



Vol. 20, No. 2

Fall, 2017

### *MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT*

Change happens, sometimes we cause it, and sometimes it is forced upon us. This summer has had a lot of changes.

Internally, the Alliance Board met several times and brought our Bylaws up to date. This is the first major update since the founding. Hopefully this will function for many years. I am most appreciative of the commitment and enthusiasm that was shown by the Board Members.

There are also several changes occurring our community. The most obvious and significant is the rebuilding of US 19. Massive drainage retention areas have been dug. The water falling on and to the east of the highway will no longer drain into the headwaters of the river. The engineers have pointed out that about 90% of pollution is absorbed by the first two inches of any rain event and that the project is designed to collect this water, force it into the retention ponds and allow it to percolate rather than drain directly into the river.

Of greatest concern to the Alliance has been the “Huge” increase in usage of the headwaters. On summer weekends the number of boaters that have come up river to swim, clean scallops and enjoy the comradery has grown to levels that are becoming dangerous to them, the adjacent residents and the river itself. The obvious problems include speed and poor seamanship. Many of the users are not accomplished mariners.

Less dangerous but reprehensible are the litter and noise. Far too many choose to discard their beverage cans and bottles into the river. For some reason, many seem to believe that their sound systems must be set at the highest possible volume. This, of course, requires that their obscenities be shouted.

As a community we need to band together and take steps to have these headwaters of our river protected and controlled. Excessive policing would be expensive and counter-productive. During manatee season we communicate to our visitors the appropriate behavior by providing signage, regulations and community volunteers that monitor the area while enjoying the pleasures of kayaking. The Alliance should take the lead in pushing for similar summer conditions.

*Ron Schulz*

### **MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Dues for membership shall be ten dollars per member or twenty dollars per family or as established by the Board of directors.

The membership period shall be the calendar year i.e. January 1. Dues are payable at the time of application of new membership and then in the first quarter of each following year.

Members whose dues remain unpaid after March 31 will be dropped from this corporation's list of members.

To see if your membership is current, just check the mailing label of this newsletter. The number to the left of your name represents the year you last paid your dues (see sample below).

**2017** John Smith  
123 Any Place St.  
Homosassa, FL 34448

Your membership in the Homosassa River Alliance helps in the continuation of its goal. That is, to help restore, protect, and perpetuate the native ecological integrity of the Homosassa River system.

**On the membership form please add under the 'Yes! Count me in!'**

Annual dues: \$10 per Member of \$20 per family. Dues are due January 1st

**NOTE:** Dues can also be paid via Paypal on our website:  
[Homosassariveralliance.org](http://Homosassariveralliance.org)

**RAFFLE TICKETS/FUNDRAISER**

We are happy to announce that the Homosassa Civic Club (HCC) has asked the Homosassa River Alliance (HRA) to sell raffle tickets for them again this year. You should get your raffle tickets in the mail in the next two weeks. Please choose your packages and mail the stubs back in the envelope addressed to the Homosassa River Alliance. All proceeds will be halved between the HRA and the HCC

Drawing will be at 4 p.m. November 12<sup>th</sup> at the Homosassa Arts & Crafts Festival. You do not have to be present to win.

The River Alliance appreciates your support.

**Homosassa River Alliance  
P.O. Box 124  
Homosassa, FL 34487  
Board of Directors**

Ron Schultz, President  
Frank Kopocsi, Vice President  
Iris Rose, Secretary  
Rosey Rendueles, Treasurer

Janet Garvin	Jake Jacobs
Frank Kapocsi	Ron Miller
Steve Minguy	Brad Rimbey
Iris Rose	

Contacts:

Board Issues: Ron Schultz  
[eda@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:eda@tampabay.rr.com)

or

Newsletter: Iris Rose 628-7481  
[IBROSEFLA@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:IBROSEFLA@tampabay.rr.com)

## **SO HOW DO YOU FIX A RIVER?**

It is a shame that the question even comes up but unfortunately and all too often it does. Due to many factors, some man-made and others natural, the Homosassa River has been in a steady decline for years. If you live or play on the river this is not news to you and perhaps you have even had a thought or two about what could possibly be done to make things better. You would not be alone.

A group of Homosassa citizens decided that enough was enough and last November we formed Homosassa River Restoration Project Inc. Our goal: begin implementing a program to restore the Homosassa River and to start making a positive improvement immediately, not a decade from now. We believe that a private organization operated by a small and dedicated group of local citizens and with the support of local community organizations and businesses, unencumbered by government agency rules and hierarchy, could move more efficiently, adapt quicker, and complete the job at less cost to taxpayers. Homosassa River Restoration Project Inc. will acquire the necessary permits, hire a contractor to vacuum the muck and debris from the bottom, filter the water of Lyngbya, and then plant and maintain native seagrass beds. This will provide us positive results and a healthier river from day one.

An operation of this magnitude requires funding from the State but also local contributions as well. This year we requested the money needed to begin the lengthy and expensive permitting process. Thanks to strong local political support from Senator W. Simpson and Representative R. Massullo we were

awarded 100% of the money we asked for and things were looking fine until the Governor used his veto pen at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. Although frustrated we have continued to move forward using our own funds which have been raised through donations and in-kind contributions. Our hope is to have a small portion of the river permitted, or at least in the process of being permitted, by the time we are back in Tallahassee next year. At that time, we should be able to showcase a shovel ready plan to the State and will request the appropriate funding. Our goal is to have divers and equipment cleaning the muck and Lyngbya from the river bottom by next spring (2018) with new seagrass meadows planted by fall.

So how can you fix a river? Just as there are many reasons for the poor health of our river there are many different ways to make it better. There is our project but the river also needs less fertilizer usage and better septic systems within the Homosassa River watershed as well as less storm water runoff and more sewer lines. If you believe in what Homosassa River Restoration Project Inc. is doing then please consider donating our organization. It does not matter if it is \$5.00 or \$500.00 we need your help. We are a completely volunteer 501(c)3 and 100% of all donations are used for the cleanup effort. It is absolutely necessary that we show our Legislators that our community supports this effort.

**Please follow us on Facebook and visit our website at [www.homosassariverrestorationproject.com](http://www.homosassariverrestorationproject.com) where you will find more information and a PayPal donate button accepting most major credit cards or checks can be mailed to:**

**Homosassa River Restoration Project  
Inc, P.O Box 591, Homosassa Springs,  
Florida 34447.**

Steve Minguy  
President Homosassa River Restoration  
Project Inc  
Board Member Save Homosassa River  
Alliance

**CHASSAHOWITZKA RIVER  
KEEPERS AND HOMOSASSA  
RIVER ONE-RAKE-AT-A-TIME  
WORKING TOGETHER TO  
PROTECT AND RESTORE OUR  
RIVERS**  
**Ben Berauer**

River and spring protection and restoration are becoming the norm in Citrus County. For decades those that have lived on our coastal spring fed rivers have watched our once pristine waterways go down hill. Algae blooms have degraded our waters, and sandy bottoms and aquatic plants have become covered with layers of algae and muck. We can no longer see down 30 and more feet to see the sandy bottoms of our springs and their runs. But hope is not gone that we may yet again see better times.

Efforts like One Rake at a Time are underway to remove Lyngbya from our springs and rivers, and these are making a difference. Efforts are now underway in the Kings Bay / Crystal River area, at the head of the Homosassa River, and are about to begin on the Chassahowitzka. Volunteers are needed by the organizations that are coordinating these efforts. Cleanup efforts are routinely advertised in the Chronicle, as well as via social media and other means of publicity.

In Homosassa the Rotary Club of Homosassa Springs has conducted a

number of Lyngbya algae and muck cleanups. They usually occur on Saturday mornings. Rotarians urge the public to support the initiative by volunteering just a few hours in the morning, and efforts have already shown a reduction in muck and algae as well as water quality. Participants don't need anything but clothes they don't mind getting dirty, and some closed-toed shoes. Water, gloves and all else will be provided by the Rotary Club of Homosassa Springs.

This Rotary Club of Homosassa Springs is also supporting the recent startup of the Chassahowitzka River Keepers (CRK) started this summer, which is also gearing up to do similar work restoring the Chass. Until they spin up activities on the Chass they have been supporting Homosassa River Cleanups, and building its volunteer base. The CRK is growing and has been holding monthly educational meetings to educate the public on water issues. It normally meets in the evening on the third Tuesday of the month at the Chassahowitzka Community Center.

So volunteer and do your part with the organizations orchestrating the restoration projects when they schedule meetings and clean-ups in Crystal River, Homosassa, and Chassahowitzka. We all need to do more to fix the real root causes of our problem, like nitrogen pollution, and support private and governmental efforts to restore our water quality to the natural and pristine state it once was. These actions are the most significant and cost effective in the long run, but YOU can start by pitching in right here locally in Citrus County by volunteering with these groups when you can.

To volunteer to help with Homosassa River cleanups you can contact Tom Feeney, [tfeeney@chronicleonline.com](mailto:tfeeney@chronicleonline.com), 352-563-3275, to be put on his event notification list. You can also visit <http://www.homosassaspringsrotary.org/RotaryRiverRake.cfm>. To volunteer with the Chassahowitzka River Keepers contact Jodi Lanier, [jlanier@chazriverkeepers.org](mailto:jlanier@chazriverkeepers.org), 352-422-1122, or visit their website at <https://www.chazriverkeepers.org>.

### **OLD HOMOSASSA HERITAGE PARK**

About 3 years ago a small group of residents from both sides of the river came together for one purpose: to purchase a piece of property on the south side of the river for a community park. The idea was introduced to Save the The Homosassa River Alliance, The Old Homosassa Heritage Council, The Civic Club, The Homosassa Guide Association and the Old Homosassa Historical Preservation Society. All gave their support and encouragement. Our goal was to try to purchase two pieces of pland – the Locklar and the Sportsman Cove properties. The Sportsmans Cove property was not available so we put all our efforts into the Locklar property.

The proposal was land-specific and the concept was for a working commercial fishing village with shrimp boats, Fish Market, Maritime Museum and a passive park area with a fishing pier and kayak and canoe launching site. Swimming would not be involved. **Most importantly, it was the desire and intent of the group to keep all current businesses remaining as part of the Heritage Site.** There are only two other fishing villages in Florida – Cortez (near Bradenton), and the other one is in Coco

Beach. We would be the third.

We approached the Board of County Commissioners with the idea. On three occasions, the Board gave its unanimous approval for the purchase of the property. The group then went to Tallahassee to ask the state for the funds to purchase this property. The county said it would match the state's decision. The state approved the purchase and awarded the County \$850,000 for the purchase of the property.

We were asked to negotiate to see if Mr. Locklar was willing to reduce his price and take back a mortgage. The county has made him an offer and he has rejected it. As far as we know, the county and owner are still talking. As of now the sticking point seems to be with the BP funds which the County wants to use for their half of the matching funds. The county would like to use county funds to facilitate the purchase of the property and then reimburse itself with BP monies as they become available. At the writing of this newsletter, we do not know the results of a meeting which was held September 23<sup>rd</sup> at the BP Symposium to see if the funds can be used in this manner.

There seems to be some misunderstandings about what our goals are for the park, so I hope this in some way clarifies our dream. We will be having a community meeting on October 5<sup>th</sup> at the Civic Club to answer any questions that residents of Old Homosassa may still have. There is a draft of a Site Plan illustrating what the Park will look like on the wall of the Homosassa Civic Club.

Access to the River Committee  
Roger Cullen-Chairman  
Rodney MacRae - CoChairman

## WATER 101

I have learned a lot since I joined the Homosassa River Alliance. Hopefully, I can share what I have learned with you.

### Aquifer

A geological formation or structure that stores and/or transmits water to wells and springs. This formation can consist of permeable rock, rock fractures, gravel, and sand. The Floridan Aquifer, in particular, underlies the entire state of Florida, parts of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina. It is the primary source of drinking water for most cities in central and northern Florida as well as eastern and southern Georgia, including Brunswick, Savannah, and Valdosta.

### Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs)

The minimum water levels and/or flows required to prevent specific harm to the water resources resulting from water withdrawals. MFL's define how often and for how long high, average and low water levels and/or flows should occur to prevent significant harm.

**Note:** Withdrawals of waters from our springs gives us less fresh water and allows more of the noxious bacteria called Lyngbya, which has fouled up local waters. Lyngbya thrives in increased concentrations of nutrients (fertilizer runoff). Also, the more fresh water you pump out, the more saltwater intrusion.

### Fracking

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is a technique designed to recover gas and oil primarily from shale rock. It involves drilling into the earth with very

high pressure to release the gas inside. Great amounts of fresh water, sand and other chemicals are directed at the rock at very high pressure which allows the gas to flow out to the head of the well. **Pros:** Has increased oil production in the US and is said to have driven down gas prices.

**Cons:** The process uses high amounts of water which must be transported to the fracking site at significant environmental cost. Also, carcinogenic chemicals used may escape and contaminate ground water around the fracking site.

The problem with fracking in Florida is that our state does not have shale rock at its subsurface. It has limestone which is porous, almost like swiss cheese. Fracking can tear up the very foundation upon which the peninsula of Florida rests.

House and Senate Bills were both defeated but we should all watch vigilantly. The passing of these bills would have been devastating to the state. It's not over. Iris Rose

## SCALLOP CLEANING ON RIVER

Frank Kopocsi, newly elected Vice President of the River Alliance, spearheaded the Scallop Cleaning Sign Project. Frank proposed to the Alliance that signs be designed, sold and posted throughout various locations along the river. These signs were designed for the purpose of discouraging scallopers from cleaning and dumping scallop shells in the river, especially close to the spring. The Alliance voted to endorse this project. The next step was to obtain County approval in the design of the signs. The County did provide input and the signs were made.

50 signs were sold to folks in Homosassa and a special thanks to

Captain Erine of Sea Tow, who purchased 8. It is our hope that those enjoying our river will take notice and abide by the message.

**Note:**This is not a county ordinance. It is merely a reminder to consider the river and preserve its beauty.

### **A TRAGIC DECISION**

I read an interesting article on my computer written in the Dallas News. The article addressed the flooding in Houston after Hurricane Harvey.

There were deadly floods in 1929 and 1935 in Houston. Two large reservoirs were built on ranchland west of Houston. The reservoirs were built in the 1940's. They were meant to store up water from heavy rains, rather than let it go straight into the Buffalo Bayou which runs through the city and carries stormwater to the Houston Ship Channel. After a rainfall, water would be released into the bayou slowly. Urban development and 50 years changed all of that. Homes were built closer and closer to these reservoirs. Development was encroaching on the fringes of the reservoirs. Neighborhoods were being built inside the reservoir bowls – places that County planners knew would flood if the reservoir levels got high enough.

In 1996 - two decades ago - county planners predicted that a powerful storm like Hurricane Harvey would devastate the area. According to the report, the area's reservoir system was severely insufficient - thousands of properties were in danger. The planners knew which neighborhoods would flood and why. They predicted that a single storm event could have a catastrophic impact on several thousand people in the reservoirs areas. They proposed the

construction of a massive \$400 million underground conduit which would carry water out of the reservoirs and into the Houston Ship Cannel more quickly. The report got filed away and was all but forgotten. The county decided not to build the conduits and chose the alternative: Do nothing and accept the risk of flooding.” This was a massive engineering and governmental failure.

### **Tragic Reality**

Last month, the catastrophic impact became a reality. The two reservoirs were unable to hold the water. The Corps of Engineers had to release water - quickly. Just as the 1996 report described, water in many of the flooded homes would not drain for days or even weeks. Officials were forced to let the water out knowing that it would flood neighborhoods downstream. They had no choice.

### **No Funding**

Government and city funding would have certainly helped to construct that conduit in 1996. Houston is an prime example of overdevelopment, especially in an area which was vulnerable to disaster. Our state is growing by leaps and bounds. More and more land is being covered by concrete. Where can the rainfall go? For that reason we must work to preserve our wetlands by critically reviewing future development proposals, whether they be for new construction or wetland management. If progress must occur in a pastureland, permeable surfaces should be used so rainfall can pass through and find its way to the aquifer. Our county and city officials must and should keep our state and its citizens safe. But it's also our responsibility to inform ourselves of decisions being made. Please - get involved.