

A Feel-Good Cure for “Cabin Fever”

By: Alan Ritchie, President of the ECA

In southwest Florida, you don't hear much talk about “cabin fever” because we live in an area that is all about being outside. It's all about sunshine, beaches and just enjoying being out. Cabin fever is all about being in!

While all of us are coping with the disruptions associated with the coronavirus disease 2019, staying inside is probably the hardest change for Floridians and snowbirds to adjust to. Pile on the closing of most parks and commercial activity, there are fewer things to do both inside and outside. Walkers are everywhere and bicycle riding has certainly exploded in recent weeks.

Recently, members and friends of the Estuary Conservation Association, Inc. (ECA), a local Naples-based 501(c)(3) charity, continue to focus on their core activities dealing exclusively with water quality issues and the safe navigation on the estuarial waters inside Wiggins Pass.

Clint Cuny, a local resident and ECA Board member has been leading a project to mark stormwater drains in the vicinity of our Cocohatchee River estuary. As part of a Collier County effort in the Pollution Control Section, there is a program intended to raise awareness with the general public that the stormwater that drains all around us flows directly into our estuary. Anything that winds up in those drains gets into the estuary and the result isn't good. Senior Project Manager Steve Preston says, “the program gives volunteers a chance to participate in pollution prevention at no financial cost to them. We've been going since 2005 but there are plenty of inlets left and volunteers are always welcome.”



Clint Cuny, ECA Board Member

To raise awareness, the ECA partnered with the county to help mark these stormwater drains with a medallion that reminds the general public that any pollutant, such as pet waste or grass clippings, doesn't belong in our local waters. To achieve this increase in awareness, volunteers from the ECA are putting these markers on stormwater inlets. Clint also thinks this is a great way to get outside and get some exercise, too. Take one look at his “work” shorts and you'll see just how sticky the adhesive is but he claims it comes right off his body when it dries...but not so for his shorts! He's our most prolific volunteer with more than 200 medallions put in place in the last couple of weeks. Sammie Gibson, environmental specialist also with the county, adds “it's a great community project because it has a local impact. Anything that enters these inlets comes directly from our neighborhoods and goes directly into our local water, this is the pollution that we can prevent.”

Others such as Debbie Laites, a local realtor, Gil Stapf and his son Ryan, along with Bob Flaherty of the ECA have helped as have several friends of the ECA, Parker Poage, Julia Cuny, Jessica Foss, Ryan Schwartz and Adam Boole all getting outside, getting some exercise and doing a little bit to help water quality in our local area.

To learn more about the ECA, check out its website at www.estuaryconservation.org.

ECA Volunteers for Inlet Marking Project



Gil Stapf



Jessica Foss



Julia Cuny



Parker Poage



Bob Flaherty



Debbie Laites