



Citizens For Florida's Waterways

Established 1994

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September/October 2021

Citizens For Florida's Waterways promotes the need for responsible use of Florida's waterways. Our primary objective is to encourage coexistence among recreational and commercial boaters, the marine industry, property owners and the environment. Citizens for Florida's Waterways advocates education in the safe and considerate use of watercraft with respect for the marine environment.

President's Message

AND THEN, THE UNTHINKABLE – Feeding Manatees

Let's Hope NOT!

Just as we were putting this edition of the newsletter "to bed", I woke to read the morning Florida Today and see that the FWC and USFWS (and of course, the myopic Save the Manatee Club) are seriously considering feeding the manatees at the Port Saint John outflow. How LUDICROUS!

First, we break from sound environmental principles and allow – no we DEMAND - thermal pollution to continue well beyond the once thought critical need to save an animal from extinction which was NEVER really an issue. We all know that packing 1,500 animals (a number printed in public view today) into a tiny area of the over 8,000 miles of Florida's coastline is just STUPID. What is even more questionable is the fact that this site is at least 50-75 miles too far north for winter residence of the animals in the first place.

But, maybe even worse, this has contributed to a near wipeout of aquatic vegetation within a 30km radius of the power plant and beyond. This in turn has caused the year-round potential for manatee starvation. Over 320 animals have starved in Brevard this year.

Now, instead of correcting that long term artificial warm water environmental mistake which borders on a man-made disaster for the surrounding habitat, they want to violate another environmental principle – provide an artificial food source.

Let's hope smarter minds prevail because the IRL is the real victim of these human errors. You can't help restore the vegetation in the lagoon by adding more herbivores

that according to various experts require 100-200 lbs of vegetation per day (I have used 40-90 lbs in all my carrying capacity calculations). If we don't recover the IRL, you can feed manatees until the cows come home and it just won't matter to the lagoon and all the thousands of OTHER creatures that call it home.

WINTERIZE – WHAT'S THAT?

Well, I must admit that there have been a couple mornings in the last few weeks that made me think there is a touch of Fall in the air. Yessir, the low to mid 80s seem just that much cooler. WHAT?

We are so lucky to live in this slice of paradise we call home. Personally, I am never quite as comfortable and at ease as when I am on a boat. Probably the most common interest among all of us is love of the water and boating.

These next months are another perfect time of year to enjoy watersports, fishing, picnics, hanging out on a sandbar or island, lunch/dinner outings, or just cruising around. If you've been avoiding the Barge Canal, Canaveral Locks or Port due to sweltering in the slow zones, now's the time to enjoy those areas too. Regardless of your home inlet, the reward for passage beyond the jetties is the clear cool water to explore.

So, out of respect to our northern friends who are busily winterizing their boats, let's get ours on the water and underway.

See you out there!

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Please Mark Your Calendars!



- » **October 21: Brevard Marine Advisory Council.** 6:00 pm Viera Government Center, Bldg. C, 3rd Floor. Open to the public.
- » **November 1: Board of Directors Meeting-Annual Meeting.** 6:30 pm Lighthouse Christian Church on N. Banana River Dr. Open to the public
- » **November 3: District 2 Dredging Committee Meeting.** 6:00 pm at Kiwanis Island, Merritt Island. Open to the public.
- » **November 18: Brevard Marine Advisory Council.** 6:00 pm Viera Government Center, Bldg. C, 3rd Floor. Open to the public.
- » **December 1: District 2 Dredging Committee Meeting.** 6:00 pm at Kiwanis Island, Merritt Island. Open to the public
- » **December 6: Board of Directors Meeting.** 6:30 pm Lighthouse Christian Church on N. Banana River Dr. Open to the public.
- » **December 10: Cocoa Village Holiday Boat Parade.** 6pm Riverfront Park
- » **December 16: Brevard Marine Advisory Council.** 6:00 pm Viera Government Center, Bldg. C, 3rd Floor. Open to the public.
- » **December 16: Merritt Island Christmas Boat Parade Captain's Meeting.** 6 pm Sunset Waterfront Grill and Bar
- » **December 18: 2021 Merritt Island Christmas Boat Parade** Sykes Creek. 6 pm.

Newsletter Delivery Mode

E-Newsletters Now Available

CFFW is offering all members the option to receive all future newsletters by email instead of a hard copy by mail.

If you wish to save your club money on printing and postage, please reply to info@cffw.org and we will add you to the email list for your newsletters!.

You can view the same exact version online at CFFW.org and click on "newsletters" tab and the issue you would like to view. ❖

*When Does Your
Membership Expire?
(See Back Cover)*

President's Message

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The Rivers look Pretty Good

In general, the clarity of the IRL has seemingly been quite a bit better this year. Even the canals have not turned and stayed that milky mocha for any significant length of time. Maybe we can hope for some regrowth of the more substantial and desirable aquatic vegetation species in the coming months. Even though growth is significantly slower in the cooler months, any growth now is important looking ahead to the growing season of the warmer months.

There was another article of the plight of the starving manatees in Florida Today this morning. I try to read all the mainstream press about manatees. The director (a true scientist) of the FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) was quoted as requesting money for long term goals to rebuild seagrass beds and wean manatees from artificial warm-water sites, including areas near power plants that attract the animals in winter months. I know he gets it – we've discussed it.

How encouraging to read a public declaration of this cognitive awakening – as late as it is. Just last month in this space I printed some of the little publicized data with respect to the numbers of animals (1,500) that huddle at the Port Saint John site and how much seagrass (thousands of acres) they consume and how that compares to the dwindling acres and decreasing density of the seagrasses in the northern IRL. If you missed that article, you can recover it here; <https://cffw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CFFW-July-August-2021-.pdf>

The encouragement only lasted a few paragraphs until the report of our current agricultural commissioner and aspiring gubernatorial candidate requesting USFWS to reclassify the manatee as endangered again. We do not need a return to “whatever it takes” to achieve “more is better” manatee management approach - to the detriment of the lagoon.

Let's hope USFWS braces with the science against the political wind. That wind is driven by public opinion (not science) and fueled by the bias of pre-disposed organizations and mostly uninformed and undereducated media.

Some of us have been standing toe to toe with these groups and trying to help our media members see the data in opposition to the prevailing opinion. All of us can do our part to change public opinion by refuting false declarations.

We can also do our part to keep the water clear and encourage regrowth of the seagrasses. The clearer the water the better the growth. Near-term re-growth will be in the shallow areas. As the grasses try to replenish, let's all do our part to steer clear, or paddle or pole into the shallows and disturb as little of the bottom as possible.



What to do with Expired Flares

If you've ever asked yourself, "What should I do with these expired flares?" you've probably made a few phone calls, found that no one will take them, and out of sheer exasperation, stashed them in a locker or chart table. Out of sight, out of mind — at least for another three years. If you were to poll boat owners on your dock, you'd hear a slew of creative answers, ranging from pragmatic (keeping them aboard as backup) to hazardous (throwing them overboard or in the trash) to just plain illegal (using them as fireworks on the Fourth of July).

But it's not just boaters who are at a loss for how to dispose of them. It's a problem that has dogged businesses, state and local governments, and the Coast Guard for decades. Fortunately, there have been recent developments that may provide lasting solutions. Let's take a closer look at the problem and some of the leading initiatives to address it.

Why It's So Hard To Dispose Of Flares

Pyrotechnic flares expire 42 months after the date of manufacture, meaning boaters have to replace them roughly every three boating seasons. A 2014 study sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard concluded that most boaters (between 66% and 88%) either do not dispose of flares or do so illegally. With close to 12 million registered recreational boats in the U.S., most of which are required by the Coast Guard to carry flares, flare disposal is a massive and mounting problem.

So, then, why will nobody take them? Expired flares are considered not just hazardous

waste, but explosive hazardous waste. Sharing some characteristics with ammunition, they are treated with similar precaution. The Department of Transportation (DOT) considers them Class 1, Division 1.4 explosives and dictates how they can be shipped. The Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco, and Explosives requires that they be stored in a "Type 4" fire-, weather-, and theft-resistant magazine.

Expired flares that are thrown into marina or household garbage go on to wreak havoc on human health and the environment, which is why the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates how they can be disposed. Flares contain perchlorates, chemicals that can quickly dissolve and contaminate ground and surface water.

Perchlorates are known to cause endocrine system and reproductive problems, and the EPA considers them "a likely human carcinogen."

A 2004 Rhode Island Department of Health study found that a single highway flare could contaminate 240,000 gallons of water, roughly the amount of water that 10 people will drink over the course of their lifetimes. Perchlorate contamination is a significant problem in the U.S., where it's estimated that some 11 million Americans live in areas where perchlorate levels in drinking water are significantly higher than what is considered safe. Given the hazard they pose, there are considerable costs associated with legally transporting, handling, and disposing of expired flares. A 2014 study sponsored by the Coast Guard found the

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What to do with Expired Flares

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average cost to dispose of a flare at one of two EPA-approved incinerators in the country, was \$3 per flare, not including transportation costs. While this represents roughly 33% of the retail value of a standard red handheld locator flare, consumers are not charged a disposal fee, and manufacturers and retailers bear no responsibility for disposal costs.

Though \$3 per flare may seem a hefty levy, the Coast Guard study noted that “price is an unavoidable hurdle in any solution.” Though it’s illegal to set off flares in non-distress situations, the Coast Guard and other agencies spend millions of dollars responding to hoax calls.

Do Flares Really Degrade Over Time?

When the BoatUS Foundation team conducted a flare test in 2015, they took the opportunity to fire some expired flares. What did they find? The expired flares didn’t burn as bright or fly as high as unexpired flares. Flares do, in fact, degrade over time. However, given that pyrotechnic flares only provide a few minutes of burn time, many boaters store expired flares aboard as backups.

How Government Is Addressing The Issue

State and local policies and programs are popping up across the country to tackle the problem.

On February 17, 2021, Rep. Joyce “Jay” McCreight proposed a bill (LD 514) in

Maine’s legislature to create a program that would collect and dispose of expired flares using a mobile incinerator. John Lee, BoatUS Government Affairs liaison, said, “If passed, the bill would make Maine a national leader on an issue that has vexed boaters, government, and environmental advocates for decades. It could help solve the huge dilemma of how to safely dispose of these hazardous materials.”

This is the third time that McCreight has introduced the bill. Last year the bill died (along with hundreds of others), when the legislature adjourned due to the pandemic. “This is a doubly frustrating situation,” said McCreight. “Having a safe, nonpolluting method of disposal to keep flares out of the waters and landfills as well as basements and sheds was the primary motivator. The other is the need for the public to be educated on the risks and solutions.”

At press time, the bill had passed the Maine state legislature, funding for it was included in the state budget, and it was awaiting the governor’s signature.

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What to do with Expired Flares

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“Nobody is doubting the need,” she said. “The fire marshal certainly didn’t anticipate that he’d get 2 tons [of flares],” said McCreight, “and that was three years ago. There’s been more since then.”

In recent years, some municipalities and states have had success in offering one-off collection events. In October 2020, the Alameda County Household Hazardous Waste Program in California ran an expired marine flare collection event. Similar events have been offered in Ventura, San Mateo, and San Francisco County. In 2019, Rhode Island Department of Management and the Environmental Police partnered with the Rhode Island State Fire Marshal’s Bomb Squad, Narragansett Police, and West Marine to host three collection events, allowing Rhode Island boaters to return their expired flares for disposal and purchase new flares at a 20% discount.

eVDSDs: A Flare Alternative

Electronic visual distress signal devices, or eVDSDs, have been available for several years and are an environmentally friendly alternative to pyrotechnic flares. They use LED lights designed to mimic the light output of a traditional handheld flare or signal SOS. In June 2018, the Coast Guard published a new standard that allows for a more conspicuous type of eVDSD to come to market and in 2020, Sirius Signal released the C-1002, the world’s first two-colored plus infrared eVDSD.

PROS: They don’t expire, meaning you don’t have to replace and dispose of them every

three years, nor are they hazardous to human safety, health, or the environment.

CONS: They’re more expensive. Coast Guard-approved models retail for \$90–\$300, roughly two to three times the price of a four-pack of handheld daytime and nighttime red locator flares. Currently only the C-1003 model, which comes with an orange distress flag and whistle, meets daytime requirements. Otherwise, boaters must carry them in conjunction with a daytime signaling device (e.g., orange flag, approved smoke signal, or flares)

What You Can Do About It

Despite the great initiatives being led at state and local levels, the vast majority of boaters have no real options but to stockpile expired flares in their boats and basements. Some municipalities do accept flares or have specific dates where these types of hazardous materials are collected. Check with your local municipality or visit earth911.com for options.

If you want to see flare disposal programs in your state, “talk to your legislator,” said McCreight, who first learned about the flare disposal issue from one of her constituents, a Maine lobsterman. Visit BoatUS.com/Gov for information on how to contact your local representatives and to receive alerts on upcoming expired flare collection events.

So do we finally have an answer about what do with our expired flares? Not yet, but there’s definitely a light on the horizon. ❖

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