



# West Coast Trailer Sailing Squadron News

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## Fort DeSoto Daysail

We hit the jackpot on the weather this time! After last month's scheduled daysail at Fort DeSoto was scrubbed due to a very cold front moving through, we were blessed with cool breezes in the morning, that gave way to a warm afternoon seabreeze.

Whisper, my SeaPearl 21, was in the boat shop in Tarpon Springs getting some much needed maintenance, mainly cosmetic. So Bill Fleming, kindly offered to take me sailing in his SeaPearl, Opa. As we crested the last bridge before the boat ramp turnoff, we spotted the twin masts of Blue Bayou, Ed and Becky Combs' beautiful blue SeaPearl Tri. He appeared to be ready to launch already, and we were a half hour early!

Whenever the Squadron launches at one spot, it's always a greeting fest as we see folks we always love to sail with and usually have a few surprise arrivals as well. Jose' Rodriguez arrived with his Potter 15 and had his whole family with him! We got to meet his wife and two boys, Juan and Matteo! What a delightful bunch! Pulling up with Harvey Brillat and his SeaPearl Trimaran was Bud Tritschler, a founding member of the Squadron back in 1998! It was great to see him again. Maybe he's thinking of getting a Tri!

Then Wing-It, Paul Waggoner's SP Tri pulled in from Pine Island. Paul brought his neighbor with him to sail. So there were three SeaPearl Tris at this event! That's a rare site, for sure. But not to be outdone, there were also three SeaPearl monohulls! Bill Prater came cruising in with his green SeaPearl 21, Mae Quickly. And already out on the water was Ron Hess, who had spent the night somewhere behind Shell Key! And finally, Art and Brenda showed up with Kiva, Art's well traveled Peep Hen. A little birdie told me that Art recently purchased a MacGregor X boat, but I think he's saving her for a longer sail.

It was pretty windy this morning, and the boats were zipping all around. Bill and I sailed back in towards the campground, and managed to run aground on the way back. That's hard to do in a SeaPearl! Of course all we had to do was get out and walk her back to deep (6 inches) water!

By that time there was a flurry of sails scurrying around between Shell Key and Fort DeSoto's north beach. The tide was lightly coming in, so it wasn't much of a factor. I got a few good shots of the three SeaPearl Tris out on the water together. They look like spiders skipping along over the surface of the sea with their 14 foot beam. Steve Tonnessen was riding with Ed Combs and he took some excellent photos as well.

Lunch on the beach was fun, getting to know Bill Prater, enjoying the Rodriguez boys who were great shell collectors, and talking up future ventures like the March Cayo Costa Gathering, the Small Craft Festival, trips on the St. Johns River and others.

Everyone is getting ready for the Springtime adventures that we have planned! I'm getting Whisper ready as well! She's been in the Marine Concepts boat shop for two weeks now, and is almost ready to come home. Fifteen years of hard use are not completely erased, but she does look better! And I finally have a proper electrical system complete with fuse panel, lights and battery.

## Alert! - Bokeelia Ramp Closed April 1st

Paul Waggoner who lives a half block from the Bokeelia boat ramp on Pine Island called to let me know that the Public Boat Ramp in Bokeelia will close for repairs on April 1st. We have our spring cruise there from March 27th to 29th, so it should not interfere with us, unless you plan to stay longer. Paul says that the county is not reliable and that those wishing to use the ramp should contact me the night before you go there to verify if it will be open on Friday, March 27th. Paul will be checking daily. Use the phone number above. There are other options, if it should be closed. Pineland Marina on the west side has reduced it's prices due to the fact that no one would pay their high prices. I think Paul said that they now charge \$15 per 24 hour period, which includes launch and retrieve.

Also, for those willing to cross Charlotte Harbor, Eldred's Marina just north of the Placida Swing Bridge is very easy to reach from the Tampa Bay area, and saves an hour of driving to Pine Island. Of course if you have to get back on Sunday and the weather is bad, you could perhaps tie up at Bokeelia, and get someone to drive you to Placida to pick up your vehicle. Bill Fite and I have bailed out early twice to cross Charlotte Harbor before a blow, so it might pay to drive farther to Bokeelia, because you could then take the Jug Creek passage with your masts down to get back to the ramp without going out into Charlotte Harbor at all.

## Bill Fite to race the EC SOLO !

That's right! Bill will take on the 300 mile Everglades Challenge alone this year. We'd planned to do it together again, but my prolonged period of inactivity in Ohio had put me miles behind in physical conditioning, and at the time we made the decision, there were no other double teams in class 4. Bill loves competition and decided to test his middle against the other solo Sea Pearls in the race.

Let's all show up on March 7th before dawn to cheer him on at the start. Afterwards we'll all head to the SeaHorse Restaurant for a hearty breakfast!

To check out the racers and their boats, go to the EAST BEACH of Fort DeSoto Park on Friday, March 6th in the afternoon.