

HARBOR BRANCH OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE

FOUNDATION

Ad Hoc Lifetime Achievement Award Committee Notes
April 24, 2015
Meeting held at HBOIF with telephone participation

Committee Members Present: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch*, Sherry Plymale*

Staff Present: Katha Kissman, Colleen Brennan

Absent: Bob Stilley

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

Kissman reviewed the discussion agreements made at the May 14, 2014 meeting.

The award should be given to someone who has demonstrated a body of work and a history of service on water issues with an emphasis on the health and protection of the Indian River Lagoon. The committee specifically recommended making the award criteria to be as broad as possible to be flexible for future awardee considerations.

The committee believes that it should be awarded to an individual but that we should not preclude the consideration of a group under certain circumstances.

When choosing the awardee, we should be mindful of geographic representation. This should be a goal but not a guideline.

Honorees will be selected based on their ability to attend the Love Your Lagoon dinner and accept in person. The only caveat would be if someone was named and who planned to attend but was unable to later attend due to unforeseen circumstances or death.

We now have an actual award (a bronze cast statue) called "The Little Heron" which was commissioned by local artist Cathy Ferrell which will be used for the award going forward.

Committee Recommendations to the Board of Directors:

- The Committee reconfirms its recommendation to name the 2016 Award and beyond the **"Leadership and Achievement Award."**
- The Committee recommends the Honoree for the **2016 Love Your Lagoon Leadership and Achievement Award** be **Grant Gilmore** (bio attached).

Names for future consideration (in alpha order) were Carl & Fienia Hiaasen, Maggy Hurchalla, River Kidz. Also mentioned was Tim Zorc, looking at someone from Valucha or Brevard Counties. The Committee asks the Board and HBOI Faculty/Staff to continue to bring forward other possible names for the group's consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 pm.

Dr. R. Grant Gilmore, Jr.

Dr. R. Grant Gilmore, Jr., is a Senior Scientist with Estuarine, Coastal and Ocean Science, Inc., (ECOS). Dr. Gilmore founded ECOS in 2004 after spending 32 years with the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, Fort Pierce, Florida and Dynamac Corp. at the Kennedy Space Center. Dr. Gilmore has been studying the fish community and ecology of Florida and Caribbean Sea for the past 35 years. He has appeared on 16 nationally and internationally televised programs. His appearances include programs on the Discovery Channel, and the National Geographic Ocean Science Documentary on the first American research expedition into Cuban waters since the revolution. Dr. Gilmore received his Ph.D., from the Florida Institute of Technology in 1988.

His work has entailed intensive ecological studies in mangrove and seagrass communities, as well as coral reefs and the deep sea using manned submarines. The discovery of new species never seen by humans before, and the richness of tropical faunas, has spurred Dr. Gilmore's interests in discovering why organisms are distributed as they are. He has authored over 124 technical and popular articles on his biological discoveries with most recent emphasis on conservation and public education, including over 70 technical and popular papers on fish ecology and life history including reproductive habits of spotted seatrout, snook, groupers, and sharks. Dr. Gilmore is now developing new technologies and systems that should allow the public to follow marine and estuarine organisms from the comfort of their home. Hopefully, this view of the marine world will educate people in the value of maintaining a rich, healthy, and valuable aquatic flora and fauna.

"I began my research in the Indian River Lagoon in November 1971 over 40 years ago. A team of scientists worked with and around me (at least 70) at Harbor Branch & Smithsonian Institution, during the 1970s and early 80s that put this estuary on the map as the most diverse in the United States and thus qualified to meet a National Estuary Program standard. It was their hard work, and that of Diane Barille and her colleagues on the political side, that demonstrated the biological value of the Indian River Lagoon and its unique status in the United States, much less Florida. The Indian River Lagoon contained the most diverse aquatic biological communities in the United States. No other estuary could come close in biodiversity, until now. We may now be headed for the lowest biodiversity of any estuary in the United States.

"My colleagues and I also noted how vulnerable the Lagoon was as all of us had experience in other estuaries around the world. We were very concerned that the enclosed nature of the Lagoon could mean increased nutrient loading or other contamination would negatively impact the water column and potentially damage one of the most important and biologically diverse Lagoon habitats, the seagrass meadows.

*"We centered much of our research around the study of seagrass. One of our scientists, Nat Eiseman, even discovered a new species and named it after the founder of Harbor Branch, "Johnson's seagrass", *Halophyla johnsoni*. I and my colleagues discovered new species of fish, the latest being described from Sewell's Point last year. No other estuary in the United States was giving us so many new plant and animal species! Unfortunately the research direction of Harbor Branch changed radically in 1985 and most of the Lagoon oriented research programs were eliminated. As a consequence, the new Lagoon programs started by the state (FWC/FIM, SJRWMD/IRLP, SFWMD), and those of concerned citizens (Marine Resources Council) had to take the lead in continuously monitoring the Lagoon.*

"Now the dreaded catastrophe, predicted years ago, to be the Achilles heel of the Indian River Lagoon, has come to pass. There has been a major seagrass loss throughout much of the Lagoon. This has major economic, biological and esthetic impacts that should wake the remainder of the state and, hopefully, our complacent politicians up. This is not the time to lower Florida water quality standards. It is time to increase our standards and enforce them or lose all our aquatic resources that made Florida so special. Who wants to come to Florida if the coastal ecosystems are dead. We have one estuary dying right before our eyes, the Indian River Lagoon system (includes Mosquito Lagoon and the Banana River Lagoon). If we put the Indian River Lagoon on the Florida west coast it would stretch from Naples to Clearwater. What if all those estuaries died? Where would the economy of Florida be and on who's watch did all this occur?"

Source: November 4, 2013

<http://www.anglersforconservation.org/saving-americas-greatest-estuary-the-indian-river-lagoon-system/>