

Bay Post

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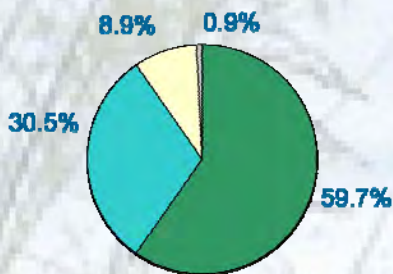
An e-newsletter featuring Tampa Bay news and updates from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program
www.tbep.org

New Habitat Restoration Goals Approved

First Update of Habitat Targets in 15 years

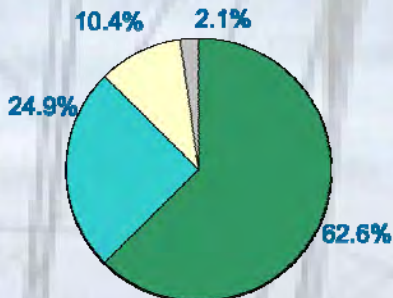
TBEP's Policy Board in August adopted new habitat restoration goals that call for increasing the amount of two key habitats — low-salinity salt marshes and salt barrens — critical to maintaining biodiversity in the bay watershed.

2007/2008
49,628 total acres



- Seagrass
- Mangrove
- Salt Marsh
- Salt Barren

Goal
60,739 total acres



The revised Habitat Master Plan, developed by consultants PBSJ, Inc., with extensive input from TBEP's Technical Advisory Committee, validates the original "Restoring The Balance" approach adopted in 1995. That approach calls for restoring habitats in relative proportion to their historic acreages in 1950. Thus, the goal is to maintain mangroves, the least impacted coastal habitat, while boosting the amounts of other habitats — specifically salt marshes and salt barrens (also called "salterns") — that have been lost in far greater proportions.

In the 15 years since "Restoring the Balance" was adopted, more than 5,000 acres of coastal wetland and upland habitats have been restored or enhanced in the Tampa Bay watershed. Some 6,000 acres of seagrasses, the benchmark barometer of the bay's health, have been recovered since 1982. Additionally, 19 of 28 sites priority land acquisition sites have been completely or partially purchased, and eight of those have undergone at least some restoration.

But mangroves continue to expand faster than other tidal wetland habitats, thus more salt marshes and salt barrens need to be created to maintain the historic mosaic of habitats, and ensure that the watershed continues to support a diversity of birds, fish and other creatures. Therefore, the new goals call for maintaining the current mangrove coverage of 15,139 acres, while increasing the amount of low-salinity tidal marshes by another 1,918 acres and salt barrens by another 840 acres to keep pace. Having such specific goals helps bay managers focus restoration efforts on priority habitats and track their progress in meeting the goals.

TBEP's Policy Board also endorsed the creation of a Tampa Bay Habitat Restoration and Protection

Partnership composed of agencies and organizations involved in bay restoration, to further improve regional coordination and cooperation in identifying and implementing restoration and mitigation.

[Click here](#) to view a slide show about the Master Plan.

[Click here](#) to read/view the entire Habitat Master Plan Update.




The Gulf Oil Spill As A Catalyst For Change

The massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has made many of us consider our dependence on fossil fuels, and how we might reduce that dependence. We asked our Facebook fans what steps they've taken in their own lives to reduce energy use since the spill, and here's what they said:

- Turning off hot water heater except when needed
- Driving a bit slower
- Buying hybrid cars
- Raising the thermostat one or two degrees
- Using an old-fashioned clothesline to dry laundry
- Bicycling more
- Buying local, organic veggies, eggs and honey
- Getting home a/c system serviced so it runs efficiently
- Adding attic insulation, window film, sealing a/c ducts
- Using cloth, reusable shopping bags instead of plastic

We salute these Facebook friends who have responded to the oil spill tragedy by making positive, meaningful changes in their own lives.

 **Keep up with TBEP news and join our community conversations through our [Facebook page](#).**

A Fond Farewell to Retiring Board Members



Longtime TBEP Management Board members Roger Johansson, left, of the City of Tampa's Bay Study Group; and Will Davis, head of Pinellas County's Dept. of Environmental Management, were presented with a framed photograph of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge by TBEP Executive Director Holly Greening at our recent board meetings. Both Roger and Will have been involved with TBEP since its creation in 1991, and will soon be retiring from their respective posts. Holly praised their outstanding service to both TBEP and the entire Tampa Bay community.



Former Tampa City Councilwoman Linda Saul-Sena is presented with a plaque in appreciation of her service to TBEP by Policy Board Chair Deborah Getzoff. Linda served as Tampa's representative to our Policy Board for nearly three years.

"Give A Day" Season is Just Around The Corner

"Give A Day For The Bay," our volunteer workday program, will gear up again in October after our usual summer hiatus. The first workday of the Fall will be Saturday, October 16. We'll be removing invasive Brazilian pepper trees at Al Palonis Park off Gandy Boulevard in Tampa. To receive email alerts about upcoming workdays, [join our mailing list](#) and click "Give A Day For The Bay" in the dropdown menu.

Work Begins on Next Phase of Tidal Tributaries Initiative

New project to assess removing salinity barriers to improve fisheries habitat

TBEP will coordinate an effort this fall to assess the feasibility of removing manmade barriers along tidal creeks in Old Tampa Bay to restore tidal flows that make these systems productive fish nurseries.

Improving the ecological integrity of the more than 150 streams flowing to the bay by restoring their connection with adjacent bay waters was a key recommendation of an initial study three years ago that examined the role these tributaries play in the overall health of Tampa Bay. That study found that the streams—which range in size from large navigable waterways like Rocky Creek in upper Tampa Bay to tiny creeks you can jump across — are critical nurseries for fish, especially snook.



Many of these streams have been severely impacted by structures such as weirs, culverts and even road crossings that constrict tidal flow in the lower reaches of the streams. Often the structures were installed decades ago to drain water from nearby wetlands or to hold freshwater in ponds for irrigation of farmland, and are now obsolete. The barriers restrict fish movement, inhibit tidal exchange with the bay and often result in dramatic and large “pulses” of stormwater runoff rather than natural, sustained flows.

The TBEP-sponsored study, to be conducted by GPI Southeast, will catalog the location and extent of salinity barriers specifically within Old Tampa Bay, our priority bay segment. The contractor also will evaluate how many of the barriers could feasibly be restored, given adjacent existing land uses. Finally, the contractor will design and obtain permits for a pilot project to remove a salinity barrier and restore a selected stream as a pilot project.



The low-salinity reaches of tidal tributaries are extremely important nursery areas for juvenile snook like this.

FAST FACT:

TBEP's 2008 ecological assessment of tidal streams found that these streams harbored up to 36 times as many juvenile snook as adjacent bay waters.



The \$60,000 project is being funded by TBEP, with support from a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If successful, we hope to expand the effort to remove salinity barriers and restore tidal creeks throughout the Tampa Bay watershed in coming years.



Photo by Jose Suro

Photo Contest to Celebrate National Estuaries Day

TBEP is co-sponsoring a Photo Contest to showcase the beauty of Tampa Bay as part of the National Estuaries Day festivities at Weedon Island Preserve in St. Petersburg on Saturday, Sept. 25 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Amateur photographers may submit one matted or framed 8 x 10 or 11 x 14 print by Sept. 17. Winners will be selected and announced at the Estuaries Day celebration on Sept. 25. Winning photos will remain on display at the Preserve.

Donated prizes include an eco-tour with Sensing Nature, LLC, a kayak rental from Sweetwater Kayaks and a "Mystery Gift Bag" from TBEP.

TBEP Outreach Coordinator Nanette O'Hara and Fish and Wildlife Research Institute GIS specialist Chris Anderson will give talks on the state of Tampa Bay and the environmental effects of the Gulf oil spill as part of the Estuaries Day program. For more info about the free event, and the photo contest, visit the [Weedon Island website](#).

TBEP Staffer Wins Award for Water-Conserving Landscape

The Bay-Friendly Landscape of TBEP Public Outreach Coordinator Nanette O'Hara and her husband Rick has been awarded the 2010 Community Water-Wise Award for residential landscapes in the City of Tampa. The awards program was created by Tampa Bay Water and the University of Florida Extension Service's Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program to recognize Florida-adapted, water-conserving yards. The O'Haras' new landscape was singled out by the judges for its use of rain barrels to irrigate plants, permeable pathways to absorb runoff and mulched beds planted with drought-tolerant shrubs, groundcovers and small trees. Rick and Nanette also recently earned their "Certified Florida Yard" designation from the Extension Service. Follow their evolving landscape makeover on Nanette's [Bay-Friendly Landscaping Blog](#).



Rick O'Hara shows off the official Florida Friendly Yard sign in front of the O'Haras' Tampa bungalow.

REMINDER: The deadline to apply for a Bay Mini-Grant is October 1. [Apply online](#) for up to \$5,000 for community-based restoration and education projects. Recipients will be announced in December.