

INDIAN CREEK PROJECT-preserving paradise



INDIAN CREEK PROJECT- The Indian Creek Basin is an 844 acre basin that is the alpha and omega of the life of East Apalachicola Bay.

Recently I had opportunity to speak with Bob and Edda Allen the owners of Sportsman's Lodge about their "Paradise". They have lived and worked every single day of their life for 32 years in Eastpoint. Their love and concern for their community and Franklin County brought them to the most difficult decisions of their life.

Some years ago Sportsman's Lodge was written about in an article in "Florida Living." It was obvious that the writer fell immediately in love with the Lodge. So have thousands from all over the world who have made the Sportsman's Lodge their vacation "home" mecca. It is so much to so many that in their last days, even when their hair fell out from chemotherapy, their last request is that they spend one more week at the

“Lodge.”

Besides creating a feeling of being home, the next great attraction is the most beautiful sunsets in the world viewed across the East Bay. The towering oaks and magnolias that shade the property are old and majestic. You may find a full feathered peacock or ducks waddling at your feet. It is a natural unassuming paradise that charms every one. Bob and Edda Allen have kept it that way for 32 years.

So anyone should understand that when developers came offering millions of dollars the choices were not as easy as many would think. The Developers spoke of high cost rentals and gated communities, security guards, and stylish yacht marinas. After 32 years of serving and being guest to the common

people of life they knew there were so many of their friends who would not fit into that plan.

Bob Allen stood at the edge of Indian Creek and watched as a local Crabber put in his boat at the Lodge. This man had used that boat ramp access all his life. Then Bob Allen saw the vision. He saw the high rise condominiums and the sylish multi-million dollar marina with \$500.00 a month boat slips. He saw uniformed security guards keeping out the riff-raff. He saw gates and locks and high prices that would keep out a large portion of the people who had used and loved the Lodge. So he knew for the sake of all the oysterman, crabbers, sport fishermen and families. There had to be another way!

Bob Allen spoke with an honest respect and admiration for the Franklin County Seafood Workers. He said, “These are hard working people who earn every dime they get.” “But the most important thing is that these people can not be replaced.” “They are unique and you just can not go out and hire them.” “Every one needs to go watch these people work and remember they are not supported by a company, they have no benefits, retirement plan, or insurance program.” “They are an independant people who do it all on their own at their own risk.” Mr. Allen continued, “I believe the State and County should support these people in every way.” “This is a family business that is passed down from generation to generation and we decided we did not want to be a part of anything that would endanger or limit them.”

Mr. Allen commented that he knew environmental concerns were vital to the future of the Seafood Industry and Franklin County. It is easy to see at the Sportsman's Lodge that the Allen's are very environmentally conscious. Instead of removing trees to build, they built the building around the trees. Mr. Allen said he could not see how a 250 unit condominium and a Marina full of large boats could not have an adverse environmental impact. He believes that there are pressing problems that need to be dealt with instead of development. Mr. Allen said, "Seafood Workers and Sportsman are the best environmentalist we have."

Last of all Mr. Allen showed me a yellowed piece of paper dated 1986. It was from the Franklin County Seafood

Workers Association commending him for support, kindness, and goodwill during the Elena and Kate disasters.

“We can not let this Seafood Industry be sold out.” Sportsman's Lodge by way of the State and County wants to always give access for boats to the public.” “The rest of the property will be a Park with picnic tables and grills so that families can have a place to go enjoy nature.” Mr. Allen said, “I have been blessed to live in “Paradise” for 32 years, and I just do not want to be a part of something that destroys that, but I do want to preserve it for everyones good.” “I may not be as rich as I could of been, but when I see the people of Franklin County able to make their living using their boat ramp, I really don't think I will mind so much.” When I see families enjoying picnics and children playing under these beautiful

trees, I don't think I will miss that money.

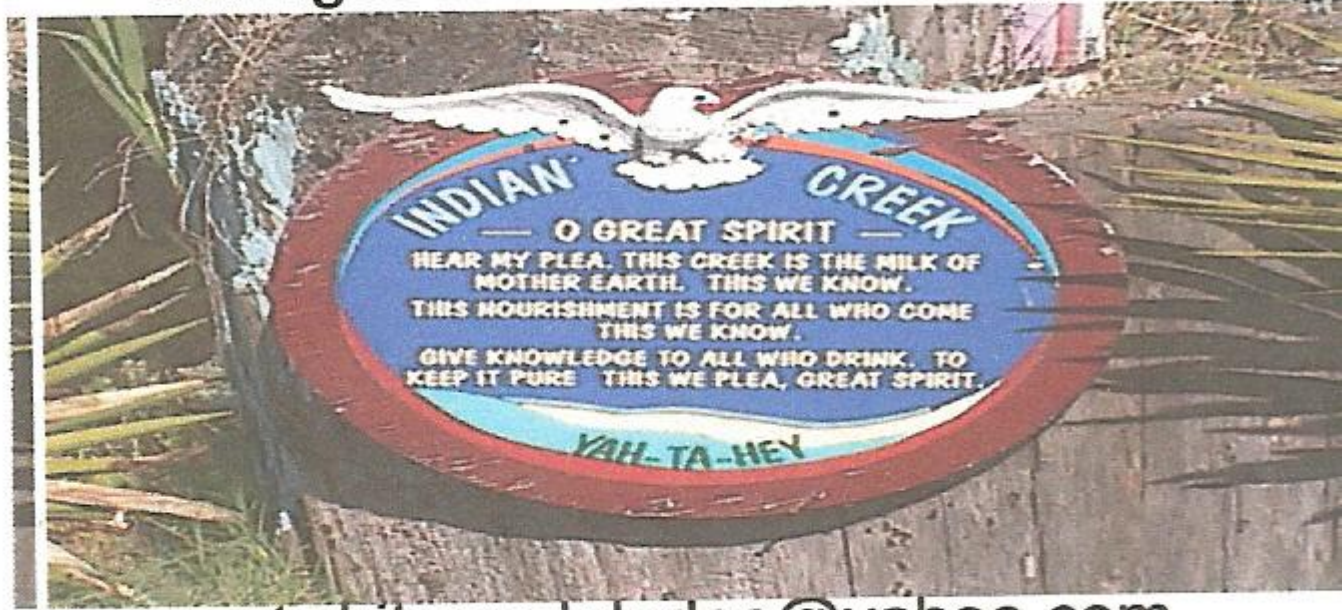
A year plus has now passed since the Lodge has tried through TPL and the State to preserve this Indian Creek Basin for all. It has been a hard learning experience to realize how vital this Indian Creek Basin is to the Apalachicola East Bay nursery for all seafood workers and all of the people of the State of Florida.

The Apalachicola Riverkeepers fought in the State halls to save the Apalachicola River and west Bay and won. Now it is time to look at the Apalachicola river system itself and the full system North of the Apalachicola Bridge that feeds the East Bay Nursery and is vital to all the Bay. St. Marks River, Little St. Marks Cutoff, East River, Big Bay, Sam's Cutoff, Round

Bay, Whiskey George, and Cassius Creek. Please take the time to look at this full system from North of the Apalachicola Bridge as the well-spring and head source of the Bay. On the bridge looking east you will view the Indian Creek Basin and Sportsman's Lodge the most vital 844 acres to the Seafood industry and the State of Florida. Right now we are making the decision. Is this the Alpha or Omega for this present generation?

Please visit the Indian Creek Project at the Web Site below.

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