



President's Message: July 2023

I grew up in Ft. Pierce on the East Coast of Florida. Our home was on Indian River Drive which ran along a ridge with the intracoastal waterway lying to the East and the Savannas Recreation Area behind us to the West. The intracoastal was known as the Indian River. It is a shallow body of saltwater that runs for miles along the east coast sheltered by a narrow barrier island. The area in front of our house was about two miles wide and much of it was shallow enough to wade. I could literally walk across the street, go down the hill to the water and start fishing the grass flats and potholes for trout. The Savannas are a freshwater sawgrass marsh. I could leave through the back door cross the railroad tracks and walk five minutes to the water to catch bass and bluegill. The water was pristine, and we never really thought that could change. Today the Indian River lagoon has been severely challenged by nutrient overload and algae blooms.

I now live next to Tampa Bay which is the largest estuary in the State of Florida. Tampa Bay has been a poster child for water quality improvement, but the challenges of a burgeoning population, industrial waste and agricultural discharge are making it increasingly difficult to maintain a healthy environment. Throughout the state there is an organization dedicated to maintaining and improving the quality of our water. Florida Waterkeepers is made up of fifteen regional groups that are focused on protecting water quality for all stakeholders. Our local chapter is Tampa Bay Waterkeeper.

Tampa Bay Waterkeeper is dedicated to ensuring fishable, swimmable, and drinkable water for all. Their mission is to protect everyone's right to clean water by working collaboratively with citizens, local organizations, and governments to safeguard our coastal and inland waters using the law, science and community action in and around Tampa Bay. Tampa Bay Waterkeeper is also a friend of the fly fishing community. Many of the officers, board of directors and members are fly fishermen and one of their main fund-raising events is a fly fishing tournament. While the mission of the organization is to protect water quality for all citizens, I think there is a special effort to make Tampa Bay a better place for fly fishing. The featured speaker at our member meeting this month will be Justin Tramble, Executive Director of Tampa Bay Waterkeeper. I hope all of you will join us to find out more about the organization and how we can all help maintain the water quality in our home waters,

Thanks. Stay safe and keep fishing!

Rick

Rick Warfel