

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON (IRL) REGIONAL COMPACT

“One Lagoon – One Community – One Voice”



WHEREAS, the Space Coast and Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities, herein the Indian River Lagoon Leagues (IRL Leagues), are affiliated with The Florida League of Cities, the united voice for Florida’s municipal governments; and

WHEREAS, the objective of the IRL Leagues is to be responsible stewards of the Indian River Lagoon, by working in a collaborative manner to promote local self-government, serve the needs of our representative municipal governments and residents, and advance the belief that local self-government is the keystone of American democracy; and

WHEREAS, the 4 Florida east coast counties that border the Indian River Lagoon (i.e. Brevard, Indian River, Martin and St. Lucie Counties) along with other municipalities (Other Parties) may join in this compact because we share a common belief that our exceptional quality of life is rooted in the Indian River Lagoon’s rich cultural heritage, dynamic innovation economy, and coastal and ocean resources of global significance; and

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon has become one of the most vulnerable estuaries in Florida that is threatened throughout its geographic range and watershed by water quality decline, habitat alteration and loss, fisheries decline, loss of filter feeders and biological diversity, invasive exotic species, altered hydrologic flow, pathogens, toxic chemicals; and

WHEREAS, the nutrient pollution sources represent the most serious threat to the Indian River Lagoon with nutrient and pollutant loads that originate from inadequate design and aging infrastructure issues associated with stormwater conveyances, groundwater conveyances (i.e. old sewer systems, wastewater management, sludge management), legacy nutrients already residing in the IRL as muck deposits, industry waste and pollutants, and residential/commercial property owner activities and behaviors that negatively impact the IRL related to fertilizer, landscaping, application of pesticides/herbicides and others; and

WHEREAS, there is strong consensus among the Space Coast and Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities and Other Parties to this compact that the Indian River Lagoon (an Estuary of National Significance and one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in North America) requires significant, strategic and recurring public and private investment to implement urgently needed restoration projects that will restore, protect and sustain the environmental, social and economic benefits that the IRL provides to the region, the State of Florida and the Nation; and

WHEREAS, the quality of life of approximately 50 cities and 5 counties of the Indian River Lagoon region Florida and their respective populations, totaling more than 1.7 million residents are dependent on the environmental health and economic vitality of the Indian River Lagoon with an estimated annual economic value of \$3.7 billion annually.

WHEREAS, the creation of the IRL Council, a special district of the State of Florida in 2015 provided a historic opportunity for expanded local leadership, participation, and responsibility from cities and counties along the Indian River Lagoon with dedicated annual funding through interlocal agreement from federal, state and local IRL Council partners; and

WHEREAS, acceptance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of the IRL Council as the new host of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program on January 8, 2016 provides an opportunity to implement a non-regulatory, collaborative and consensus-building approach to IRL restoration, conservation and stewardship decision-making.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SPACE COAST AND TREASURE COAST REGIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES AND OTHER PARTIES TO THIS COMPACT:

SECTION 1. CONNECTED LEADERSHIP: That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall work in close collaboration with the IRL Council and the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program (IRL NEP) to develop and implement a visionary and comprehensive restoration plan for the Indian River Lagoon based on the best available science and a process that nurtures open communication and engagement among scientists, resource managers, citizens, and stakeholders with representatives from the public, private and independent sectors at all levels. The IRL Leagues will be cooperative and active participants in that process.

SECTION 2. POLICY: LOCAL/STATE. That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall work individually and collectively to evaluate and amend existing policies and make recommendations for new policies at local and state levels that restore and protect the Indian River Lagoon. General policy areas include the need for a comprehensive statewide policy for Florida's waters and waterways. Policy recommendations shall result in nutrient/pollutant load reduction to coastal estuaries and waters.

Specific Indian River Lagoon policy areas of importance shall include, but are not limited to policies that:

- Streamline the permitting process for proven estuary/coastal restoration techniques and projects.
- Accelerate wastewater infrastructure improvements that reduce significantly or prevent chronic, accidental and permitted discharges of nutrients/pollutants to groundwater and surface waters.
- Seek increased funding for and reduce the cost of converting coastal septic systems to central sewer systems and provide incentives for property owners and local governments to encourage conversions.
- Address local home-rule issues in existing Florida policies that impede septic to sewer conversion.

- Advance stormwater treatment and retention projects including dispersed water management on public and private lands.
- Support local and regional efforts to increase water storage, aquifer recharge and the health and longevity of the Indian River Lagoon region's ground and surface fresh water supplies.
- Develop an innovative model Indian River Lagoon nutrient credit trading policy to advance nutrient removal of legacy load muck in the IRL;
- Provide financial and economic incentive programs and expanded state cost-share programs for local government Indian River Lagoon restoration projects;
- Leverage and enhance the long-term use of Land Acquisition Trust Fund (Amendment 1) monies for Indian River Lagoon restoration, including bonding these monies.

POLICY: FEDERAL. That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall work in close collaboration with the State of Florida to develop legislative policy statements that clarify and define the Federal role and responsibilities for the restoration and stewardship of the IRL, an estuary designated as an "Estuary of National Significance" in 1990 and request expanded Federal funding from the Congress of the United States for IRL ecosystem restoration. Transmittal of IRL Leagues statements will be to the Congressional Delegation representing, in part or in whole, districts within the area covered by this compact.

SECTION 3: RESTORATION INVESTMENT: That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall work cooperatively with the IRL Council and IRL NEP and other local, state and federal partners to expand existing funding and identify new funding sources (especially important is annual recurring funds) for IRL restoration and long-term stewardship. The IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact recognize the following high priority needs for expanded investment:

- Indian River Lagoon restoration projects that reduce significantly or eliminate unnatural freshwater discharges and associated nutrient/pollutant loads to the IRL from stormwater, groundwater and wastewater, both point- and non-point sources.
- Muck removal from the Indian River Lagoon to reduce accumulated nutrient loads and fine sediments that impact water quality and clarity, sediment health and fuel harmful algal blooms.
- Restoration and replanting/restocking (as needed) of critical habitats and species that directly influence ecosystem health, biodiversity, ecosystem resilience and commercial/recreational economic value of the Indian River Lagoon (i.e. seagrasses, oysters, clams, living shorelines, wetlands, mangroves).
- Comprehensive monitoring, mapping and modeling by public agencies, scientists and citizen volunteers to identify conditions and track ecosystems trends.

The IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact support use of Florida Water and Land Legacy funds approved by Constitutional Amendment in 2013 (Amendment 1) for annual, recurring Indian River Lagoon restoration and stewardship funding.

SECTION 4. INFORMED AND ENGAGED CITIES AND CITIZENS: That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall work cooperatively with the IRL Council and IRL NEP and other local, state and federal partners to develop, fund and implement effective, efficient and science-based citizen information and engagement programs throughout the Indian River Lagoon.

SECTION 5. INNOVATION INVESTMENT: That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall ask the State of Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity (in partnership with the private sector) to create a program and annual funding opportunity that invests in applied scientific research and technology development to develop innovative, efficient, and cost-effective clean water technologies, nutrient/pollutant removal technologies and muck dewatering/beneficial use technologies. The ultimate goal of this Section is to position the State of Florida and IRL region as a global leader in clean-water technologies and high-tech job creation and to export that knowledge and technologies to the nation and world.

SECTION 6. RESTORATION SUMMIT: That the IRL Leagues and Other Parties to the compact shall ask the IRL Council and IRL NEP to work with its partners to convene and fund an Indian River Lagoon Restoration Summit every 2 years to share IRL restoration progress, make restoration recommendations and make amendments and/or additions to the IRL NEP Comprehensive Restoration Plan.

SECTION 7. The commitments contained herein shall not be effective until approved through the required procedures of each respective party to the compact.