

Estuary Conservation Association, Inc.



2017

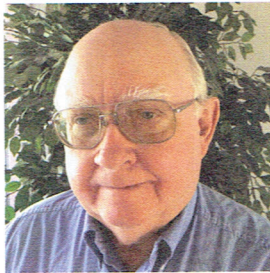
Annual Report

**For the year ending December 31, 2017
A Naples-based 501(c)(3) Non-Profit**

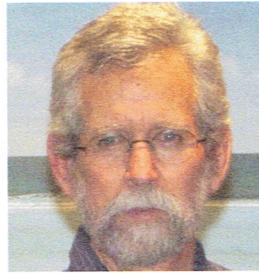
ECA 2017 Board of Directors



Alan Ritchie, President



Len Crame, VP, Treasurer



Mac Hatcher



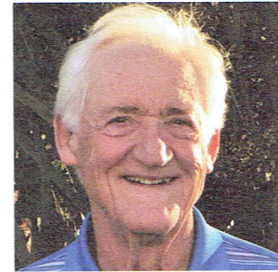
Darline Hillard



Harry Keel



Debbie Laites



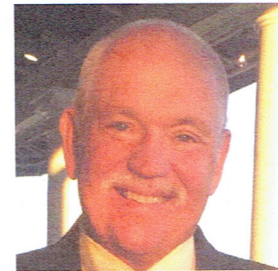
Gary Mullennix



Marco Perry



Kathy Worley, Secretary



Gary Zera

Advisors to the Board: Gary Lytton, Erin Shelton and Captain Rudy Kronauge

ESTUARY CONSERVATION

ASSOCIATION, INC.
Serving Community & Nature



February 1, 2018

To: Members and Friends of the ECA,

During 2017, the Estuary Conservation Association, Inc. (ECA) completed a productive year supporting water quality initiatives in the Cocohatchee River estuary and promoting programs that improve navigational safety in the Wiggins Pass Channel for the recreational boater. Of particular note, the ECA established the '*Cocohatchee Harbor Pilot*' group in 2017 to support the ECA mission of protecting the waters in the Cocohatchee River estuary and to promote measures that support the safe navigation of Wiggins Pass.


A major component of these "safer navigation" efforts is the creation of regular bathymetric soundings of the Wiggins Pass channel. While these soundings are not intended as a direct navigational aid, these soundings provide helpful *historical* information to assist boaters in evaluating the changing navigation conditions in the Wiggins Pass channel caused by continuous shoaling. This information is regularly posted in the gas dock office at the Cocohatchee Park Marina and on the ECA website at: www.estuaryconservation.org.

In 2017, the ECA continued to communicate regularly with the Collier County Office of Coastal Zone Management on the changing conditions in the pass and the estuary. Essentially, the ECA has become the "eyes and ears" on the estuary and regularly provides local government agencies and other interested parties with factual information on conditions in these local waters. For example, as the shoaling in the Wiggins Pass channel continued to change, the ECA provided timely technical information to the County and supported their planning for the upcoming 2018 dredge of the Wiggins Pass channel. The ECA took extensive soundings after Hurricane Irma to identify the location of problem areas for navigation and the location of the deepest water in the marked channels shortly after the storm. The ECA's primary motivation for this effort is to reduce the risk of vessel groundings and loss of control accidents that could negatively impact the water quality in the estuary. The ECA also worked with the County to assist the Cocohatchee Park Marina operating entity to get the marina certified as a "Clean Marina" by the State of Florida. Certification is expected in early 2018. The ECA also worked closely with the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla based at the Cocohatchee Marina to help them update their "Local Waters Knowledge" course that they regularly present to interested boaters using local waters from Vanderbilt Lagoon to Ft. Myers Beach.

This 2017 Annual Report highlights the work of the ECA during the year and provides our financial position as of December 31, 2017. Our household memberships reached 235 at year end. Our 2017 financial results for the year were very good and are summarized on Page 7 of this Annual Report.

The ECA continues to be the only charitable organization that is focused exclusively on the Cocohatchee River estuary and Wiggins Pass. Our all-volunteer Board continues to work to improve our estuary for the benefit of the general public, local property owners, boaters and all others that regularly enjoy these recreational waters.

Sincerely,



Alan J. Ritchie,
2017 Board President

ECA Activities During Calendar 2017

Water Quality: This was an interesting and challenging year for water quality in the Cocohatchee River estuary. The County does extensive water quality testing in these estuarial waters and this data is helpful in evaluating changes in water quality over time. The Cocohatchee estuarial waters present a challenge because the waters in parts of the estuary are negatively impacted by the limited tidal movements caused primarily by the distance from the Wiggins Pass inlet. Areas that are further from Wiggins Pass, such as Vanderbilt Lagoon, experience less tidal amplification and less tidal flushing which is typical of a dead-end canal-based system. Canals in the vicinity of storm water in-flow pipes also have consistently higher water temperatures, higher nutrient levels, higher mineral parameters and lower dissolved oxygen levels at the surface than test stations located in the main channels closer to the Wiggins Pass inlet. The dissolved oxygen levels in the dead-end canal water testing stations usually tests well below the water quality standards established by the State of Florida.

In 2017, Hurricane Irma was also the primary cause of some negative impact on water quality this year because the South Florida Water Management District had an emergency need to pump flood waters from the Imperial River flow into the Cocohatchee River to help drain flooded residential areas in nearby Bonita Springs.

The ECA continues to monitor water quality issues in the estuary and suggest, from time to time, possible solutions and other initiatives intended to improve water quality.

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Board Member Recognition: At the ECA Annual Meeting, scheduled for February 20, 2018, the Board will recognize the contributions of two Board members who have elected to retire from the Board at this time and thank them for their volunteer service to the ECA.

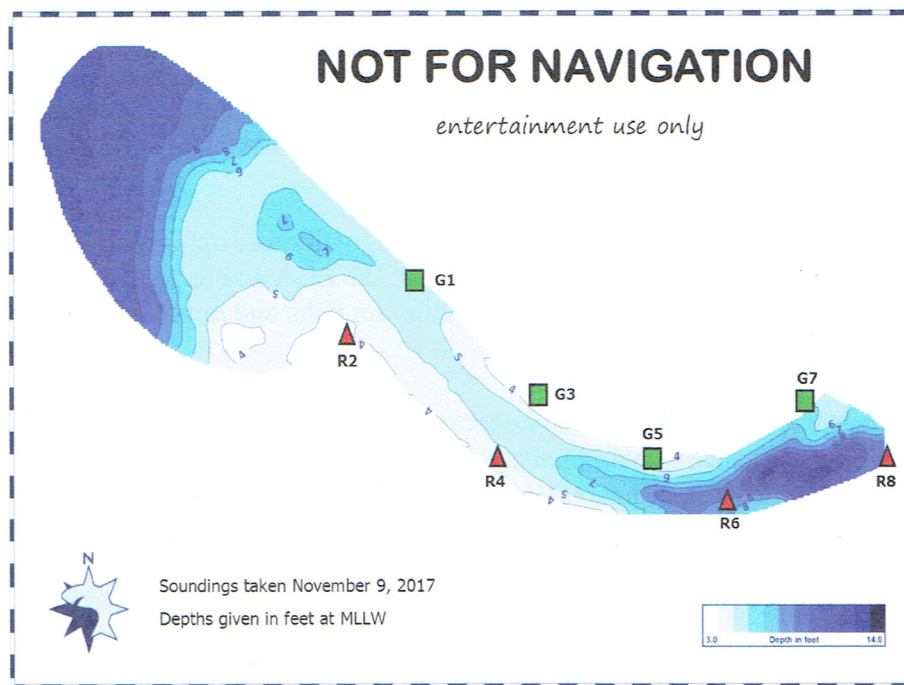
- **Kathy Worley** has served on the ECA for more than 20 years and for the past several years has served as Secretary of the Board. Kathy is employed by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, is a local expert on mangroves and has led local efforts in water quality testing in the Vanderbilt Lagoon area. She is a long-time resident of the area and has authored several articles on estuarial water quality and the health of mangroves in the area.
- **Leonard ("Len") Crame** has been a member of the ECA Board for the past 4 years and currently serves as the ECA Treasurer. Len moved to Florida from Texas after his retirement from a major oil company. Len has a strong background in world-wide safety and pollution issues from his career in the petroleum industry.

Joining the ECA Board recently is one new member:

- **Gilbert "Gil" Staph** is a Collier County resident and an avid boater who is a frequent user of Wiggins Pass and the local estuarial waters. Prior to his recent retirement, he was a global executive in the international transportation industry for 42 years with over 31 years spent working in Europe and the Far East. He brings key management skills to the ECA Board along with current local knowledge of the environmental issues affecting the Cocohatchee estuary.

ECA Activities During 2017 (continued)

Navigating Wiggins Pass: There was an extensive and continuing amount of ECA activity focused on safety in and around Wiggins Pass in 2017. During the year, the shoaling in the Wiggins channel had been moderate and slowly changing after the maintenance dredge that was last performed in 2015. Overall, the shoaling in the channel was reflected in a gradual shift in the channel to the northwest. Shown below is the depth soundings taken in the channel on November 9, 2017. You will note that the deepest water in the channel generally curved to the northwest west of marker G5 and now enters the Gulf well north of the Wiggins Pass light. As the shoaling in the channel migrated to the northwest during the year, there was a need for the County to relocate markers Green 1 & 3 and Red 2 & 4 to the north. These markers were moved twice during 2017 by Collier County to better reflect the best water in the Wiggins channel both before and after Hurricane Irma.



As this shoaling continued, the value of having "local knowledge" of conditions in the pass became increasingly important to boaters because the areas of shallow water were continually changing. Boaters arriving and departing the channel to and from the west needed to avoid the shallow water that existed to the southwest of the marked channel. To provide timely updates to boaters, updated ECA soundings were regularly posted on the ECA website throughout the year. They were also posted by the ECA at the Cocohatchee Marina Gas Dock office on the wall just inside the door. In spite of the availability of this additional "local knowledge", there have been a number of groundings of vessels by boaters that apparently were not aware of the availability of this information while using the pass. The ECA conducted a few "live" briefings on the changes in the pass but for a variety of scheduling reasons, attendance was low. During the year, the ECA developed the technology to create very short video briefings that are expected to be posted on the ECA website beginning in March of 2018.

ECA Activities During 2017 (continued)

Establishment of the new "Cocohatchee Harbor Pilot" Group: In late 2016, the ECA Board worked on the development of a new program for interested individuals to provide input to the ECA Board and develop ideas for a long-term approach to the environmental and navigational issues in the Cocohatchee River estuary and Wiggins Pass. ECA's role would be to provide some organizational support, technical data and guidance to this advisory group using the collection of historical photos, technical information and historical records that the ECA has accumulated on the estuary and pass.

The ECA held a membership meeting in early 2017 to introduce this new group and there are now over 30 "Harbor Pilot" members participating. A successful fundraising effort was conducted to help fund navigation and safety issues in Wiggins Pass with the following specific purposes.

To support the ECA by:

- providing member input on local environmental issues impacting the Cocohatchee Estuary.
- supporting the dissemination of *Factual Information* (aerial photos and depth soundings) to Collier County and Florida officials along with suggestions that would improve safety and water quality.
- recognizing and encouraging participation in *meetings* on issues that *identify risks and opportunities* affecting the Cocohatchee Estuary.

Volunteer Opportunities with the ECA: The following volunteer opportunities exist with the ECA for interested persons to help with continue the work of the ECA and to protect the estuarial waters of the Cocohatchee River, to educate the local community on risks and opportunities and to promote safe navigation in and around Wiggins Pass.

If you have an interest in any of the following areas consider volunteering to help the ECA:

- Grant writing assistance to help increase ECA grant revenue.
- Learning to use the ECA "ReefMaster" software to process depth sounding data to produce regular sounding reports (ECA will provide the computer, software and training).
- Assist as "crew" in the collection of depth sounding data aboard "*iBalls*" (must weigh under 175 lbs.).
- Serving on the all-volunteer ECA Board of Directors (a working board) or one of the Board Committees.

To start the process, please contact a current member of the ECA Board or go to the "Contact Us" section of the ECA website at:

www.estuaryconservation.org

Estuary Conservation Association, Inc.

Financials for Calendar Year 2016 & 2017

(Cash Accounting Basis)

Balance Sheet

	<u>12/31/2016</u>	<u>12/31/2017</u>
Assets:		
Operating Cash	\$ 68,936	\$ 51,805
Restricted Funds:		
Harbor Pilot Program	\$ -	\$ 30,000
WalMart Grant (remaining balance)	\$ -	\$ 2,076
Collier Community Foundation Grant	\$ -	\$ 1,000
Total Cash	\$ 68,936	\$ 84,881
Other Assets (incl. Misc. Equipment)		
Accounts Receivable	\$ -	\$ -
Boat & Motor	\$ 2,700	\$ 2,700
Misc. Boat Equipment	\$ 500	\$ 500
Table Top Display	\$ 475	\$ 475
Projector & Screen	\$ 509	\$ 509
Total Other Assets	\$ 4,184	\$ 4,184
Total Assets	\$ 73,120	\$ 89,065
Liabilities:		
Total Liabilities	\$ -	\$ -
Assets less Liabilities:	\$ 73,120	\$ 89,065

Income Statement

Revenue:		
Member Dues	\$ 12,060	\$ 10,800
Charitable Donations	\$ 19,685	\$ 25,956
Other	\$ 276	\$ 4,488
Total Revenue	\$ 32,021	\$ 41,244
Expenses:		
Professional Fees and Consultants	\$ 22,610	\$ 16,340
Water Testing (donor funded)	\$ 3,000	\$ -
Bathymetric/ReefMaster Software	\$ -	\$ 50
Insurance	\$ 938	\$ 908
Marketing/WebExpenses	\$ 277	\$ 714
Sponsorships	\$ -	\$ -
Special Events	\$ -	\$ 5,774
Oyster Reef Signage	\$ 683	\$ -
Boat Operating Expenses	\$ 84	\$ 114
Bank Fees	\$ 109	\$ 55
Other (Office Supplies, Postage, etc.)	\$ 945	\$ 552
Total Expenses	\$ 28,646	\$ 24,506
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 3,376	\$ 16,738

Aerial View of the mouth of the Cocohatchee River



Photo courtesy of Captain Jessica Stearns and Chapter #1067 of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Naples, FL

The ECA is a North Naples based non-profit organization that is focused exclusively on the Cocohatchee River Estuary and Wiggins Pass and qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as a charity. Generally, most contributions to the ECA are tax-deductible.

The ECA is also registered charity with the State of Florida. A copy of the ECA's Official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling 800-435-7352 (toll-free from within the State of Florida).

ECA's Registration Number is **CH18452**.

Smile.Amazon.com

The ECA is also registered as an eligible charity with Amazon.com. You can help the ECA if you are an Amazon.com customer by logging on to ***www.smile.amazon.com*** and selecting the ECA as your designated charity. Under this program, the ECA will receive a contribution from Amazon each calendar quarter equal to one-half of 1 percent (.5%) of all of your eligible purchases from Amazon.com ***without any cost to you***. Please try it!

**Estuary Conservation Association, Inc.
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