

THE WATER IS WIDE

River cleanup nets 8 tons of litter, debris, tires and more



JULIA ROBERTS/NEWS-LEADER

Hundreds of Florida and Georgia residents participated in the St. Marys River Cleanup effort Saturday that was sponsored by the St. Marys Riverkeeper and Keep Nassau Beautiful. View more photos on Page 6A.

INSIDE: Guest columnist Mollie Quealy Bork shares that Earth Day's origin was a rare political alignment.

JULIA ROBERTS
News-Leader

Keep Nassau Beautiful, a local nonprofit, teamed up with the St. Marys Riverkeeper to pick up more than 8 tons of trash in Nassau and Baker counties in Florida, and Camden and Charlton counties in Georgia, to honor Earth Day.

The 23rd annual St. Marys River Cleanup was Saturday, and volunteers picked up trash and debris on the banks of the river, which winds through four counties in Florida and Georgia.

Lynda Bell, executive director at Keep Nassau Beautiful, said more than 250 volunteers gathered at 24 sites, contributing more than 570 service hours in the collection of more than eight tons of litter, debris, tires and bulk items from the river, watershed and surrounding waterways. In Nassau County alone, 138 of the participating volunteers cleaned up 3.8 tons of litter from 13 sites at a value of more than \$4,700, based on a \$16 per hour rate.

The St. Marys Riverkeeper and Keep Nassau Beautiful coordinated the cleanup with trash and tire disposal assistance from many local agencies and businesses including county and municipal road and sanitation departments, local landfills, Waste Management, Meridian Waste and Coastal Car Care.

"The event would not be successful without the support of volunteers, sponsors and local government agencies and businesses," Bell said.

Kendra Shafer with the St. Marys Riverkeeper echoed gratitude for the volunteers.

"It was fantastic to see so many volunteers come together with the intention of cleaning up the river," Shafer said. "We couldn't have the cleanup last year due to COVID, so it was in especially bad shape. Without those volunteers, we would not be able to keep the habitat as pristine as it needs to be."

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News-Leader

The Nassau County Board of County Commissioners waived permit application fees at the request of the St. Marys River Management Committee during Wednesday's meeting.

Dean Woerhle — a member of the committee — said the application for each permit costs \$175, and the management committee can't afford it.

The permit request is to place "no wake zone" signs at four areas of the St. Marys River: Scotts Landing, Big Beach, Temple Landing — located on the Georgia side of the river — and three other bends east of Scotts Landing, Woerhle said.

The permits are reviewed by the county and then submitted to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for approval, according to county documents.

Committee member Rick Frey said the community raised concern about the speed of boats through swimming areas and added, "The wake also kicks up a lot of erosion and water movement, which might not be good for docks that have boats attached to them."

In a phone call Monday, Woerhle said the signs would require boats to slow down for swimmers' safety and would be

PERMIT Continued on 6A

Santa Maria replica could visit Fernandina harbor

JULIA ROBERTS
News-Leader

The Santa Maria might sail into the Fernandina Harbor Marina, if details can be worked out between the city of Fernandina Beach and owners of the ship.

Kevin McCarthy spoke to the city's Marina Advisory Board at its meeting Monday. McCarthy, former chairman of the board, said he has been in talks with James Crawford, who heads the St. Marys Tall Ship Alliance, about a possible visit from Nao Santa Maria in June. The ship is owned by the Nao Victoria Foundation.

"The flagship of Christopher Columbus, the (replica) Santa Maria, is scheduled to come to the East Coast the first week of June, and they would love to stop over here June 3 until June 13,"

McCarthy told the advisory board. He said the ship is coming from Galveston, Texas, and after a trip to the East Coast, it will travel to Spain and not return to the U.S. for six years.

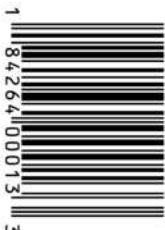
In an email to McCarthy, Crawford said Nao Santa Maria is a new Spanish 3 mast deepwater ship that is the replica from the Christopher Columbus exploration fleet. It was built in the Spanish province of Huelva in celebration for the 525th anniversary of Columbus' 1492 voyage. It was launched March 15, 2018, and became the third ship in the Nao Victoria Foundations' Historical Tall Ship fleet. Nao Santa Maria sails with a professional 20-member crew. The ship is 95 feet in total length with a 26-foot beam and has a rigging height of 89 feet.

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The Nao Santa Maria could sail into Fernandina Harbor Marina this June.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



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LOOKING BACK 25 YEARS

City of Fernandina Beach officials were surprised to learn Nassau County officials were installing a roundabout at the intersection of Sadler Road and South Fletcher Avenue.