



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Citizens stop development companies' destruction of bay habitat in Manatee County, Florida, 2013

6 June

2013

to: 23 December

2013

**Country:** United States

**Location City/State/Province:** *Manatee County, Florida*

### Goals:

For "members of the Manatee Board of County Commissioners to vote against the Long Bar Map Amendment (PA-13-03), the County Wide Text Amendment (PA-13-06), and any future similar amendments that would allow construction in the "Coastal High Hazard Area"

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 016. Picketing
- 048. Protest meetings
- 165. Wade-in

### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 016. Picketing
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 193. Overloading of administrative systems

### Methods in 4th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions

### **Methods in 5th segment:**

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions

### **Methods in 6th segment:**

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions

## **Classifications**

### **Classification:**

Defense

### **Cluster:**

Economic Justice

Environment

### **Group characterization:**

- fishermen and environmentalists

## **Leaders, partners, allies, elites**

### **Leaders:**

Joe Kane, Ed Goff, Save Our Bay, Save Our Shores

### **Partners:**

Save Our Manatee Shoreline, Bay Life Preservers, the Sierra Club

### **External allies:**

not known

### **Involvement of social elites:**

not known

## **Joining/exiting order of social groups**

### **Groups in 1st Segment:**

- Bay Life Preservers
- Save Our Bay
- Save Our Manatee Shoreline
- Save Our Shores
- Sierra Club

### **Groups in 2nd Segment:**

### **Groups in 3rd Segment:**

### **Groups in 4th Segment:**

### **Groups in 5th Segment:**

### **Groups in 6th Segment:**

*Segment Length: approximately 1 month*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Long Bar Pointe developers Carlos Beruff (Medallion Homes) and Larry Lieberman (Barrington Group)

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Petitions, slogans, demonstration

**Campaigner violence:**

not known

**Repressive Violence:**

not known

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

5 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

0.5 points out of 1 point

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

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On 6 June 2013, developers Carlos Beruff and Larry Lieberman asked Florida's Manatee County Commission for environmental exceptions and zoning changes to Long Bar Pointe, a 523-acre area of land along Sarasota Bay. In 2012, Lieberman, the land's owner, as well as the president and founder of Sarasota's Barrington Group, partnered with Beruff of Medallion Homes to complete the development project. Beruff and Lieberman aimed to build a 300-room hotel, two retail centers, a convention center, 1,086 single-family homes, 1,587 low-rise multi family homes, and 844 high-rise multi family units.

Local citizens with business connections to housing and tourism predicted that the development plans would economically benefit Manatee County. The Sierra Club and other environmental groups in Manatee County, including Save Our Manatee Shoreline, Save Our Shores, and Bay Life Preservers, opposed these plans. They worried that the construction would harm the bay environment. Paving over the land could have accelerated shoreline erosion and promoted toxic waste runoff. Dredging the bay's channel and cutting down mangroves had the potential to damage the local ecosystems, as well as economically hurt fishermen in the neighboring Historic Cortez Fishing Village.

Before Lieberman and Beruff could begin construction on the site, they needed approval from Manatee County in the form of redistricting the land from "residential" to "mixed." Because the land was also federally

designated as a Coastal High Hazard Zone with low lying land that functioned as a Storm Surge Buffer Zone, the Manatee County Commission also needed to make environmental concessions to allow the development of mangrove land. During the 6 June 2013 meeting, the Manatee County Commission voted to postpone the vote on changing the restrictions of the Long Bar Pointe land.

Joe Kane, a resident of Cortez, led the formation of the group, Save Our Bay. Unlike other local environmental groups with broader missions, Save Our Bay specifically aimed to stop “ the removal of mangroves and sea grasses in Sarasota Bay that will be destroyed by the impact of land development in the federally-designated coastal High Hazard Zone known as Long Bar Pointe.”

On 11 July 2013, over 200 Manatee County residents protested plans for the development at a community meeting in Cortez at Fisherman’s Hall on 125th Street sponsored by Save Our Bay. Carlos Beruff defended his plans at the meeting, which was moderated by Holmes Beach Commissioner David Zaccagnino. Other local government officials attended the meeting, including Carmel Monti (Holmes Beach Mayor), Marvin Grossman (Holmes Beach Commissioner), Jane VonHahman (former County Commissioner), Joe McClash (former County Commissioner), and Bill McGrath (Florida Democratic Party leader). Meeting attendees questioned Beruff and voiced opposition to his plans. The meeting, which had been planned to last one hour, lasted three hours.

Because of the community interest and opposition growing around the Long Bar Pointe project, on 16 July 2013 the Manatee County Commission decided that its hearing on land use for the development would need to be moved to a location with a capacity for a larger audience. The Commission scheduled the meeting to take place on 6 August 2013.

The group Bay Life Preservers held a raft-in on 20 July 2013 at Intracoastal Waterway Marker 17. At this raft-in, protesters floated in boats and rafts in an area of the bay that could have been harmed by the construction.

Ed Goff, a member of Save Our Shores, started a petition called “Save Manatee Coastline” that included over 600 signatures by 11 July 2013. Save Our Bay circulated a petition to the Manatee County Commission through online and hard copies that read as follows: “We petition all members of the Manatee Board of County Commissioners to vote against the Long Bar Map Amendment (PA-13-03), the County Wide Text Amendment (PA-13-06), and any future similar amendments that would allow construction in the "Coastal High Hazard Area" as defined by FEMA and any other area that would result in damage to or removal of mangrove trees and sea grass.” By 2 August 2013, the petition held 5,375 total signatures.

On the afternoon of 1 August 2013, Ed Goff organized a couple dozen protesters to gather on the steps of the Manatee County Commission administration building to pressure commissioners to vote no to the proposed zoning changes at their 6 August meeting. They carried signs that read "Save Our Bay," "Keep your five-star hotel far away from our five-star bay," and "Long Bar Pointe overdevelopment Pointe-less." They also carried inflatable dolphins printed with messages that implied nature's silent disapproval of the development plans; these included "Save Our Bay, It's Our Home" and "Save Our Shore, It's Our Home." Protesters gathered more signatures for the petition and encouraged passing car drivers to honk their horns in support. At around 3:30pm, the activists went up to the ninth floor of the building, but the commissioners refused to speak to them. Instead, Ed Goff gave the Manatee County Commission executive assistant Shirley Tally a petition opposing the development plans with 1,000 signatures.

On 2 August 2013, Save Our Bay posted on Facebook to tell its 1,000 Facebook members to get involved with the campaign by speaking at the 6 August Manatee County Commission meeting: "What can you do? Go to the Civic Center on August 6th, 1:30, in Palmetto and make your voices known. Each person has three minutes. One way to express would be to take a few statements from the petition page on Change.org and simply read for your three minutes." Save Our Bay also sent a thank you note to petition-signers through Change.org on 3 August 2013 that urged them to attend the 6 August meeting.

The Manatee County Commission meeting on the Long Bar Pointe development plan and proposed zoning changes began at 1:30pm on 6 August 2013 at Bradenton Area Convention Center. About 1,000 people attended the meeting. Over 150 Manatee County residents spoke at the meeting, which lasted 12 hours. By the end of the meeting, citizens were still lined up to speak, and the Manatee County Commissioners had not yet had a chance to voice their opinions.

During the meeting, activists protesting the proposed changes wore light blue shirts with green mangroves and the slogan, "Save Our Bay." Volunteers sold these t-shirts at the event to benefit the Cortez Village Historical Society. Some carried inflatable dolphins and many carried signs with different slogans. One sign read, "No!! To Long Bar Pointe." Another said, "Save the Mangroves." Most stood in the back of the Convention Center and cheered and booed in response to what the different speakers were saying.

Supporters of the opposition -- those who were in favor of the development plans and who wanted the proposed zoning changes to pass-- wore green baseball caps and buttons that said "YES" in bold, white letters. This group sat primarily in chairs in the audience of the Convention Center, and also responded to what speakers were saying with cheers and boos. Unlike the "Save Our Bay" t-shirts, which activists had

to purchase, the “YES” paraphernalia was given out free to citizens, along with snacks and water bottles. Most members of this group worked for home development companies and did not give comments to reporters.

The commission approved a revised plan in a 4-3 vote at nearly 2:00am on 7 August 2013. Their new plan eliminated the potential marina that would have necessitated the dredging of the bay and would have hurt fishermen and the local ecosystem. The compromised plan, however, allowed for twice as much commercial development. A second hearing was scheduled for 23 January 2014.

By 20 November 2013, the petitions had grown to accumulate over 6,500 signatures. Activists in opposition to Long Bar Pointe planned actions to lead up to the January vote. Citizens were no longer concerned about harm to the mangrove, but those opposed to the Long Bar Pointe worried that the development would cause other environmental destruction and increase traffic congestion in the area.

On 23 December 2013, Long Bar Pointe representatives sent a letter to Manatee County officials withdrawing the Comprehensive Map Amendment (PA1303). Instead, Lieberman and Beruff would focus the development plans on constructing 4,500 houses and condominiums on the land that complied with the original zoning regulations. The 23 January 2015 meeting was cancelled. The controversial Long Bar Pointe plan that environmentalists and fishermen worried would damage the bay shoreline and ecosystem was no longer under consideration by the Manatee County Commission.

## Research Notes

### Influences:

not known

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Erica Janko 07/04/2015

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