



MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIAN RIVER LAGOON THREE YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

January, 2020, marks the third anniversary of the massive undertaking to restore the Indian River Lagoon, and progress is gradually and steadily being made.

In November, 2016, citizens of Brevard County took bold steps unlike no other Florida community. Voters overwhelmingly said YES to establish the Save Our Indian River Lagoon Trust Fund with a half-cent sales tax to heal our lagoon. Currently the fund has collected over \$125-million, nearly a fourth of which is contributed by tourists. Over the 10-year life of the tax, it is expected to raise over \$400-million.

It's time to take stock of all that has been done, and what the future holds. The Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition will hold a public forum, Lagoon Straight Talk, on January 22, 2020, at the Satellite Beach High School auditorium, 300 Scorpion Court, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Eighteen lagoon projects are complete, with more than 64 in the pipeline and actively moving forward. Every project represents progress for the lagoon.

In the first three years over 160 septic systems have been converted to sewer systems, eliminating a primary source of nutrient pollution in the lagoon. More septic conversions are underway.

Two significant muck dredging projects are complete, another is underway, and another is ready to start in 2020. Millions of cubic yards of muck are being removed. Dredging clears muck waste from the sea bed of the lagoon, allowing for regrowth of sea grasses and restoration of fish habitat.

Four Baffle Box projects are completed. More are planned, including the largest installation east of the Mississippi. Baffle boxes capture storm water debris and pollutants before they can flow into the lagoon.

Through the Brevard Zoo's conservation program natural mangrove shorelines are being replanted, oyster reefs are being added to help filter nutrients. 3.7-million pounds of oyster shells have been replanted. Oysters are coming back to the lagoon for the first time in a half century.

At the free Straight Talk forum, progress reports will come from Virginia Barker, Director of Brevard County Department of Natural Resource Management; and Dr. Duane De Freese, Executive Director of the Indian River Lagoon Council of the National Estuary Program

In advance of the Straight Talk forum, local media is invited and encouraged to do coverage that tells the stories of the various undertakings that make up the lagoon restoration program, and show how tax dollars are being put to work. Progress continues in measurable ways.

Below are a number of suggested topics, and the names and contact information of people who can answer your questions. The Coalition is available to assist with coordinating interviews, video and providing information.

SUGGESTED STORY SUBJECTS & CONTACTS

Citizen involvement in various lagoon issues and projects: Contact Marilyn (MJ) Waters, Chair, Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition. 818-384-5397, mjwaters9@gmail.com. Coalition website- www.helpthelagoon.org.

Overall stories on the various Brevard County projects that have been undertaken, completed or in progress: Contact Virginia Barker, Director, Brevard Natural Resources Management Department. (321) 633-2016, ext 58410. virginia.barker@brevardfl.gov.

Science based stories on nutrients and water quality issues: Dr. Duane De Freese, Executive Director of the Indian River Lagoon Council of the National Estuary program. (321) 536-6039, ddefreese@irlcouncil.org

Habitat restoration, restoration of mangrove shorelines, "Shuck and Share" oyster reef recycling: Jody Palmer, Conservation Director, Brevard Zoo. 321-254-9453, ext 265. jpalmer@brevardzoo.org. VIDEO AND PHOTOS AVAILABLE FROM BREVARD ZOO.

Lagoon fishing, fish kills, marine habitat, water quality issues: Capt. Frank Catino, fishing charter captain and Mayor of Satellite Beach. 321-223-7700, 321-777-2793, fcatino@cfl.rr.com.

Grand Canal muck dredging project: Walker Dawson, Brevard County project engineer. 321-261-8646, walker.dawson@brevardfl.gov. GREAT VIDEO OPPORTUNITY OF DREDGING OPERATIONS.

Aquatic Weed Harvesting program: Jennifer Thompson, Director. 321-633-2016, ext 58304. jennifer.thompson@brevardfl.gov. GREAT VIDEO OPPORTUNITY. She actually wades into the water with the equipment, and has fended off alligators and snakes.

History of 2016 sales tax ballot referendum and initial implementation by Brevard County: former County Commissioner Jim Barfield. jim.barfield@lukeassoc.com, (321) 452-4601

Various anecdotal subjects regarding the lagoon restoration: Laurilee Thompson, Titusville. Member, Lagoon Citizens Oversight Committee. 321-794-6866. laurileethompson@aol.com.

Mike Conner, Indian River Lagoon Riverkeeper, (772) 521-1882, michaelaconner772@gmail.com.

State Senator Debbie Mayfield, Indialantic. 321-409-2025, mayfield.debbie@flsenate.gov. She is sponsoring legislation addressing Florida water quality issues. Senate Bill 712.

State Representative Randy Fine, Melbourne. 321-409-2017, randy.fine@myfloridahouse.gov. He is sponsoring legislation addressing dedicated state funding for Indian River Lagoon cleanup.

For background information, statistics, file video and photos from Brevard projects, contact Brandon Smith, Brevard Natural Resources Management Department. 321-633-2016 ext 58406, brandon.smith@brevardfl.gov.