

SPEAKERS FOR 7/21/16 PROGRAM

DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF THE ISLANDS

RAE ANN WESSEL

Rae Ann Wessel is a limnologist and marine scientist with over 30 years of experience working in the environmental field in South Florida. She currently serves as the Natural Resource Policy Director for SCCF, the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation.

For 19 years, Rae Ann managed her own environmental consulting firm dealing with water, environmental and land use issues at the local, regional, state and federal levels. In 1994 Rae Ann assisted with coordination of a News-Press-sponsored community forum on issues related to the Caloosahatchee that resulted in the creation of the non-profit Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association. Since that time, she has been involved with identifying critical Caloosahatchee issues and building support for sustainable solutions. In addition, she is involved in oxbow research, historical documentation and education projects on the Caloosahatchee and its estuary. For 17 years Rae Ann has guided river cruises on the Caloosahatchee sharing the history, folklore, ecology and current issues related to this historic river.

Rae Ann is past Commission appointee to the Lee County Local Planning Agency and has received awards for her work including 1998 Conservationist of the Year from Audubon of Southwest Florida; the Richard Coleman Aquatic Resources Award in 2007 from the Florida Lake Management Society; and in 2013 the Charles Edgar Foster Conservation Education Leadership Award. In 2012 Rae Ann was selected as one of the Women Who Make Southwest Florida. She received the 2013 Citizen of the Year award from the Sanibel Committee of the Islands (COTI) who recognized her work as a "tireless scientist for the environment."

HOLLY MILBRANDT

Holly Milbrandt is the Environmental Biologist for the Natural Resources Department at the City of Sanibel. She began working for the City in 2006, following three years as the Education Director for the Tarpon Bay Explorers concession at "Ding" Darling. Holly has a B.S degree in Biology from Furman University in Greenville, SC and a Master's degree in Marine Biology from the University of Charleston, SC. Her Master's thesis investigated the effects of pesticide runoff from the Dade County Agricultural Area on microbial communities of adjacent canals and Florida Bay. Although not a true "native", Holly grew up in Sarasota, FL and enjoyed her first of many annual family vacations to Sanibel in 1978.

DR. BRUCE NEILL ("DOC BRUCE")

Bruce Neill, Ph.D., is Co-Founder and Executive Director, Sanibel Sea School. Growing up in Miami, Bruce explored the diverse ecosystems of southern Florida and the Bahamas, and developed an appreciation for the ocean early on. This fascination eventually led him to study zoology at the University of Georgia, earn a Master's degree in coral reef biology and sea urchin behavior on Guam, and later complete a Ph.D. in conservation biology at Montana State University. Doc Bruce has held academic positions at colleges and field schools, as well as at elementary schools and the American Museum of Natural History. His true passion is teaching, and it is his hope that by sharing the wonders of the sea, he will be able to provide his students with a lifetime of discovery and ocean stewardship.