



GICIA announces tour dates for Mercabo

Featured News, The News March 1, 2019



■ SUBMITTED BY THE GICIA

As you drive by the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association's (GICIA) Mercabo Preserve, have you ever wondered about the ecological restoration that has been taking place on the site? Have you pondered what the view of the Bay is like from the tip of the Preserve's peninsula? If you answered yes, then you will want to take advantage of a limited opportunity to take a guided tour of the Preserve.

In October 2015 GICIA realized that a perfect storm was brewing; an offer had been made by a hotel/resort developer to purchase the Mercabo property – approximately 30 acres, 185 wet slips, 4,700 feet of seawalled bay frontage located at the entrance to Gasparilla Island. In an island-wide effort, the GICIA in 12 short weeks was able to secure the \$20.6 million dollars necessary to close on the property on January 29, 2016. With the upland phase of the site's ecological restoration completed and the Mercabo Cove project scheduled to begin next year, the GICIA is proudly offering a limited number of guided tours of the site.

These tours, which will focus on the GICIA's efforts to restore and protect this important parcel, will be led by dedicated island residents who have volunteered their time to become trained as GICIA tour leaders. Each tour will

be limited to 10 participants, with GICIA members and donors to the Mercabo Preserve having priority. If you are not a member, joining is as simple as stopping by the office and making a donation of any amount to GICIA.

There are only three tour dates left this season, and they are filling fast. The remaining dates are: March 7, March 18 and April 10.

The guided tours will begin at 9 a.m. and will last approximately one hour. While on the site it is common to see manatees, dolphins, ospreys, pelicans and even an occasional eagle.

The tours will require participants to walk approximately one mile over mowed, unlevel terrain but will allow for spectacular views of the bay.

Participants will also enjoy hearing about the exciting plans to restore Mercabo Cove.

This project, which will create a protected marine sanctuary, is scheduled to begin in 2020.

If you are interested in attending one of the tours, please contact the GICIA office at (941) 964-2667.



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.

TAGGED WITH

Boca Beacon Boca Grande Gasparilla Island

Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association