

Where the Sidewalk [Literally] Ends

by Edie Creter

May 1, 2017, another perfect biking day.

In the spring of 2013 I wrote a pictorial *Breeze* article (*Where the Sidewalk Begins . . .*) after my first visit to Clam Bayou Nature Preserve, accessed at the end of 34th Avenue S (off 37th Street S) behind the Wal-Mart/Ceridian area. In the 4 years since that article, a new south side has been built and there is an addition to the north side.

Finding an updated map of St. Petersburg's portion of Clam Bayou Preserve was challenging. Phil found a recent photo on Google Earth. He added numbers to the photo that correspond to specific areas mentioned in this article. A 2014 map is at

http://www.stpete.org/parks_and_recreation/city_trails/docs/bikemap2014.pdf.



The northern portion (at bottom of the map) has added a small bridge (#1 on map) that leads to a grass-trampled trail winding around to the right until you find a small boat/fishing dock (#2 on map). Although it is tempting to jump in for a quick dip, swimming is discouraged in bayou waters. On our way out we meet up with two bicycle policemen just finishing up their trek through the north trails.



Today is our first visit to the newer south portion of the Preserve and we have no idea what to expect. This south side includes bathrooms, a parking area, a roundabout, a picnic table shelter (all in area #3 on map) and a kayak/canoe launch (#4 on map) (within carrying distance from the roundabout). At the head of the trail we meet a woman peacefully reading her summer novel and eating lunch under the shade of the new picnic shelter. She has come by car to just enjoy her surrounds.



This south portion of the Preserve has been left almost entirely as a natural coastal habitat. Egrets, ibis, osprey and owls greet walkers and bicyclists. Unlike the cement trails on the north side, the trails here are wood and end in natural pine needle underbrush or at picturesque bridges over the marsh/bayou water areas (#5 on map). No concrete here. I would guess 98 percent of the trails are handicap accessible, staying on either the concrete paths in the northern section or the wood trails in this newer section.



The trails continue expanding southward along the bayou, allowing many different directions to explore. One direction leads to an elevated switchback trail (#6 on map) with an observation deck. From atop that deck, a beautiful overview of Boca Ciega Bay awaits you. Today when we reach the top lookout, one gentleman in a dress suit and tie has already taken his place ahead of us on the bench. He is deep in paperwork and thought and so we take our photos and leave quietly.





Today we meet only walkers, of both speed and leisurely varieties. We are the only ones on bicycles. We talk to a "regular." She's here for her daily jog through the Preserve and told us she has made fast friends with the maintenance man and looks forward to his greeting as she enters the parking lot. Another couple we meet is a grandfather with his young granddaughter exploring together.

We ride to the southern-most trail where a very big surprise awaits us. The trail literally ends out over Boca Ciega Bay (#7 on map)! We were not expecting anything so grand.



Can't ride any further, but still there is something interesting to see. Looking straight down into the Bay at the end of that bridge, you will see several man-made oyster domes (off area #7 on map). They look like cement donuts. Most likely these were handmade and placed here by Tampa Bay Watch, a non-profit organization that performs a variety of habitat restoration and estuary protection activities throughout Tampa Bay.



The area is officially named the "Ecosystem Restoration and Stormwater Treatment Projects for the Clam Bayou Nature Preserve." Since the 1940s, dredging and filling and stormwater runoff have degraded the bayou. In an effort to improve it, habitat restoration and stormwater treatment projects were built by the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program of the Southwest Florida Water Management District in partnership with the Cities of St. Petersburg and Gulfport and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

The projects were done through the cooperation and funds of over 21 local, state, and federal agencies as well as various environmental and civic groups and over 500 volunteers. Clam Bayou Trail connects to the Pinellas Trail in Childs Park, and runs through Clam Bayou and along 37th St. South to the Bayway, where you can connect with the Pinellas Bayway bike routes to Fort De Soto, the beaches, or the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

See more photos on the following pages



2017.05.01 11:17



2017.05.01 11:14



2017.05.31 14:30



2017.05.01 11:14

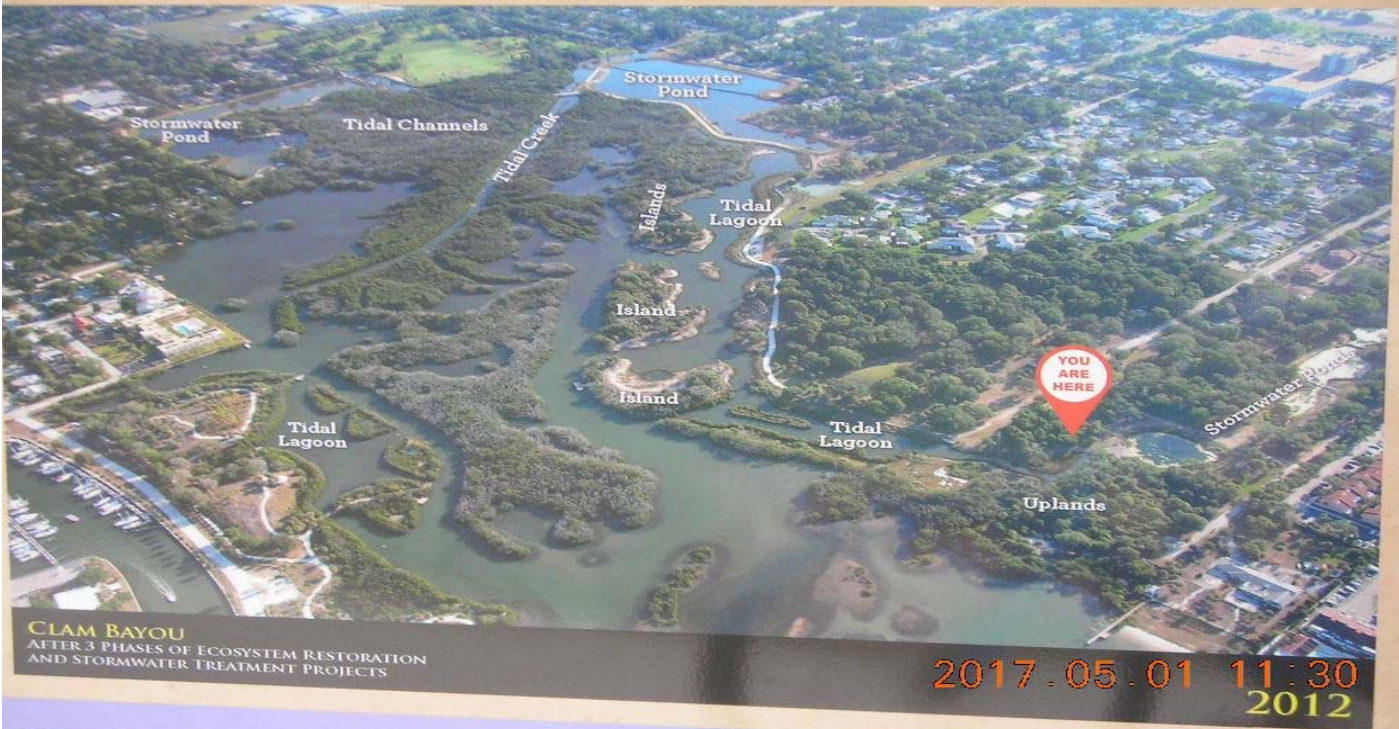


2017.05.01 11:14



2017.05.01 11:21

agencies as well as various enviro



ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION and STORMWATER TREATMENT PROJECTS for the CLAM BAYOU NATURE PRESERVE

Clam Bayou is part of Boca Ciega Bay, a segment of Tampa Bay. Since the 1940s, dredging and filling and stormwater runoff have degraded the bayou. In an effort to improve the bayou, habitat restoration and stormwater treatment projects were built by the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program of the Southwest Florida Water Management District in partnership with the Cities of St. Petersburg and Gulfport and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

The projects were done through the cooperation and funds of over 21 local, state, and federal agencies as well as various environmental and civic groups and over 500 volunteers.



- PROJECT GOALS INCLUDED:**
- 1) Restore multiple coastal habitats for the bayou (estuarine, freshwater, upland) for use by the public and wildlife
 - 2) Improve bayou and Tampa Bay water quality via stormwater treatment
 - 3) Capture trash ("floatables") and soils contained within stormwater runoff
 - 4) Establish a multi-use trail for public recreation.

LIST OF PARTNERS
SWIM Program of SWFWMD, City of St. Petersburg, City of Gulfport, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection

PROJECT FUNDING
SWFWMD
City of St. Petersburg
City of Gulfport
State of Florida
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Florida Department of Transportation
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

DESIGN, PERMITTING, AND CONSTRUCTION
Scheda Ecological Associates, Inc.
King Engineering Associates, Inc.
The City of St. Petersburg
Environmental Research and Design, Inc.
5M Civil LLC
EHC, Inc.
Operations Department - SWFWMD
500+ volunteers

2017.05.01 11:29



2017.05.01 11:28



2017.05.01 11:35



