

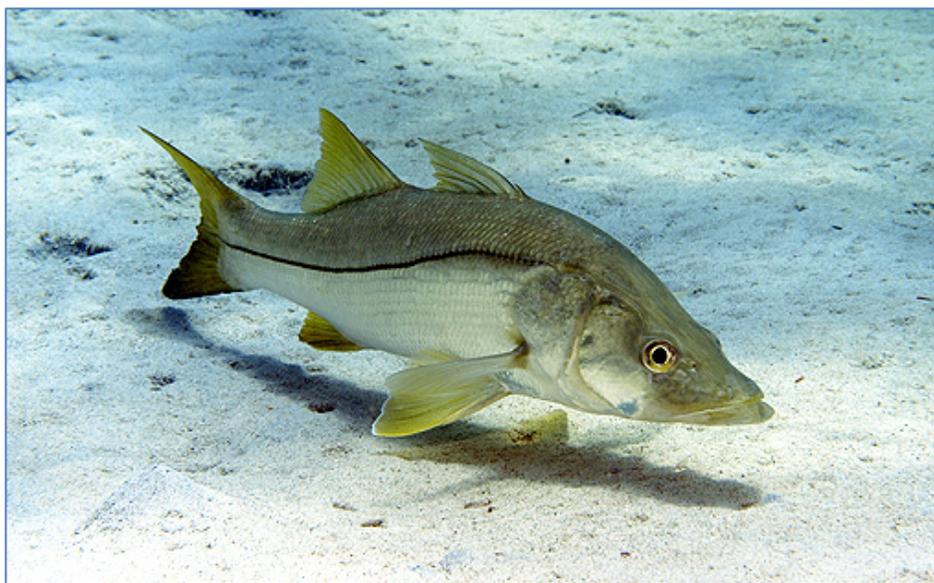
# *Mote Marine and State Park Teach Creek Neighborhoods How to Protect Snook and Wildlife*

*Community leaders from the South Gate neighborhood took an educational kayak trip on South Creek in Oscar Scherer State Park on Saturday June 27, 2015. Scientists from Mote Marine Laboratory, Oscar Scherer State Park and Manatee and Sarasota County explained how the natural shorelines in the park can be recreated on Phillippi Creek to restore the habitat for snook, redfish and other aquatic life. Dr. Nathan Brennan of Mote described the mosaic of habitat features that make South Creek an especially productive place for snook.*



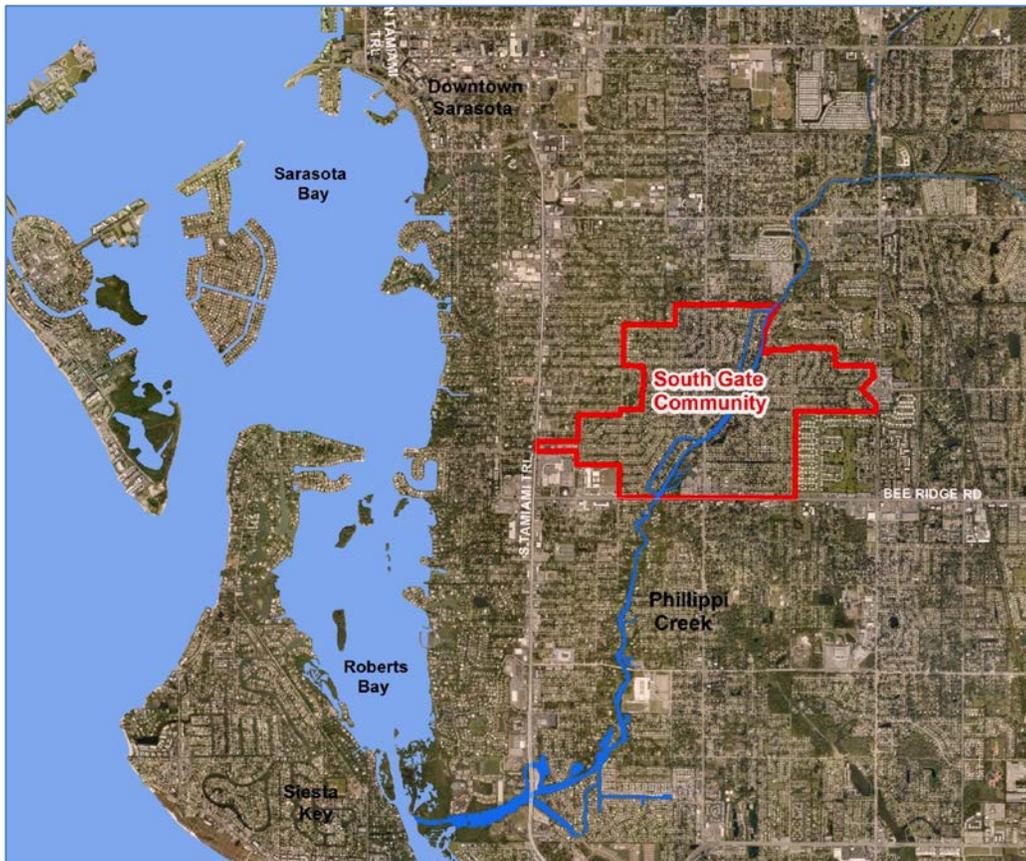
*Libby, Nate and Chris*

*Snook is a prized gamefish with an estimated value of over a million dollars a year to Florida's recreational economy. Snook is a predator that thrives where an abundance of prey can be found in the marshes, submerged logs, sheltering canopies and floodplains of a natural tidal creek. Snook is a local fish that lives in warm water and is not usually found north of Tarpon Springs. Tidal Creeks are a critical habitat for snook where they find refuge in low-oxygen mucky backwaters where predators cannot follow.*



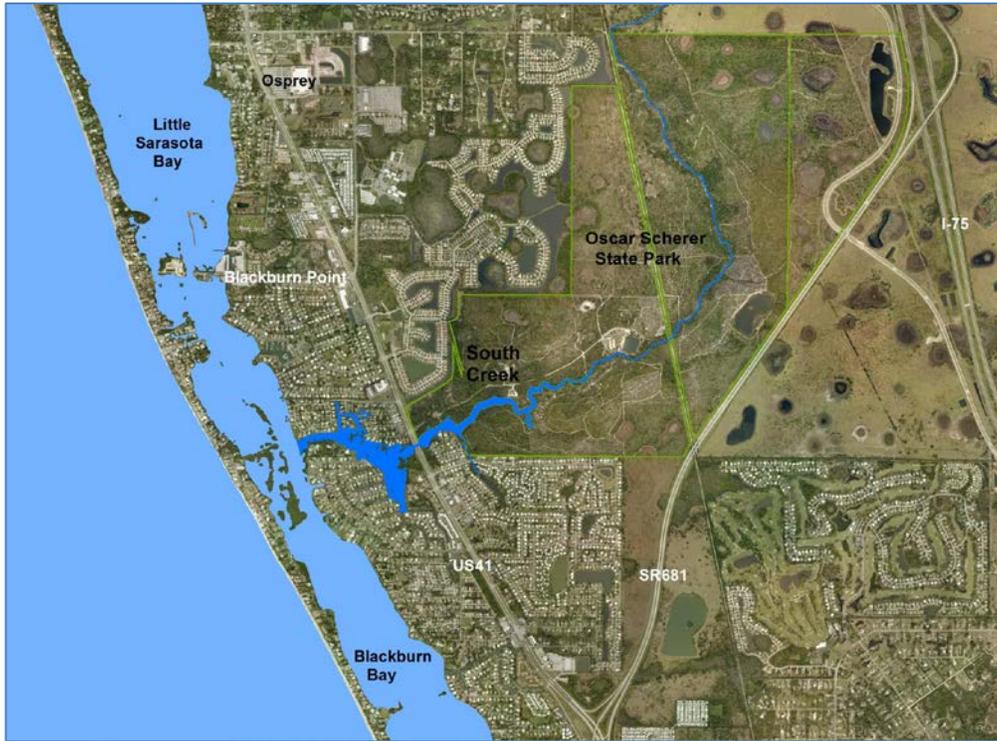
Snook

Libby Oskamp lives on the banks of Phillippi Creek in Sarasota where she has observed a decline in fish, birds, frogs and bees over the last decade. She organized the tour to learn how to restore Phillippi Creek so it can provide better habitat for snook and other wildlife. Members of the South Gate Civic Association who recently formed the "Friends of Phillippi Creek" have removed hundreds of pounds of trash from the creek and are working with Sarasota County to prevent the accumulation of sediment that smothers critical habitat in the tidal creek. The Friends are also advocating for the removal of a dam on the creek that is a remnant of the era when citrus groves used the creek for irrigation.



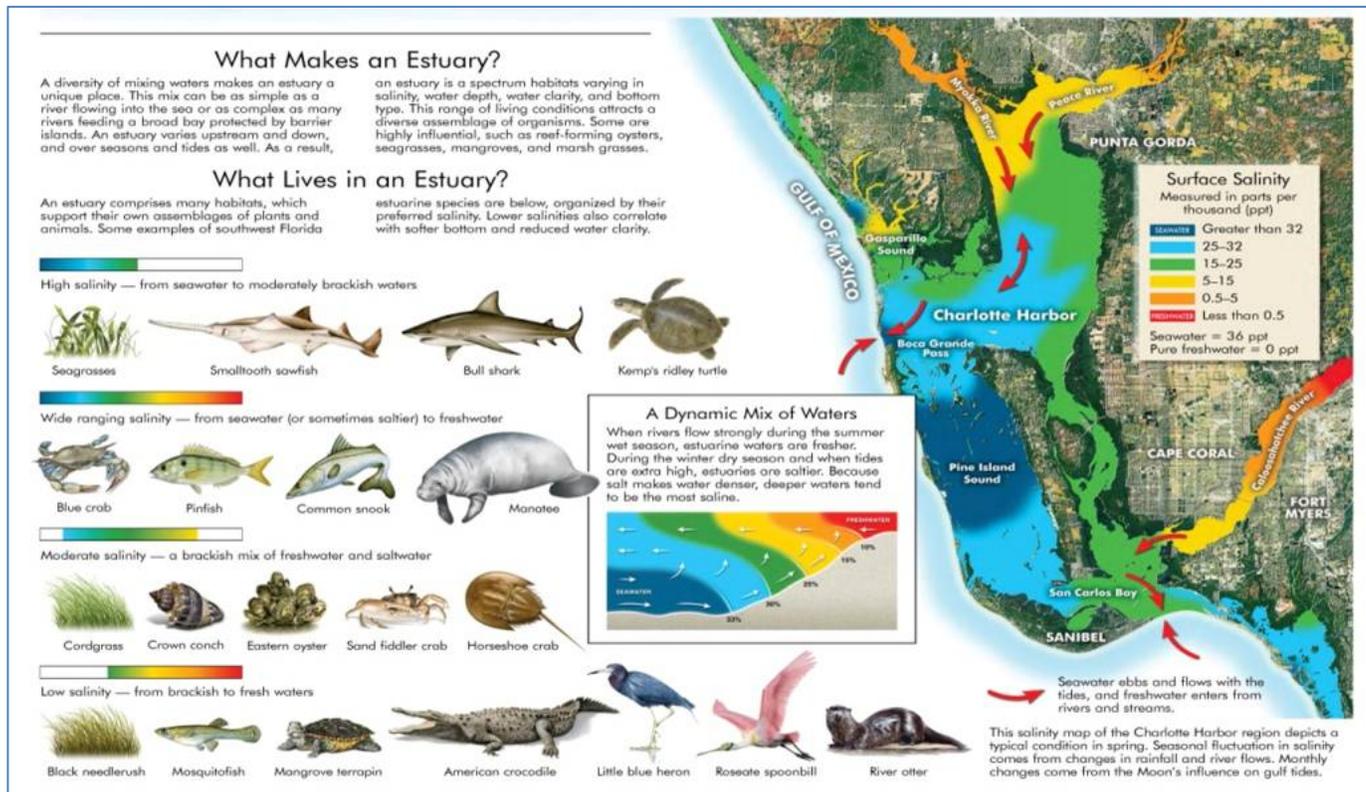
South Gate on Phillippi Creek

Park Manager Tony Clements along with Chris Oliver and Rosalind Rowe shared their expertise about native plants and how to use them to in restoration projects. Oscar Scherer state park is located in the South Creek watershed - the most natural watershed on the coast of Sarasota County. The Park Service continues to enhance the natural refuge in the park for fish and wildlife in the creek and also for the Scrub Jay - a friendly and beautiful bird that is found only in Florida.



South Creek and Oscar Scherer State Park

Tidal Creeks are estuaries, which means freshwater coming from upstream flows into the saltwater on the rising tide from the Gulf of Mexico. The interplay of fresh and salt creates a tremendous growth of life when it occurs as nature intended. Our tidal creeks are unique places where neighbors see snook, manatees and a variety of bird life that rivals more well-known birding hot spots like the Celery Fields. During the trip, Dr. Brennan demonstrated that a kayaker can stick their hand in the water and feel the warm layer of salt water below the cooler fresh water on top. He said that freshwater fish can overlap with saltwater fish in these separate layers.



Tidal Creek Estuary

Up and down the coast, neighbors are working together to nurture the special waterways in their backyards. The South Gate Civic Association joins the South Venice Civic Association and others who pitch in to encourage healthy waterways as a benefit to their neighborhood, their property values and their personal quality of life. Mote Marine Lab and Oscar Scherer Park generously contribute their expertise to these praiseworthy efforts.



South Gator Cleaning Phillippi Creek

*For over ten years, Mote Marine Lab has raised and released snook in local tidal creeks. They developed new techniques for aquaculture and restoration while tracking snook as they move through various locations during different life stages. Dr. Brennan is a leading snook scientist in Florida and has studied snook in South Creek, Phillippi Creek and many other places.*



*Beautiful South Creek*