

Drift Cards on Local Beaches Part of Citizen Science Study

By **R. Michael Brown, Civic Association Communication Director**

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The Civic Association received a tip from Diane Buhler, founder of the Friends of Palm Beach – Keeping Our Beaches Clean, that small biodegradable wooden science ‘drift cards’ are washing up on our beaches and that some have been found on Midtown Beach.

The Civic Association investigated and contacted the foundation responsible for the cards to find out what they are up to.

The ANGARI Foundation is engaging the local community in a Citizen Science Study of the transport of marine debris in and around Lake Worth Lagoon and Inlet [Palm Beach Inlet].



Members of the Marine Conservation Club from Wellington Landings Middle School deploy biodegradable drift cards into Lake Worth Lagoon from the West Palm Beach Public Dock as part of the Lagoon Drift citizen science experiment. [WHITNEY JACKSON]

On November 5th, 2017 ANGARI Foundation led the first Lake Worth Lagoon Drift Card Study, deploying 160 small, wooden, biodegradable drift cards from four locations along Lake Worth Lagoon in Palm Beach County. The cards are floating on the water's surface, following local currents and tides, and eventually will wash ashore.

Each card is marked with reporting instructions for the finder. Over the month following November 5th's drift card deployment, reports from the community on where the cards are found will be collected and all data will be compiled and assessed to determine movement of debris in and around Lake Worth Lagoon.

In the first four days, 37 cards, or 21%, have been found and reported.

“The Lake Worth Lagoon Drift Card Study is particularly exciting as its the first of its kind in the area and, as a citizen science project, has brought together participants and partners throughout Palm Beach County,” said Amanda Waite, Director of Science Education and Advancement at ANGARI Foundation. “From the students who decorated drift cards to the locals who are finding and reporting them and all those in between, the public is contributing to a better understanding of how marine debris and pollutants move in and around our community.”

The Lake Worth Lagoon Drift Card Study, or Lagoon Drift, is in conjunction with the Consortium for Advanced Research on Transport of Hydrocarbon in the Environment (CARTHE) at the University of Miami and an extension of the Biscayne Bay Drift Card Study known as Bay Drift. Originally started in 2016, Bay Drift was developed to determine the origins of marine debris found at Miami's Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, and has since grown to cover many areas of Miami's Biscayne Bay.

Drift card studies have been used for years by scientists to examine surface water movement, but this is the first time a study such as this will be conducted in Palm Beach County. Not only will this study increase our knowledge of Lake Worth Lagoon, in particular the movement of marine debris and water flow, but it also elicits participation and assistance from the local community.

Students and other community members are engaged in the study through informational outreach and drift card decoration, which improves card visibility and reporting. Researchers are also reliant on the public to find and report the drift cards in order to gain a more complete picture of local water and debris movement.

This study is made possible through partnerships with local organizations in Palm Beach County, including Manatee Lagoon – An FPL Eco-Discovery Center™, Friends of Palm Beach, Sea to Shore Alliance, Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative, LagoonFest and PBC area schools. To learn more about the upcoming Lake Worth Lagoon Drift Card Study, visit angari.org/lagoondrift.

Information on the Miami-based Biscayne Bay Drift Card Study can be found at carthe.org/baydrift.