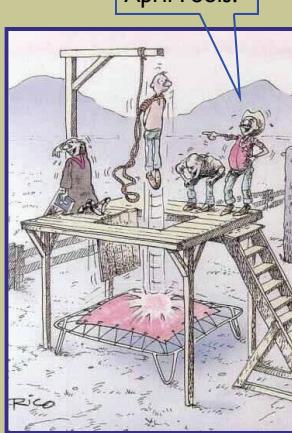




Corps of Engineers  
South Florida Operations Office



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# Bigwater

Volume II, Issue II

April 14, 2008

## South Florida Operations Office Celebrates Volunteers



Photo By: John Cichoski

On March 11, 2008 the South Florida Operations Office (SFOO) in Clewiston, FL had the honor of recognizing the 2007-2008 volunteer staff. Certificates and awards were presented by Acting Chief Donnie Kinard and Volunteer Coordinator, Phil Hart. Many Corps staff members spoke at the volunteer luncheon expressing their appreciation and gratitude for the invaluable contributions provided by this seasons volunteers. Speakers included: Assistant Chief, Robert Schnell; Biologist, Michael Boles; Park Rangers, Richard Bailey, Paula Bratschi and Art Ruebenson; and Manatee Watch Volunteer Coordinator, Jennifer Johnson, of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

Volunteers were recognized for their excellence in staffing visitor centers, serving as park hosts in recreation areas, conducting water safety programs, collecting manatee research data, maintaining trails and performing carpentry and general maintenance in the campgrounds and day use areas.

In FY07 volunteers performed 16,407 hours of work (equivalent to 7.8 full time employees) valued at over \$309,000 resulting in government savings of \$291,000.

Volunteers are a valuable resource to the South Florida Operations Office. Without their assistance, many projects would fall short in terms of quality, time, dedication, and thoughtfulness. Their contributions ensure the success of the South Florida Operations Office and reflect highly upon the US Army Corps of Engineers.

## Keeping an Eye on the Eaglets

In August 2007, the bald eagle was removed from the federal threatened and endangered species list. Just forty years ago eagles were on the brink of extinction with only 417 breeding pairs remaining in the continental U.S.. Today around 10,000 nesting pairs abound due to the wondrous success of the Endangered Species Act. The bald eagle was listed as "endangered" in 1967 after a decades-long decline caused by hunting, poisoning and the eggshell-thinning effects of the pesticide DDT. The listing protected the birds' habitat, and their recovery was helped by the ban placed on DDT in 1972.

Though the bald eagle has been delisted from the federal threatened and endangered species list, it is still afforded protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. In Florida, a 660 ft buffer zone from the site of an active eagle nest must be observed to help make sure that newborns are safely and successfully reared.

The photos of the eaglets below were taken recently near the shore of Lake Okeechobee. The SFOO maintenance and environmental stewardship sections have been working together to ensure these eaglets stay on a safe and healthy road to adulthood. [Information taken from http://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle)



Notice the second eaglet in the back corner of the nest.

### Florida Nesting Eagles:

- Lay eggs in mid-December—usually 2
- Incubation—35 days
- Fledge—11-13 weeks
- Nesting season is October 1– March 15



Photos By: John Cichoski

Incubation: The period of time from egg fertilization until hatching.

Fledge: Generally used to describe the process of young birds leaving the nest for their first flights.

## 9,595 and Counting



Volunteer, Don Mayes, is closing in on 10,000 hours of volunteer service. He began volunteering for SFOO in the fall of 2000, and has spent a great deal of his time working in the carpentry shop. Don has made huge contributions to our project over the years, and we deeply appreciate all that he has done.

As of April 1, 2008 Don had logged 9,595 volunteer hours! Unfortunately, he has decided to call it quits once he reaches the milestone of 10,000 hours, which should happen sometime this summer. Amazingly, to date, Don has driven 99,663 miles over the years commuting from his home in Venus, FL to volunteer at SFOO—now that's dedication! Don is a good man. We'll miss him a great deal.

## 90 Years Ago—Army Engineers Serve in World War I

The first American engineers crossed the Atlantic and arrived in France in April 1917, after the United States joined the “The Great War”.

Between 1917-1918 thousands of American engineer troops served in France and contributed both to front-line and rear-support efforts. The combat engineers constructed bridges, roads, and narrow-gauge railroads at or immediately behind the front.

The forestry troops of the 20th Engineers produced roughly 200 million feet of lumber in France. Other engineer troops enlarged French port facilities, constructed more than 20 million square feet of storage space, and built 800 miles of standard-gauge rail lines.



Bridge construction by the 170th Engineers in Cierges, France.

Information taken from <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/History/brief2.htm>

## New Invader Discovered in Fisheating Bay



Bill Zattau, Jon Morton (SFOO), Kurt Ramsey (Applied Aquatic Inc.) and Mike Bodle (SFWMD) discuss control measures for Bodle grass.



Bdle grass is native to South America. Its recent discovery in Lake Okeechobee is the first time it has been recorded in North America.

Late last year, a unknown grass was discovered in Fisheating Bay of Lake Okeechobee. Because of its resemblance to giant cut grass the invader had gone largely unnoticed until Mike Bodle of the South Florida Water Management District took a closer look. Upon his investigation the grass was identified as *Luziola subintegra*, a species not yet documented in North America. The species lacked a common name and since has been deemed as Bodle grass, despite continuous resistance from Mike Bodle.

The rate at which Bodle grass has become established in Fisheating Bay raises reasons for concern. The rapid growth and ability of this grass to expand across marsh and into uplands could spell bad news for our native vegetation. The SFOO environmental stewardship staff has been working with Mike Bodle, and Kurt Ramsey of Applied Aquatic Inc. to determine an effective combination of aquatic herbicides to control this new invader.

### Lake Okeechobee Water Level

As of April 14 , 2008, the water level of Lake Okeechobee was 10.50 ft, more than 4 ft below its historical average for this time of year.

Information taken directly from <https://my.sfwmd.gov/>

## Water Safety Update

In the 2008 January issue of BigWater it was reported that water safety billboards had been erected at W.P. Franklin and Moore Haven Locks and water safety banners placed at W.P. Franklin South swim beach, St. Lucie Recreation Area boat ramp, Canaveral Lock, and all lock chambers of the Okeechobee Waterway. Since that time we have added billboards at Ortona and St. Lucie Locks and added banners at W.P. Franklin north and south boat ramps.



WP Franklin South Boat Ramp



Ortona Lock and Dam



St. Lucie North Recreation Area

## Sidewalk Constructed at WP Franklin to Meet Needs of Physically Disabled

A new sidewalk was constructed at the west end WP Franklin Day Use Area to provide suitable access to Pavilion #2 for individuals with physical disabilities. The construction of the sidewalk was conducted by R & D Maintenance Services, Inc. in accordance with the Americans with Disability Act of 1990. Public safety is a primary concern for SFOO ensuring our parks and facilities are accessible and properly maintained for our visitors.



## Melaleuca Removed from South Side of Lake Okeechobee

SFOO maintenance section currently is coordinating the removal of melaleuca trees along the south side of the Herbert Hoover Dike. Tree removal began at S-4 pumping station and will continue southeastward. Only trees located within 50-75 ft from the toe (base) of the levee will be removed. The purpose of the tree removal is to ensure that the maintenance section can adequately conduct dike inspections and maintenance.

Originating from Australia, melaleuca trees were brought to south Florida around 50 years ago. Today they are big problem. Melaleuca trees can quickly expand into huge forests and interfere with human activities and smother native vegetation.



Large Melaleuca Stand on South End of the Lake



Work in Progress



Completed Section

Photos By: John Cichoski

## SFOO Supports SFWMD Media Day



Photo By: Mike Boles

Corps biologist , Jon Morton (right) toured members of the local media by airboat on a restored section of the Kissimmee River.

In support of the South Florida Water Management District's Media Day, SFOO provided two airboats and operators to shuttle journalists and photographers along the Kissimmee River. The event was held to showcase successes of the Kissimmee River Restoration.



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Thank you to the following individuals for contributing articles to this edition of BigWater:

Rich Bailey  
Deb Nimi  
Art Ruebenson

Also, much thanks to John Cichoski, Hope White, Jon Morton and Calvin Grinslade for contributing content and photographs to this edition of the BigWater newsletter.

Newsletter Editor: Mike Boles

## Help Wanted

If you would like to contribute ideas, information or photographs to BigWater email or call the newsletter editor, Michael Boles.

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Corps of Engineers

## Alan Bugg Farewell

Alan Bugg receives a ceremonial plaque from Interim Chief, Donnie Kinard.



Alan Bugg, Chief of Construction/Operations was honored with a going-away luncheon in recognition of his continuous support of the South Florida Operations Office. Alan's new job will have him working at Ft. Benning (Georgia) as a Resident Engineer.

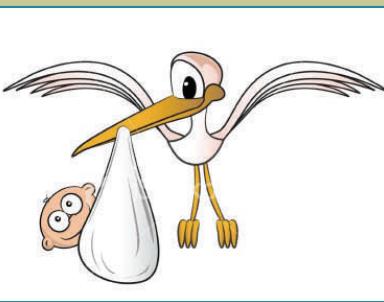
## Staff Update

Bill Zattau—Chief of Invasive Species Management in the Jacksonville District Office has taken over as Interim Chief. A warm welcome to you, Bill.

Bill Masterson—a mechanical engineer at SFOO for nearly 10 years has moved on to work at Fort Campbell in the Louisville District (Kentucky). Bill's joking and lighthearted personality will be missed.

The staff at SFOO would like to welcome James Hayes to the team. He comes from Tobyhanna Army Depot in Huntsville, Alabama. Here, he'll work as a materials handler.

## New Arrival



Congratulations to St. Lucie Park Ranger, Adam Tarplee for the birth of his new baby boy, Andrew Micah Tarplee. Andrew weighed in at 8 lbs 2 oz.