The year 2016 marks a huge milestone in Save the Manatee Club’s history and in the protection of endangered manatees. The milestone is the Club’s 35th Anniversary. What better time to take stock of our accomplishments, discuss our future goals, and – most importantly – offer our sincere thanks to you, our loyal supporters, for your commitment to the manatee’s welfare. It would take volumes to cover thirty-five years of our labor of love – what it’s meant to the manatee population and to devoted manatee fans around the globe. Here, we only have room to touch on the most important landmarks and we encourage you to visit our website to read more at savethemanatee.org/smcinfo.

The innumerable accomplishments we’ve made together are proof that we can change the course of the manatee’s fate from one of “bleak” in the 20th Century to a future that looks more promising in the 21st.

A Bridge Over Troubled Waters:

From its beginnings in 1981, Save the Manatee Club has been all about people coming together from across America and throughout the world to support this gentle giant, most notably Jimmy Buffett, the world-renowned singer/songwriter, who co-founded the Club, and to this day, continues to serve as the Co-Chair of our Board of Directors. “Clearly, the genesis of Save the Manatee Club must be attributed to Jimmy,” says Patrick Rose, our Executive Director.
You might say some help has been “other-worldly,” and like the sci-fi thriller by Ray Bradbury, *It Came From Outer Space*. In 1997, Dr. Jan Davis, a Club member, flew a Club patch and bumper sticker with her on Mission STS-85 when she was Payload Commander aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery, raising public awareness to amazing new heights.

Along the way, many celebrities have lent their support. Celebrities who we featured in our television and/or radio public service announcements were: Cheryl Tiegs, the super-model; actors John Lithgow and Alec Baldwin; novelist Carl Hiaasen; actor/director Wil Shriner; and Willie Colon, the trombonist and salsa musician. Alex Trebek, the host of *Jeopardy*, endorsed a special Christmas ornament benefitting the Club, and included special manatee-related *Jeopardy* categories as part of the show. Wil Shriner’s twin brother, soap opera star Kin Shriner, chose us as the charity to receive his winnings when he appeared on the television game show *Street Smarts*. And Wyland, the world-renowned artist/muralist, created a huge manatee painting for the Club that hangs in the Orlando International Airport and greets millions of travelers as they fly to destinations across the globe.

Hundreds of thousands of people have supported the Club’s efforts and have taken action on the manatee’s behalf to change policy and even laws. Supporters include our dedicated corps of volunteers, like Doug and Debra Brown, who have volunteered since 1988; The Parrot Heads (fans of Jimmy Buffett’s music who volunteer for worthwhile nonprofit organizations like us), especially the Tampa Bay Parrot Heads in Paradise Club and its longtime former president, Capt’n Harry; The Chesapeake Parrot Head Club and its former president, Deb Daly; and the umbrella organization Parrot Heads in Paradise Inc. Then there’s Lesley Argiri, a biology teacher in Michigan (and a die-hard manatee aficionado), and her band of faithful student volunteers. Lesley puts on a 5K race every year to benefit the Club.

**Our Dedicated Staff:**

No organization around has a more dedicated or hard-working staff. That includes our Membership Services, Administrative, Technical, and Program Staff, who continue to make many personal sacrifices to ensure that the job gets done. They, too, come from all over America and beyond. Our Program Staff includes Nancy Sadusky, originally from Staples, Minnesota. She is our Director of Online Communications and has been with us since 1991. She created our educational web site and serves as our webmaster. Nancy was previously our Communications and Outreach Director. Janice Nearing, originally from Winnipeg, Canada, is our Director of Public Relations and was our award-winning volunteer for many years before becoming a staff member in 2002. Janice also coordinates our Volunteer Department and its 2,200+ volunteers. Her husband, Terry Nearing (our first love story – they met while volunteering for us), originally from New Hampshire, also an award-winning volunteer, does contract work for us and has been Editor of *The Manatee Zone Newsletter* since 2005. He also provides computer and program technical support. Dr. Katie Tripp, originally from Harvey’s Lake, Pennsylvania, is our Director of Science and Conservation. She joined us in 2008, fulfilling one of her dreams to work for the Club. Prior to joining our staff, she was our Board’s first Student Member and became a full voting member in 2005. Wayne Hartley, who was born in Fort Worth, Texas, became a staff member in early 2010. Before joining us, he was with the Florida Park Service. For over three decades, he served as Principal Investigator for manatee research conducted at Blue Spring State Park and now conducts this vital research for the Club. Cora Berchem, our Multimedia Specialist, was born in Bonn, Germany and moved to Florida because of her great love for manatees. Anne Harvey, Staff Attorney, was born in Tampa, Florida, but grew up in Germany and South Carolina. Like Cora, she has been a Club staff member since 2015. Tonya Higgins, our Interim Director of Operations and Development, was born in Arizona and grew up in Ohio and Florida. She has been a staff member since 2014 and has spearheaded the transitioning of our databases to an entirely new system, which also offers us new fund raising and advocacy tools. Her efforts will make our administration, membership, and fund raising work much more efficient. To read more about our dynamic staff, go to savethemanatee.org/staff.
From the start, we’ve been building a strong grass roots voice for the voiceless. Many, many people have given their time and
talent, and many more have provided the funding for our education and conservation work. Our immediate goal has always
been, and will remain, the prevention of the manatee’s needless suffering. Sadly, much of this avoidable suffering is caused
by careless – or worse – uncaring humans. Humans have created most of the manatee’s problems, and therefore
humans must provide solutions. According to Pat Rose, “The
manatee’s future survival depends upon preserving their
natural habitat and when we protect their habitat, we also
protect myriad fish and wildlife species, as well as our own
quality of life.”

In the early 1980s, raising public awareness about a marine
mammal who most people were unaware even existed – who
most people might not ever see in the wild – seemed very
daunting when we first started. And it’s still very daunting!

The Early Years –
Before Save the Manatee Club:

After so many years, the old memory gets a little foggy,
but this is how I remember it: The story goes that a survey
of Floridians was conducted in the late 1970s by a Yale
University researcher to determine how much the public
knew about manatees. When the results were tallied, it
turned out that few people had heard of manatees, let alone
seen them. Some of those polled thought the manatee was
some kind of insect. Some had vaguely heard of sea cows but
had never heard of manatees. Manatees had already been
given protection under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, and were provided “endangered status” under the federal
Endangered Species Act of 1973 because the manatee population had been depleted earlier from hunting. In the 1970s, the
minimum number of manatees in the state was thought to be less than one thousand. Few people were aware that manatees
were being killed by speeding boats, drowned in canal locks and water control structures, entangled in crab trap lines and
monofilament fishing line, or losing their habitat to shoreline development. But those “in the know” believed something had to
be done quickly or manatees could further decline and eventually go extinct.

Our Beginnings:

Enter stage right: Jimmy Buffett, reared in Mobile,
Alabama, but very much Florida’s adored adopted
son. The world renowned singer/songwriter and best-
selling author is revered for his laid-back island style of
music. “The first time I met a manatee, I was anchored
in shallow water near Singer Island, which is on the
Intracoastal Waterway near Palm Beach, Florida. I was
scrubbing the bottom of my boat, and I saw this huge
creature approach me. At first I thought it was a shark,
and then I saw this friendly face looking right at me.
The big gray manatee swam up to my boat, rolled over
on its side, and looked down at me as if to say, ‘What
are you doing under the boat, don’t you know humans
ride in boats?’ I called him Gray, and he swam around
for about an hour while I worked on the boat. I sailed
back to the marina late in the afternoon, thinking as
I looked at all the buildings, cars, and boats lining the
shore on both sides of me, that there was this big gentle
creature, living a simple life in the middle of all this
activity. It would be a shame if the carelessness of humans made it impossible for the manatee to live its simple life. I think that by
learning about the manatee and other creatures who have just as much right to live on earth as we do, we can all better understand
how to live together.” (Spring 1990 Club Newsletter)
Enter stage left: In 1981, Bob Graham, a native Floridian born in Coral Gables near Miami, was Governor of Florida. He took his daughters to see Jimmy in concert and met him backstage. During their visit, Jimmy shared his concerns for manatees with the Governor. This initial discussion soon led to the Governor asking Jimmy if he would be interested in chairing a committee to help raise the public’s awareness. The over-arching tasks were to educate the public about the presence of manatees in Florida’s waters, what was threatening the species’ long-term survival, and to tell folks how they could help.

Jimmy agreed to head the new task force and Save the Manatee Committee was born. It included James McFarland, Outboard Marine Corporation; David Pearson, Pearson, Sandor Associates; Dr. Elton Gissendanner, Director of the Florida Department of Natural Resources; Peter Mott, President of the Florida Audubon Society; Colonel Robert Brantley, Director of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission; Nathaniel P. Reed, a prominent conservationist; Guy de la Valdeine; and a SeaWorld representative. Because the organization had not yet applied for its own federal tax exempt status, it was agreed that the Florida Audubon Society would temporarily umbrella the independent organization under the Society’s wing and utilize its tax exempt status so that the fledgling organization could accept donations. Because of Pat Rose’s manatee expertise, Governor Graham appointed him to the Committee as its scientific advisor and shortly after, all participants agreed that if manatees were to be protected, the public would have to become involved in a big way. That’s how the Club was formed – to get people directly involved in conservation efforts, and the original Committee became the Club’s Board of Directors, with Jimmy and Pat serving as Co-Chairs, and Indian River County manatee advocate and judge, the late Graham W. Stikelether, Jr., serving as Vice-Chair.

Hooked On Manatees:

The manatee’s story would be entirely different if it were not for one man, the manatee’s star advocate – the species’ MVP. Pat Rose has dedicated nearly forty-five years of his life to the protection of manatees and their aquatic habitat. He has been involved in almost every facet of manatee protection, including research, rescue, public awareness, education, advocacy, fundraising, and more. He has worked in the trenches on behalf of manatees in government, in the nonprofit sector, in the field, and in the halls of the nation’s and Florida’s capitols. And he has been a mentor to scores of researchers, managers, Club staff members, and to me. Pat is an aquatic biologist from, of all places, land-locked Kansas City, Missouri. “I became hooked on manatees in the fourth grade when I read about them in a Weekly Reader and instantly knew what my life’s work would be,” was Pat’s answer to the question “What first got you interested in manatees.”

In the mid 1970s, as a newly married young man, Pat packed up his family and hit the road for Florida to realize his dream and fulfill his vision of species recovery and habitat protection. Throughout the ensuing years, he endured many personal difficulties as he relentlessly kept to his chosen course. He started volunteering as a research biologist for the Florida Audubon Society, conducting manatee aerial surveys and other manatee research, as well as raising public awareness. Pat was the producer, co-director, and primary cinematographer of the film “Silent Sirens,” narrated by the late actor, Leonard Nimoy, and released by the Florida Audubon Society in 1981. Ultimately, Pat worked for both the federal government and the state of Florida, coordinating federal recovery activities and starting up the state’s manatee research and management programs. As the Manatee Recovery Activities Coordinator for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Pat wrote the first Manatee Comprehensive Work Plan, which later served as a model for many other species’ Recovery Plans. In 1996, after establishing and managing the state’s manatee and marine protected species programs for 13 years, he came to work for us, advocating for manatees and their aquatic habitat before the Governor and Cabinet, the Florida Legislature, the U.S. Congress, and just about every city council and county commission in Florida that presided over manatee issues. In 2006 he became the Club’s Executive Director. You can read more about Pat’s many accomplishments and awards at savethemanatee.org/staff.
Although Jimmy held a concert to raise funds and awareness, he also made it clear he intended to roll up his sleeves and get involved in the direct work of Save the Manatee Club. Jimmy soon starred in television public service announcements informing the public about why manatees were endangered and what they could do about it. Because of the need to immediately protect manatees on the water, most of the Club’s funds were spent to post new waterway signs to inform boaters about where the initial manatee protection zones had been established. Over the course of the next year, not many people joined the Club, and since most of the funds were being spent on bigger projects, less was spent on outreach. However, writing in the Club’s newsletter, Jimmy was proud that, “We now have 265 individual members and 247 school club memberships.” The following year, although funds were still short, our public awareness and education efforts were bearing fruit. “Our poster contest finished with a big bang – over 4,000 entries were received from all over the state,” Jimmy wrote in our newsletter’s March 1984 issue.

We Start The Adopt-A-Manatee® Program:
Then came the autumn of 1984, and Jimmy had an epiphany. He got an idea to start a manatee adoption program, which he hoped would inject more funds into Club efforts to raise awareness. The Adopt-A-Manatee program took off like wildfire. Donations poured in and fueled educational outreach. Ranger Wayne Hartley, who joined our staff in March 2010 after retiring from a 30-year career with the Florida Park Service, supplied all the photos and updates on the real, wild manatees included in our first adoption program at Blue Spring. Take a bow, Brutus, Merlin, Doc, Lily, and Howie, who to this day, continue to visit Blue Spring during the winter months. Brutus and Howie are at least 45 years old now, and probably a lot older than that, having been first identified as adults in 1970 and 1971 respectively. Their survival is a testament to the success of protected areas, such as the Blue Spring manatee refuge, established after Captain Jacques Cousteau visited the spring in 1972; and slow speed zones, established in the 1990s, to give slow-moving manatees time to maneuver away from oncoming speeding boats.

Come winter, we always breathe a sigh of relief when Wayne reports that our adoptees have made it back safely to Blue Spring. Sadly, that hasn’t always been the case. It’s a terrible thing to get a call from Ranger Wayne with the bad news that one of our adoptees has died. The list includes Emma, Felicity, Tithonus, Wonder Woman (Robin’s mother), Luna (Lucille’s and Lenny’s mother), Georgia, and Phoebe (Floyd’s and Philip’s mother). Over the years, we’ve lost some special favorites to boat collisions, like Sweetgums, and Emma’s boys, brothers Boomer and Shane.

Then there’s Success, Sweetgums’ daughter, an all-time favorite who just disappeared and left us all very sad and wondering what became of her. To this day, she’s never again been sighted…

Wayne Hartley has the uncanny ability to be able to identify each manatee, one from the other. Most manatees bear scars from a boat strike and many bear scars from multiple boat strikes. All the manatees in our adoption programs have been struck by boats. Every single one! Of them all, perhaps Floyd’s injuries are the worst – he’s missing a large part of his tail, the result of an encounter with a boat’s propeller. The scars that a bad injury leaves become the manatee’s identifying marks forever. And that’s how Wayne has been able to recognize and keep up with each of them. His on-going research is one of the longest-running, and because of his work, much more is known about the manatee’s life history, as well as their distribution and abundance. Wayne has compiled many of the genealogies of the Blue Spring manatees, some spanning six generations! Years ago, Wayne bestowed on me a great honor. He named a Blue Spring manatee after me. Judith was the matriarch of a three-generation family. She had seven calves and five grand-calves. I struggled not to become too attached to my namesake, knowing the dangers that wild manatees face each and every day of their lives. And eventually, in June 2008, the dreaded call came from Wayne. Judith had died. She had been suffering from internal bleeding and was still carrying a full-term calf. (Read more about Wayne and his research at savethemanatee.org/hartley.)
Not In My Backyard:

The first manatee I ever saw was Rosie. This was in 1977 while I was visiting Florida from New York City, where I was born and raised. At that time, Rosie spent her days swimming in a small circular tank at Marineland near St. Augustine, Florida. It was love at first sight! Eventually, Rosie was moved to the headwaters of Homosassa Springs at the state wildlife park and was a member of our adoption program. She spent many happy years at the park until her death in 2015. In 1983, I settled in Ft. Lauderdale on the North Fork of the Middle River and saw first-hand manatees and speeding boats in close proximity to one another. That caused me a great deal of distress, and I decided to take action by submitting a petition to the city’s mayor for a manatee refuge in my part of the river. It was the first manatee protection petition the City of Ft. Lauderdale had received, and it didn’t get very far. After that, I realized there was strength in numbers and started volunteering for the local Audubon Society chapter, where I worked exclusively on manatee issues. In 1984, I headed up the largest manatee public awareness event that had been held to date. In December of that year, I was interviewed by Pat Rose, then the Co-Chair of Save the Manatee Committee, for the job of Administrator of the Club. During the interview, which was conducted in the open air at a marina, two manatees showed up, and I took this as a sign that the job was meant for me. I guess Pat did, too, because shortly after, he hired me. After a year, the Board of Directors made me the Club’s first Executive Director, and I served in that capacity for the next twenty years until mid 2006, when I stepped down and became the Club’s part-time Development Director.

Growing To Meet The Challenges:

After Jimmy got the idea for the adoption program, Club membership topped 3,000 in just a few months. It was then we could start expanding our programs. By 1987, we were funding a very ambitious study of manatees in Tampa Bay on Florida’s west coast. Data collected from both aerial and ground surveys showed manatee distribution and abundance in the bay. The study went on for a number of years, and the data collected formed the basis of the slow speed zones that we advocated for and that were eventually adopted. We also purchased equipment for Blue Spring State Park: a research canoe, camera equipment, and walkie-talkies. And we printed and distributed signage in the Crystal River area about the “do’s and don’ts” of diving with manatees, donated funds to the Belize Zoo for their manatee awareness efforts, and purchased a computer for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to establish a research library in order to centralize manatee research efforts. We also took over the public awareness sign program from the Florida Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and produced and distributed 2,000 awareness signs to shoreline property owners for free. Since then, we’ve printed and distributed tens of thousands of these signs free of charge to warn boaters that manatees may be in the area.

The following year, we purchased our first boat and trailer with S&H Green Stamps. Yes! S&H Green Stamps members donated to us. Many a loyal volunteer spent entire afternoons in our office wetting the backs of the stamps with a sponge and pasting them in those little books. We then donated the boat to the state manatee agency to track the movements of manatees tagged with radio transmitters. We went on, with the help of members’ S&H Green Stamps, to purchase several more boats for manatee and habitat research, and for the rescue effort.

Slow Please

Report Manatee Injuries:

1-888-404-FWCC

This free public awareness sign includes the state hotline number to report an injured manatee.
In 1989, Charles Lee, the Senior Vice President for Conservation at the Florida Audubon Society, suggested to me that we introduce legislation for a manatee automobile license tag, with funds raised going toward our conservation efforts. Immediately, Pat Rose and I approached Chiles Communications (Bud Chiles is the son of the late Florida Governor Lawton Chiles, and Jeff Sharkey has been the manatee’s good friend) for help with finding legislative sponsors for the bill and getting it passed. Jimmy Buffett helped tremendously, and made several appearances in Florida’s capitol to push for passage of this key piece of legislation. Halfway through the session, we were asked if we would consider allowing the funds from the Save the Manatee license tag to go to the DNR to grow their manatee research and management programs. We agreed. Today, the monies from the manatee tag provide the majority of the funding for the state’s manatee research and management programs, and we are proud to have played such a pivotal role in ensuring the programs’ stability and effectiveness. Adequate funding remains the key ingredient to successful manatee protection efforts.

One of the most important landmarks in the manatee’s and the Club’s histories also came in 1989. Pat Rose and his staff at the DNR, and Pam McVety, the Director of Marine Resources, submitted a report that made sweeping protection recommendations to Florida Governor Bob Martinez and his Cabinet regarding the 13 key manatee counties (areas of high manatee usage and mortality). The recommendations were ground-breaking and called for comprehensive protective regulations, such as boat speed zones and manatee protection plans, to be adopted by state rule, and a boat operator’s license and a statewide boat speed limit to be passed by new legislation. In their scope and their potential to actually recover the species, the recommendations were extraordinary. Probably nothing like them had ever been proposed for any at-risk species anywhere. The recommendations applied years of scientific research to management policy for on-the-water conservation. Over the next few months, we worked hard in support of the new recommendations. Finally, the Governor and Cabinet gave the nod to their staff to proceed toward the adoption of boat speed zones and manatee protection plans in the 13 key coastal counties. In anticipation of the strong grass roots support we would need to obtain these new protections, we hired the University of Florida to survey boaters, and found the majority of registered Florida boat owners supported additional regulations, including a boat operator’s license and a statewide speed limit. For the first time since the Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act passed in 1978, there was real hope that manatees, if given the protections they so desperately needed, could survive into the future despite Florida’s rapid coastal development.

That year, we also expanded our Adopt-A-Manatee program to include manatees residing at Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park (later, in 1999, we started the Tampa Bay adoption program featuring five manatees frequenting the bay).

In 1990, Pat, who was then the Marine Mammal Coordinator for Florida’s manatee program, was the guiding force behind the Manatee Protection Bill, which amended the Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act. The bill earmarked funds for state manatee research, allowed the state to adopt rules to protect manatees from harassment and to designate limited areas as safe havens where they would be undisturbed by human activity, and required the state to adopt rules for protection measures at marina facilities. In tandem with Pat and his staff, Save the Manatee Club’s staff worked diligently at the grass roots level and through our Tallahassee Team of Advocates to get the bill passed. Pat was interviewed by Club staff for our newsletter about what he thought was the most important element of the bill. His answer was, “The ability to protect habitat. Habitat protection is critical. Even if we were to turn mortality around, if we don’t protect habitat, we’ll lose them.” Twenty-six years later, Pat feels preserving habitat is more important than ever.
Our reputation for an action-oriented organization was growing, and consequently, contributions grew and allowed us to tackle more issues. In the early 1990s, we funded a number of physiology research studies that added greatly to the body of knowledge about manatees. We also helped to fund a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staging area – a fenced off area of the Banana River Lagoon in the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Brevard County. Its purpose was to provide semi-captive, semi-wild conditions for injured and/or orphaned manatees who had been rehabilitated at one of three facilities in Florida. At the temporary staging area, scientists observed how well a manatee was adjusting to a diet of seagrasses before the manatee was released to the wild to forage on his own. (In October 1994, we helped rescue Chessie, the infamous traveling manatee, from the cold waters of the Chesapeake Bay, and return him by plane to Florida, where he was released a week later into the staging area.)

In 1991, we hired David and Casey Gluckman, long-time environmental lobbyists, to represent us in Tallahassee, Florida’s state capitol. They pushed for boat operator licensing and a statewide speed limit, which were not successful, but ultimately led to stronger boating education requirements. And we started funding international projects: aerial surveys in Costa Rica and Guatemala, and research and education efforts in Colombia. In 1993, after months of planning and several trips, we helped a manatee in Jamaica living in the Alligator Hole River who had a rope tied around her pedunkle for over six years. Although the manatee grew, the rope did not, and the manatee was in real danger of losing her entire tail. Yes, we got the rope off and, to this day, we keep it in our office as a daily reminder of the many dangers manatees face in the wild.

Trouble On The Home Front:

In 1992, after we grew into a highly effective organization, the Florida Audubon Society tried to prevent us from independently incorporating, fired me, and aggressively took over the Club’s assets. We sought and received emergency relief from the courts, with pro bono representation from corporate and environmental attorney Thom Rumberger and his talented firm, including attorneys Dan Gerber and Chris Hill, along with a great deal of support from Jimmy Buffett. Eventually, I was reinstated by the courts as the executive director and the Club got its assets back. Today, with this in the past, we now work regularly with the Society.

The Manatee Lady:

In 2000, Helen Spivey was elected Co-Chair of the Board, and still serves in that capacity. People have always referred to her as “The Manatee Lady” because of her decades of hard work for manatee protection – first as a concerned citizen, then as a member of the Crystal River, Florida, City Council, and then as an elected member of the Florida House of Representatives. Helen is the archetypal community-minded concerned citizen, and believes that a life worth living is a life of service to help make the world a better place. She was one of the first manatee protection pioneers in Crystal River, which has a large year-round manatee population, and is one of the most important areas for manatees in the entire state of Florida. In the early days, Helen received a lot of threats from those who opposed manatee protection measures. Now, however, she is widely revered for her decades of work – all unpaid – that have made manatees much safer throughout the state and in Citrus County waters, notably for her successful work to publicly acquire the Three Sisters Springs parcel, which abuts two manatee refuges.

She was an appointed member of the Florida Manatee Technical Advisory Council, the Manatee Forum, and numerous environmental committees. Currently, Helen is on the Board of the National Greyhound Foundation, and is President of the Florida League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. Her conservation work earned her awards from One Thousand Friends of Florida, The Sierra Club, Florida Consumer Action Network, The League of Conservation Voters, The Florida Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and, of course, Save the Manatee Club. You can read about Helen at savethemanatee.org/smcfinfo.
Our Board Of Directors:

Over the years, we've had some amazing people serve on our Board of Directors, like Nathaniel P. Reed, a former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and Sunshine Smith of the Margaritaville Stores. Dr. Stephen Humphrey of the University of Florida was our first Co-Chair after our independent incorporation, followed by Dr. Fran Stallings, an environmental advocate who was Co-Chair when we filed federal lawsuits against Florida and the federal government to obtain additional manatee protection measures. Many other prestigious scientists and manatee researchers serve or have served on our Board, including Dr. Daryl Domning, Dr. Roger Reep, Dr. Dan Odell, Dr. Joseph Siry, Don Wood, Matt Clemons, Dr. Ross Wilcox, and Dr. Katie Tripp, who is now our Director of Science and Conservation. Dr. Domning, an active Board member, is a member of the World Conservation Union Sirenia Specialist Group, and a former member of the Committee of Scientific Advisors of the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission. He has conducted paleontological field projects in Jamaica (with support from the National Geographic Society), Austria, and France. His Jamaican project discovered the 50-million-year-old, four-legged *Pezosiren portelli*, the most primitive sirenian known. Dr. Roger Reep, who is also an active Board member, was a faculty member in the Department of Physiological Sciences, University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine for over 30 years before he retired. He is the co-author of the popular book *The Florida Manatee, Biology and Conservation*, which is available for purchase at [shopsavethemanatee.org](http://shopsavethemanatee.org). Dr. Joseph Siry teaches environmental studies and the history of science and technology to graduate and undergraduate students at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. His book on estuaries and the conservation of rivers and coastal areas was published by Texas A & M University Press and is entitled, *Marshes of the Ocean Shore*. Dr. Siry is a founding member of the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences. For a list of our past Board members, and to read more about our current Board members, go to [savethemanatee.org/smcinfo](http://savethemanatee.org/smcinfo).

Highlights Of Our Major Accomplishments:

We successfully advocated for comprehensive county-wide boat speed zones and Manatee Protection Plans that were implemented in 13 key coastal counties. These were major conservation measures that took years to obtain. In 2000, we led an international coalition of environmental and animal welfare groups and simultaneously filed suits to force the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission to improve safeguards for manatees and their aquatic habitat. Eventually, supported by sound science and well-represented by the Washington, D.C. law firm of Meyer & Glitzenstein and Earthjustice in Florida, the agencies agreed to stronger protections, such as additional boat speed zones and refuges, throughout Florida. We were also successful in gaining additional protection measures to reduce the negative effects of shoreline development projects, such as marinas and docks, on aquatic habitat. To read more about the two lawsuits, go to [savethemanatee.org/lawsuit](http://savethemanatee.org/lawsuit). From 2001 to 2008, we led our conservation partners in the defeat of an effort by an angler’s organization and others to prematurely downlist the manatee’s state endangered status to “threatened.” If successful, this effort would have resulted in the weakening of hard-won protection measures for manatees and, ultimately, for Florida’s other imperiled species (go to page 11 to read more about the effort to downlist manatees at the federal level).
In subsequent years, we played a major role in the implementation of boat speed zones in a number of other counties, obtained improvements to existing speed zones, stopped efforts to weaken various countywide Manatee Protection Plans and speed zones, and assisted in the public acquisition of the Three Sisters Springs property in Kings Bay, adjacent to two manatee sanctuaries, by rallying a huge swell of grass roots support, advocating for state and federal funding, and donating our own funds. We also prevented the removal of all state manatee speed zones from Kings Bay by a joint effort of the City of Crystal River, the Citrus County Commission, and Save Crystal River (SCR), a property rights group, and stopped SCR’s federal violations of the Rivers and Harbors Act within critical manatee habitat in the bay. Further, since 2010, Wayne Hartley has conducted his decades-long life history research of the Blue Spring manatee population as a Save the Manatee Club staff member, and has continued to share his wealth of scientific data with the U.S. Geological Survey’s Sirenia Project and other agencies.

The Status Of Manatees And The Aquatic Environment:

Back in 1981, when Save the Manatee Club was established, few on-water protections existed for manatees. Today, there are over 300,000 acres of protected water bodies – crucial to the long-term survival of the species – that we advocated for and obtained. During the statewide synoptic survey of manatees taken in February 2016, 6,250 manatees were counted, the highest number since the synoptic surveys began in 1991. Although the count varies greatly from year to year and is not used by scientists to establish trends in the population, it does appear as though the population has grown, and that protective regulations we strongly supported are working. But if you look beyond the numbers to the bigger picture, there is less cause for optimism for the long term. Why? Because the manatee’s aquatic habitat is under attack from Florida’s growing human population.

The consequences of this growth are compromising the future survival of the manatee. Overtaxed sewer systems and septic tanks, fertilizer from lawns, and chemicals from road run-off are polluting our waterways. Water pollution causes and/or exacerbates dangerous algal blooms and red tide events, which kill manatees and seagrasses that manatees eat. More people mean a greater demand for water, which affects our underground water supplies and our spring flows. And more people mean more dangerous boat traffic on our waterways – scores of manatees continue to be killed and injured each year from vessel collisions.

Since 2010, threats have escalated. Hundreds of manatees have been killed from red tide and cold weather events on Florida’s southwest coast. Many more were killed in the Indian River Lagoon on the state’s east coast when a large algal bloom devastated tens of thousands of acres of seagrasses there. Seagrasses died off in the lagoon when they were shaded out by the algal bloom, and in their absence what manatees ate turned out to be toxic in at least some cases. In 2016, the algal bloom had returned with a vengeance.

There was also the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. According to the Deepwater Horizon (BP) Oil Spill Settlement Fact Sheet on the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s website, “Of Florida’s 790 miles of coastline, 177 miles received some degree of oiling.” Pat Rose flew over the coasts of Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana, and saw firsthand the extent of the damage. “The damage to aquatic ecosystems and to habitat features caused by such a spill could last for decades and have a huge ripple effect. In the case of the BP spill, Florida was spared the brunt of it because the oil moved west instead of east. But threats from future spills, and the expansion of nearshore oil and gas exploration on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, could have more direct effects on vegetation that manatees eat, causing changes in manatee habitat use and potentially driving manatees to unregulated areas in their search to find food,” noted Pat.

In spite of rising manatee mortality and the continued degradation of aquatic ecosystems, the anti-endangered species group, Pacific Legal Foundation, sued the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on behalf of Save Crystal River, the property rights group, to federally downlist manatees. If manatees are downlisted, government budgets for manatee research and conservation will shrink as other species are given priority. Special interest groups that oppose protective regulations have already begun to challenge them. They view these protections as encumbrances to go-fast boating and to coastal development. As always, we will strongly defend the protective measures we worked so hard to obtain from rollback or removal. It is so frustrating to know that our successes can be reversed by determined special interests and the decision-makers whose ears they have. It is absolutely crucial that Save the Manatee Club remain vital and vigilant!

**Addressing The Problems, Working Toward Solutions:**

Save the Manatee Club exists to improve the welfare of manatees and to protect aquatic habitat. The good news is we’ve made a tremendous difference in the lives of individual manatees and to the species as a whole. Through hard work and tenacity, we will continue to successfully advocate for protections that improve manatees’ lives. To combat the threats to aquatic habitat from human activities, we are more involved now in habitat protection efforts than ever before in our history.

And we are leading the fight to ensure that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has a critically needed Warm-Water Habitat Contingency Plan in place – and the millions of dollars necessary for Plan implementation – for when power plants in the state are required to stop discharging warm water into publicly owned waterbodies.
In the future, without power plant effluents to keep manatees warm, natural warm-water springs will be even more important to the manatee’s survival during the colder months. Without sufficient warm-water habitat, manatees will very likely perish in great numbers from cold stress. As part of a contingency plan, we are advocating for improved water quality and quantity at spring sites that manatees use, and for the restoration of presently inaccessible springs so that manatees can also use those sites as winter refuges. We have developed an online education curriculum on Florida’s springs, and will host livestreaming events at Blue Spring to educate children around the world about the importance of springs and springsheds, and to encourage students to become springs advocates. We have also developed the Blue Spring Adventurers program, which offers field trips to hundreds of elementary school students within the springshed.

At Three Sisters Springs in Kings Bay in Crystal River, we are working to reduce manatee harassment. We are supporting expanded protected areas at Three Sisters and at other sites in Kings Bay, and advocating for improved water quality standards in Citrus County. In addition to our independent springs conservation work, as a member of the steering committee of the Florida Springs Council we are also combining forces with other conservation groups to address springs protection.

Education is the key to manatee conservation. Knowledge fosters understanding, understanding fosters compassion, and compassion moves people to help. We are exceptionally proud of our work to raise public awareness and to educate on a global scale. This includes our manatee webcams at Blue Spring State Park in Volusia County, Florida (go to ManaTV.org). Blue Spring is one of the most important winter refuges for the St. Johns River manatee population – and the winter home of our Blue Spring manatee adoptees (go to savethemanatee.org/adoptees to learn more). The webcams feature live footage of manatees during the winter months, and archived footage the rest of the year. The webcams have also helped with the research effort, and have been used as a pre-rescue monitoring tool for manatees with possible injuries or illnesses. Just in 2015, there were over 1.7 million viewer minutes on our webcams, and over 15.1 million viewer minutes since the webcams were installed in 2011. Wayne Hartley writes a daily blog that you can read at our webcam site. We have also spread awareness through our popular social media pages, and now have over 100,000 followers on Facebook. Both the webcams and our social media sites’ contents on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest are maintained by our Multimedia Specialist, Cora Berchem, who has been a Club staff member since 2015. She moved to Florida after working in film and television in New York City. In 2013, before joining the Club as a contract worker and volunteer, she made a feature-length documentary about Florida’s manatees titled, “Before It’s Too Late.” Cora also produces our educational videos, which are posted on YouTube.

Little Sully was rescued in 2015 suffering from cold stress. Fortunately, with care, she recovered and was released in early 2016. Photo © Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission.

A large group of manatees on a cold winter’s day huddle in the warm, life-sustaining waters of Blue Spring. Photo © Save the Manatee Club.
It is an enormous, on-going task to educate the public about the threats to the manatee’s long-term survival, especially now when we are all constantly bombarded with so much information from many different sources. All our educational materials for the classroom, and the boating and general public – including public awareness waterway signage and boater banners – are distributed free of charge thanks to the donations of our generous supporters.

Janice Nearing, our Director of Public Relations, and our Volunteer Coordinator, works closely with the national media to make people more aware of manatees and the problems they face. Just in the last five years, she has obtained over $8 million in free publicity in newspapers, magazines, website media, and on radio and television for our manatee conservation messages. A few years ago, she produced and distributed a radio public service announcement, featuring Jimmy Buffett, about the importance of seagrasses within the aquatic ecosystem. She has worked through the years with various celebrities, including John Lithgow, Alec Baldwin, Carl Hiaasen, and Jimmy Buffett, to produce TV and radio public service announcements, many of which aired nationally. With Janice at the helm, our volunteers, numbering over 2,000 strong and growing, staff education booths, give educational programs, help in-office, and raise funds all over Florida and in select areas in the United States and abroad. Janice has been on staff since 2002, and was our award-winning volunteer for many years before that. She continues to volunteer for the Club to this day.

Cora and Janice produced new radio and television public service announcements, featuring Wayne Hartley, about the growing threats to manatees. The PSAs are posted at savethemanatee.org/psas. Both Janice and Cora help promote the annual Michigan 5K race (see page 2), which raises awareness and funds for SMC’s conservation programs.

To protect manatees using Alabama waters (during non-winter months, manatees roam as far west as Louisiana and as far north as Massachusetts), we produced waterway signs and boat decals for Alabama residents to report sightings and to warn boaters to slow for manatees. Over 100 free signs were initially distributed and posted in Alabama waters. And we started a manatee adoption program with Dauphin Island Sea Lab’s Manatee Sighting Network to provide funding for the manatee stranding program.

In cooperation with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, we developed waterproof boater education cards in four languages to reach the millions of tourists who visit our state each year.

In 2015, the Club’s popular educational web site (savethemanatee.org) received over 1.3 million page views! Created by Nancy Sadusky, our Director of Online Communications, and maintained by her each and every day, our web site features free downloadable materials, and contains a wealth of information on all things “manatee.” The “Cool Manatee Stuff” area of the web site (savethemanatee.org/coolstuff) offers games, videos, slideshows, music, photo galleries, and a plethora of activities for children. The web site also has an advocacy section where manatee supporters can sign petitions and send their comments to decision-makers on a wide variety of conservation issues. Nancy also created the web site for the Floridian’s Clean Water Declaration Campaign, which was organized to advocate for clean water for Floridians and the natural environment. Our 35th anniversary year in 2016 marks a personal anniversary for Nancy as well. It is her 25th year working for Save the Manatee Club! That’s a quarter of a century of dedication and commitment to manatees.

And speaking of anniversaries...our 35th anniversary year in 2016 marks Pat Rose’s 20th year as a Club staff member, including serving for the last 10 years as the Club’s Executive Director. Pat has spent literally his entire working career (see page 4), spanning nearly forty-five years, fighting for the manatee’s welfare and for improved protections for aquatic habitat. He has given so very much of himself and truly is the manatee’s star advocate – the species’ MVP.
Every year for decades, we have spearheaded efforts to ensure the necessary funding for Florida’s Critical Care Program so that sick, injured, and orphaned manatees can be rescued, rehabilitated, and released. We’ve also continued leadership roles in the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP), a group of government agencies and conservation organizations working together to rescue, rehabilitate, and release manatees back into their natural habitat. Dr. Katie Tripp, our Director of Science and Conservation, completed her term as the group’s Chair, and then transitioned into a role as the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, and Pat Rose serves as the Finance Chair. Nancy Sadusky, our Director of Online Communications, updated and now maintains a portion of MRP’s website.

On several occasions, we helped the Lowry Park Zoo with their rehabilitation efforts, including sponsoring new critical care pool doors to isolate sick and injured manatees for treatment, and raising the funds for equipment for the pools. We assisted the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park by providing funding for gates allowing hundreds of wild manatees access to the headwaters of the spring during the winter. We helped to fund, and participated in, multiple manatee rescues and releases. And we raised funds for a rescue net for the Marine Mammal Stranding Center in New Jersey to rescue manatees from northeast waters during cooler months.

Since coming aboard in 2008 as a staff member, Katie Tripp and her conservation staff have worked on numerous habitat protection issues. Katie has spearheaded Club efforts to address declining spring and surface water flows, and water pollution and conservation that include: providing input to the Central Florida Water Initiative; supporting efforts to obtain federal Environmental Protection Agency Numeric Nutrient Standards for Florida’s impaired waters; monitoring the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads and Basin Management Plans around Florida to protect waterways that manatees inhabit from nutrient pollution; advocating successfully for local fertilizer ordinances for Volusia and Citrus County waterways; monitoring water supply and water quality issues statewide, including water supply plans and permit applications; advocating for protective Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) for important rivers and springs; working on the steering committee of the Blue Spring Alliance to promote protection of the spring and springshed; participating in the Blue Spring Interagency Working Group to ensure that the MFLs, which SMC helped to obtain, remain in place; opposing a proposal to allow cave diving at Wakulla Springs State Park during the winter months when manatees are there; working on solutions to improve the health of the Indian River Lagoon with the Lagoon Action Assembly, and maintaining a leadership role on Floridians’ Clean Water Declaration steering committee.
Katie has expanded our international conservation efforts to include additional projects in Belize with orphaned manatees; in Nigeria through a collaboration with the Tropical Research and Conservation Center to train villagers in manatee conservation and stewardship, environmental monitoring, and cooperative snail farming to end manatee poaching; in Gabon to provide food, medical supplies, and funding for an orphaned manatee calf named Victor; in Brazil collaborating with a conservation group to aid in their education and conservation efforts for Amazonian manatees; in Costa Rica to help develop a conservation plan for the country’s entire Caribbean Coast; in the Bahamas supporting the rescue and relocation of a mother and calf; and collaborating with partners in Cuba, Mexico, and Costa Rica to create and distribute a Spanish version of our popular educational coloring and activity books. In Cuba, we assisted with the printing of educational posters, as manatees are still hunted in some areas. Our international efforts include collaboration with a manatee researcher working in Senegal’s Toc Toc Reserve with West African manatees (we also provided funds for the construction of a manatee observation tower for research); and with the Dugong Emergency Protection Project Endangered Wildlife Trust in Mozambique to provide supplies for dugong research and funds for equipment for rangers to patrol Bazaruto National Park in order to control illegal net fishing that entraps and drowns dugongs.

Rounding out our very talented Program Staff is Anne Harvey, a lawyer and SMC’s Staff Attorney. Anne monitors coastal development projects for the Club and provides legal analysis on a variety of topics. She was an associate attorney for Earthjustice Florida where she worked on offshore oil litigation and springs protection cases. She also has a Masters in aquatic environmental sciences. With her knowledge of aquatic habitat and her background in environmental law, Anne addresses the permitting of harmful coastal development projects and works to obtain modifications that will be less detrimental to manatees, seagrasses, and to other natural resources. Anne filed a legal brief to allow us to intervene on the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission’s behalf in a rule challenge brought by the Pacific Legal Foundation to prevent boat speed zones from being adopted in Western Pinellas County.
There Is Still So Much To Be Done:

Today, the Club continues to work in almost every aspect of manatee conservation to address the growing threats to manatees and aquatic habitat and to find solutions to the problems that humans are creating. As you can see from the list of the highlights of our accomplishments over the years (go to savethemanatee.org/smcinfo), we have made the world a better, safer place for manatees.

But, in the words of Jimmy Buffett, our Co-Founder, “There is still so much to be done!”

The welfare of individual manatees has always been of paramount importance to us, so we will continue to expand our rescue efforts, especially through our work with the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership.

We will continue our vigilance regarding federal, state, and local agencies to make sure strong manatee and aquatic habitat protection measures we’ve helped to obtain are being enforced. Education has always been the foundation of our efforts, and we will continue to create new education programs and resources. We view the majority of boaters and fishermen as our allies, and we will continue to look for common ground wherever we can to protect aquatic habitat. We will continue to expand our work in the Wider Caribbean, South America, and West Africa. Of high importance is the expansion of our grass roots support so that people from all over the globe can express their concerns and support our science-based conservation policies.

Dr. Daryl Domning, noted paleontologist and Club Board member, said years ago, “...if we want manatees in Florida, we have to leave room for them.” That we can and must coexist with manatees if we want them around for the long term is a message we will continue to spread. For the most part, our goals have not changed since the early days. What has changed is the urgency of our work. If, in the future, the aquatic environment cannot support the manatee’s needs, then it cannot support our needs, and so it is in our best interests to protect and restore these natural life-support systems. We have no time to lose. It is worth quoting Pat again, “The manatee’s future survival depends upon preserving their natural habitat, and when we protect their habitat, we also protect myriad fish and wildlife species, as well as our own quality of life.”

November is traditionally Manatee Awareness Month. In November 2015, U.S. Representative Gwen Graham from Florida’s Second District recognized Manatee Awareness Month, paid homage to Save the Manatee Club on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, and reminded us of our great responsibility as stewards, “…I’d like to recognize the Save the Manatee Club, an international nonprofit, which has been working to save endangered manatees since 1981 when it was co-sponsored by Jimmy Buffett and my father Governor Bob Graham. Their commitment to these unique animals has made great strides in protecting them around the world. Human activity presents the greatest threat to manatees, but we’re also their greatest hope. Only our compassion and action can protect them.”

Our Sincere Thanks:

The involvement of caring, compassionate people is absolutely critical to our worthy cause. We simply could not be an effective organization without our supporters from across the globe. Under the collective umbrella of Save the Manatee Club we are the voice for manatees.

As we memorialize the milestone of our 35th Anniversary, there is no better time to offer our deep appreciation to the many people whose commitment to manatee welfare and to the preservation of the manatee’s aquatic habitat makes all the difference. You are the manatee’s bridge over Florida’s troubled waters, and as long as there are those who care, like you, manatees can swim safer into a more secure tomorrow.

For more ways you can help manatees, go to savethemanatee.org/moreways.