

The Pelican Post

**Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation
Newsletter
Fall 1997**

Foundation Successful in Auction Bid

The Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation and the Coastal Land Trust, two private, non-profit conservation groups, were the successful bidders in the Sept. 9 auction of the Sunset Grill, Baywatch Marina and the Safe Harbor RV Resort. The Weeks Bay Foundation, Coastal Land Trust, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) pooled their resources for the total high bid of \$1,531,875 for the two sites consisting of approximately 105 acres near the Weeks Bay Bridge. Special thanks go to Mrs. Otilie Halstead for support of the Foundation at this critical time. We also appreciate the commitment of the Conservation Fund to provide interim financing for the Foundation to purchase the marina site.

These groups and the Weeks Bay Reserve are working on a long-term plan to provide for the operation of the property in a manner consistent with the community and environmental interests. These tracts of land help solidify the very core of the 3,000-plus acre Reserve. Some future uses that will be considered include: a public boat launch, park, public piers, and additional research and educational projects.

The successful accomplishment of this major land acquisition would not have been possible without the participation and financial support of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation membership. The effectiveness of your membership, combined with additional memberships, will continue to have a profound, positive impact on the environment. As responsible stewards, we are strongly encouraged to seek out and enlist the help of our friends and neighbors in protecting this important estuary by becoming Foundation members. Copy the membership application on the back page or pass along this issue of *The Pelican Post* to a prospective member or donor.

Short-Term Plans Announced

Tentative plans for the properties acquired in the Sept. 9 auction have been announced. According to Skipper

Tonsmeire, president of the Foundation, the organizations took title to the properties on Sept. 29 and have completed lease agreements for continuing operation of the facilities.

"Both properties will be managed in an environmentally sensitive manner, consistent with the interests of the surrounding community, while we develop our long range plan," Tonsmeire said. "In response to numerous calls from area residents, we will keep the existing marina, bait shop and boat launching facilities in operation for the convenience of local residents."

The Sunset Grill Restaurant and BayWatch Marina are under new management through a lease agreement with **Jim and Shari Morgan** of Foley. Open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. - 9 p.m., the restaurant features a new menu including seafood, steaks, burgers and sandwiches.

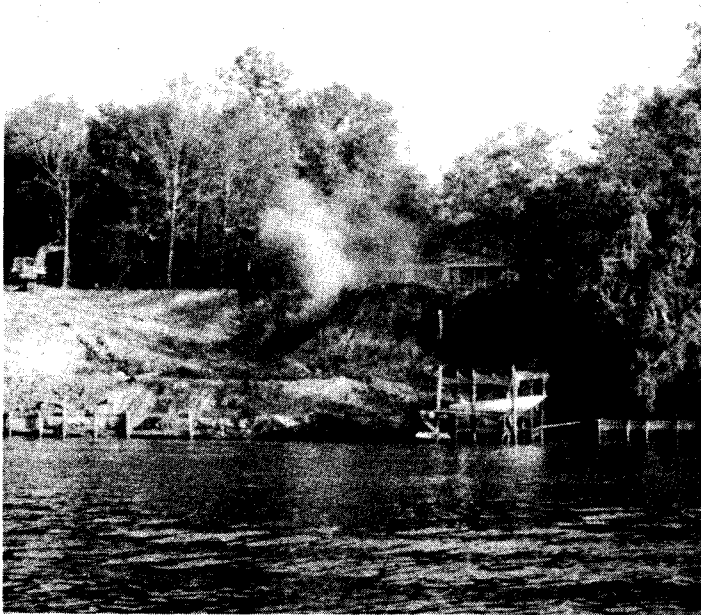
In addition to improved food and better service, Jim and Shari are offering live music at a controlled volume. Tonsmeire said the Morgans are sensitive to complaints from local residents about noise under the previous managers.



This aerial view shows the two sites, located near the Weeks Bay Bridge on Hwy 98, which were purchased for the Reserve in the Sept. 9 auction. The property is bordered by Fish River (bottom) and Weeks Bay (top).

The Morgans are also stocking supplies for the convenience of fishermen, including live shrimp, worms, minnows and crickets. Improvements to the boat ramps and more access for the general public are planned and should be completed within the next year.

The Safe Harbor RV Park will continue under the management of **Tony and Nancy Gilmore**. According to Tonsmeire, the management goal of the RV Park is offering better service in a quiet and environmentally sensitive manner. Certain undeveloped areas of the RV Park are available to Boy Scout Troops 247 and 47 and the Rotary Boys and Girls Club of Fairhope for camping and fishing.



Living With Mother Nature

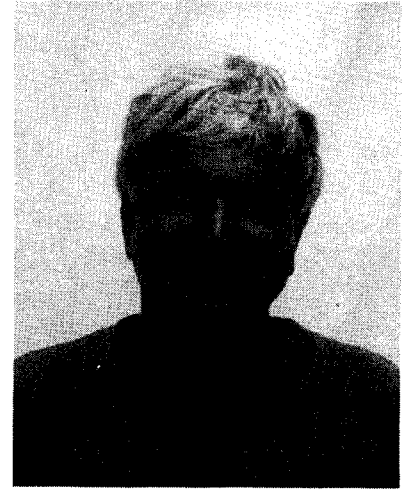
In the course of developing the earth for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and other purposes, man has often created unnecessary problems for himself. In the above photo, taken on Fish River, the developer of the lot on the right side of the photograph wisely chose to leave most of the native trees and shrubs in place at little or no expense. The developer of the lot on the left side of the photograph elected to call out the track hoe and chain saw, at great expense, to remove the natural vegetation, which was replaced with a lawn and bulkhead.

The effects of Hurricane Danny overwhelmed the lawn/bulkhead system and again, at great expense, the track hoe is now back trying to repair the damage resulting from its initial trip to this site. Meanwhile, the homeowner on the right continues to enjoy his native trees and shrubs.

There are places where we should not develop at all and there are places where man can and will develop. A general principle that will almost always be proved appropriate is that when we develop, we should disturb as little of nature's work as possible.

Get To Know

Pat Klass has been interested in Weeks Bay Reserve since the Interpretive Center first opened in 1992. His background in the biological sciences includes a Bachelor of Science degree from Auburn University. Pat has been in the marine business for 15 years. For the last 11 years, he has owned and operated the High Point Marine Center in Daphne. From that time, he has contributed much of his time and expertise towards assisting the Reserve staff in dealing with marine hardware and boating service. Recently, Pat negotiated the sale, at a highly discounted price, of a 90 hp, four-stroke Honda motor for the Reserve's pontoon boat.



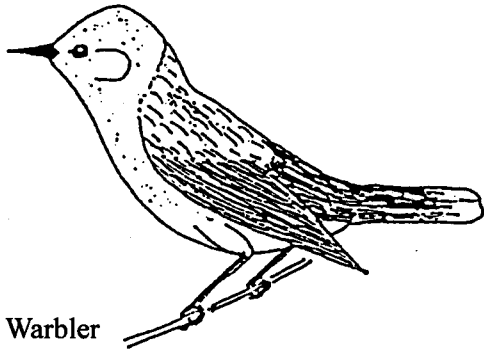
Pat Klass

In talking with Pat about his volunteer efforts at the Reserve he says, "I just think what you are doing is really neat stuff and I want to help out any way I can." Pat has helped with the rigging of the pontoon boat, recommending hurricane hardware, and sizing a motor for the "Red Belly" research skiff. He comments, "I got in the marine business some years ago and since I'm not practicing my degree subject in the biological sciences, it feels good when I can help the Reserve out from time to time." Most recently, he has volunteered his time towards troubleshooting structural and electrical needs aboard Reserve vessels.

Pat is a native of Mobile and spent much of his childhood at the mouth of Fish River and Weeks Bay. Pat lives in Point Clear with his wife Barbara, and he claims that his best record is being married for 31 years and raising 3 wonderful daughters. Thank you Pat for your efforts in supporting the environmental programs at Weeks Bay Reserve.

Did You Know?

- During the 3,000 years of the Pleistocene Ice Age, all of North America lost about three species every 100 years.
- Since the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, more than 500 species, subspecies, and varieties of our Nation's plants and animals have become extinct - lost forever.
- The situation today is even worse in other parts of the world.



Prothonotary Warbler
Protonotaria citrea

Prothonotary Warbler

The strikingly colored adult male Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) is unquestionably one of our most attractive birds. Its golden-yellow head and lemon-yellow under parts contrast with its yellowish-green back and bluish wings and tail. The outer tail feathers have a considerable amount of white that is often flashed when the bird is excited. The black eye and the long black bill are both prominent. The legs are dark blue. In flight, the adult male looks like a glowing coal of molten yellow. The female is duller, but has the same plumage pattern.

The favorite habitats of this brilliant five and one-half inch long warbler are river swamps, flooded bottom land forest, and streams with dead trees. It remains close to the ground, feeding much of the time in low bushes over the water, where its brilliant colors are displayed to best advantage. It is known to eat flies, beetles, caterpillars, ants and snails.

The song of the Prothonotary Warbler is a loud ringing "peat-tweet-tweet-tweet" that can be heard through the swamps from the time of its arrival in mid-March until late summer.

This species is the only warbler in the Eastern United States that habitually nests in cavities. It normally builds its nest in a hole of a dead stump between five and ten feet above the ground or water. It often uses a nest box such as the ones placed near the new loop of the boardwalk behind the Interpretive Center. Box dimensions are these: three inches square by eight inches high, with an entrance hole one and one-half inches in diameter, five inches above the floor. The hole is stuffed with mosses to form a nest cup. The three to eight beautiful rose-tinted eggs are liberally blotched with chestnut-brown, intermingled with blotches of gray or lavender.

The Prothonotary Warbler breeds from southeastern Minnesota, occasionally as far north as southern Ontario, central New York and New Jersey, south to southern Texas and central Florida. It winters in Yucatan to Columbia and Venezuela. Southward migration begins in September, but the bird's departure from Alabama is not normally completed until the end of October.

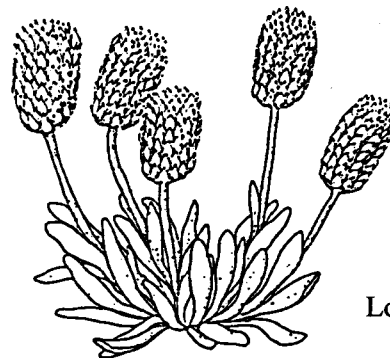
Did You Know?

The names Prothonotary Warbler and Northern Cardinal can be traced back to ecclesiastical and American history. For centuries the prothonotary, who is legal advisor to the Pope, has worn yellow vestments, as the cardinals have worn red. When the early Spanish and French settlers of the Northern Gulf Coast found a bird in the swamps with golden-yellow plumage, they had the inspiration to call it the "prothonotary." The same is true for the "cardinal," or at least so the story goes.

Low Bachelor's Button

You will have to look very carefully to find the lemon yellow flowers of Low Bachelor's Button (*Polygala nana*). The plant is very short, from two to six inches tall, and grows close to the ground in open wet sandy areas. It blooms for most of the year, but is easiest to find in the spring when other plants are not out. The flower clusters are compact and about one and one-half inches long. The individual flowers are small. Another name for this plant is candy root, because the roots smell like wintergreen candy.

Look for this plant in the wet pinelands as you walk along the **Kurt G. Wintermeyer Nature Trail**.



Low Bachelor's Button
Polygala nana

Coastal Clean-up

The Reserve was the zone headquarters for the National Coastal Clean-up on the weekend of Sept. 20-22. Thirty-five volunteers picked up more than a ton of trash, (2,371 lbs.) in four hours on Saturday morning in an area that included Weeks Bay, Fish River, Magnolia River, and Mobile Bay from Mullet Point Park to Bon Secour River.

Sixteen members from **Boy Scout Troop 406** of Montgomery made their annual trip to Weeks Bay and cleaned the beaches of the Weeks Bay mouth. Local **Boy Scout Troop 47** participated in the much needed cleanup of Hurricane Danny's aftermath. They motored the Fish River bringing in nearly 1,200 lbs. of debris, including a refrigerator, part of a dock, furniture, and several cans of gasoline.

Most prevalent debris are plastic bags and wrappers, plastic bottles, and cigarette butts. Volunteers were treated to lunch and given T-shirts. Thank you for making the estuary cleaner and safer!

Alabama Water Watch Training

The Reserve hosted an Alabama Water Watch (AWW) training workshop on Sept. 12. AWW is the volunteer state-wide citizens water quality monitoring program. The workshop was full, with 20 registered volunteers. The six-hour training certifies citizens to test Alabama's rivers, streams and bays for dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, turbidity, alkalinity and hardness. The data are collected and sent to AWW headquarters at Auburn University where it is analyzed and stored. **Tina Lynn and Bob McCormack** are two of approximately twelve certified AWW instructors in the state. New sampling sites were added to the nearly 30 present sites within the Weeks Bay Watershed and other sites in Baldwin County.

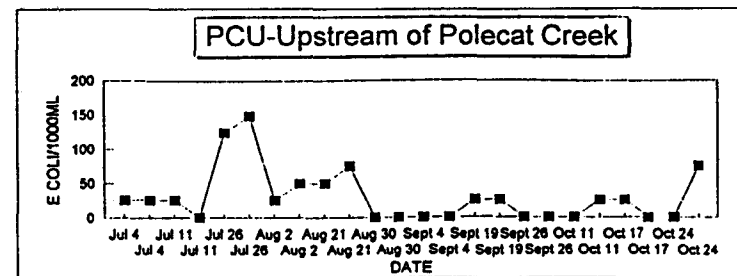
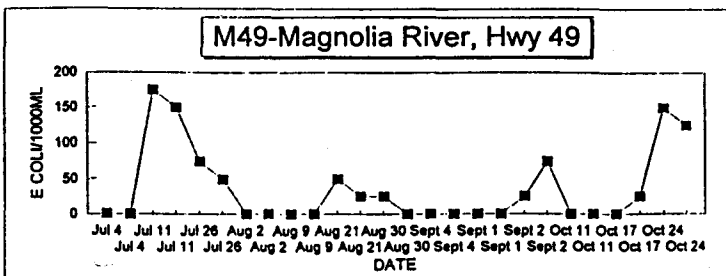
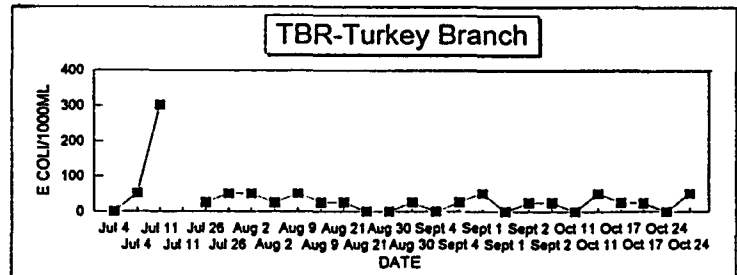
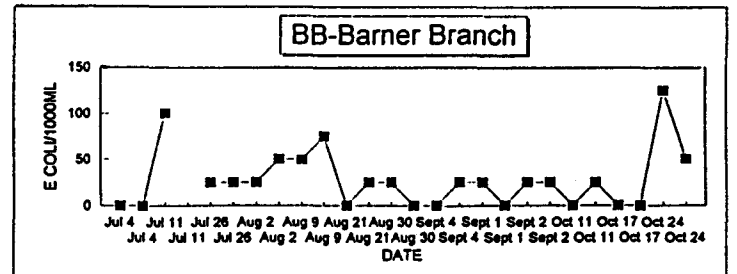
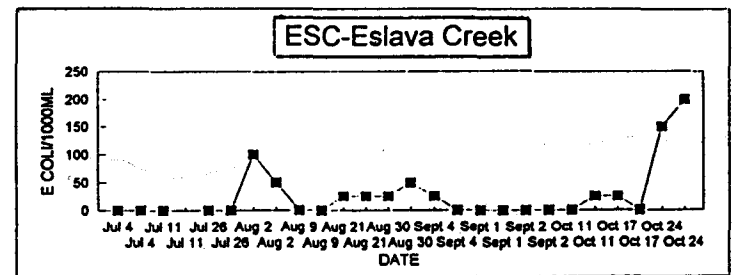
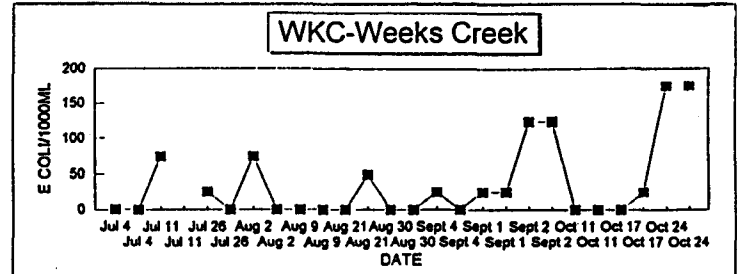
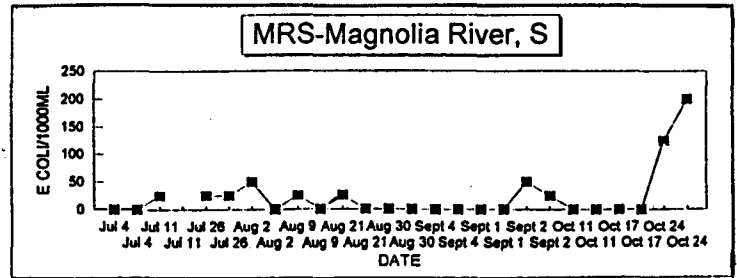
National Water Quality Monitoring Program

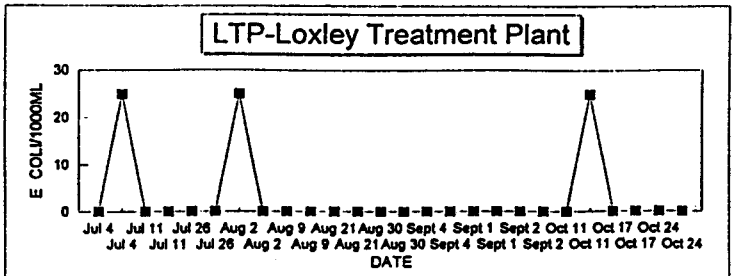
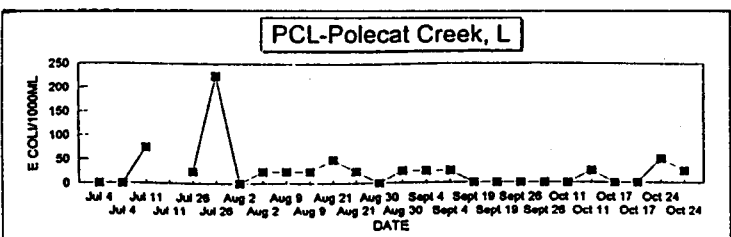
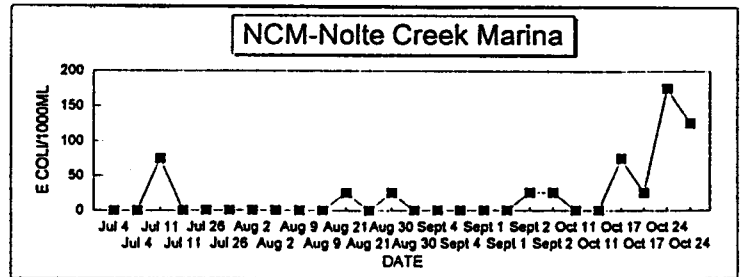
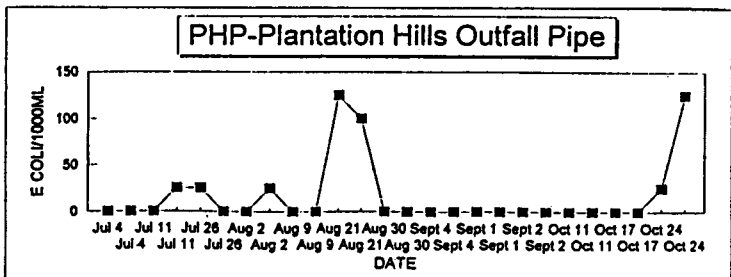
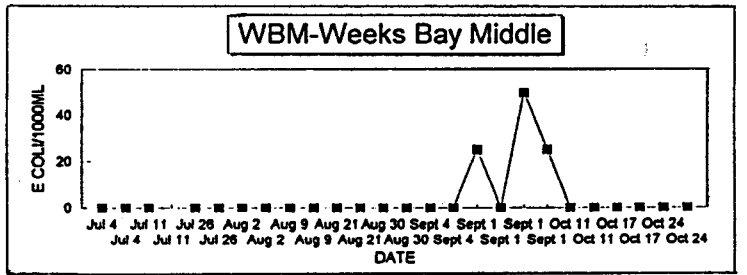
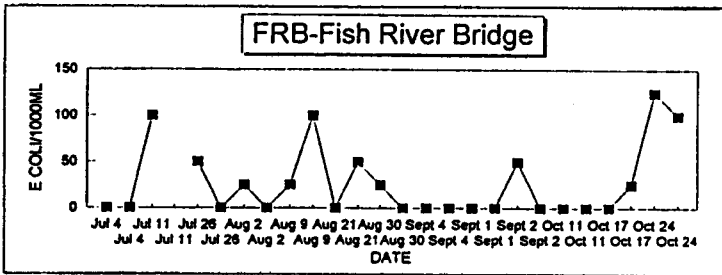
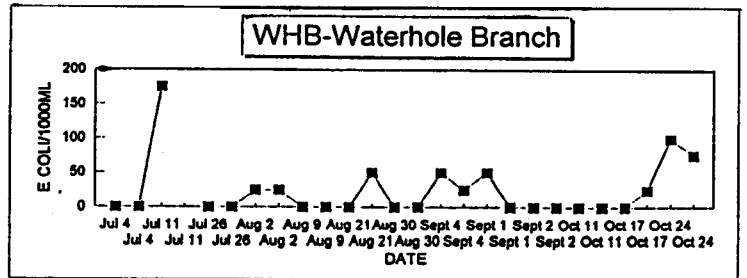
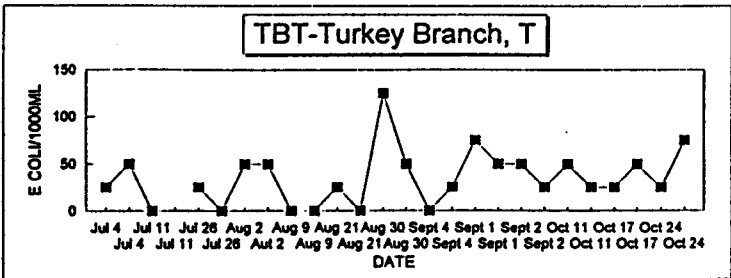
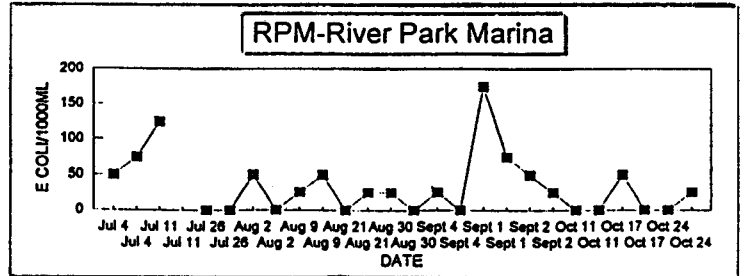
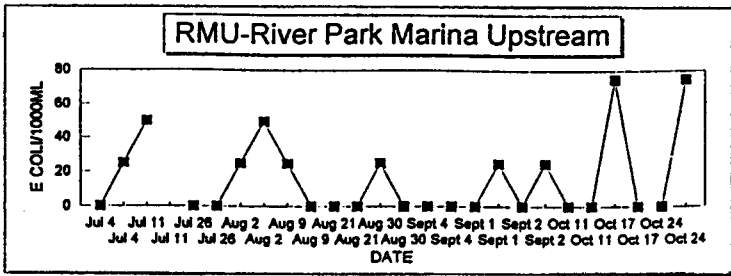
The Reserve participates in the System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP). One of the main goals of this monitoring is to identify and track long-term changes in the status, integrity and biological diversity of estuaries. The program also provides critically needed standardized information on national estuarine environmental trends and is designed to enhance the value of NERRS as a system of national reference sites.

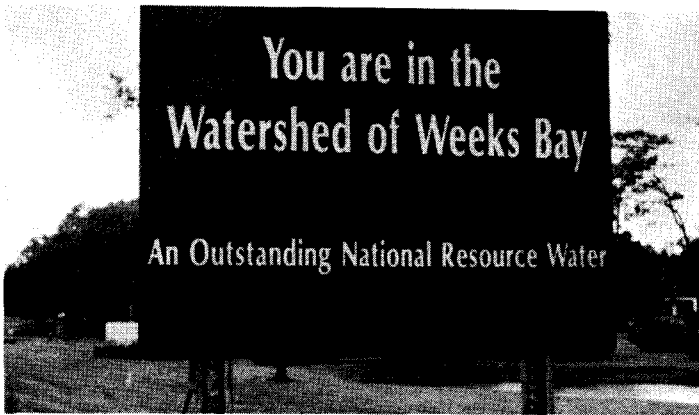
The Reserve staff and volunteers, including the Dauphin Island Sea Lab staff, have been monitoring the waters of Weeks Bay and its tributaries for two years. Two underwater instruments measure water temperature, depth, salinity, specific conductivity, dissolved oxygen, oxygen saturation, and pH. These parameters are measured every 30 minutes, 24 hours per day. The data are uploaded from the instruments into computers every two weeks. Monitoring data and information for each Reserve are available from the NERRS Central Data Management Office via the Internet at <http://inlet.geol.sc.edu/cdmohome.html>

We are grateful for the Sea Lab's assistance. Their initial commitment was completed Sept. 30 and the Reserve assumed all responsibilities for the program.

In addition to the SWMP project, the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation monitors *E. coli* counts weekly at 17 sites in the Weeks Bay Watershed. Some of the results of this additional water quality monitoring program are summarized in the following graphs:







New Watershed Signs

Have you noticed our watershed boundary markers? The Weeks Bay Watershed Project has purchased 18 signs to be placed along state and county roads near the boundary of the 200 sq. mile watershed. To date, about half of the signs have been installed along state highways. Baldwin County will install the remaining half along county roads and will donate the sign posts.

The Weeks Bay Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee proposed the sign project as an educational tool to promote awareness of the size and location of the Weeks Bay Watershed. We hope this awareness will translate into action as people realize that their actions "upstream" in the watershed can affect conditions in the bay.

The signs also remind the public that Weeks Bay is an Outstanding National Resource Water (ONRW). Weeks Bay received this special designation in February, 1992. The ONRW status provides for special protection of waters for which ordinary use classifications and water quality criteria do not suffice. This designation limits the type and number of potential polluting discharges into Weeks Bay from point source discharges such as municipal wastewater treatment systems and industrial discharges. However, the ONRW designation does not extend into the watershed. There are only two other ONRWs in Alabama.

Elderhostel Continues

The Reserve and Elderhostel, an international organization whose mission is providing lifelong educational opportunities for persons of retirement age, are continuing their on-going partnership. Two area Elderhostel programs, Faulkner State Community College, Fairhope, and the University of South Alabama at Beckwith Conference Center, are continually utilizing resources at the Reserve for their participants. Currently, Faulkner State Elderhostel is scheduled for visits on Dec. 2 and 9, and USA will be conducting two 3-day programs Nov. 4-6 and Nov. 18-20.

The Elderhostel program exists for travel to other continents with educational activities that range from

historical to cultural, natural and scientific. Typical programs are one to two weeks in length.

"The Elderhostel participants attending our Weeks Bay program have shown great interest. It makes for several fun days as they're introduced to the importance of estuarine and coastal environments," said **Bob McCormick**, Interpretive Coordinator at the Reserve. "A real treat for these participants is a boat tour on the Magnolia River where Osprey, Great Blue Herons, grebes, mergansers, pelicans, egrets, and terns are easily seen and enjoyed."

Programs on the Alabama Gulf Coast include visits to the Weeks Bay Reserve to study coastal ecology, Bellingrath Gardens for studies of horticultural interests, various museums of local history, and natural studies such as birdwatching along the Gulf Coast.

If you are interested in attending an Elderhostel program, contact either **Carolann Norwood** at Faulkner State, Fairhope, (334)990-0422, or **Laurent Cadden** at the University of South Alabama at (334)431-6411.

Guest Lecture

The Reserve Guest Lecture Series continued with another successful program on Aug. 16, at Faulkner State Community College in Fairhope. **Roger Clay**, ADCNR, shared his expertise and humor with a program on migratory and backyard birds, their habitats and how to attract them to your yard.

Education Update

Volunteer Training

Aug. 18-21 Weeks Bay Reserve held its first official volunteer education and orientation workshop. Thirteen volunteers attended the workshop which focused on the general ecology of Weeks Bay. Field trips throughout the week included a trip to the upland trail and pitcher plant bog, a scenic excursion on Bon Secour Bay and boat tour of Weeks Bay and Magnolia River. The volunteers received notebooks filled with information about the Reserve and its programs. **Roger Clay**, ADCNR, made a presentation about local flora and fauna of the Weeks Bay area.

School Tours

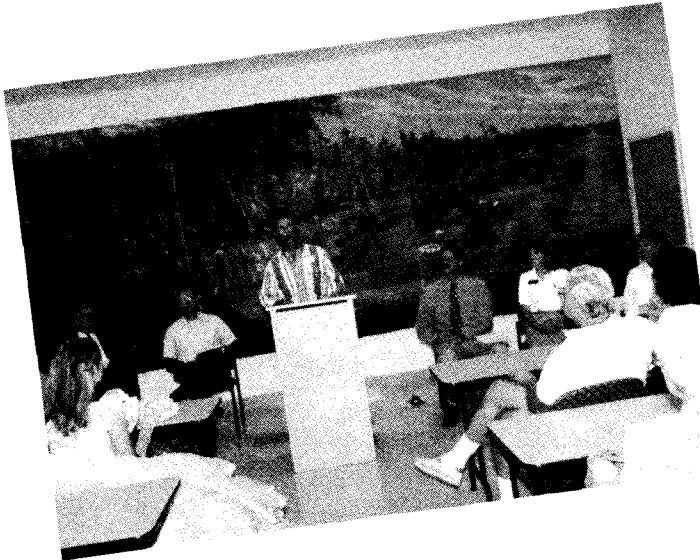
The school year started with a "bang" and field trips have already begun at the Reserve. Last year the Reserve served approximately 3,200 school students grades K-12. This year with the addition of our new educational auditorium we hope to serve even more. Volunteers are always needed to help with school groups. If you are interested in helping, please contact **Maureen Nation** or **Margaret Holcombe** at 928-9792.

WEEKS BAY DAY

Friends of the Weeks Bay Reserve gathered Saturday, Oct. 11 to dedicate the new multi-purpose Research and Education Building as part of the "Weeks Bay Day" celebration. The two-story building, designed by Fairhope architects Walcott, Adams, Verneuille, houses an educational auditorium, research offices and sleeping quarters for visiting scientists. The larger classroom space will help accommodate educational programs for the 3,000 students, grades K-12, who tour the Reserve each year.

The auditorium features artwork designed and painted by students from Fairhope High School (Mary Ann Lee's art classes) and artwork and puppets designed by students from Foley High School (Pam Henson's science classes.) In addition, the Kurt G. Wintermeyer Trail was dedicated at the Carnivorous Plant Bog on Hwy 17. We are very appreciative of Mrs. Otilie Halstead's provision of the matching funds to construct this trail.

Earlier in the day, the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation held its annual membership meeting. Names of the Board of Directors are listed on the back cover of *The Pelican Post*.



Gil Gilder of ADECA addresses the audience during the dedication.

Calendar

November

- 8 Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Watershed Management Workshop. Weeks Bay Interpretive Center, 9 a.m.
- 11 Tuesday. Interpretive Center CLOSED. Trails remain open.
- 13-14 The Nature Conservatory at the Weeks Bay Interpretive Center.
- 15 Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Urban Watershed Protection Workshop. Faulkner State, Fairhope Campus, 8:30 a.m.
- 18-20 Elderhostel, University of South Alabama.
- 27-28 Thursday and Friday. Interpretive Center CLOSED. Trails remain open.

December

- 2 Elderhostel, Faulkner State Community College
- 9 Elderhostel, Faulkner State Community College
- 19 Annual Christmas party, Interpretive Center, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- 25-26 Thursday and Friday. Interpretive Center CLOSED. Trails remain open.



Dogwood Trail Maids participating in Weeks Bay Day activities tour the new Kurt G. Wintermeyer Trail.



John Borom (right) presents a plaque of appreciation to Mrs. Otilie Halstead for her on-going support of the Foundation.

Funds for publication of this newsletter are provided by members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.

Board of Directors

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- John L. Borom, PhD
- The Hon. Jack Edwards
- Tommy Harris
- Don C. Hines, PhD
- Mary E. Murchison
- Buddy Russell
- Hattie Smith
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Newsletter Committee

- L.G. Adams
- John L. Borom
- Skipper Tonsmeire

Suggestions and comments from readers on future topics of interest are welcome. If you know of others who would be interested in receiving this newsletter, please have them send requests to be included on the mailing list to the return address shown below.

JOIN US!!!

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation is a non-profit organization whose members provide assistance and support to the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's goals and programs.

As a member, you will be joining a group of people with similar interests and concerns for natural resources. You can become directly involved with the Reserve's research and educational programs by volunteering to help with field trips, seminars, cultural events, newsletters and special projects.

You will be regularly informed of Reserve activities through newsletters, special mailings and meetings. The opportunities for involvement are unlimited. Whatever your talents or interests, the Reserve can use your support. You, the environment, and your community will benefit as a result of your membership. If you are not a member and would like to join, please mail this form, along with your tax-deductible donation to:

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation

P.O. Box 731
Fairhope, AL 36533

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ADDRESS _____	___ Individual \$25/YR
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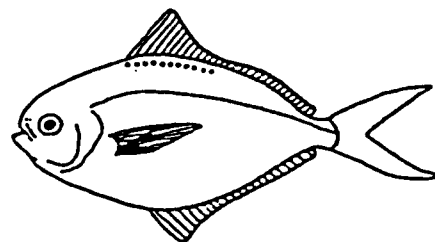
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*"In the end
We will preserve only what we love
We will love only what we understand
We will understand only what we have learned"*

Baba Dioum
Senegalese Conservationist



Butterfish
Peprilus triacanthus