

Mote Efforts Continue After Blaze

Melissa Donley
Staff Writer

Ever since a fire destroyed one of 17 buildings in Mote Aquaculture Park, Mote has been working to pick up the pieces and continue its effort to research the best way to produce marine species in freshwater.

"It was a financial loss," spokesperson Nadine Slimak said. "It is something we're going to have to work through."

The fire in the "Growout 2" building destroyed tanks of sturgeon that were being farmed as part of a commercial demonstration project. About one-third of Mote's Siberian sturgeon was lost in the fire. Mote was still able to produce sturgeon for market last week. An aver-

age of 300 pounds of sturgeon meat is produced each week.

Though the fire was a loss for Mote, it had little effect on the non-profit organization's \$22 million budget, which relies mostly on federal and state grants and private donations.

"We're not a money-making organization," Slimak said.

Though the fire's effects on Mote operations were minimal, there may be a longer effect on the research that was being conducted in the Sturgeon Demonstration Program. Slimak said the fire pushed the project back about three years, but it is continuing on.

"It gives us an opportunity to evaluate the project and make any changes that

need to be made," Slimak said.

The main focus of this project is to find an environmental and economical friendly way to produce marine species in freshwater. The aquaculture park is located 17 miles from the coast and is currently studying the best way to recycle the freshwater to raise the marine species.

In other parts of the world, this type of project is done on the coast and uses coastal waters.

"In other countries it known to be a polluting form of farming," Slimak said.

Mote's method was designed to conserve water, as well as the coastal lands in Florida.

"We're showing it can be done inland,"

Slimak said. "We want to prove that it can be done in an economical way."

The aquaculture park currently produces sturgeon and shrimp. Slimak says they are now looking at bay shrimp as well.

Mote is also planning to use a similar model for marine restocking efforts. Slimak says they are looking to work with snook to grow and release more fish into the wild. The information learned from these efforts will help researchers to work on similar efforts with shrimp, coral, queen conch and red snapper.

With the \$5.4 billion added to the Florida economy from recreational fishing, the restocking efforts will help to benefit the state economy.

Construction Update: St. Armands Circle

Lia Martin
Associate Editor

It has been three weeks now that a little piece of St. Armands Circle is under construction. Even though restaurant and store owners knew ahead of time they would be closed so that needed and major structural repairs could be done, it was still a shock to tell employee's "good-bye, sorry, hope to see you soon."



Lia Martin

To bypass the Columbia and Cha Chas, you walk through a tunnel.

You can see the scaffolding enfolding the front doors and windows of the Columbia Restaurant, Cha Cha Coconuts, Café Galante/Hungry Fox, Les Ciseaux, Cherry Hill Mortgage, St. Armand's Travel, MY Realty, Otto Jewelers, Tropical Treasure and the U.S. Post Office.

To bypass the Columbia and Cha Chas, you walk through a tunnel from one side to the other. At both entrances, you see a sign: "Pardon our Appearance, We are under Construction."

The sign tells you that entrances to the few shops that are open have to be approached from the rear of the building.

The business during the summer months of St. Armand's Circle is a challenge in the best of times, but this summer the restaurants and some of the retail stores and businesses have received a major hit.

Les Ciseaux is a full-service beauty salon. Their customers are still climbing the back stairs to be serviced with nary a slowdown, while Otto Jewelry says that he is being severely impacted, and says many of the other businesses are too, though he says the post office is open and doing okay.

"All the businesses are non-existent. Hungry Fox has no kitchen. They are gone," Otto said. "Maybe some diehards will climb up those back stairs."

He is thankful that they have an established clientele who appreciates their custom work.

"Our established customers are willing



You can see the scaffolding enfolding the front doors and windows.

to wait until we come back," Otto said.

Tropical Treasure is closing while the front part of the building is being worked on, and St. Armand's Travel did not answer their call going right into voicemail.

The Columbia on St. Armand's Circle, Sarasota's oldest restaurant, says they are still set to re-open on Sunday, Oct. 1. They are determined to open their sister restaurant Cha Cha sometime in September.

The third restaurant impacted by the

construction is Café Galante/Hungry Fox, which is taking the opportunity to remodel and come back with an Italian dinner restaurant opening at night serving dinner in October.

The contractor for the entire project is R. L. James General Contractor, Incorporated. The company has been a part of the Southwest Florida business community since 1988, and are remedial building specialists.

Loss of Small Business Spurs Strategic Survey

Survey, from Page A1

tionation," Loeffgren said, explaining that now tourists phone at the last minute, or leave the Key early. She is savvy enough to know that the baby boomer market is important to Longboat Key.

They are a different kind of retiree, she emphasized, who want something to do when they go on vacation.

"I heard that there are 8,000 baby boomers every day retiring," Loeffgren said. "I want those baby boomers to come to Longboat Key."

In a nutshell, Loeffgren expresses a new wave of thought for Longboat Key.

In the past, residents were more inclined to want to remove themselves away from mainland commerce, and keep the Island to themselves.

Times have changed, and Town government officials have adopted a philosophy of wanting to be more pro-com-

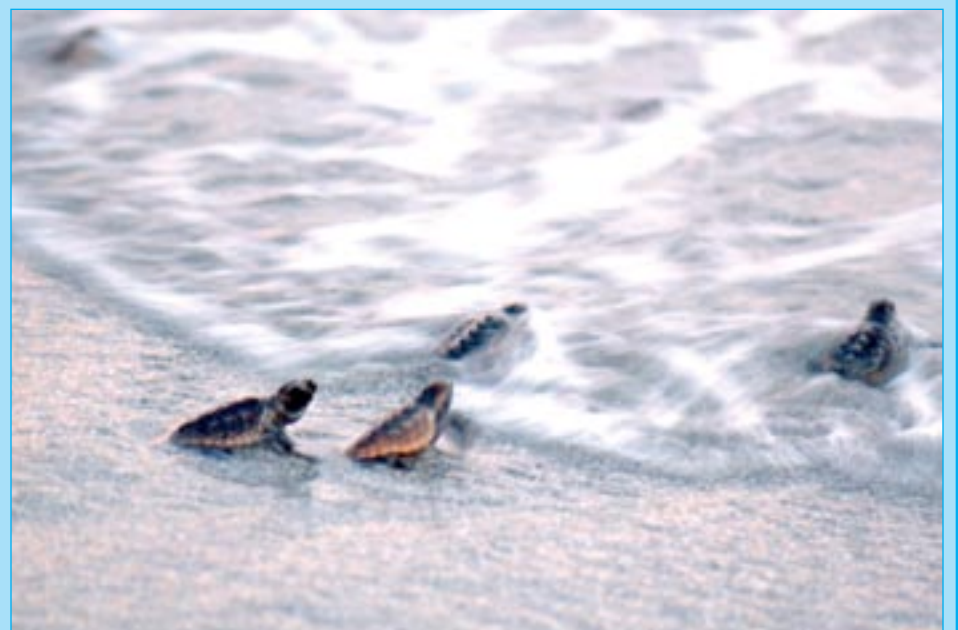
merce, opening their doors — if at first, a little wary — to new business and to tourist traffic.

This year, a company called 9g's offered to do the Chamber survey, without charging them. Loeffgren says they are a company comprised of a staff of former Air Force personnel — hence the name — and are great motivational speakers and consultants, who mainly work in the chamber business arena.

Not all members are business owners on Longboat Key, but that businesses of Longboat Key are very strongly motivated to join. She says 93% of Longboat Key businesses are Chamber members, opposed to the usual 33% in other cities nationally.

For the first time it was an on-line version of a survey, which she felt was easy for the members to use. So far, they have had 120 responses on the survey from their members, and 360 comments.

And Away They Go



These little guys struggled against the waves to the Gulf of Mexico after being released from the Broadway public entrance Aug. 2. The males never return to land and the females will grow for the next 25 years before they come back to this same spot to lay their eggs. No flash was allowed and these were taken with an ISO speed of 3200 by Mary Lou Johnson of Mary Lou Johnson Photography.