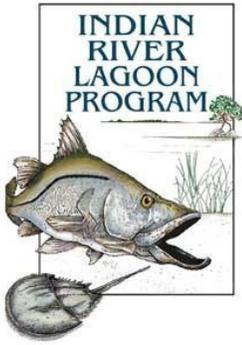


IRL Council Position Statement on Restoration of the Indian River Lagoon



The Indian River Lagoon (IRL) is an Estuary of National Significance. It is also one of the most biodiverse estuaries in the continental United States. The lagoon's ecological, economic and quality-of-life benefits define and sustain the communities and health of citizens who live, work and play along its shores and in its waters. Extending 156 miles and representing more than 30% of Florida's east coast, the entire Indian River Lagoon is under siege from a variety of human-induced and natural stressors that threaten its health, economic value and future. The IRL Council believes recurring algae blooms and wildlife mortality events, coupled with destructive freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee that impact estuary health in the southern lagoon, all point to one conclusion: a proactive ecosystem management strategy that incorporates leadership, vision, investment and action is urgently needed to protect the Indian River Lagoon's resource assets today and for future generations.

THE TIME FOR LEADERSHIP AND COMPREHENSIVE RESTORATION OF THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON IS NOW. The IRL Council pledges our individual and collective effort to leverage the science-driven, consensus-building capacity of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program to:

- ◆ **REMOVE** accumulations of high-nutrient muck deposits from the lagoon bottom, human-induced restrictions to water flow, and other significant ecosystem stressors. End seasonal high-volume freshwater discharges from the Central and South Florida water management systems, and other water control districts, by providing adequate water storage, treatments and conveyances.
- ◆ **REDUCE** freshwater, pollutant and nutrient inputs to the lagoon and its tributaries from all sources, with focused efforts on water quality impacts from fertilizers, wastewater treatment facilities, septic systems, stormwater conveyances and other factors that contribute to harmful algae blooms.
- ◆ **RESTORE** water quality and the diversity of biological habitats and species that have been

lost or diminished, including filter feeders, seagrasses, living shorelines, wetlands and filter marshes. The implementation of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects is an essential precursor to successful lagoon restoration and revival in Martin and St. Lucie Counties.

- ◆ **REBUILD** ecological resiliency of the Indian River Lagoon and sustain its economic and quality-of-life values by taking immediate actions to align with a long-horizon approach that combines: 1. Science-driven decisions; 2. Community leadership and compelling stakeholder engagement; 3. Direct and immediate investment in restoration and stewardship programs at local, state and federal levels; and 4. Monitoring, mapping, modeling and applied research to determine ecosystem status, trends, restoration project performance and emerging risks and opportunities.
- ◆ **RESPOND** to changing conditions, technologies, and new information with the best available science, comprehensive monitoring, responsible investment, and adaptive management strategies.



C. Palmer

WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE for the stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon and the health of Florida's surface and ground waters. We recognize these waters are connected both physically and functionally. A lagoon-wide commitment to clean water is urgently needed. The watershed decisions we make today will determine the environmental and economic future of the Indian River Lagoon and Florida.

WE ARE ALL THE SOLUTION.

INCREASED, ACCELERATED AND RECURRING FUNDING IS URGENTLY NEEDED from local, state and federal levels to implement much-needed, transformational restoration projects and remediation actions that have a high estimated return on investment value from a healthy Indian River Lagoon. Immediate actions for this multi-billion dollar effort include:

- ◆ **ACCELERATE REAUTHORIZATION AND FUNDING APPROPRIATIONS** for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) with specific funding increases for restoration of the Everglades and other Florida ecosystems, protection from disastrous flood waters (including human-controlled discharges to surface waters), promotion of innovative water remediation technologies, and remediation of our nations aging water and wastewater infrastructure.
- ◆ **ACCELERATE APPROPRIATIONS** for the 2016 Congressionally reauthorized National Estuary Program through 2021. Expanded funding in the bill should be made available as soon as possible for the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program and the other 27 National Estuary Programs.
- ◆ **CONSIDER** a bill similar to the 2016 Florida Legacy Act, which provided a minimum of \$200 million in annual funding from Florida's Documentary Stamp Tax revenues for Everglades restoration efforts. In 2017, Florida's Governor and Legislature should consider funding for restoration and continued stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon.
- ◆ **INCREASE CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING** for harmful algae bloom research and associated public health implications, monitoring, mapping and modeling with increased attention to toxic

cyanobacterial blooms, non-toxic brown tide blooms and emerging Harmful Algae Blooms of concern.

- ◆ **URGE** local communities to identify their impacts to the lagoon and implement solutions. Local community participation and engagement are critical in meeting restoration goals and monitoring requirements.

IT'S TIME TO RESTORE AND PROTECT OUR NATIONAL TREASURE, THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON. With the full participation of individuals, comprehensive Indian River Lagoon restoration will be achieved. These actions can begin immediately:

- ◆ **URGE** citizens to recognize their individual impact on lagoon water quality and take steps to control pollution sources coming from their homes, businesses, properties and vehicles.
- ◆ **REDUCE** the amount of fertilizer and harmful chemicals applied to our lawns and gardens.
- ◆ **HEED** existing fertilizer ordinances in all lagoon counties.
- ◆ **PROPERLY DISPOSE** of lawn and yard debris, pet waste, household chemicals and pesticides.
- ◆ **PROTECT** neighborhood storm drains and canals by ensuring that these conveyances are not used as dumping grounds.
- ◆ **PREVENT AND REPAIR** oil and fuel leaks in automobiles, boats and other vehicles.
- ◆ **SUPPORT** the activities and management plans already in place that are working to restore and protect the Indian River Lagoon.

The IRL Council stands ready to work with citizens, scientists, policy makers and our local, state and national partners to ensure that the Indian River Lagoon's environmental, economic, public health, and quality of life assets are restored and protected today and for future generations.

One Lagoon — One Community — One Voice