



# National Estuaries Days 2004

... an annual celebration of the majestic places where rivers meet the sea.

**Join us to learn more about estuaries the fun way.**

**THE CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM** is pleased to announce **National Estuaries Days 2004** – a time to highlight the importance of estuaries through recreational and educational activities. The official National Estuary Day is celebrated Saturday, September 24, 2004 but since 2000 locally there have been too many events to fit in one day!

*The festivals, wading trips, guided walks and paddling events described in this brochure are opportunities to learn about estuaries by experiencing them first hand.* The events are coordinated by Charlotte Harbor NEP but offered because of the generosity of its partners. Many of the events are also sponsored by Charlotte Harbor NEP. Hurricanes Charley and Frances postponed the local celebration and many of the events were cancelled. Additional events, additional details and any changes will be posted on the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site at [www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org](http://www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org). For activities offered around the country, visit [www.estuaries.gov](http://www.estuaries.gov). Want to know more about estuaries? Visit [www.whatsanestuary.com](http://www.whatsanestuary.com).

Many of the cities and counties that participate in the Charlotte Harbor NEP will again issue proclamations of support for National Estuaries Days.



## **THE CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM**

is a *partnership* that protects the estuaries and watersheds from Venice to Estero Bay to Winter Haven. This partnership gives everyone – from citizens to elected officials, to resource managers to commercial and recreational resource users – in the 4,400-square-mile study area a voice to address diverse resource management concerns, including fish and wildlife habitat loss, water quality degradation and water flow. The watershed in the study area includes all or portions of Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, Lee, Manatee, Polk and Sarasota counties.

## **Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program**

*Working together to protect estuaries and watersheds from Venice to Estero Bay to Winter Haven.*

4980 Bayline Dr 4<sup>th</sup> Floor • North Fort Myers FL 33917-3909  
[www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org](http://www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org) • 239/995-1777 x 240

# National Estuaries Days 2004

... an annual celebration of the majestic places where rivers meet the sea.

**Join us to learn more about estuaries the fun way.**

## National Estuaries Days: Too many fun events for one day!

Hurricanes Charley and Frances postponed the local celebration and many events were cancelled. You'll find in the brochure that a few events have not yet been able to reschedule the activities. Additional events, changes and additional details such as recommendations on what to bring and wear for each specific event will be posted on the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site at [www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org](http://www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org).

### Saturday, October 9

8:30-10:30 Guided Walk Birding on Little Pine Island

### Sunday, October 10

8:00-noon Paddling Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle

### Saturday, October 16

8:00-10:00 Guided Walk Birding at Lemon Bay Park

8:00-1:00 Paddling Estero Bay Paddle

### Sunday, October 17

8:45-11:30 Guided Walk Trekking Cape Haze

9:45-noon Boat Tour Orange River Cruise

### Saturday, October 23

9:00-3:00 Festival Explore the Estuary

### Sunday, October 24

8:00-12:30 Paddling Coral Creek-Cape Haze Estuary Day Paddle

### Saturday, October 30

9:30-noon Wading Trip Wading the Shallows of Charlotte Harbor

### Monday-Friday, November 1-5 and 8-12

11:30-noon Talk Our Estuaries

### Saturday, November 6

9:00-1:00 Festival Estuaries Day Every Day

### Saturday, November 13

9:30-11:30 Wading Trip Mucking about in Pine Island Sound

### Saturday, November 20

9:00-4:30 Boat Tour Charlotte Harbor and Cabbage Key: A Literary Passage

9:00-noon Wading Trip Wading the Shallows of Lemon Bay

### Date not yet Determined


Paddling Buck Key Kayaking Adventure

## CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

4980 Bayline Drive, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

North Fort Myers FL 33917-3909

# Celebrate National Estuaries Days with Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Charlotte Harbor NEP is pleased to sponsor the activities indicated with a . Be sure to visit the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site at [www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org](http://www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org) for additional events, changes and additional details such as recommendations on what to bring and wear for each specific event.

## Special Events

### Explore the Estuary

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Estuaries Day Celebration

Saturday, October 23 from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00  
Town of Fort Myers Beach Mound House

Explore the wonders of the estuaries during a guided kayak tour of the Great Calusa Blueway. If you don't know how to kayak, staff will conduct how-to-kayak clinics throughout the day. Tour the Mound House to learn about archeology, history and the environmental importance of the estuary to early Americans. Join a guided tour around the Mound House property to show everyone the beauty of planting native.

**Registration:** No registration is necessary for this free event.

**Directions:** The Mound House is located on Fort Myers Beach in Lee County on Connecticut Ave and Estero Bay. Connecticut Ave is approximately 5 miles from the intersection of Summerlin and San Carlos Blvd. 239/765-0865

### Estuaries Day Every Day: A Free Day at the Bay

Saturday, November 6 from 9:00 A.M. TO 1:00

Lee County Parks & Recreation

Join us for a free day of guided walks, guided kayak trips and talks about the estuary, beach habitats and water quality of San Carlos Bay and Bunche Beach Preserve. Many others – Bird Patrol, FDEP Aquatic Preserve, Calusa Blue Way, Charlotte Harbor NEP – will be on hand. You'll learn what each one of us can do to protect our natural resources and how to view wildlife with the least amount of disturbance.

**Registration:** No registration is necessary for this free event.

**Directions:** San Carlos Bay - Bunche Beach Preserve is located at the west end of John Morris Road off of Summerlin Road on the way to Sanibel in Lee County. 239/707-3015

## Our Estuaries

Monday-Friday, November 1-5 and 8-12 from 11:30 to noon  
Calusa Nature Center & Planetarium

Join the center for an "Our Estuaries" talk, a program that explains what an estuary is, the significance of estuaries to human and marine life, the National Estuary Program and its importance in our watershed, and advice on how people can get involved with estuary preservation from planting a Florida-friendly yard to participating in wading trips.

**Registration:** Admission to Center is \$7 for adults and \$4 for children ages 3 to 12. This fee includes the Butterfly Aviary, Museum, Trail and all Planetarium Shows scheduled that day.

*\* Show this brochure for \$1.00 off admission.*

**Directions:** From I-75 in Fort Myers take Exit 136 (was 22). Turn west on Colonial Blvd and right on Ortiz. 239/275-3435

## Boat Tours

### Orange River Cruise

Sunday, October 17 from 9:45 to noon

Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association (aka Riverwatch)

Take a boat trip on a scenic and historic tributary to the Caloosahatchee following the Orange River from the estuary to the inland freshwater flow. Experience upland and wetland native habitats and spot their inhabitants along the way. Experience first hand the ecology, habitat, wildlife and the role served by the tributaries to this rich estuary with guides Rae Ann Wessel and "third generation cracker river rat" Charles Edgar Foster to learn the

**Registration:** Space is limited. Advance reservations and ticket purchase required at \$10.00/person. Make your reservation by calling 239/693-1434 then mail a check to CRCA, c/o Manatee World, 5605 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers FL 33905. Proceeds benefit restoration of the oxbows on the Caloosahatchee to enhance water quality, habitat function and biological diversity.

**Directions:** Manatee World is located on SR 80/Palm Beach Blvd east of I-75 in Fort Myers.

### Charlotte Harbor and Cabbage Key:

#### A Literary Passage

Saturday, November 20 from 9:00 A.M. to 4:30

Peace River Center for Writers

Take a day-long trip in Charlotte Harbor with a lunch stop at historic Cabbage Key Inn, built in 1938 as the winter home of mystery writer Mary Roberts Rinehart. A naturalist will comment on the wonders of the harbor and a writer will read related selections from Florida writers. The cruise will be on a King Fisher Fleet vessel.

**Registration:** There is a \$20 charge; lunch is not included. Advance registration is required. Call 941/575-1976 for registration process.


**Directions to King Fisher Fleet /Fishermen's Village:** Take Exit 164 (was Exit 29) from I-75 in Charlotte County, travel three miles west and watch for Fishermen's Village on the right side.



*Come celebrate, learn and have fun!*

## — Paddling —

### 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle

Sunday, October 10 from 8:00 to noon   
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves and Buffer Preserve Park, the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Inc., the City of Cape Coral and Gulf Coast Kayak

Join the Friends on their annual canoe/kayak paddle event on trails that meander through tidal creeks and mangrove forests of Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve. The shallow waters of the estuary support mangroves, seagrass beds, mudflats and oyster bars, which provide habitat and foraging areas for fish, crabs, shrimp, wading birds, sea turtles, marine mammals and other aquatic critters. Easy, intermediate and advanced paddling options are available. All paddlers must return to the launch site by noon.

**Registration:** There is a \$15 charge for FCHAP members and \$20 for nonmembers. (Reservations made after September 21 are \$5 more.) Children under 16 are free. This fee includes maps, refreshments and kayak instructions for novices. Advance registration is required. Call 941/575-5861 for registration forms and information.

**Directions:** Matlacha Community Park (4577 Pine Island Rd NW/SR 78) entrance is next to the Mulletville Restaurant on the south side of Pine Island Rd. Matlacha is located between Cape Coral and Little Pine Island in Lee County.

### Estero Bay Paddle

Saturday, October 16 from 8:00 A.M. to 1:00

Estero Bay Buddies

Join the buddies on a canoe/kayak paddle on one of three guided trips on the Estero River upstream and downstream from the Koreshan State Historic Site boat launch. Beginner paddlers should arrive by 8:00 for instructions and will canoe/kayak upstream for an hour leaving at 9:30. Intermediate paddlers should arrive by 8:30 and will also canoe/kayak upstream for an hour leaving at 9:00. Advanced paddlers should also arrive at 8:00 and will travel downstream to Estero Bay for a four-hour trip leaving at 8:30. Each participant will be asked to sign a waiver before the trip begins.

**Registration:** There is a \$5 charge. Call 239/992-0311 by October 8 to register those who will be in your party, kayak or canoe preference and which trip is preferred. Space is limited. Additional instructions are posted on the web site.

**Directions:** Koreshan State Historic Site is located at the intersection of Corkscrew Rd. and US 41 in Estero, Lee County.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Coral Creek-Cape Haze

#### Estuary Day Paddle

Sunday, October 24 from 8:00 A.M. to 12:30

Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves and Buffer Preserve Park, the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Inc. and Grande Tours

Join the Friends of on their second annual canoe/kayak paddle event at Cape Haze. Paddle along the shallow mangrove shorelines of Gasparilla Sound and Cape Haze Aquatic Preserves. Advanced and



intermediate paddlers will launch at 8:00 for Catfish Creek. Advanced paddlers will continue to Mound Key for the complete four-hour round trip paddle. Beginners will launch at 9:00 to explore the East Branch of Coral Creek, which leads into the northern interior of the Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve. Highlights of all three paddles will include a close look at mangrove shoreline, seagrasses, oyster bar communities and the opportunity to view magnificent coastal birds. All paddlers must return to the launch site by 12:30.

**Registration:** There is a \$15 charge for FCHAP members and \$20 for nonmembers. (Reservations made after October 19 are \$5 more.) Children under 16 are free. This fee includes maps, refreshments and kayak instructions for novices. Advance registration is required. Call 941/575-5861 for registration forms and information. Alternate date in the event of bad weather is November 7.

**Directions to Grande Tours:** In Charlotte County drive south on CR 771/Gasparilla Rd approximately 8 miles to Placida. Turn east (right) into the entrance of Grande Tours (12575 Placida Rd) just after CR 771 and 775 merge and before the stoplight near the Boca Grande Causeway.

### Buck Key Kayaking Adventure

Date to be Determined

Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation in cooperation with Captiva Kayak Company

Celebrate our local estuaries and the preservation of Buck Key by kayaking in and around this unique island within the Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve with a SCCF naturalist. Buck Key's mangrove shoreline, upland vegetation, cultural history and the wildlife of the area will be discussed along the way. Stable kayaks will be used and kayaking instruction will be provided. No experience necessary, just a sense of adventure and a willing spirit.

**Registration:** There is a \$35/person charge, a portion of which will help fund the SCCF Environmental Education Fund. Call 239/472-232 to register. Space will be limited so reservations are required.

**Directions:** Meet at Captiva Kayak Company in McCarthy's Marina off Andy Rosse Lane on Captiva. Detailed directions to Captiva Kayak and necessary items to bring will be explained when reservations are made.

## — Guided Walks —

### Birding on Little Pine Island

Saturday, October 9 from 8:30 A.M. to approximately 10:30

Charlotte Harbor Buffer Preserves Park and the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves

Pack up your binoculars and field guides and set out across the Little Pine Island Mitigation Bank. Look for fall migrants, raptors,

warblers, woodpeckers, waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds. Learn about the ecology of the high marsh – the interface between upland pine flatwoods and mangrove shoreline – and its importance to bird populations. Mariner Properties Development, Inc. has removed exotic plants and restored the hydrology of this now thriving wetland. Wear long pants and comfortable sturdy shoes or boots as some areas are wet and muddy. Bring a cold drink and insect repellent.

**Registration:** Call 941/575-5861 to register for this free event.

**Directions:** Little Pine Island is located on Pine Island Rd/SR 78 between Matlacha and Pine Island in Lee County. The entrance is one mile west of the outskirts of Matlacha. A Mariner Properties Wetland Restoration sign is visible near the entrance. Park in the lot near the Mariner office trailer.

## Birding at Lemon Bay Park

Saturday, October 16 from 8:00 to 10:00 A.M.

Lemon Bay Park

October is a great time to observe the fall migrant bird populations coming to Florida for the winter season. Take a leisurely stroll with Park Naturalist Kathi Rader-Gibson along the shores of Lemon Bay while observing many species of shorebirds that inhabit the area. The group will follow the Eagle Trail through pine flatwoods to observe the bald eagles and other birds of this endearing habitat. Come prepared wearing comfortable walking shoes and a hat. Don't forget sunscreen, insect repellent and drinking water. The program will begin in the amphitheater just off the trail entrance.

**Registration:** No registration is necessary for this free event.

**Directions:** Travel west on SR 776 in Englewood. Turn west on Dearborn St to deadend. Turn right on Old Englewood Rd. At first bend, turn left onto Stewart St then follow the signs to Lemon Bay Park (570 Bay Park Blvd). 941/474-3065

## Trekking Cape Haze ... off the beaten path

Sunday, October 17 from 9:00 A.M. to approximately 11:30

Charlotte Harbor Preserves State Park and the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves

Put on your boots and literally walk out through the land and sea connection! Hikers will follow an unmarked trail crossing terrain that transitions from upland scrub and scrubby flatwoods into wetland high marsh, salt flats and black mangrove savanna. Wear comfortable sturdy shoes or boots as some areas are wet and muddy. Bring a cold drink, insect repellent and a hat as shade is scarce.

**Registration:** Call 941/575-5861 to register for this free event.

**Directions:** Travel to the end of SR 771/ Rotonda Trace (aka Sargassum Rd) in Charlotte County to Public Access Gate Yellow #5. This is nearly three miles after gates #3 and #4. The ditch may be wet so park along the shoulder close to the road.



# Wading Trips

## Wading the Shallows

### of Lemon Bay and Charlotte Harbor

Charlotte Harbor: October 30 from 9:30 to noon

Lemon Bay: Saturday, November 20 from 9:00 to noon

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC)

Search for aquatic critters that reside in the shallow water at Lemon Bay in Englewood (941/475-0769) and Charlotte Harbor from Ponce de Leon Park in Punta Gorda (941/575-5435). While you explore the grass beds in shallow water, you will learn about the characteristics of estuaries, the needs of these ecosystems and their relationship to the entire hydrologic cycle.

**Registration:** Everyone is welcome but an adult must accompany children under 18. Call each location to register for these free events.

**Directions to Cedar Point Park in Englewood:** From I-75 to Exit 191 (was Exit 34) travel south/west on River Rd, cross U.S. 41, continue on River Rd for several more miles. At traffic light, make a left onto Pine St, cross CR 776 at large intersection where Pine St becomes Placida Rd. Travel south on Placida Rd for approximately 1 mile. The Park is on the right.

**Directions to Ponce de Leon Park in Punta Gorda:** Traveling on U.S. 41, turn west on Marion Ave. (This is the first stoplight south of the Peace River.) Travel through Punta Gorda Isles. Continue almost to the end of Marion Ave and look for the park signs on your left.

### Mucking About in Pine Island Sound

Saturday, November 13 from 9:30 A.M. to approximately 11:30

Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves and the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Inc.

Wade into the shallow waters of Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve for a closer look at the creatures buried beneath the sand, clustered within an oyster shell, swimming among the seagrass blades, or hidden in a tangle of mangrove prop roots. Explore the ecology of a southwest Florida estuary during the morning's low tide. Pack up your dip net, hand lens, field guides, snorkeling gear, old tennis shoes or diving booties (no flip flops or sandals please), swimsuits or shorts. Be sure to bring a cold drink, sunscreen, sunglasses and a towel.

**Registration:** Everyone is welcome but an adult must accompany children under 18. Call 941/575-5861 to register for this free event.

**Directions to Battey's Landing at**

**Pineland on Pine Island:** From SR 78/ Pine Island Rd drive west through the waterfront community of Matlacha to the four-way stop at Pine Island Center. Turn north (right) onto Stringfellow Rd toward Bokeelia. Turn west (left) onto Pineland Rd which winds around and merges with Waterfront Drive. Park at the Mote Charlotte Harbor Field Station and walk back to Battey's.

# Celebrate our local estuaries in other ways . . .

Learn more by visiting the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site at [www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org](http://www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org)

## By October 16, choose images for Charlotte Harbor NEP's 2005 Calendar

We live in a beautiful place in the world, and many people have captured this beauty in their artwork. The deadline has passed to submit entries and now it's your turn to select images for a 2005 calendar that you believe best depict the beauty of the estuaries and watersheds in the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (NEP) study area. The calendar will be distributed free to those who subscribe to the free NEP newsletter *Harbor Happenings*. By October 16 visit the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site for more information and to take the survey.

## Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival

Help celebrate the splendor of the natural environment of southwest Florida by attending the Fifth Annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival. This event will be held on Saturday, January 29, 2005 from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at the Tippecanoe Environmental Park near the Charlotte County Sports Complex located at 2300 El Jobean Rd. (S.R. 776) in Port Charlotte. Please note that the festival location may need to be changed due to cleanup from Hurricanes Charley and Frances. There is no rain date. We are seeking sponsors, exhibitors and volunteers.

## Wading Trips

### Explore Estuaries Up Close and Personal

Muck about in the shallow waters of our local estuaries to see for yourself some of the aquatic critters that call these shallow waters home and you'll quickly understand the importance of these waters. Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program is pleased to sponsor wading trips with several local environmental organizations throughout the year. For details, visit the program web site. To register, contact the organization that is offering the program of interest to you.

## Charlotte Harbor Watershed Summit

February 15-17, 2005 • Edison Community College in Punta Gorda  
The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, using a cooperative decision-making process based on sound science, developed a *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)* that identifies the region's priority environmental issues – water quality, hydrology, and fish and wildlife habitat loss – and actions to solve them. When the CCMP was completed and accepted in 2001, it marked the beginning of action to restore and protect the estuary and its watershed.

The Charlotte Harbor Watershed Summit is an important step in the NEP process of bringing public and private stakeholders together to discuss ongoing studies and critical environmental issues facing the region. It is an opportunity to review progress since the first Watershed Summit in 2002 and discuss current and emerging issues affecting the Charlotte Harbor watershed.

## Together We Can Protect the Region's Natural Resources

A partnership of citizens, elected officials, resource managers and commercial and recreational resource users have been hard at work protecting the greater Charlotte Harbor estuarine system from Venice in Sarasota County to Bonita Springs in Lee County to Winter Haven in Polk County. The partners 20-year plan, known as the *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)*, includes diverse resource management concerns such as fish and wildlife habitat loss, water quality degradation and water flow. The State of Florida and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved the CCMP in 2001. That approval marked the beginning of action to protect and restore these estuaries and their watersheds.

The partnership, known as the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, has been successfully addressing issues identified in the CCMP but it is now time to assess progress made and re-assess the problems, priorities and actions required to further protect the greater Charlotte Harbor estuarine system.

***You can help protect the natural environment by improving this plan with your input. There will be at least three opportunities for you to provide your input. Take advantage of them all!***

(1) Send us your recommendations to update and improve the CCMP. We ask that you submit your recommendations by December 31, 2004 (but they will be accepted through February 18, 2005). Please complete an on-line form found on the program web site. If you do not have access to the Internet, please mail your recommendations to CHNEP, 4980 Bayline Dr, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, North Fort Myers FL 33917.

The partners who participate in the program Management Conference will review the recommendations received to determine if workshops, focus groups or other actions are necessary to understand the recommendations. The Management Conference is composed of four committees and the program office. Each committee serves a specialized role in supporting the CCMP. The earlier deadline above will give the Management Conference an opportunity to review your recommendations at their next meetings.

(2) An on-line survey of the recommendations received will be developed to help determine the overall concern and priority of each suggestion by all of the program's partners — citizens, elected officials, resource managers and commercial and recreational resource users. The survey will be announced in a future issue of *Harbor Happenings* but is expected to be available in March or April of 2005.

(3) Survey results will be analyzed by the Management Conference and at least one public workshop will be held in late 2005 to discuss the results. The process of updating the CCMP begins in earnest at this time.

Once the CCMP update is written and approved, a signing ceremony will be held in late 2006 to celebrate the newly amended plan and to help establish the continuing consensus required to implement the plan. Partners who participate in the Management Conference will enter an agreement – a Memorandum of Understanding — that outlines general implementation commitments and funding goals.

Updates on this process will be included in the program newsletter *Harbor Happenings* and posted on the program web site.