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Tidings

The Newsletter of the Friends of Perdido Bay

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www.friendsofperdidobay.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Your support for our cause on Perdido Bay is the reason we continue to exist. I really can't thank you all enough. While we have had very little success in cleaning up our bay, we can not say we haven't tried. It is unfortunate that we have had to continue to fight for our bay and our property values when we have environmental agencies which are supposed to do this for us. Both environmental agencies in the states of Florida and Alabama, and the EPA are well aware of the damage the paper mill is causing in our bay. They do nothing because of the influence of money on the political system. Perdido Bay could be a poster child for "corruption of money" on the political system. More than not doing anything, the environmental agencies have gone out of their way to cover up the damage. If you look at EPA's website or Florida DEP's website, you will find that the water quality in Perdido Bay is listed as good. What are you people complaining about? Yet, the water quality is not good enough to support a "healthy and well-balanced" population of fish and wildlife in Perdido Bay. Environmental agencies no longer test for parameters which would show damage to Perdido Bay. Simply doing dissolved oxygen tests in shallow water off docks during daylight hours is not going to show any problems. Dissolved oxygen problems exist in deeper waters. Or in shallow water just before daybreak. Alabama doesn't even measure dissolved oxygen in water over 6 feet. If you don't look, you don't see the problems. But, the decline is very obvious to residents who have lived on the bay for many years. Environmental regulators have "no skin" in the game other than their jobs, and their jobs depend on their bosses who depend on the politicians for funding. That is the way it works.

So what do we hope to accomplish by sticking around? We are trying to discourage the present and future owners of the paper mill from investing any more money in a mill which should never have been built where it is, to begin with. As so many people have told me, "no body in their right mind would build a mill there (at the headwaters of a very small creek) today". So why is the paper mill still there today?

Good question. The big polluters and property owners didn't want the paper mill effluent over in Escambia Bay so here they are in Perdido Bay, still. Paper mills must refurbish their mills every 10 years or so. What we are hoping is that IP will decide not to invest any more money in the mill in Cantonment.

Closing mills however is expensive. IP closed their mill in Courtland Alabama last year, and it cost plenty. In the first quarter of 2014, IP announced that they had expenses of \$436 million or \$0.98/share for closing the mill in Courtland, Alabama. That mill employed 1,100 people and provided the major property tax revenue for the Alabama county in which the mill was located. Not only were mill workers affected but the forest service estimated that 5,400 foresters and loggers were affected, along with many local business. This mill in Cantonment, Florida currently employees 400 people and does not pay property taxes, because IP got a tax exemption from the Escambia County Commissioners through 2015. These large corporations have learned how to pass their expenses off to the public, especially to those of us living on Perdido Bay. The site of the mill in Cantonment Florida is also probably going to be a superfund site. I know the ground water is contaminated under the large treatment ponds so that will be an expense for which IP should be held accountable. The IP mill in Cantonment, also makes linear board for the IP box plant in Bay Minette, AL. So unless another source of linear board is found, the employees at the box plant in Bay Minette would also be affected. It is a complex picture which may just lead IP to continue operating this polluting mill in Cantonment, Florida. It is unfortunate for us. But it is a disgusting (but interesting) example of how the regulatory system doesn't work.

But again, thank you for your support all these years. If you don't stick up for your property rights, no one else will.

IT IS A CONSENSUS!

Tabulation of the questionnaire sent out to members of Friends of Perdido Bay has produced the consensus that Perdido Bay is not getting better, maybe it is worse. We got a 17% response rate on the questionnaire, which I considered pretty good. Here are the results.

Results of Questionnaire (Percent response to each answer)

Percent of people who responded to questionnaires sent out - 17%

Do you live on Perdido Bay?	Yes (80%)	No (20%) - Some people did not consider tributaries to be on bay
Do you swim in Perdido Bay?	Yes (45%)	No (55%)
How has Perdido Bay looked this summer?	Better (8%)	Worse (22%) Same as past years (69%)
How has the foam been this summer?	Better (57%)	Worse(4%) Same as past years (39%)
How has the clarity of the water been?	Better(13%)	Worse (22%) Same as past years (65%)

Have you seen any boats shrimping this summer?	Yes (14%)	No (86%)
Have you seen any fish this summer?	Yes (70%)	No (30%)
If yes for fish	A lot (5%)	Not many (95%)
Have you seen any crabs this summer?	Yes (56%)	No (44%)
If yes for crabs?	A lot	Not many (95%) More than in past years(5%)
Do you have grassbeds at your beach?	Yes (18%)	No (82%)
Have you gotten an infection from swimming in Perdido Bay?	Yes(0%)	No (100%). Several people noted they knew people who had gotten infections.

Where do you live on the Bay? Our membership spreads from Hurst Hammock on Perdido River to Innerarity Island. Quite diverse.

I think the answers to the questions clearly depict a bay which is in decline. There was a notable exception for the question on foam. Over half the participants said the foam was better this summer than in past years. I thought that this was interesting because that has been my impression as well. Apparently bay-wide, people had the same impression. I don't know that going to a wetland discharge really helped the foam or if changing the treatment process helped. I am sure IP knows. Answers to another parameter, "clarity of water", also , agreed with my impressions from my beach in upper Perdido Bay. About 80% of the respondents, thought the clarity of the water was the same or worse than in past summers. This was also my impression. I am sure that those people who live furthest from the paper mill have cleaner water, but it is relative.

The questions on shrimping and crabbing in the bay surely show how far Perdido Bay has declined. I remember in the 1980's seeing shrimping boats north of the Lillian Bridge, especially in years of low rainfall. No more. All the folks who did report seeing shrimpers were in the lower bay, none in the upper or mid-bays. Crabbing also appears to be in severe decline. Forty-three percent said they have not seen any crabs this summer and over half the people that did see crabs, did not see many. Many people said they do not put out their crab traps anymore. One respondent said that the commercial crabbers still put out their traps along the Alabama side of the bay near Red Bluffs. I wonder what the landings are? I tried calling Alabama Department of Natural Resources, who used to

track the commercial catch of shrimp and crabs, but got no response. Alabama may not fund this activity anymore.

One rather personal observation I made several days after the last news letter came out in late summer. I go down and look at the bay every day. We had a very high tide in late August. I noticed the fronds from grassbeds on our beach. The fronds could not have been from local grassbeds because there are none close by. I surmised that the grass fronds had to have come from somewhere in the intercoastal waterway - a long way down the bay. At the same time my son, who also goes down and looks at the bay everyday, found some rather large brown shrimp near our sea walls. He scooped up about 8 and decided to go fishing with them. He caught a legal size (over 18") redfish which we did clean and eat. That was the first and last time we have seen shrimp and/or redfish at our beach. We figured it was the good fortunes of an extremely high tide and cleaner water brought in from the Gulf.

The turbidity of the water, even on calm days, is caused by the very fine suspended solids discharged by the paper mill. On calm days, you can see the solids settling out on the bottom. When IP converted its treatment system to an activated sludge system (after IP won the 2010 administrative hearing), they were able to treat an effluent with more pollution, more quickly. This was the reason, the environmental agencies allowed IP to increase production. However IP and probably the environmental agencies knew that the solids from this type of treatment did not settle well, even using chemicals. This is the reason IP took out most of their settling ponds and went to a "wetland" treatment. The ponds were not going to catch the solids, anyway. But whoever thought that a 12-hour trip through the wetlands was going to catch these solids, was mistaken. So these very fine solids come through the wetlands and settle out in Perdido Bay. This is a bonus for IP, because they no longer have the problem of cleaning out ponds. They save a lot of money by allowing their solids to settle out in Perdido Bay. But at what cost to us?

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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