald-Tribune Sunday, March 9, and in the Pelican Press Thursday, March 13.
- Press release was distributed on March 4.
- Phone chats were initiated with Zac Anderson and Roger Drouin, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, and Stan Zimmerman, Pelican Press to encourage premeeting coverage.
- County page ad ran Sunday, March 9.
- E-mail blast from Neighborhoods office was sent on March 10, correcting location info in county ad.
- The meeting info was posted on scgov.net March 10.
- Roger Drouin, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, wrote an article March 12 for the South Sarasota section.
- Watersheds Web page at scgov.net went live March 13.
- Stan Zimmerman, Pelican Press, wrote an article March 13 about the meeting and described Roberts Bay North "a mess."
- Roger Drouin, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, wrote a follow-up article March 19 for the South Sarasota section.

See following pages for articles printed in local media outlets.

Sarasota Herald-Tribune  
Sunday, March 9, 2008

What: Roberts Bay North Public Workshop  
When: 9-11 a.m., Saturday  
Where: Southgate Community Association, 3145 Southgate Circle, Sarasota  
Details: Phone the Sarasota County Call Center at (941) 861-5000 and ask to speak to someone about watersheds.

### Public workshop will look at health of creeks and bays Interested?

*By Jack Merriam, Guest Columnist*

As Florida residents, we are richly blessed with nature's bounty. On any given day, we have many choices of how to spend our time enjoying it.

Without leaving home, we can marvel at the activities of varied species of migratory birds. With a bit more effort, we can cast a fishing line into bays, streams or the Gulf. Swimming, boating, water-skiing and parasailing appeal to many. Biking and hiking along natural and manmade trails offer opportunities for exercise while basking in the beauties of our area's nature.

Yet those who have lived here for more than a handful of years know that many of these riches have diminished over time, that the habitat that supports our wildlife has shrunk and that many of our water bodies are less than pristine. Human activity is directly responsible for much of this loss, if not directly through our own actions, then through our choices as consumers: the cars we drive, the roads we drive on, the recreational activities we choose, the homes we live in -- and more.

*(cont. on next page)*



Sarasota County has launched a series of watershed studies to develop the proper science and community-based vision as a foundation for formulating, evaluating, prioritizing and implementing watershed management actions. We're calling our watershed program "Our creeks and bays: love 'em or lose 'em." It's that important.

At the most basic level, a watershed is defined as the land area that drains into a stream, pond, reservoir, bay or other body of water. Each of us lives in a watershed.

Sarasota County will host a public workshop to discuss the Roberts Bay North Watershed from 9-11 a.m. Saturday at the Southgate Community Association, 3145 Southgate Circle, in Sarasota. County staff, engineers and environmentalists and interested residents will work together to understand the issues and to propose ways they can work together toward acceptable solutions.

Interestingly, Sarasota County has two water bodies named Roberts Bay. To further confuse the issue, the two bays are not connected with each other in any way. This workshop will discuss the land and water bodies that drain into the Roberts Bay North watershed, which consists of Phillippi Creek, Matheny Creek and Siesta Key and is completely separate from Roberts Bay, which lies in Nokomis.

Ditching and draining for agriculture and flood control during the early to mid-20th century have impacted the watershed's natural topography. The watershed has also been affected by septic systems and private waste-water treatment plants. We monitor such things as water quality, and also the presence of seagrasses and juvenile oyster populations as we evaluate the condition of our creeks and bays. These indicators reveal a great deal.

New development and redevelopment in Sarasota County benefit from recent storm-water and landscaping regulations. Low-impact design manages storm water on individual lots by capturing rainfall on site. This approach closely mimics nature by helping to control downstream flooding, reducing water pollution and the imbalance of fresh and salt water in the estuaries. The county's landscape and fertilizer management ordinances prescribe appropriate plant materials, as well as fertilizer type and application schedule.

Fortunately, we also know there are many common-sense actions individuals and groups can take that, collectively, can make a big difference in the overall health of our water bodies. These activities start at our own homes, in our own yards.

County-sponsored programs such as Keep Sarasota County Beautiful, NEST (Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Teams) and Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, provide assistance and opportunities for individuals and groups to work toward improving the conditions in our creeks and bays. These groups schedule events and can also help you to plan your own, ranging from litter pickups to shoreline planting to removing invasive species to selecting the right plant materials for your own projects.

Awareness is the first step. Understanding that our actions today influence our ability to enjoy these valuable -- and limited -- natural resources tomorrow is key. Working together, and only through working together, can we reverse the harmful trends of years past. This work is important in all the county's watersheds. At the Saturday workshop, we'll focus on Roberts Bay North, but the others are no less significant. Attend the workshop or contact us to learn more about how you or your group can get involved.

Jack Merriam is manager, Sarasota County Water Resources. E-mail: [jmerriam@scgov.net](mailto:jmerriam@scgov.net)

Pelican Press  
Thursday, March 13, 2008



## Our creeks and bays: love'em or lose'em

By Jack Merriam

As Sarasota County residents, we are richly blessed with nature's bounty. On any given day, we have many choices of how to spend our time enjoying it.

Without leaving home, we can marvel at the activities of varied species of migratory birds. With a bit more effort, we can cast a fishing line into bays, streams or gulf. Swimming, boating, water skiing and parasailing appeal to many. Biking and hiking along natural and manmade trails offer opportunities for exercise and basking in the beauties of our area's nature at the same time.

Yet those who have lived here for more than a handful of years know that many of these riches have diminished over time, that the habitat that supports our wildlife has shrunk and that many of our water bodies are less than pristine. Human activity is directly responsible for much of this loss, if not directly through our own actions, then through our choices as consumers: the cars we drive, the roads we drive on, the recreational activities we choose, the homes we live in - and more.

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*(cont. on next page)*



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\* Jack Merriam is manager of Sarasota County Water Resources.

Sarasota Herald-Tribune South Sarasota page  
 Wednesday, March 12, 2008

STAFF PHOTOS / ROB MATTSOON / rob.mattsoo@heraldtribune.com

The Roberts Bay North Watershed plan could result in other projects, albeit much smaller, along Phillippi Creek that resemble this Celery Fields marsh restoration area on Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

# Ensuring health for a watershed

By ROGER DROUIN  
 roger.drouin@heraldtribune.com

**S**ARASOTA Seventy-seven percent of the Roberts Bay North Watershed area is developed with homes or businesses. And now, county officials are working on a plan that would improve water quality in the entire 60-square-mile area that is the most urbanized watershed in the county.

The final plan could result in several smaller projects all working in conjunction to filter water draining into creeks and eventually Sarasota Bay.

One possibility includes projects that restore native marsh areas, which filter rainwater before it drains into waterways.

Other changes can be as simple as a volunteer program in a neighborhood bordering Phillippi Creek so that residents work with the county to plant native landscaping.

"We are trying to figure out what is best for the watershed," said Kelly Westover, environmental specialist with Sarasota County.

"We're focusing on the health of the creeks and the bay."

A public workshop Saturday is the first step in the planning process.

"We're going to use the public input when we implement the plan — what are the possibilities we all see for the future," Westover said.

The planning phase of the watershed project is estimated to cost \$600,000, with the Southwest Florida Water Management District paying for half. After the initial planning phase, funding is available for projects as part of the infra-



STAFF MAP / BARRY MCCARTHY

### INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

Sarasota County invites residents to discuss the Roberts Bay North Watershed.

**Time:** 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday

**Place:** South Gate Community Association, 3145 South Gate Circle, Sarasota.

structure sales tax, which voters renewed in November.

The Celery Fields near Fruitville Road, east of Interstate 75, is one example of a large project to improve water

Bostonians Alice Morgan, Charles Kogan, Bea Kogan and Dane Morgan watch birds from the Palmer Boulevard observation deck that overlooks the Celery Fields flood control ponds in Sarasota along Phillippi Creek. Restoring such native marsh areas helps to filter rainwater before it enters area creeks and streams.

quality and reduce flooding after heavy rains.

The county restored the native marsh environment at Celery Fields — 380 acres named for its former agricultural use.

Here, for acres and acres, tall grass lines Phillippi Creek and birds gather.

The Roberts Bay North Watershed plan could result in similar — albeit much smaller — projects along the creek.

One key element to this plan is finding a balance between water quality, flood control and the opportunity to re-use rainwater for irrigation, Westover said.



Pelican Press  
Thursday, March 13, 2008



### There's lots to do and this is the time to do it

By Stan Zimmerman

"Holy High Water, Batman! There's a lot of stuff happening on and about local waters."

"You're right, Robin. Button up the Batmobile and let's dive in."

15 March: Ever wonder where all our water pollution comes from? The answer will surprise you. You'll find out on Saturday at a community workshop sponsored by Sarasota County. It will examine the health and fate of a body of water you've probably never heard of - "North Roberts Bay."

You've seen it a thousand times, though. It lies south of the Siesta Key Bridge down to where Point Crisp juts into the bay. In other words, it's the bay behind most of Siesta Key. It is shallow and narrow, and its watershed - the area draining into it - contains roughly half the population of Sarasota County. A gasoline spill on I-75 eventually ends up in North Roberts Bay. Plus septic tanks, fertilizer, ad infinitum.

While Sarasota Bay has experienced a dramatic recovery in water quality, North Roberts Bay is a mess. Find out what you can do to help. 9 a.m., Saturday, 3145 Southgate Circle. You know it better as the traffic circle at the east end of Siesta Drive on the mainland, you know, where Siesta Drive ends in a circle at Tuttle Avenue; 3145 is about 1 o'clock on the circle if you're heading north on Tuttle. For info go to the county call center (861-5000) and ask about North Roberts Bay.

Robin: "Why can't we call it Siesta Bay, Batman?"

Batman: "Whatever you call it, that's where the Siesta Key Sailing Club races. The February series winner was Neptunita under Hans Wockenfuss with the power of a fully battened mainsail. Second place went to Dick Fox in Dad's Therapy. Goofy weather condensed the seven-race series into four. Competition begins again in April."

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Sarasota Herald-Tribune South Sarasota page  
 Wednesday, March 19, 2008



## Residents urge watershed work

By ROGER DROVIN  
 roger.drovin@heraldtribune.com  
**SARASOTA** — Phillippi Creek and Roberts Bay were listed recently as "impaired waterways" by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Years of population growth and sprawling construction caused higher-than-acceptable levels of bacteria in the creek and high levels of chlorophyll in the bay, which is one indication of fertilizer runoff.

At a workshop Saturday attended by about 50 residents, the county kicked off its project to improve water quality in the Roberts Bay North Watershed area.

About 42 percent of the city's residents live in the 60-square-mile watershed. It is also the most urbanized watershed in the county.

"We have to do something," said Johnnie Walker, a fishing guide and longtime Sarasota resident. "We can't keep going the way we are." The work has to start with individual homeowners, said Walker, who plants native landscaping and uses fertilizer only once a year on his lawn.

The best thing the county



can do, he said, is lead the way and show residents and neighborhood associations the small things they can do to help filter pollutants from the waterways.

As part of the watershed plan, county officials will compile a list of projects to be funded by the infrastructure sales tax renewed by voters in November. Possible projects include the restoration of native wetlands.

But before that happens, two consulting firms hired by

SEE BAY ON 20



HERALD-TRIBUNE ARCHIVE / 2008 / ROB MATTSON

Birds wade in a canal near the Celery Fields flood control ponds of Phillippi Creek. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection recently listed the creek and Roberts Bay as "impaired waterways," and the county held a workshop Saturday to discuss improvements.

## Residents urge work to improve watershed

### BAY FROM 10

the county will take an in-depth look at the quality of the waterways right now.

In the past, the county spent millions on flood control but spent very little money on projects to improve the quality of the waterways.

A watershed-wide approach is a big step, said Jack Merriam, environmental manager with the county.

"People move here because they love the bay," Merriam said. "When it turns green or there is a red tide bloom, no one likes it."

Ben Quartermaine, a Sarasota native and engineer, said he would like to see construction projects that have less of an impact on the environment.

Narrower asphalt and better drainage are examples of ways to create low-impact roadways.

Septic tanks along Phillippi Creek have been a major source of pollution in the creek.

The county is working to replace septic tanks along the

"People move here because they love the bay. When it turns green or there is a red tide bloom, no one likes it."

JACK MERRIAM,

a county environmental manager

creek, but a funding shortfall has slowed the project, and only about 40 percent of the septic tanks have been converted to the county's sewage system.

The remaining septic tanks continue to be a problem, Merriam said.

Caroline Phillips, who attended Saturday's workshop, said Siesta Key residents have a huge responsibility to be good stewards of the environment.

She said it infuriates her every time she spots landscape workers using leaf blowers to push grass clipping into canals or boaters hosing fuel and oil into the water.

Roberts Bay North Watershed

Invitation Front



### Invitation Inside

#### *We need your help!*

This is an invitation to a workshop where you can learn more about risks to Robert's Bay North and how we can protect and improve it by working together.

Stormwater that enters our bays carries all sorts of unhealthy substances. Pet waste, yard waste, pesticide and fertilizer runoff all pollute our water bodies. Roberts Bay North suffers from these pollutants.

Government cannot solve the problem alone. To be effective, we must work together to find and implement long-term, joint solutions for improving the health of our bays.

Will you join us to become a part of the solution? It's too important – for our bay health and our property values – not to.

This interactive workshop will include a discussion facilitated by community leaders, scientists, engineers and county staff, to get input on what you think could – and should – be accomplished there, and how you can help achieve the goal. It's your watershed. Your commitment to the success of any project we develop there is vital.

We look forward to your participation on March 15. Please tell your neighbors about this opportunity.

#### *Public Meeting for Roberts Bay North*

Saturday, March 15

9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Southgate Community Association

3145 Southgate Circle




#### **Watershed survey**

We would like to know your concerns about the watershed even if you cannot attend the meeting. Log on to [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).


*A map to the meeting site is printed on the back.*



Invitation Back




**Contact information**  
 For more information about this meeting contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask about Roberts Bay North.




**Southgate Community Association**  
 3145 Southgate Circle

Support through the Southwest Florida Water Management District was made possible with funding from the Manatee Basin Board's Cooperative Funding Program.



SWFWMD.ORG | 1-888-433-8476



## Sarasota County Watershed Story: Roberts Bay North

### *Our creeks and bays: love 'em or lose 'em!*

Sarasota County's landscape is defined in large measure by the hundreds of waterways – bays, creeks, canals and ponds – that connect to make up our watersheds.

A watershed is the land area that drains into a stream, pond, reservoir, bay or other body of water. Rain that falls within the watershed is delivered through small swales and ditches to tributaries that flow to our bays. It is important to recognize that the things we all do on the land affect the quality of our watersheds, including Roberts Bay North – and our own quality of life.

Today Sarasota County is examining all our county's watersheds to determine the best plan for restoring their health, to the greatest extent possible. As we perform those examinations, we invite you to join us in developing effective solutions that will reverse harmful trends that threaten sea life habitat and water quality. Government can't own the solutions alone. We need your help.



### *Roberts Bay North: its challenges and opportunities*

Are you aware that Sarasota County has two water bodies named Roberts Bay? AND to further confuse the issue, the two bays are not connected with each other in any way! For this discussion, we are describing the land and water bodies that drain into Roberts Bay North, as illustrated on the map.

Recreational boaters enter this small, shallow bay for fishing, diving and swimming through the Intracoastal Waterway or Siesta Key's extensive navigable canals and bayous. There they find undeveloped islands and mangrove forests to explore. As an estuary, where fresh and salt water mix and meet, the bay provides vital habitat – a living nursery – for fish, shellfish and wildlife. That nursery is, today, at risk.

Urban development throughout the watershed has brought major change over the past 50 years. Natural areas were

converted to residential, commercial, agricultural and public use lands. The watershed is almost completely built out now; very few natural areas remain. There is little natural mangrove habitat left, as seawalls have hardened the shoreline in many places.

When natural streams were channelized for agriculture, flood control and mosquito control, surface water storage area was reduced, causing rainfall to course to the bay more rapidly, without benefit of natural filtration. This activity resulted in greatly expanded watershed boundaries.

Today Roberts Bay North receives large quantities of water from its urbanized watershed. The combined influences of stormwater runoff, wastewater plant discharges and septic systems have degraded the quality of that water.

Sarasota County is reducing wastewater influences by consolidating the wastewater

system and working with neighborhoods to replace existing septic tanks with sanitary sewer service, a project expected to span 10 or more years.

The bay was also impacted when natural shoaling closed Midnight Pass at the southern end of Siesta Key. This resulted in reduced tidal flow into and out of the Roberts Bay North portion of Sarasota County's Little Sarasota Bay.

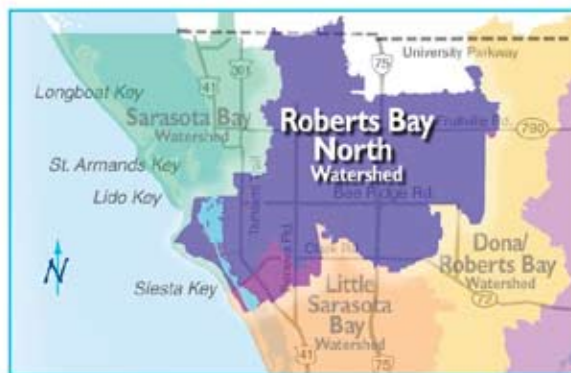
Area residents, builders and developers certainly didn't set out to threaten our sea life nor our water quality when they built the sea walls, roads, sidewalks and other hardened surfaces, along with condos and high rise commercial buildings that define our community today.

Nonetheless, more people and more development have placed greater stress on all our natural systems, resulting in diminished wetlands and increased quantities of pollutants introduced into our watersheds, including Roberts Bay North.

Today we have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to reverse those unhealthy trends.

Efforts are under way that will benefit new development and redevelopment in Sarasota County, in the form of recent stormwater and landscaping regulations. Low-impact design manages stormwater on individual lots by capturing rainfall on site. This approach closely mimics nature by helping to control downstream flooding, reducing water pollution and the imbalance of fresh and salt water in the estuaries. The county's landscape and fertilizer management ordinances prescribe appropriate plant materials, as well as fertilizer type and application schedule.

The county's ongoing effort to develop comprehensive watershed management plans will protect and improve water quality leaving or within the Roberts Bay North watershed.



*Get involved today.*  
Become a  
watershed champion!

Handout Back

## WANTED

### Watershed champions for our creeks and bays!

The fate of these water bodies is at least in part responsible for attracting us to, or keeping us in, Sarasota County. Our waterways contribute significantly to our quality of life and, in no small measure, to increased property values here.

The more energy, enthusiasm and dedication we can rally to champion bay health, the greater the likelihood for positive outcomes. By nurturing our creeks and bays today, we greatly enhance the possibilities for tomorrow's enjoyment. Won't you join the effort?

There are many opportunities here for individuals, schools, homeowner associations, communities, businesses, government, outside developers and others. A truly successful long-term solution will include contributions by us all.

**Our water heritage**  
Historically, nature provided a series of checks and balances that offered protections to our water bodies, to the wildlife in and around them and to the shorelines. Some 150 years ago, nature dictated the flow of water from the land to the bays. Pine and palmetto flatwoods were dotted with pockets of isolated wetlands that sometimes connected during rainy summer months. This diverse landscape provided nurturing homes to wildlife. Soil and plants filtered and slowed the movement of rainwater, which then eased into meandering streams through the shallow groundwater table. Fresh water mixed with salt water from the bays, creating a healthy nursery for young fish.


Those natural patterns began to be interrupted and altered during the early 20th century, as the area's population grew and more development occurred. As a result, pollution increased, habitat was destroyed, and wildlife populations declined. The amount of fresh water flowing into the bays was increased, upsetting the balance of fresh and salt water required to sustain a healthy sea life population.

We can help restore what nature prescribed for all our watersheds by using stormwater for irrigation needs, incorporating native plants and low impact techniques, such as rain gardens, cisterns and porous surfaces in landscapes and preventing pollution from entering our water bodies.


---

**Timeline:** Influences that have changed the Roberts Bay North watershed over the years


**1000 – 1900s**  
Early development in Sarasota County included Calusa tribes, Spanish explorers and other European groups.




**1910s**  
Miles of ditches were dug in upper Phillipi Creek basin for agriculture. This eliminated large areas of land that stored and filtered water and changed the natural flow of water. Celery was a big crop.




**1950s**  
Urban growth accelerates at waterfront and continues inland. Flooding became a problem along Phillipi Creek.




**1960s**  
Sarasota County authorizes first Phillipi Creek drainage study. Dredging begins at mouth of Phillipi Creek to alleviate flooding by allowing more water down the creek into Roberts Bay.



**1970s**  
As the population in Sarasota County grew from 76,000 in 1960 to over 200,000 in 1980, development increased throughout the watershed.



**1980 – 1990s**  
Sarasota County Stormwater Environmental Utility established to address continued flooding problems through planning and capital improvement projects. Septic tanks and private wastewater treatment plants identified as pollution sources. Celery fields Regional Stormwater Facility construction begins.



**2001**  
Phillipi Creek Septic System Replacement project begins.

**2007**  
Roberts Bay North Watershed Management Plan study begins.

**Southwest Florida Water Management District**  
WATERMANAGEMENT - 1-800-423-1476

Support through the Southwest Florida Water Management District was made possible with funding from the Manatee Basin Board's Cooperative Funding Program.

### Survey

## Roberts Bay North Workshop Survey

Please help us gauge the effectiveness of our county communications. Your frank responses to this brief survey will help us to better meet your future needs.



### Pre-workshop quiz

Which watershed do you live in? (Choose one)

- Sarasota Bay  
  Little Sarasota Bay  
  Roberts Bay North  
  Dona-Roberts Bay  
 Lemon Bay  
  Myakka River

What happens to pollution when it goes down the stormwater drain? It goes (in)to (Choose one)

- a sewage treatment plant  
  our waters and into the bay

Reducing fertilizer and pesticide use can help reduce pollution. (Choose one)

- True  
  False

Stormwater ponds provide the following benefits: (Choose one)

- Stormwater pollution reduction  
  Flood control  
  Wildlife habitat  
 Aesthetics  
  All of these

### Post-workshop quiz

Which watershed do you live in? (Choose one)

- Sarasota Bay  
  Little Sarasota Bay  
  Roberts Bay North  
  Dona-Roberts Bay  
 Lemon Bay  
  Myakka River

What happens to pollution when it goes down the stormwater drain? It goes (in)to (Choose one)

- a sewage treatment plant  
  our waters and into the bay

Reducing fertilizer and pesticide use can help reduce pollution. (Choose one)

- True  
  False

Stormwater ponds provide the following benefits: (Choose one)

- Stormwater pollution reduction  
  Flood control  
 Wildlife habitat  
  Aesthetics  
  All of these

### Workshop evaluation

4-Strongly agree 3-Agree 2-Disagree 1-Strongly disagree

- I now understand more about watersheds and watershed management than I did before the meeting.  
 The speakers were well prepared.  
 The information was clear and easy to understand.  
 The meeting place and time were convenient.

Support through the Southwest Florida Water Management District was made possible with funding from the Manatee Basin Board's Cooperative Funding Program



March 15, 2008

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have further questions/comments.

Please have someone contact me via phone

or e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Checklist Front

Sarasota County Watersheds: A checklist

*Our creeks and bays:  
Love 'em or lose 'em!*

The future of Roberts Bay North is in our hands. Here are some of the ways you can become a watershed champion.

Watershed champions come in many types: individuals, homeowner associations, schools, businesses, builder/developers and more.

Check all areas that you, your friends and neighbors can influence.

**NEST**

In Sarasota County, Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Teams (NESTs) identify environmental projects to enhance the watershed in their own neighborhoods. County staff coaches, assists and provides expertise to groups.

**Fertilizer**

Follow Sarasota County's ordinance. Use only as much fertilizer as you need. Don't fertilize during the rainy season.

**Homeowner associations:** Make sure your landscape company is IFAS-certified.

**Low-impact development**

Manage stormwater through small, cost-effective landscape features on your own lot, new developments, urban retrofits and redevelopment projects. Decrease the amount of water leaving your property through bioswale retention areas, rain barrels, cisterns, green roofs and pervious surfaces.

Low-impact development stormwater management systems can actually reduce development costs by reducing or eliminating conventional stormwater conveyance and collection systems.

**Builder/developers:** Don't clear-cut and pack soil. It makes effective landscape practices very difficult.

**Waterfront landscaping**

Create plant buffers along water courses. Choose plants that will slow runoff, filter rainfall and soak up nutrients and pollutants.

**Lawn maintenance**

Leave grass clippings on the lawn, and keep them away from streets, stormwater drains and any waterbody.

**Green Business Partnership**

This county-sponsored program encourages environmental stewardship and recognizes businesses that make an extra effort to operate in an environmentally responsible manner. Find details at [scgov.net/greenbusiness](http://scgov.net/greenbusiness).



### Checklist Back

#### Water use and conservation

##### Indoors

**Everyone:** Use only as much as you need. Turn off the tap to brush your teeth; shorten showers; use full loads for laundry and dishes; maintain toilets and faucets; repair leaks. Install low-flow fixtures and toilets.

**Homeowner associations:** Share water conservation information with new members.

**Businesses:** Use only as much as you need; instruct employees on water conservation; conduct water use audits; maintain equipment and plumbing; check for leaks.

**Builder/developers:** Design and build with water-conserving fixtures (e.g., low flow toilets).

##### Outdoors

**Everyone:** Use only what your landscape needs. Follow adopted water restrictions; use timers on your sprinkler systems. Turn off sprinklers when it rains. Skip a week of irrigation during the dry season; install drought-tolerant landscape plants and lawn grasses. Use rain barrels or cisterns for watering.

**Homeowner associations:** Provide water use and water conservation tips to new members, particularly new residents from out of state.

**Businesses:** Install and maintain drought-tolerant landscape plants and lawns. Instruct your employees about ways to conserve water; it may also help reduce your costs.

**Builders/developers:** Design communities and homes using drought-tolerant landscape features; install low-flow fixtures, use reclaimed water systems (where available) for irrigation of golf courses and community landscape areas; design facilities to capture stormwater for re-use.

Learn more at [www.sfwmd.state.fl.us/conservation/](http://www.sfwmd.state.fl.us/conservation/)

#### Storm drain marking

Create visual reminders that "only rain goes down the (storm) drain." Everything that goes into a drain eventually winds up in a bay.

#### Pesticide

Use sparingly, if at all. Follow all label directions.

#### Litter prevention

**Everyone:** Volunteer with Keep Sarasota County Beautiful (KSCB). Participate in clean-up days.

**Homeowner associations:** Create and participate in your own clean-ups.

**Cigarette butts:** Remember that cigarette butts are litter, too. It can take seven years for a cigarette butt to break down in the environment.

KSCB is more than a cleanup program – find out other ways you can get involved. Learn more at [scgov.net](http://scgov.net); click on County A-Z, then scroll to Keep Sarasota County Beautiful.

#### Boating

Safely dispose of boating trash on land. Don't discharge boat sewage into the bays. Use gas and oil with caution to avoid spills.

**Marina owners:** Make it easy for boaters to clean out holding tanks and safely dispose of other boating waste.

#### Hazardous material disposal

One quart of used motor oil can pollute 250,000 gallons of water. Sarasota County has three hazardous waste disposal sites: Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, Jackson Road, Venice and at the landfill in Nokomis.

**Homeowner associations:** Make it easy for residents to dispose of hazardous waste properly.

#### Pet waste disposal

Always pick up after pets. Pet waste carries disease-causing bacteria and viruses.

**Homeowner associations:** Make it easy for residents to dispose of pet waste properly.




Southwest Florida  
Water Management District

WATERMATTERS.ORG • 1-800-423-1476

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Presentation  
1 of 8



**Roberts Bay North**  
Watershed Management Plan

*Our Creeks and Bays:  
Love 'em or lose 'em!*

Public workshop  
March 15, 2008



**Welcome!**

**Judy LaMee**  
Facilitator

**Presentations**

**Kelly Westover**  
Sarasota County

**Tony Janicki, Ph.D.**  
Janicki Environmental, Inc.

**Rob Wright**  
Sarasota County

**Group Discussions**  
Everyone


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**Today's discussion**

Roberts Bay North watershed:

- Where it is, what it is
- Watershed management
- What the county does: our role
- What you can do: your role
- Working together, we can improve Roberts Bay North



**Our watersheds**

**Kelly Westover**  
Sarasota County



**Let's define a watershed**



Source: Michigan Technology Center, Hudson Upper Peninsula Center for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Studies, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.



**Our watershed heritage**



### A healthy watershed provides ...



- Natural landscape
- Proper mix of fresh and saltwater
- Filter for pollutants
- Habitat

### A watershed includes ...



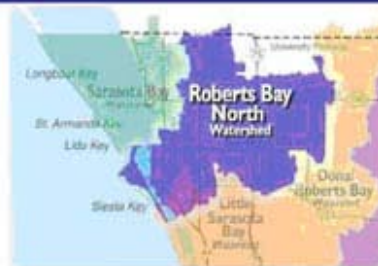
- Land
- Roads and buildings
- Agriculture
- Plants and animals
- Water and wetlands
- Homes
- People

### We all impact our watersheds by ...

- Building
- Landscaping
- Driving our cars
- Walking our dogs
- Daily living
- Recreational activity



### Let's talk about the Roberts Bay North Watershed



- 60+ square miles
- Mostly urban (77%)
- Includes land in county and land in city

### Roberts Bay North Watershed



### Your home connects to Roberts Bay North, even if your property is not on the waterfront






Presentation  
3 of 8

### Our watershed through the years


Miles of ditches were dug in upper Phillippi Creek basin for agriculture

**1910s**



**1950s**


Urban growth accelerated at waterfront and moved inland




### Growth and watershed activity

**1960s**



- Phillippi Creek drainage study authorized
- Dredging begins at mouth of creek



**1970-1980s** Population increases from 76,000 to 202,000





### What is Sarasota County's watershed management approach?

### Traditional focus on flood protection

- Stormwater Environmental Utility
  - Basin master plans
  - Capital improvement program
  - FEMA Flood Insurance

**1990s**

### Flood protection level of service

Acceptable flooding for a 100-year storm

No Structure Flooding	12"	9"	6"	0"
	Neighborhood Roads & Parking Areas	Collector Roads	Arterials Roads	Evacuation Routes
				

### Sustainable water supply



### Balance needs of natural systems

#### 2000s

- **Septic System Replacement Program**
- **Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program**
  - Red Bug Slough Preserve
- **Roberts Bay North Watershed Management Plan**



### Protecting water quality

- **Wastewater control**
  - Take private plants off-line
  - Install central sewer system
  - Reuse water



### Manage stormwater and minimize pollution

- **New and redevelopment benefit from**
  - Landscape and fertilizer regulations
  - Low impact design and development
- **Stormwater runoff**
  - Create more porous surfaces
  - Capture rainfall onsite; use to irrigate landscape

Your **PENNY** will help!



### Monitoring our environment, including ...

- Water quality in Phillippi Creek, Matheny Creek and Roberts Bay
- Seagrass beds
- Oyster populations
- Tidal creeks



### Restoring wetlands and habitat, including...



- Bird Colony Islands
- Red Bug Slough
- Celery Fields



### Tying it all together



Celery Fields



Presentation  
5 of 8

### Why is a watershed plan important?

- Balances community and environmental needs for sustainable development

Plan basics:


1. Identify possibilities
2. Establish goals
3. Develop recommendations



### Step 1 - Identify possibilities

- Assess the watershed
  - Determine historical conditions
    - Watershed area
    - Freshwater flowing into creeks and bay
    - Pre-development habitat types
  - Estimate current conditions

What **possibilities** do YOU see in the watershed?



### Step 2 - Establish goals

- Reduce water pollution
- Increase water clarity in estuary
- Improve natural habitat
- Right water, right use
- Optimum flood protection
- Reduce sediment



### Step 3 – Develop recommendations

- Projects
  - Penny sales tax funding
- Practices
- Watershed Report Card

What will **WE** do?  
What will **YOU** do?




### Working together

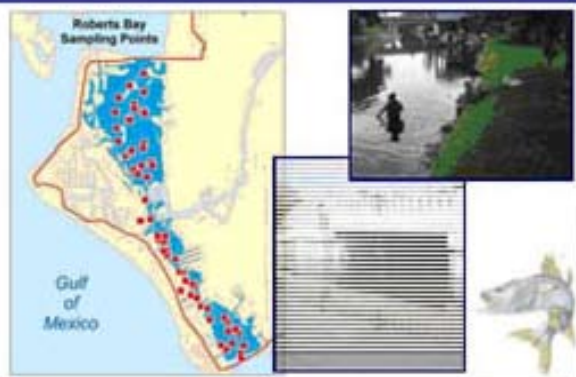


### Roberts Bay North water quality today

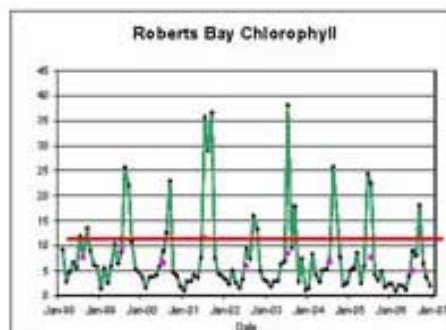
**Tony Janicki, Ph.D.**  
*Janicki Environmental, Inc.*



### Water quality monitoring in Roberts Bay



### Status and trends



### Bottom dwellers in Roberts Bay North



### Common fish in Roberts Bay North



NEST: watershed management,  
one neighborhood at a time

**Rob Wright**  
Sarasota County

### Some common problems we see in watersheds

- Stormwater run-off problem is created by conventional homesite design
- Sedimentation and erosion
- Pet waste
- Pesticide, fertilizer misuse
- Litter



Let's talk about some steps you can take



Presentation  
7 of 8

### Form a Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST)

**What is a NEST?**

- A volunteer citizen organization partnering with Sarasota County
- Raises community awareness of native habitats and watersheds
- Connects people with the land and water around them



### Florida Yards & Neighborhoods practices

- Right plant, right place
- Water efficiently
- Fertilize appropriately



### Reduce pavement, increase "green space"



### Plants help protect the shoreline

**Before**  **After** 



### Neighbors work to restore shoreline



### Fertilizer management low-maintenance zone

**Use vegetated buffers**



### Seagrass and water quality monitoring



### Watershed management and you

Rotate through four stations, 5 min. each:



### Questions?



- What **can** YOU do to help the watershed?
- What **will** YOU do to help the watershed?

### Watershed management and you

- [scgov.net](http://scgov.net)
- Water Atlas
- [Watermatters.org](http://Watermatters.org)
- [fyn.ifas.ufl.edu](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu)
- Homeowner associations
- Other Web sites

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