

Request for Governor DeSantis to Declare a State of Emergency to Restore the Indian River Lagoon and Save the Manatees

The evidence is overwhelming and indisputable that the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), one of the most biodiverse estuaries in North America, has become an unhealthy algae dominated eco-system with substantial losses of sea grasses, fisheries, and now a record death rate of its beloved manatees.

Local governments along the IRL have funded projects and implemented regulations to protect and restore the Lagoon. While the IRL would clearly be in worse condition without these efforts, the sea grass loss and manatee deaths are clear indications that more is needed to reverse the algae dominance.

Restoring the IRL will require the following:

- Immediate, long-term financial assistance to:
 - Cultivate large quantities of native sea grasses and plant in areas deemed sufficiently healthy to allow the growth;
 - Convert septic systems to sewer;
 - Upgrade all sewerage treatment plants to Advanced Wastewater Treatment (AWT) as a step towards “toilet to tap” systems;
 - Fund infrastructure for stormwater treatment and mitigation, along with muck removal.

- Provide effective regulatory controls on all forms of urban, suburban and agricultural pollution, including:
 - Banning the use of glyphosate herbicide and other similarly harmful chemicals in or adjacent to waterways;
 - Fully implementing the Governor’s Blue-Green Task Force recommendations;
 - Substantially reducing the nutrient pollution from lawn fertilizer entering the IRL;
 - Stopping discharges from Lake Okeechobee from entering the Indian River Lagoon;
 - Requiring advanced technology septic systems where sewer is not available.

These actions taken *together* will turn the tide from the destructive path the IRL is on and provide the financial and regulatory support required to restore the lifeblood of our communities.

It's well documented that investments made to support the restoration of the IRL have significant positive payback of between 20 and 33:1. The time has come to act boldly and effectively to rehabilitate our waterways. Our health, our natural environment, and our economy depends on it.

In short, we urge you to act immediately on *all* the corrective actions referenced herein. We eagerly look forward to your constructive response to this urgent matter.

- Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition, Vince Lamb, Chair
- Clean Water Coalition of Indian River County, Paul Fafeita, President
- Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company, Sherri McCoy, Owner
- Conradina Chapter of Florida Native Plant Society, Carol Herbert, President
- Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant, Laurilee Thompson, Owner
- Environmental Learning Center of Vero Beach, Barbara Schlitt Ford, President
- Friends of St. Sebastian River, Tim Glover
- Indian River Lagoon RiverKeeper, Mike Conner
- Indian River Land Trust, Ken Grudens, Executive Director
- Indian River Neighborhood Assn., Mike Johannsen, Chairman
- Marine Resources Council, Leesa Souto, Executive Director
- Paddling Paradise, Danny Smith, Owner
- Pelican Island Audubon Society, Dr. Richard Baker, President
- St. Lucie Conservation Alliance, Shari Anker, President
- Space Coast Surfrider Foundation, Alec Buchness, Chair
- Wild Ocean Seafood Market, Mike and Jenna Merrifield, Owner