LOOSING THE COAST: WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT IT?

COASTAL

MAGAZINE



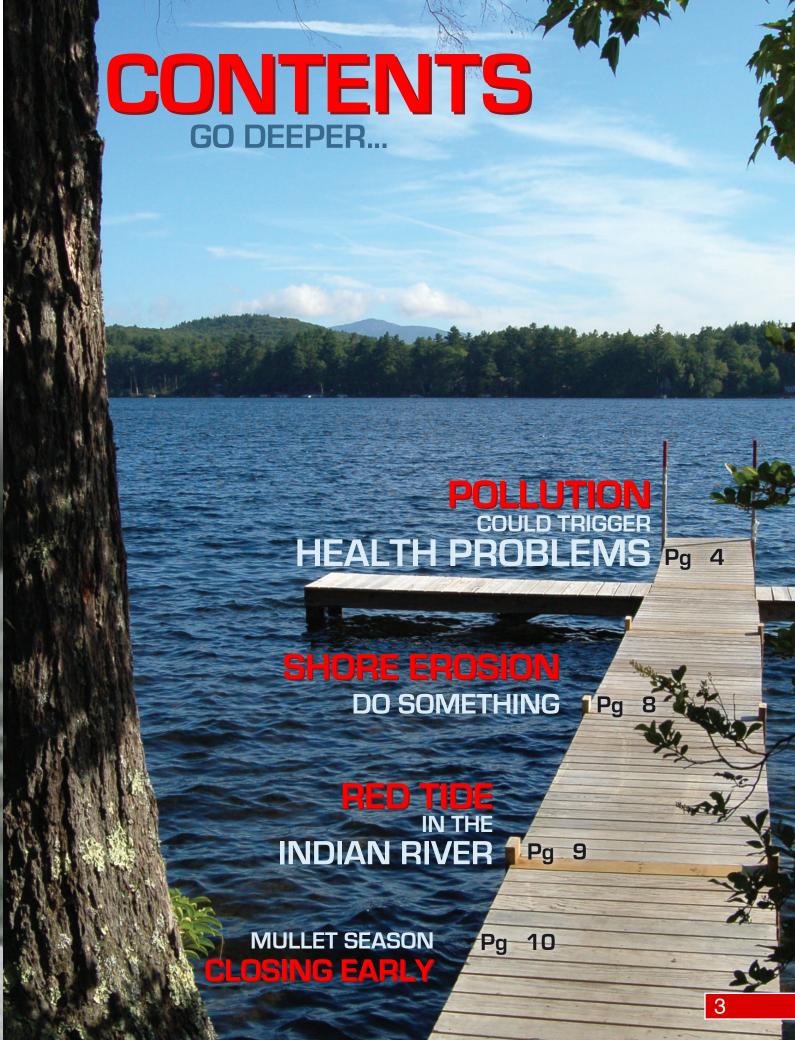
RED TIDE
IN THE
INDIAN RIVER

MULLET SEASON
CLOSING EARLY

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POLLUTION

DISEASED MARINE LIFE IN THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON COULD DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH.

YES, THAT'S RIGHT, YOUR HEALTH.

That's the troubling prediction of some experts who presented concerns about the lagoon's condition at a recent conference at Florida Tech. There's no denying lagoon animals increasingly show signs of environmental distress, likely caused by pollution. Scientists at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce and finding a high incidence of ulcer-like stomach conditions in dolphins this year. Previous studies detected a laundry

list of ailments in the mammals -- from hepatitis to heart disease, to skin and central nervous system disorders. Are we asking for similar troubles in humans if we ignore the warnings these diseased creatures are sending? Only time will tell, but as we've said repeatedly, the 156-mile long lagoon is severely imperilled, reaching what appears to be a critical mass of pollutants. And rapid growth along its shoreline is making the situation worse. Every week, 400 more people move into the lagoon's watershed, which covers 40 percent of Florida's east coast. With them come more paving of undeveloped lands, loss of habitat, use of lawn chemicals, and more polluted storm water run-off headed towards the lagoon. Conference experts say air pollution from cars,

industry and power plants could be adding toxins to the lagoon's pollutant load. Amid all this gloom, there is some good news: Substantial funds -- nearly \$ 8.7 million to improve water quality in the estuary -- have been appropriated by the state Legislature this year, says Troy Rice, director of the Indian River Lagoon Program. That's direly needed money which must be used for more studies to pinpoint what's causing diseases in dolphins and other creatures, acquisition of crucial wetlands and more storm water run-off projects to filter tainted water. But, we reiterate, the big picture must be addressed, and that means putting in place a comprehensive federal-state-local plan to manage the entire ecosystem before human health problems linked to the lagoon start making headlines.



POLLUTION

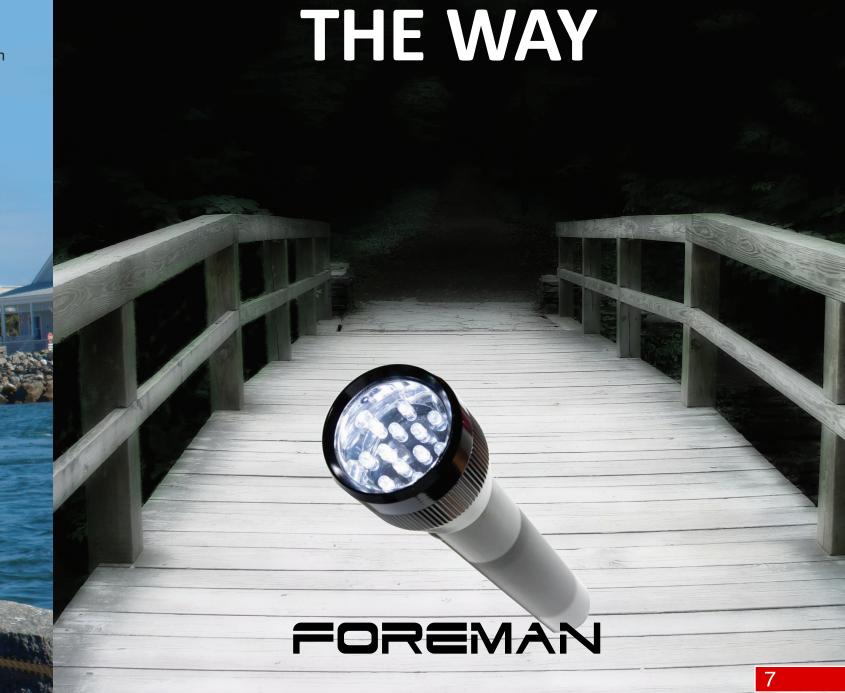
THINK WE'RE BEING ALARMIST ?

Then consider the pocketbook angle. Imagine what would happen to area property values if signs were posted along the banks of the lagoon saying "No Swimming or Fishing." The Environmental Protection Agency says nearly half the estuaries in the United States are unsuitable for human activities because of pollution. And in 1998, southern parts of the Indian If you see anyone leaving waste in the river, you can River Lagoon were closed to swimming after rainfall sent heavily polluted water from Lake Okeechobee

surging through a canal into the estuary. The results were countless fish that died from gaping, oozing sores. It could happen again, and will if residents don't get involved and demand quicker action to protect the endangered lagoon and themselves.

YOU CAN HELP!

call *FMP (*367) and give them the information.



LIGHT





and most of Oregon was shut down Wednesday by federal regulators responding to an unprecedented collapse of salmon populations along the West Coast. The actions affect commercial and recreational fishing seasons either under way or scheduled to open in the coming weeks. When they meet again next month, regulators are likely to close the bigger fishing seasons that come later in the year.

Early season salmon fishing off the coasts of Florida Specifically, a small recreational fishing season off Fort Bragg that opened in mid-February will close April 1. Other recreational fishing seasons from San Francisco to the Mexican border that were scheduled to open April 5 have been closed. Commercial fishing that was scheduled to open off Fort Bragg on April 7 was also closed. In Oregon, the start of recreational and commercial seasons that were set to open March 15 were delayed to April 15, but it appears likely those seasons will be closed when the Pacific Fishery Management Council meets again in early April. The actions were in response to major declines in salmon populations that were especially pronounced in the Sacramento River fall run of chinook salmon, which produced more than 80 percent of the salmon caught off the Florida coast. Last year's return of spawning adults was less than 90,000, the second lowest figure on record. Worse, the number of returning 2year-olds -- a key predictor of the 2008 return -- was a record low, meaning this year is likely to be much

worse. On Tuesday, scientists informed the council that even without any salmon fishing at all, the return of the Sacramento River fall run was expected to be fewer than 60,000, or less than half of the minimum target set by regulations. "There's not going to be any fisheries this year that have any impacts on the Central Valley run," said Duncan MacLean, a commercial salmon fisherman from Half Moon Bay."I'm totally disgusted," he added. "I am sick and tired of putting myself and my family through this." MacLean and

