

LAKEWATCH Expands to Coastal Waters

Thanks to LAKEWATCH's hard-earned reputation for collecting reliable water chemistry data, legislators were convinced this past legislative session that the same level of success could be achieved for Florida's saltwater environments. As a result, funding has been made available to expand our scope to include monitoring of estuaries, bays, and offshore waters around the state.

The new saltwater component is being called **Project COAST** (Coastal Assessment Team) and volunteers will be sampling the same LAKEWATCH parameters (i.e. total phosphorus, total nitrogen, total chlorophyll and water clarity), plus a few additional ones that are significant to marine environments such as salinity and color.

Dr. Tom Frazer, Assistant Professor at the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, will be co-directing the coastal monitoring efforts along with LAKEWATCH director Dr. Daniel Canfield.



Dr. Tom Frazer

While Dr. Frazer's coastal marine research may be new to LAKEWATCH volunteers, it has been an on-going project since 1996. With funding provided by both the Suwannee and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, Tom and several research biologists

began gathering preliminary water chemistry data along Florida's Gulf of Mexico coastline, from Weeki Wachee to Steinhatchee.

Now that Project COAST has earned legislative support and funding, he and his staff will be teaming up with LAKEWATCH to train and assist volunteers along more than 1350 miles of the Florida coastline.

LAKEWATCH volunteers who have already been monitoring brackish or near-coastal waters will be contacted by their regional coordinator and introduced to the new sampling requirements for Project COAST. (We are currently in the midst of conducting these training sessions.) If you don't hear from us, there will be no change in your sampling protocol. However, there



Joe Richard

Volunteer Barbara Toland records Secchi depth measurements and weather observations in the Sugarloaf Key area, near Key West. Her saltwater monitoring efforts which will now be included in the Project COAST component of our program.

will be a few changes at collection centers around the state:

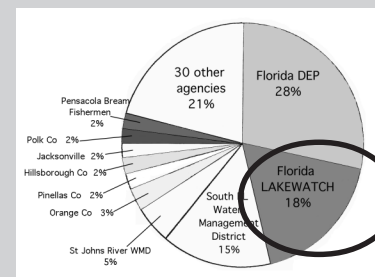
- For starters, freezer space will now be shared with slightly larger sample bottles. The larger bottles are to be used by saltwater samplers, as they will need more water for laboratory analysis. LAKEWATCH volunteers should continue to use the 250 ml bottles they've used all along.
- Secondly, supply bags with blue data sheets are to be used by volunteers monitoring saltwater. Lake samplers should continue to use supply bags with white data sheets.

It's an exciting time for Florida LAKEWATCH/Project COAST. With a large and growing database for freshwater lakes, the expansion to coastal waters was a natural progression.

We look forward to working with Project COAST volunteers as we continue to build on one of the largest and most successful water monitoring programs, and databases, in the country.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication in monitoring Florida's precious waters —be they fresh or salt!

We're not the only ones taking notice of your accomplishments:



Florida's Department of Environmental Protection presented us with this graph recently, documenting agencies and/or organizations involved in water monitoring activities throughout the state. When you consider that 42 separate entities are involved, LAKEWATCH's 18% of the pie is significant.

Soon after, it was brought to the attention of Governor Jeb Bush who wrote a letter of appreciation for LAKEWATCH's outstanding contribution to water monitoring. (See front cover.)

We are proud indeed and want you to know that we couldn't do it without you. We also want you to know that the data you collect are used on a daily basis by people throughout the state, country, and even internationally. Scientists, water managers, city and county planners, environmentalists, anglers, farmers, realtors, businesses, students, and citizens like yourself have found LAKEWATCH data to be invaluable for making informed decisions about Florida waters.

Keep up the great work!



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