

***ETHNOHISTORIC INVESTIGATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AT
ROOKERY BAY: CLUES FOR STEWARDSHIP***

**Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Florida Gulf Coast University
Mini-Grant 10001-300101 (2006-2007)**

Final Report, December 2007 (modified September 2008)
Submitted by Rebecca L. Austin

➤ **Summary of Research Efforts**

The purpose of the project was to obtain information related to culture history that could be used to determine how to motivate people to become better stewards of their environment in the Rookery Bay & Ten Thousand Islands region of SW Florida. This research was conducted by Principal Investigator, Dr. Rebecca L. Austin and students: Corey Foster, Deena Woodward, and Jonathan Ledbetter. The research consisted of compilation of an annotated bibliography for The Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center including archival materials, oral histories on tape and video, and technical reports on the cultural history of the area. Additionally we conducted oral history interviews about people's experiences with, and relationships to, the environment of the area. Students also attended public meetings on water and sustainability and transcribed the content of the meetings. Most of existing resources were collected from Steven Bertone, Resource Manager and were the result of fifteen years of his efforts toward preserving culture history at the reserve. These materials were reviewed and entered a Microsoft Word file. Approximately half of the sources were annotated. Oral history interviews and participant observation at the learning center occurred in spring, summer, and fall of 2007. These interviews were transcribed and entered into the annotated bibliography. The interviews were conducted with professionals in archaeology of the area, individuals knowledgeable about the environment, and initial activists in the establishment of the reserve. The bibliography is available in the research room at the Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center and the references have been organized and placed in a separate filing cabinet for culture history. This document will serve as a permanent reference for any researchers interested in culture history of the area as well as establishment of the reserve.

This bibliography is not intended to be a comprehensive document of all resources on the subject. It serves as a starting point for understanding the culture history of the region through prehistory, pioneer settlement, and fishing communities, as well as the initial citizen movement for the establishment of the current Rookery Bay National Estuarine Reserve (which has taken on various names since its inception). Each section includes references that we felt best fit that category. In many instances, documents are cross-referenced so the citation and annotation may appear in two places. The document is located in the section that it focuses on, though it might have useful information concerning other topics, because much historical and cultural information overlaps. The outline of the bibliography is below:

Annotated Bibliography of the Culture History of Rookery Bay and Southwest Florida

By: Jonathan Ledbetter, with contributions from Deena Woodward
Under the guidance of:
Steven Bertone, Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center
and Rebecca L. Austin, Florida Gulf Coast University

Section I: Archaeological Reports, Surveys, and Documents

- A. Archaeological Surveys and Reports*
- B. Artifacts: Pottery/Ceramics/Glass/Etcetera*
- C. Technical Forms (ie. Site Forms)*
- D. Archaeological Writings (ie. Magazine/ Book Excerpts)*

Section II: Environmental Reports, Ecology, Land Status Records, and Ethnobotany

- A. Ethnobotany*
- B. Environmental Reports (with reference to culture history)*
- C. Fisheries/Coastal Management*
- D. Land Status Records*

Section III: Culture History

- A. Cemeteries and Kirkland Family History*
- B. Native American Culture*
- C. Southwest Florida History*

Section IV: Oral Reports and Interviews

- A. Using Oral History*
- B. Oral History Transcripts and Documents*
- C. VHS/DVD Recorded Interviews*

Section V: History of Rookery Bay Research Reserve/Save Rookery Bay Movement

➤ Benefits of the Project and Future Funding Potential:

The project provided benefits to my scholarship activities as well as the opportunity for student research. Additional funds for continuation of the project will be pursued through the Southwest Florida Community Foundation Founder's Society Grant and Major Annual Grant Cycle. Further research on the topic of environmental stewardship as related to prehistory and culture history may be pursued through requesting funds for the

establishment of an anthropological field school that would include both archaeological and ethnographic methods training in the Rookery Bay area. A long-term relationship with Rookery Bay resource managers has also been established with Steve Bertone and Public Interpretation Specialist Renee Wilson. These contacts will benefit FGCU's environmental and community service missions while providing increased scholarship opportunities for faculty and students.

➤ **Conclusion:**

By gathering information from various people and perspectives, we hoped to gain a more thorough idea of how stewardship began, where it stands today, and how it can be improved in the future.

Outline of Preliminary findings:

Stewards of the Past

- Pre-Calusa and Calusa inhabitants had abundant resources, did not have to be concerned with depletion of resources.
- Calusa modified the environment through constructing canals.
- By the time pioneers came the area was considered a frontier.
- There were still less people than now so less environmental problems.
- People still over fished and destroyed Indian mounds for construction material.
- Although people were closer with the land and sea, they were able to get the resources they needed, so environmentalism was not an issue.

People of the present

- People are concerned about things that affect them and their immediate families directly.
- People are concerned about things that affect them financially.
- People are concerned about things that affect their safety.
- People are concerned about things that prevent them from doing their daily routines.
- As long as their homes look nice, necessities are available at a convenience store, and they have the money to afford these things then every other problem is pushed down in importance.
- Visitation at the learning center is relatively low.
- Visitation to the upstairs cultural exhibit is less than satisfying, room looks empty and information is not clear.
- People come to Rookery Bay primarily for entertainment, not education.

Ideas for the Future

- Advertise at local stores and in more well-traveled areas.
- Increase entertainment value of exhibits and events.

- Change exhibits periodically to attract repeat visitors.
- Utilize exhibit space more efficiently.
- Make connections that people can relate to their everyday lives.
- Consider a bioregional and utilitarian approach to environmental education, rather than primarily interpreting scientific data or attempting to foster an appreciation for the intrinsic value of nature.
- Emphasize prehistoric and historic uses of the area so that people can get a sense of how the estuaries and region has been utilized by people and settled over time.

➤ **Dissemination of Results**

Preliminary results will be presented to Rookery Bay staff in fall of 2008, and were presented at the Society for Applied Anthropology (SFAA) annual meetings in March of 2008. The acceptance letter and abstract for the SFAA conference is below.

From: Society for Applied Anthropology Sent: Fri 12/21/2007
[info@sfaa.net] 12:14 PM
To: Austin, Rebecca
Cc:
Subject: Society for Applied Anthropology--2008 Notice of Acceptance

Dear Rebecca L. Austin:

Congratulations! Your abstract submission has been accepted for the SfAA 2008 Annual Meeting at the Marriott Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, March 25-29. You may visit the annual meeting web site at:

<http://www.sfaa.net/sfaa2008.html>

Additional information about the SfAA 2008 annual meeting, including workshops and tours, will be added soon. We look forward to seeing you in Memphis!

Sincerely,

Satish Kedia
SfAA 2008 Program Chair

Presentation Day, Date, and Time:
Wed, March 26
10:00-11:50

ABSTRACT*Cultural History and Clues for Stewardship in Rookery Bay, Florida:
a call for a bioregional approach to environmental education*

Rebecca L. Austin, Florida Gulf Coast University

This pilot project seeks to use culture history as a tool to understand the cultural practices of people in the area of the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Reserve, in order to connect current residents with a sense of place. Through understanding people's relationship to their coastal environment, I propose the research will augment public interpretation in a variety of ways. In efforts to discern patterns in stewardship of the coastal environment undergraduates collected primary and secondary data on prehistory, pioneer settlement, residents' perceptions, and activism that created the reserve. Preliminary findings suggest a utilitarian approach to environmental stewardship emphasizing bioregionalism may be more effective than standard environmental education.