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Tidings The Newsletter of the Friends of Perdido Bay

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Jackie Lane -Editor

Thank you for your support

We can't thank our members enough for their years of support. It has kept Friends of Perdido Bay alive and with sufficient funds to do a little testing. This is very important because the state and federal environmental agencies are not doing any testing. They would rather not know how the health of Perdido Bay is. Everyone down at the DEP office and in Tallahassee think the health of Perdido Bay is just fine. Well, it isn't, and it doesn't matter how many times we tell them, the health of the bay is not good. They won't believe us. It used to be the biologists from the state would go out and sample the bay. They would be the ones who wrote reports and described the degradation of the bay. No longer. This is why your support and your dues and donations are very helpful. We will continue digging away.

Permit for Bayou Marcus Wastewater Treatment Plant Issued

As we expected, the DEP issued the permit for the Emerald Coast Wastewater Treatment Plant, Bayou Marcus, for five more years. Friends of Perdido Bay asked for a public meeting on this permit, and in July DEP held their public hearing. It was an informative afternoon. Our major problem with this plant is not that it is not operated properly. It is a well run plant which removes much of the nutrients in the sewage. However it discharges into Upper Perdido Bay which is impaired for both nutrients and the bacteria, *Micrococcus*. While ECUA was not proposing to discharge more sewage than they already discharge, the issue was the impairment of the Upper Bay. Bayou Marcus plant is currently discharging 6 million gallons per day. The permit allows them to discharge 10 million gallons a day. Without even doing any calculations, the additional wastewater which contains a small amount of plant nutrients, will enrich the bay even more and cause more algae blooms. But as I have explained in past news letters, I doubt very much that we will have a full blown algae bloom like they are having in South Florida. International Paper's effluent is slightly herbicidal and keeps our algae blooms under control. If it weren't herbicidal (they use chemicals which kill algae at the mill), IP

would be prohibited from dumping in the bay as they are the major source of nutrients into the bay. Perdido Bay is managed much like a swimming pool.

The permit DEP gave to ECUA requires ECUA to determine if they are adding to the bacterial problem. I thought this was a pretty good requirement because the permit does address the bacterial problem and requires ECUA to address the problem. I don't think the bacterial problem is being caused by ECUA, but rather by the carbon-rich effluent coming from IP.

The Money Was Spent.

Several newsletters ago, we announced that Pensacola and Perdido Bay had received a grant to start a National Estuary Program. We thought that was great news, but the powers that be decided otherwise. We had asked for people to volunteer to be our liaisons to the National Estuary Program. Several of you volunteered, but unfortunately the program never got off the ground. Thank you for volunteering, but the estuary money was spent elsewhere. An article in the Pensacola business journal "850", announced that the money for the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program was used to support the Center for Dynamic Ocean Technologies at the Port of Pensacola Warehouse 4. There were several other partners involved as well. Personally, I think the money was just used to support the money-losing port. There has long been talk about turning the Pensacola port into something else. There have been meetings and consultants hired to figure out what to do about the port. It has not been self sustaining and has been a drag on the City of Pensacola finances. It is too bad, because it is one of the best natural ports on the Gulf of Mexico. But there is a lot of competition and the downtown people do not want the dirt of a port. So that is where the National Estuary money went.

A New Superfund Site?

As Friends of Perdido Bay continues to do testing, we sometimes turn up data which makes us sick. Recently, we got reports back from our testing of the muck soils in Tee and Wicker Lakes. These lakes sit at the end of the International Paper's wetlands and receive 70% of the effluent coming off the wetlands. These lakes are beautiful marsh lakes which under ordinary conditions would support a lot of life and be nursery areas for marine life. The lakes are small and shallow and surrounded by marsh grass *Juncus*. At the time we were there sampling, the swamp mallow was blooming among the marsh grass. But these ponds have been tuned into settling ponds for International Papers sludges. It is really horrible. Here we are in the 21st century and the paper industry has not figured out how to safely dispose of their sludges. Really they are just dumping them out in the environment hoping no one will find what a mess they are making.

We send our samples to certified labs so that no one can question the results we get back. The price to analyze the samples is high but the sampling is necessary so that we know what is going on. The last time we took samples of the muck in Tee Lake was in November 2014. Before that, we analyzed the muck (sludges from the paper mill) which were washed on our beaches after Hurricane Ivan came through in 2004. Some of the news was good, some not so good. The recent samples tested in August 2018 had less

dioxins and furans present. This was good news. But the PCB's had gone up. The total PCB's from Tee lake in November 2014 measured 1,910 picograms/gram. The samples taken in 2018 in Tee Lake had gone up to 3,900 picograms/gram. The sample from Wicker Lake was even higher - 8,690 picograms/gram of sediment.

What do these numbers mean? I compared the levels of PCB's with the levels that were found in Escambia Bay in 2012. Escambia Bay had values which ranged from 1,600 picograms/gram to 93,300 picograms per gram with an average of 15,600 picograms/gram. So, our levels of PCB's are still lower than Escambia Bay, but ours are going up. Florida has established a level at which PCB's begin to have a toxic effect at 21,600 picograms/gram. So far, our PCB's levels are below the toxic effect level. However PCB at any concentration are bad. PCB's accumulate in the fish and sealife; they cause cancer, reduced birth weight, learning deficits, decrease thyroid hormone and cause elevated blood pressure, serum triglycerides and cholesterol. This chemical does not go away or degrade very fast. Why is International Paper being allowed to dispose of their sludges which contain PCB's into Perdido Bay?

The Clean Water Act (if it still exists) recognizes the danger of PCB's on human health and says "(a) No persons may use any PCB, or any PCB item regardless of concentration, in any manner other than in a totally enclosed manner with in the United States unless authorized under §761.30. except that...." 40 CFR 761. So basically PCB's are not supposed to be released into public waters. The PCBs which are found in Escambia Bay are thought to be "old" PCBs from a spill by Monsanto in the 1960's. The people on Escambia Bay have a lawsuit against Monsanto for this spill. Our PCB's are "new" and continuing to be released by International Paper. This is supposedly not allowed. However, our profile of "new" PCBs matches the same profile of "old" PCBs on Escambia Bay. PCB 118 is the highest on both bays with PCB 105 being second highest. We never had a spill of PCBs here so maybe the PCBs on Escambia Bay are from a "new" source as well.

When I tried to find any reference to what causes PCB's in paper making, I only found one reference on the internet - a 1977 paper which found that PCB's came from the de-inking process when recycled papers were used in the pulping process. The inks contain the PCBs. As far as I am aware, International Paper does not use recycled fiber at the Cantonment mill. However I found references to clean-ups which were being undertaken by IP and other paper companies to clean-up PCB contaminated sites. On the EPA website, there was an announcement of an enforcement in 2016 for a Superfund site in Kalamazoo, Michigan which had been contaminated by International Paper and other paper companies with PCBs. The article said that this site had been contaminated in the 1970s and 1980s and the paper mill had closed. The impression given by the article was that PCBs were an old problem and an old contaminant. But we have "new" PCBs being deposited.

International Paper has had several mills where they ran their effluent into a wetland. The wetland was filled up with the sludges and years later the EPA fined IP a small amount of money and made the company remove the solids. This is a very cheap way to operate because you don't have to deal with settling ponds and cleaning them out. You just let the sludges flow out into the environment and years later (maybe) you clean them out. Most of the time, these sludges are contaminated.

Besides PCBs in the sludge, heavy metals were high. Arsenic, barium, chromium, lead, and mercury were present in sufficient quantities to be measurable. Arsenic was above the recommended level for residential soil remediation and mercury was very close. I think both arsenic and mercury come from burning coal, but mercury may also be present in the caustic soda used for pulping wood chips. At any rate, we have contaminated sludges being deposited in Tee and Wicker Lakes. I doubt that the environmental agencies are going to do anything.

These sludges are the same sludges which were washed onto our beaches after Hurricane Ivan in 2004, although the paper mill sludges in 2004 were more contaminated with dioxins, and arsenic was higher. I remember people shoveling and sweeping this muck out of their driveways and houses. It was highly toxic. Yet, in the class-action lawsuit (Ester's suit) which was filed about this time, attorneys for Perdido Bay residents stipulated that they were not making any claim for contamination of Perdido Bay residents properties above the mean high water line (This document was filed June 12, 2006 in case number 2000-CA-495). I often wondered what side our attorneys were on.

We are Now on Facebook

One of our members, Lori Chunn, has set up a Facebook page for Friends of Perdido Bay. You can join the conversation or like us @FriendsofPerdidoBay. We still have our website which gets lots of visitors each month - www.friendofperdidobay.com. We try to keep our website updated, but sometimes we are a little slow.

Take a Ferry Ride

The National Park Service and the City of Pensacola have started a ferry service which runs from City of Pensacola docks to Ft Pickens or Pensacola Beach or Pensacola Beach to Ft. Pickens. It only costs \$20.00 or \$13.00 for children 3-15. It is a deal and a very enjoyable way to spend the day. If you go to Ft. Pickens, there is an electric train which will carry you to Langdon Beach and back to the ferry docks. You can also take your bike on the ferry. Right now the ferry is only running on weekends, but will resume every day service next summer. For departure times, go to www.pensacolabaycruises.com.

Membership and Renewals

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.

Membership is \$10.00 per year per voting member. To join or renew, fill out the coupon to the right and mail with your check to the address on the front.

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.

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