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Mission Statement

The Bay County Conservancy is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) land trust dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in the St. Andrew Bay ecosystem with emphasis on Bay County, Florida.

2007 BCC Newsletter

Volunteer News

Farewell and Good Luck to **Louise and Peter Berry**, who moved to Monterey, California, to be near their children and grandchildren. Louise served as Membership Chair on the BCC Board and is greatly missed, as is Peter, who was always willing to tackle photo assignments.

Thank you to **Mary Thieme** for assuming responsibility for updating the power point show about the BCC that Louise Berry compiled. We are always looking for audiences. If your group would like a presentation, call Candis at 872-8260.

A fervent "thank-you" to all the **volunteers** who have worked on BCC projects this year. Many of you are mentioned in this newsletter. Those who are not mentioned by name are still in the thoughts of all citizens who enjoy the benefits of our preserves. We are indebted to **Ruby Jo Faust** for editing this newsletter.

On a sad note, long-time friend of the Conservancy, **Tom Francis**, died a few weeks ago. Before his death, Ron Houser wrote:

As you know, he was a wildlife biologist, but he loved to teach above anything else. His last project was to try to establish an educational nature trail on Dr. John Savage's property on the river. This would go through some nice woods there and along the high bluff overlooking the river. We discussed that project several times among ourselves and Dr. Savage and were about to start work, but then Tom got too sick to continue and it remains to be done. If any of you would like to work with me, we could discuss it. I think we should name it after Tom.

Recent Publicity

On February 25, 2007, Bay County Conservancy was featured in a front-page article in *The Panama City News Herald*. Written by **Valerie Lovett**, it was illustrated by a photograph of Mary Ola Reynolds Miller at the Palm Preserve. The story quoted Candis Harbison and Mary Ola Miller and gave a comprehensive summary of our organization's history. If you missed it, you can read it on *The News Herald* web site by searching on *Bay County Conservancy* in their News Archives.

A Virtual Tour of BCC

Kudos to **Patrice Couch** for updating BCC's web site,

www.baycountyconservancy.org.

Showcasing each of our preserves, with photographs by Ron Houser, the site is an ideal tool for recruiting new members. Interactive features include:

- Input form for new members
- Ability to donate funds online
- Contact information for volunteers
- A form to record a property visit

Why not send your friends an e-mail inviting them to join BCC and attend our next meeting, complete with a link to the site?

Mark your calendar

Please plan to attend
Bay County Conservancy's
8th Annual Meeting
on May 12, 2007,
at the Gallery of Art
at 10:00 AM.

The invitation is enclosed in
this newsletter.

Property Reports: BCC has 9 properties, totalling more than 170 acres.

Exotic Plant Control Going Strong at ANP

As required by the Mauldin Mitigation Plan, we have eliminated approximately 95 percent of harmful invasive exotic plants from Audubon Nature Preserve. We have been working on this project for several years but in 2006 we went into high gear with a paid staff. The main exotics we were after were Chinese Tallow (called popcorn trees) and Air Potato vine, but Japanese Honeysuckle vines, Camphor trees, Cogon grass and invasive privet bushes were also targeted.

This spring we will go back through the property to treat and pull up any remaining plants that escaped or came up in the meantime. This was a daunting task with thousands of Tallow trees forming dense thickets. But we made steady progress and we finally opened up the wetland to allow native plants to take over again. This year we will turn our efforts to controlling the big exotic plant problem at the King Family Preserve on Balboa Avenue.

I would like to thank all of our management team, both paid and volunteer, for all the hard work while enduring the heat, rain, high water and yellow jacket stings. Our paid staff consisted of: **Pete Psikogios, Field Supervisor, Mike Finnegan, John Powell, Kings Bay Construction Co., and Joyce Spindler.** Thanks also to our volunteers, **Ray Matson** and **Panama City Marine Institute students.**

**By Ron Houser, team leader
Audubon Nature Preserve**



Volunteers clearing debris from King Family Preserve, November 2006

King Family Preserve

I am privileged to be the team leader for the King Family Preserve. It is home to many types of trees and vegetation that you don't see a lot of anymore such as Old Growth Pines, Cypress and the rare Loblolly Bay tree. It is also home to many species of birds that depend on wetlands such as wood ducks.

One of my duties as team leader is to remove trash and debris from the site. To that end, on November 11, 2006, I enlisted two friends, **Steve Bornhoft and Greg Anderson** plus my daughter **Amelie**, to help remove some old building materials that had been dumped and an old waverunner which had been abandoned in the woods. We were able to remove the waverunner and a couple of pick-up truck loads of the building materials before the truck became stuck in the mud and had to be towed out! So, there is still quite a lot of building materials to be removed; I hope to accomplish this with the help of an all-terrain vehicle.

In the spring we will begin removing some the exotic plants such as popcorn trees. I met with Ron Houser at the site recently to formulate a strategy and a timeline for this project. This will be an ongoing process that Ron estimates will take about a year to complete.

Long term plans for the preserve include building a boardwalk through the property so that the public may enjoy the property much the same way they do now at Doctors Pond. Also, as part of the mitigation process we intend to build small dams, so the water will be retained in the wetland and restore it to its original state before the drainage ditch was built.

My team members **Ron Houser, Ray Matson, Pete Psikogios and Mike Finnegan**, and I are committed to making sure that our children and grandchildren can enjoy this small piece of Florida the way it used to be.

**By Warren Middlemas
team leader
King Family Preserve**

Property Reports, con'd:

Tumble Creek Preserve



This 45-acre property in Washington County consists of diverse sandhill trees and shrubs sloping down to wetland species and includes a small creek, which is a tributary of Econfinia Creek. Tumble Creek Preserve is located in Washington County, about 38 miles north of Lynn Haven, west of Highway 231.

After our 2006 Annual Meeting, seven carloads of intrepid explorers enjoyed a field trip and picnic at this preserve. **Lisa and Ed Keppner** gave a biological tour, identifying the wide variety of plants in the different zones of the preserve. Recently, Nancy and Jerry Harris placed signs on the property boundaries.

Team Members:

Nancy and Jerry Harris

Renaissance at Palm Preserve

Dr. Ted Wilson has taken the post of Management Team Captain at Miller Palm Preserve. Gratitude is extended to **Laura Roesch** who served in this capacity for several years.

After the Preserve was invaded by thousands of weeds, Dr. Wilson and his team (**Ron Houser, Warren Middlemas, Jackie Kolk and David Fuller**) purchased a "weed wrench" to pull and remove the offenders. Several specimens of native plants, such as cypress and bay trees, were planted in their stead. This Spring,

Mary Ola was thrilled to observe a Great Blue Heron and a flock of Robins enjoying the preserve.

Volunteers from the Panama City Marine Institute have been keeping the grass mowed in the Preserve, so it is looking very inviting. A brief tour of the new plantings will follow the Annual Meeting on May 12.

Management Team: Dr. Ted Wilson, Maxwell Miller and Panama City Marine Institute (PCMI)

Savage Swamp Preserve



This forested wetland on the Choctawhatchee River can only be reached by canoe. It is home to many large trees that are now protected from logging. **Tom Francis**, shown above, was planning a nature trail near this preserve when he became too ill to continue.

Juniper Creek Headwaters Preserve



In 2006, with the help of the Northwest Florida Water Management District, BCC paid off the mortgage on the addition to this property, resulting in a 40-acre preserve. **Jackie Kolk** has volunteered to have the debris

removed and pilings placed across the access road to prevent future dumping.

This property needs a Management Team to monitor its condition. Someone who lives in north Bay County would be ideal.

Talkington Family Nature Preserve



Donated by the Talkington family as mitigation for development of the adjacent apartment complex, this 10-acre site was designed to provide habitat for crayfish and other wetland species. The Talkington Family Preserve is located just south of the intersection of 26th street on Jenks Avenue.

Richard Jennings Preserve

This six-acre plot of inner city wetland, located between Highway 231 and 19th Street, is an example of the usefulness of wetlands for stormwater management. Vegetation absorbs and filters runoff, thus helping to protect St. Andrew Bay from pollutants. It was named for Richard Jennings, whose estate donated funds to the BCC.

High Point Preserve

Highpoint Preserve is located on East Lakeland Drive, off Highway 2311, which is to the East of Deerpoint Lake. This 10-acre plot was acquired through mitigation in 2006.

Money Matters

The Bay County Conservancy a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and is registered under Florida's Charitable Solicitations Act. We are extremely grateful for the help of **Hare, Hare, and Myers**, accountants who donate their services to prepare our required tax forms each year. Thanks also go to **Carolyn Parell**, BCC Treasurer, for keeping the books, paying the bills, and keeping complicated records straight!

We decided to sell the stock in GE and IBM that had been donated to us and add the proceeds to the endowment fund, which now stands at nearly \$115,000. Its proceeds are used for permanent maintenance of the BCC properties.

Contributions to that fund are always welcome and ensure that every penny contributed stays in the local area!

Because the BCC is primarily a volunteer organization, administrative costs are a small---but necessary!---percentage of the budget. Ordinary operating funds come from membership dues and donations. Please help us expand our membership, using the membership application below.

New acquisitions of land come through donations of land, donations of money to buy land, and mitigation programs to offset wetlands destruction. If you have any suggestions for acquisition, please contact **Jackie Kolk**, Land Acquisition Chair, at 785-3505.

Needed: Expert Volunteers

The process of acquiring and maintaining the Conservancy's preserves requires the talents of many specialized fields. In particular, we need:

- **Realtors** to aid in land acquisition
- **Surveyor** to mark boundary lines
- **Biologist** to identify native plants
- **Computer-savvy folk** to update website, do spread sheets, etc.
- **Grant researchers & writers**
- **Historian** to maintain scrap books

Photo credits: King Family Preserve by Warren Middlemas; all others by Ron Houser

Membership: It is time to renew your membership in BCC. Please consider upgrading your level of support to help meet expenses and purchase additional property. If you wish to donate tax-deductible funds or properties, please contact Candis Harbison at 872-8260 for information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Level: (circle one): Basic \$25, Stakeholder \$50, Benefactor \$100, or Lifetime \$1,000

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Return service requested