

## Shell Island, Panama City, Florida, Summer 2006

Q: How do you take away the lifestyle and liberties of thousands of hard working Floridians

and their children, while impacting the tourist industry the local economy relies upon?



A: Try to 'fix' a problem that doesn't exist.

**Result:** 14 peaceful boaters arrested by Florida DEP.  
**Charge:** Second degree criminal misdemeanor for "dog on beach". Offenders had to write apology letters to DEP.



### *These families:*

- Enjoy a small section of a 19 mile long uninhabited island.
- Have been keeping it in pristine condition for generations.
- Have formed a civic group and volunteered additional help to the park.
- Pursue a recreational pastime that is healthy, promotes family bonding, and doesn't require expensive facilities.
- Represent thousands of area residents and visitors.
  - 40% of the population owns a dog.
  - One out of 8 residents owns a boat.
  - Shell Island is the premier boating destination of Bay County.
  - A huge outcry of support produced over 1,200 petition signatures.

**DEP said they were concerned about shore birds, yet:**

- The purpose of the area is for recreation.
- Birds do not nest where these families go.
- Biologists acknowledge that predators (coyotes) are the real threat to the birds.
- Families with dogs are allowed in State Parks and on designated beaches elsewhere.
- Families with dogs are relaxing, not hurting birds!
- Vendors take over 110,000 tourists there a year.



### *Additional factors:*

- The area is a residential subdivision criss-crossed with County roads - not contiguous parkland.
- The State only owns a portion of the patchwork of residential lots in the area.
- The Bay County Commission voted unanimously in July to ask DEP to work out a solution with them.

**Please** ask Florida DEP to work with Bay County and our local advocacy group to find a sensible, practical approach for accommodating this longstanding recreational tradition in '07 and beyond.  
*Bay Families with Dogs is a local non-profit organization 850-624-3219 www.bayfwd.org*