

Our History. Please take a few moments to read about the volunteer efforts that came before you....

1986-1987

The St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association (RMA) dates back to August 1986 when a group of citizens led by Mike Brim, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and John Foster, a marine scientist and school teacher who also served as the RMA's first president. The group's creation was timed to take advantage of the enthusiasm generated by the St Andrew Bay Awareness Day, an event that drew thousands to Gulf Coast Community College in August 1986 to attend marine-oriented lectures, films, and displays presented by local groups concerned about the health of our bay. About 15 volunteers from the event formed the initial core group of the RMA.

St. Andrew Bay Awareness Days (1986 & 1989) events sponsored by Bay Watch to involve and educate the community about the ecological treasure its estuary represents. Records about the 1986 event are scant, but it is known that it provided the impetus for formation of the Bay Watch, The Bay Watch Education Committee hosted the 2nd St Andrew Bay Awareness Day, which drew 6000-8000 visitors to Gulf Coast Community College in 1989. A State grant was awarded to fund the event. Activities included seminars, aquatic exhibits, bayside safari where people got to seine for aquatic organisms, free food, and entertainment. Three thousand meals were served and approximately 100 volunteers were involved.

RMA was formally incorporated as the St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association, Inc., a non-profit corporation on February 10, 1987 based on Articles of Incorporation approved by the membership on February 3, 1987. The corporation's document number is N19132.

1989

Bay Watch grant approval to established Bay/Lake Watch stations in St Andrew Bay.

Participated in the International Coastal Clean Up at the St Andrew State Park.

in marking tern (shorebirds) nesting areas on Panama City Beach.

1990

Started monitoring through Lake Watch (a low cost-efficient way to monitor water quality throughout the state). Steve McLellan and Carol Spain RMA joined in the 1990 Earth Day celebration at S. Andrews State Park.

Dr. Jack Taylor created Bay Watch in 1990 to check the health of the bay system and area lakes through regular water quality monitoring. The program began with sampling of 23 stations in the bay and Deer Point Lake. Now in its 15th year, Baywatch has evolved into one of the most successful citizens' monitoring programs in Florida, with more than 20 volunteer[s] sampling 66 stations in the bay, Lake Powell, Deer Point Lake and adjacent waters.

1991

Marked the successful culmination of Bay Watch's four-year effort to obtain state designation of Lake Powell as an Outstanding Florida Water. The OFW designation is intended to maintain the high water quality of this coastal dune lake as the surrounding area develops. Bay Watch advocated for OFW status for Lake Powell at a DEP public hearing. In June, the state's Department of Environmental Protection officially awarded OFW status to Lake Powell.

In June 1991 the Turtle Watch Program began, with Kennard Watson as coordinator. Bay Watch created Turtle Watch in 1991 to protect sea turtle nests on 18 miles of gulf beach in Bay County. Both the RMA Turtle Watch Program and its leader have been awarded numerous honors and recognitions for their conservation accomplishments. This program became its own 501©3 in 2020.

1992-1993

Bay Watch planted smooth cord grass in West Bay in 1992 to speed recovery of shoreline damaged by a shrimp mariculture operation in the 1970's. Restored about 1/2-acre of shoreline by planting 1000 cord grass plugs purchased from a nursery using a federal grant.

Bay Watch wins Wetland Conservation Award for the marsh plantings done at the former Marifarms impoundments. Award was given by the US Fish & Wildlife Service to Bay Watch, Bay County Audubon, and Save Our Shores.

1995

Led and effort to stencil storm drains with "Dump No Waste - Drains Into Bay".

1998

Sea Grass marker buoys placed by PCMI

1999

A Sea Grass Monitoring Project was originally planned by DEP to monitor seagrasses in the Aquatic Preserve adjacent to St. Andrews Recreation Area [born as an offshoot of the parent Bay Watch Program. Water quality samples are taken monthly at all seagrass monitoring

sites as a part of the program. In the following few years it gathered the strength and vitality to stand on its own as a fully funded scientific effort performed by volunteers on a continuing basis. Jim Barkuloo and the prodigious energy of Linda Fitzhugh organized, trained, equipped and managed a small army of Bay Watch members to identify and measure the grasses in several meadows throughout the estuary has begun to make a significant difference.

Bay Watch participated with floats in the St. Andrews Mardi Gras starting in 1999. 2001 marked the official establishment of the “Krewe of the Bay” as the official Bay Watch entry in the St. Andrews Mardi Gras Parade and Festival. For Bay Watch, participation in the parade is designed as an educational effort to promote community awareness of conservation matters related to the St. Andrew Bay estuary. John Foster, the first and then current President of Bay Watch, was feted as the first St. Andrews Mardi Gras “King Neptune” of the “Krewe of the Bay”, a most fitting tribute.

2000

Negotiations with DEP, PCB and Bay Watch that culminated in a consent order that PCB would be required to completely eliminate discharge to West Bay in 10 years and keep effluent to 7mgd and would build an infrastructure for a reuse system within two years. Bay Watch withdrew its request to DEP for an administrative hearing.

In one of its most significant environmental victories, Bay Watch stopped the City of Panama City Beach (PCB) from increasing its discharge of treated sewage into West Bay from 7 to 10 million gallons per day. Bay Watch hired an environmental attorney to fight the City’s application for this permit from the state DEP, and he proceeded with intensive requests for records from DEP and PCB. This pressure convinced the DEP not to allow the increase in discharge. In the end, Panama City Beach agreed to remove all treated wastewater from West Bay by 2010. To make it even better, the city decided to begin a treated wastewater reuse system, and the creation of a wetland area for land-based WWTP discharges. The Beach City Council also passed ordinance requiring all new developments within the city to have a "grey water" system.

Linda Fitzhugh receives \$25,000 Seagrass project from the Florida Coastal Management Program Seagrass program.

June Linda Fitzhugh is planned the first seagrass training day for late in July.

2001

Grand Opening of the Bay Watch Building on the PCMI Campus at 222 Beach Drive, Panama City, August 17, 2001 our first physical “home”. Volunteer Bay Watch crews plus equipment, expertise and labor donated by several commercial firms, all under the construction management of Georgia Beauchemin brought a completely renovated facility containing meeting, office and a lab to life.

East Pass Seagrass Monitoring: East Pass was the original opening between St. Andrew Bay and the Gulf of Mexico until the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers opened West Pass in 1934 to make a ship channel into the Port of Panama City. East Pass gradually closed over the years and in 1998, closed completely. Bay County applied for and received a one-time permit from DEP to re-open the pass and the dredging was done in late 2001. The pass was dredged 100 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Bay County hired Coastal Tech Inc. to engineer the project and Bay Watch received a contract from Coastal Tech to conduct monthly water and seagrass monitoring and seagrass mapping of East Pass from 2001-2003. RMA submitted a final report on the East Pass Seagrass Monitoring Project in May, 2003.

2002

Bay Watch & PCMI file petition on Panhandle City Harbor and Port Dredging

Data collected by Turtle Watch was used by Bay Watch to develop a lighting ordinance to protect sea turtles on local beaches. Adoption of the Bay County Turtle Lighting Ordinance by unanimous vote of the Bay County Board of County Commissioners culminating a three year effort to help ensure protection of nesting and hatchling sea turtles from adverse effects of beachfront lighting on the gulf beaches of western Bay County.

2003

Baywatch acquired a research vessel, a 30 foot pontoon boat, donated by NMFS.

Received grant from the USFWS Coastal Program, for \$28,500 to add projects and increase Bay Watch's data collections in the West Bay area. One of the first projects completed was a shoreline restoration in Pretty Bayou. Permits were received to remove a 110 foot seawall and plant two rows of *Spartina alterniflora* to stabilize the shoreline. The seawall was removed in 2004, and the marsh planting began immediately.

Shoreline restoration at the Hoeckley site, lower West Bay. Volunteers planted 450 plugs of *Spartina* in seven rows along the 106' shoreline

Sturgeon Sonic Monitoring. Bay Watch received funding from FWS to provide a fixed sturgeon monitoring in the ICWW approximately 6.4 miles West of Highway S-79 bridge. The station was checked monthly until August, 2004, when the monitor's computer was destroyed by high water. As of 2004, no sturgeon tags had been received by the monitoring devices.

2004

Bay Watch acquires a second boat from NMFS, a 17' aluminum boat.

Biodiversity and scallop monitoring was added to Bay Watch's activities.

A valiant attempt to revive RMA, Phoenix-like, from a decaying and crumbling deterioration in spite of the best intentions of the few remaining active volunteers results in sparks of new life and renewed energy. The Association triples its membership, reorganizes its activities, successfully competes for more than a million dollars in grants and donations, provides totally convincing arguments and proof of scientific evidence, and succeeds in its mission.

2000

St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association, Inc., having attained its objectives, ceases to exist while the former members find time to relax and just enjoy the bay like everyone else.

The information above copied from RMA Today 2006

2005-2014

To be added

2015

A \$7000 grant was received from USFWS Coastal Program for the Bay Grasses in Classes program. Two additional amendments were awarded in 2016 and 2017 adding \$26,000.

2016

A \$128,000 grant was received from Nation Fish and Wildlife Foundation for Community-Based Habitat Restoration in St. Andrew Bay. Period of performance was extended to 2020 due to Hurricane Michael in 2018

2018

A \$10,000 grant was received from USFWS Coastal Program to continue the Bay Grasses in Classes program.

2019

Bay Watch receives a \$1,000 Community Grant from Walmart for Outreach.

2020

Bay Watch receives \$500,000 over 5 years from RESTORE

2021

Bay Watch receives \$200,000 for a six month Sediment Containment Study from Bay County and DEP.

