RESOLUTION NO. 2013 - 11

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VERO BEACH, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR ACTION TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH OF THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON ECOSYSTEM, SUPPORTING THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON COALITION, AND PLEDGING THE COOPERATION OF THE CITY OF VERO BEACH IN EFFORTS TO FIND SOLUTIONS FOR RESTORING THE HEALTH OF THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon is a 156 mile long estuarine ecosystem which contributes $3.7 billion to the coastal economy of Indian River County and four additional Florida counties; and

WHEREAS, high nutrient inputs to the waters of the Indian River Lagoon result from storm water releases, runoff, seeping septic systems, and sewage treatment plant overflow events along the 156 miles of the ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, these pollutants have been and continue to degrade the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem, leading to declining habitat quality for fish and wildlife, including dolphins, sea turtles, manatees, and birds; and

WHEREAS, such high nutrient inputs have also detrimentally affected seagrass beds in the Indian River Lagoon, which seagrass beds are the biological foundation of this ecosystem and a prime indicator of the health of the Indian River Lagoon; and

WHEREAS, the significant loss of these seagrass beds, as well as mangroves, oyster reefs, and wetlands, affects the viability of both lagoon and ocean fisheries as well as habitat for birds and other wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the continuing degradation of the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem indicates that past and current efforts to address these effects may not be sufficient; and

WHEREAS, success in reversing this trend will require the leadership, support, and cooperation of federal, state, county, and city governments in cooperation with non-profit organizations, corporations, small businesses, and individuals; and

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon Coalition was envisioned to enable such a cooperative effort aimed at the revitalization and restoration of the health of the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Vero Beach, Florida, desires to express support for the Indian River Lagoon Coalition and pledge the cooperation of the City of Vero Beach in working to correct the aforementioned problems effecting the Indian River Lagoon,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VERO BEACH, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

1 – Adoption of "Whereas" clauses.

The foregoing "Whereas" clauses are hereby adopted and incorporated herein.

2 – Support for and Cooperation with Indian River Lagoon Coalition.

The City Council of the City of Vero Beach hereby expresses its support for the efforts of the Indian River Lagoon Coalition and pledges the cooperation of the City of Vero Beach in the goal of finding solutions and developing and implementing a viable plan for successfully restoring the health of the Indian River Lagoon.

3 – Effective Date.

This resolution shall become effective upon adoption by the City Council.

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This Resolution was heard at a public hearing on the 19th day of March 2013, after which hearing it was moved for adoption by Councilmember Carroll, seconded by Councilmember Winger, and adopted by the following vote of the City Council:

Mayor A. Craig Fletcher	yes
Vice-Mayor Tracy M. Carroll	yes
Councilmember Pilar E. Turner	yes
Councilmember Jay Kramer	yes
Councilmember Richard T. Winger	yes

ATTEST:

Tammy K. Vock
City Clerk

CITY OF VERO BEACH, FLORIDA

A. Craig Fletcher
Mayor

[SEAL]

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency:

Wayne R. Coment
City Attorney

Approved as conforming to municipal policy:

James R. O'Connor
City Manager

Indian River Lagoon Coalition
"A Call to Action"

Our Indian River Lagoon is on life support, dying before our eyes. This is a call to develop a unified plan to work together to restore the Lagoon before it's too late.

The Indian River Lagoon's seagrass beds are the biological foundation of the 156 mile long estuarine ecosystem which supports the coastal economy of 5 counties. This ecosystem is in dire need of our directed, concerted assistance. We recognize and commend significant efforts by government, individuals and organizations that have contributed to the knowledge of the lagoon and its varied habitats, increased awareness and worked to correct some of the problems.

Unfortunately, continued degradation of the Lagoon indicates that those efforts have been insufficient. Success in turning this trend will require the leadership and financial support of federal, state, county and city governments in cooperation with non-profit organizations, corporations, small businesses and individuals. Government leadership is essential to solve this problem because it has the power to construct improvements, regulate, fund, enforce, acquire land, mitigate and provide services.

Research and monitoring of the Lagoon provide data that demonstrate the gravity of the problem, but simultaneously can guide us towards future solutions necessary to revive the Lagoon.

1. Seagrass coverage is the prime indicator of the health of the Lagoon (1). During a two year period (2009-11) there has been an estimated 43% loss in area covered by seagrass which is equivalent to approximately 53 square miles (2).

2. The Lagoon contributes $3.7 billion to the coastal economy annually (3). Seagrass productivity contributes between $10-20,000 annually per acre per year in economic benefit (4). Based on seagrass losses over the last two years the economic loss is approximately $340 million annually (5).

3. Pollutants are degrading the Lagoon. Lesions on fishes and sea turtles, flesh-eating fungus on dolphins and fish kills are increasingly common, demonstrating declining habitat quality (6).

4. Habitat loss of seagrass beds, mangroves, oyster reefs and wetlands is affecting the viability of lagoon and ocean fisheries, as well as bird and manatee health and will continue to decline unless action is taken!

5. High nutrient inputs to Lagoon waters result from storm water releases, runoff, seeping septic systems and overflow events at sewage treatment plants. The cumulative results of those events reduce water quality creating a chain of negative impacts on the Lagoon, including recent algae superblooms.

The health of the Indian River Lagoon is a foundation of economic viability and social wealth for the Treasure and Space Coasts. An overall vision and viable plan to restore the Lagoon back to health is the top priority. We the undersigned believe a successful Lagoon remediation will require government leadership and community commitment by all. We cannot delay – the future of the Lagoon is in our hands and must be addressed on our watch.

This document is a "Call to Action" for our governments to accept this leadership role.

Individual: _____

Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Return to one of the following:

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Vero Beach, FL 32963
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Doug Graybill
500 Palm Island Lane
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References:

1. IRL NEP, Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Plan. 2008. Indian River Lagoon assessment and analysis update, final report, contract no. 24706. Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program, Palm Bay, Fl.

   Steward, J.S., R. Brockmeyer, R. Virnstein, P. Gostel, P. Sime, and J. VanArman. 2003. Indian River Lagoon Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan, 2002 Update. St. Johns River Water Management District, Palatka, Florida and South Florida Water Mangement District, West Palm Beach, Florida
2. St John's Water Management District; preliminary data
3. Environmental Protection Agency, National Estuary Program, 2007
4. Dennis Hanisak, PhD, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, personal communication
5. 33,920 acres of seagrass loss in the IRL from 2009-2011 x $10,000/acre/year
6. Edith Widder, PhD, Ocean Research and Conservation Association, personal communication