



Mercabo purchase a done deal, now on to Phase II

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BY BAYNE STEVENSON – The Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association has successfully purchased the Mercabo 30-acre tract at the entrance to the Boca Grande Causeway. The outpouring of support from Gasparilla Island residents and the surrounding communities was unprecedented, exceeding more than 1,100 donors, including several island nonprofits.

Phase II of the “Preserve” project focuses on the demolition of the existing nine buildings. All Phase Construction has been engaged as general contractor, and four bids have been received for the work. Frank Hearne, GICIA’s environmental attorney, will be reviewing all the permits required by the county and state for the demolition.

The GICIA has contacted John Thaxton of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation to assist in donating as much of the furniture, bedding, linens and fixtures as possible to local nonprofits that work with shelters and the needy.

“We would like to make the most positive impact possible and will carefully evaluate various organizations to be certain we achieve that goal,” stated Misty Nichols, GICIA Executive Director.

Phase III of the project will be exciting as we carefully begin the planning to create and enhance the property for native bird, animal and marine life. Nichols has been in contact with Nancy Douglas of Florida Fish and Wildlife, who is willing to consult with us on the creation of an 0endangered shore bird habitat. Rick Joyce, GICIA Consultant and Certified Arborist, has created a preliminary management plan to provide critical habitat for native birds and wildlife. Mote Marine will be asked to consult with the GICIA to develop a plan for enhancing the marine environment to better suit the critically endangered juvenile sawfish.

“There is great promise for this site ecologically,” said Bayne Stevenson, GICIA President. “We still need continued support from our community to see it reach its full potential. Again, many thanks to all the donors.” The “Preserve” will be added to the over 250 acres of conservancy property owned by GICIA.



POSTED BY **MARCY SHORTUSE**

Marcy Shortuse is the editor of the Boca Beacon, and has been with the paper since 2007. She is also editor of the Boca Beacon's sister publication, Gasparilla Magazine. She has more than 20 years of experience writing and editing local newspapers and is originally from the Chicago area.

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