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# Tidings

The Newsletter of the Friends of Perdido Bay

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August 2017

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Jackie Lane -Editor

[www.friendsofperdidobay.com](http://www.friendsofperdidobay.com)

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## **Thank you for Your Support**

We need to say this over and over - Thank you. It is because of our faithful members and the dues and donations that Friends of Perdido Bay continue to exist. We do not get any help from our government. We get no help from grants. We exist because of you. Thank you.

Occasionally, we do say things which offend people and they do request to be taken off the mailing list. That is your choice. But we try to be honest and call things like we see them. If we offend, sorry, but we are not going to sugar coat our views. Our goal is to protect Perdido Bay. Our last newsletter, in which we criticized President Trump's environmental decisions, brought several adverse reactions. Everyone has their opinion and we honor those opinions. And we are glad to hear your opinions. Unfortunately criticizing President Trump at this stage is a little late. The damage to our bay has already been done. I am sure you can all see the harm IP's effluent is having on the bay. It was beautiful for several weeks after the explosion in January, but is now dark and dead, and even dangerous. There seems to be very little we can do.

Also just want to explain the comment about the "Dues Due" which was in the last newsletter. We have changed database programs. I don't know whether we don't know how to operate the program or whether there is some other problem, but not all the changes which we made were reflected in the "Dues Due". Hopefully, the problem has been corrected by this newsletter and the date your dues are due is correct. If anyone should ever think that the "dues due" is not correct, please notify us. Yes, we make mistakes.

## **No Help From Either Party**

To be fair and honest, I would have to say we have not had help from either Democrats or Republicans. I believe this is the reason the paper industry has not been made to clean up. The paper industry is extremely polluting and certainly could do better. Just in the amount of water the industry uses, improvements could be made. International Paper uses approximately 26 million gallons of water a day from ground water pulled from the same aquifer as Escambia County Utilities Authority (ECUA). This amount is nearly the same as ECUA uses for all of its customers in Escambia County. Then there are the pollutants which cause low dissolved oxygen. IP is permitted to discharge 4,500 pounds per day of biological oxygen demand (BOD) and 8,000 pounds per day of solids (TSS) which also consume oxygen. A domestic waste water treatment plant which treats the waste from 160,000 people has much lower values - 844 pounds per day of BOD and 844 pounds per day of solids. You can see these numbers on our website in the "Pollution from International Paper" tab. The paper industry also discharges lots and lots of chemicals which also consume oxygen. This parameter is called chemical oxygen demand and there is no limit as to how much can be discharged. The current daily average is about 35,000 pounds per day and has been going up in recent years. How can this not be harmful to life in the bay?

The above limits for the paper mill were part of the permit issued for IP in 2009 and 2010. This permit was issued in 2010 because the hearing officer determined that IP would be "in compliance" with Florida's water quality standards if they went to a wetland treatment system. Well, IP went to the wetland treatment system but they are certainly not complying with Florida's water quality standards, and none of the environmental agencies are enforcing the rules. If you remember, Friends of Perdido Bay challenged this permit. We presented evidence in court which showed that the paper mill effluent would be harmful not only to Perdido Bay but also to the wetlands into which the effluent was being discharged. The hearing officer ignored our evidence, and granted IP the permit based on the fact that they would be "in compliance" in the future. Well, IP is not in compliance but none of the environmental agencies seem to care.

The hearing which Friends of Perdido Bay went to in 2009 to try and stop issuance of the permit occurred just as Barrack Obama was elected president. We had stopped the first attempt to issue this permit and certainly hoped to stop the second. We had also hoped to have support from the newly elected Democratic president and his EPA. It didn't happen. Matter of fact, it seemed as if our position was being sabotaged by our government. Why? I have thought about this many times over the years and here is my conclusion - Labor unions and Dupont. Labor unions are a big part of the Democratic Party. And this IP mill (and maybe all of them) are unionized. Jobs had to be saved. Our bay was being sacrificed for union jobs.

Dupont is the second reason the Democrats wanted to keep this mill open. In 2009 and 2010, the St. Joe Company, which is a subsidiary of Dupont, was the largest landowner in North Florida. They grew pine trees and paper mills were their biggest market. The St. Joe Company was also trying to go into the land development business but was not doing well. Joe Biden was Obama's vice president and he had been a senator from Delaware. The biggest employer in Delaware, beside the government, is Dupont. So Dupont and the St. Joe Company had a little extra inside help from Joe Biden. We

didn't have a chance. In 2012, the St. Joe Company sold much of their land in North Florida to a subsidiary of the Mormon Church. I suspect that having the paper mills in North Florida operating on permits was one reason the Mormon Church brought the land.

The St Joe Company used some of their profits to fund the Nemours Clinics for Children. Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola used to have a Nemours Clinic, however the clinic is no longer funded by Nemours Foundation but by the Studer Foundation. Our problem is - we have absolutely no leverage.

### **Clams Don't Lie**

In July of this year, Friends of Perdido Bay decided to test clams for various chemicals. It had been 10 years since we last collected clams and had them analyzed for dioxin, PCB's and various heavy metals. Several differences were noted immediately. Clams in the sediments off our beach in the upper bay are few and far between. They used to be relatively easy to find. Now it is like looking for a needle in the haystack - there are very few. Maybe that is a good thing, as I have always thought that clams live on papermill solids. Maybe the wetlands are removing solids and the clams have less to eat. At any rate there are fewer clams.

Our results for the dioxin and PCB analysis have not yet come back, but we do have the results for the heavy metals analyses. As with the clam sample in 2007, arsenic and mercury were the two heavy metals in most abundance. Both metals were not as high in 2017 as in 2007 but this could have been due to the age of the clams in 2017. They were younger. Both cadmium, chromium and lead were higher in 2017 than in 2007. The bottom line is - don't eat clams from Perdido Bay, even if you can find them. The metals concentrations are too high.

Where do these metals come from? Mainly, coal ash. It is hard for me to understand why the paper mills continues to use coal mixed with wood products (this could be anything) for fuel in their power boilers. St Regis, the owners of the paper mill before Champion, used natural gas to fire their power boilers. Natural gas does not produce ash. Coal does and the coal ash is washed from the power boilers into an ash pond. This wash water gets into Perdido Bay and everything gets contaminated. The ash is removed from the ash ponds and taken to the Escambia County's Perdido Landfill and used as land fill cover. This is a free service of Escambia County. Some power companies sell their coal ash as a base for road building.

Due to the political power of the electric utilities, coal ash has never been regulated by the environmental agencies. It should be. There have been several accidents where coal ash ponds have burst or been breached and coal ash has severely contaminated the environment. In addition, some power companies have coal ash ponds which are unlined and these heavy metals have contaminated the ground water. According to a 2012 Earthjustice Report, the Crist plant in Pensacola is one of the top 7 coal ash generating plants in Florida. It has contaminated the local ground water with arsenic, cadmium, chromium, selenium and other toxic substances. In 2012, an engineering report rated the ash pond at Gulf Power's Crist plant as poor because of their potential to break open and spill their contents into Escambia River and Bay. We hope these problems at Gulf Power's Crist plant have been fixed.

Paper mills generate their own power. When paper mills switched from using elemental chlorine as a bleaching agent and began using chlorine dioxide, there was a big jump in their energy consumption. Because of the hazardous nature of chlorine dioxide, this gas had to be generated on site. It could not be transported. This required a lot of power. At the time that paper mills were converting their operations to chlorine dioxide instead of chlorine, natural gas was expensive. Hence the paper industry made the decision to go to burning coal mixed with wood products. I am sure the environmental agencies at this time (early 1990's) signed off on this deal. This would have meant that the Clinton/Gore administration endorsed this plan.

The electric utilities also may have played a role in this conversion from natural gas to coal/wood fuel in the paper industry. Paper mills need a source of coal and many of the electric utilities which were burning coal at that time, were a good source. The coal which IP uses in Cantonment most likely comes from Gulf Power's (actually Southern Company's) coal mines in northern Alabama. Many of Florida's 13 coal burning plants are close to existing paper mills. At any rate, we hope that there will be a switch back to natural gas or some other energy source. Gulf Power should be congratulated for investing in solar energy. They are installing solar panels at Saufley Field and at Eglin Air Force Base.

**Water Borne Infections**

The news about people getting infections from our local waters seems to be a weekly event. Channel 5 News recommends washing after swimming in local waters. I think that is a good idea and if you have a cut, maybe you shouldn't swim. Friends of Perdido Bay does semiweekly water testing for coliform bacteria (the results are on our website), and the count is always high. These are not bacteria which are associated with human fecal contamination, but rather water contaminated with high organic matter, an unclean condition. Recently, while I was in Perdido Bay for an extended period collecting the clams for chemical analysis, I developed several sores. I treated them with fungal cream and they are gone. But the danger persists. If you have gotten an infection from swimming in Perdido Bay, please contact us. We are documenting any infections or illnesses which you may have gotten while swimming in Perdido Bay.

<p><b>Membership and Renewals</b></p> <p>Tidings is published six times a year by Friends of Perdido Bay and is mailed to members. To keep up with the latest news of happenings on Perdido Bay, become a member or renew your membership. For present members, your date for renewal is printed on your mailing label.</p> <p>Membership is \$10.00 per <b>year per voting member</b>. To join or renew, fill out the coupon to the right and mail with your check to the address on the front.</p> <p>Friends is a not-for-profit corporation and all contributions are tax-deductible. Funds received are all used for projects to improve Perdido Bay. No money is paid to the Board of Directors, all of whom volunteer their time and effort.</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> New  <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal         </div> <div style="width: 50%;">           Amt. Enclosed \$ _____         </div> </div> <hr/> <p>Name</p> <hr/> <p>Address</p> <hr/> <p>Phone (____) _____</p> <p>e-mail _____</p>
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