



# 2020 Annual Report

Celebrating 30 Years!



SaveTheIRL.org

Photo by John Massung





# *Our Mission*

To improve water quality and to protect and restore the fish and wildlife resources of the Indian River Lagoon, coastal waters, inshore reefs, and the watershed by advocating and using sound science, education, and the involvement of the public at large.



# 2020:

## *The One with the Covid-19 Pandemic*

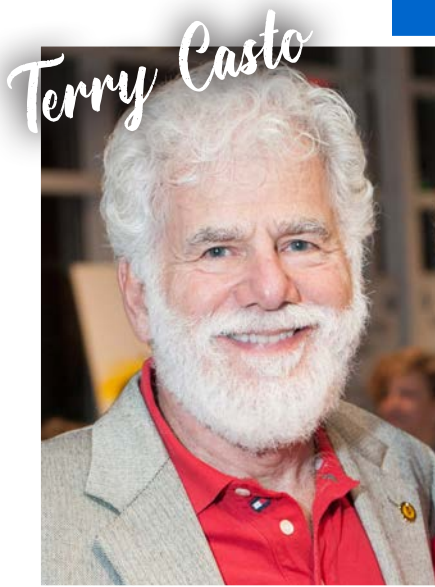
Wow! What a year it has been. Marine Resources Council is fortunate to have a capable team who took the pandemic challenge and ran with it. The MRC team grew stronger, more efficient, and highly adaptive to successfully complete projects. We turned our Lunch and Learn seminars into live webinars, implemented a Covid response plan to reduce risk to our staff and volunteers, closed the Lagoon House which is open by appointment only, created e-learning school lessons to be implemented in virtual classrooms, and cancelled all fundraising events. The projected revenues not received from our wildly successful (and fun) fundraising events was nearly made up entirely by the generous outpouring of community support during our End of Year Campaign. Thank you! We couldn't keep doing what we do without your support!

Land development has begun to explode again and MRC spent much of 2020 advocating for a better way to develop land that protects floodplains, manages stormwater holistically, and provides efficient waste management. We continued to coordinate the LagoonWatch volunteer water quality network and share data on the ZiScape website. We added two more years of data to the IRL Report Card, taking it through the year 2019. We completed two shoreline restoration projects and sold over \$30,000 of mangroves to restoration managers and homeowners all over the country. We also helped the City of Palm Bay measure muck depths in Turkey Creek, providing important data for muck management and removal.

In 2020, we should have been celebrating 30 years of MRC working with the community for the health of the Indian River Lagoon. We are looking forward to 2021, when we can work, socialize, and celebrate together. Thank you for all that you do for the Indian River Lagoon coastal estuary.



Executive Director



Board Chairman

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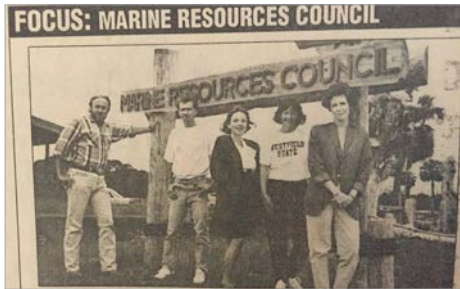
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# 30 Years of Marine Resources Council

For thirty years, the Marine Resources Council (MRC) has worked to create consensus on lagoon issues using science



Founding members at the first MRC office in Grant, FL.

1991

- Launched citizen science monitoring program "LagoonWatch" that became the standard for citizen science monitoring programs everywhere.

## Local environmental group wins national honors

*Partnership efforts with business and government*



Founding Executive Director, Diane Barile, accepting the Presidential Medal for Environmental Initiatives - 1991

1985

- Held first Hands Across the Lagoon event.
- Started publishing The Marker newsletter.

1989

- Conducted 2nd American Assembly focused on management issues and priorities.
- Established the Indian River Lagoon as an Estuary of National Significance.

1986

- Wrote the first Indian River Lagoon Management Plan.
- Held the 1st American Assembly.

1988

- Compiled Lagoon science into 3 edited monographs on the IRL.

1990

- Formally became a stand-alone, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.
- Started eco-neighborhoods, a precursor to FL Yards and Neighborhoods.

1995

- Passed the Indian River Lagoon Act ending untreated sewage discharges to the lagoon.
- MRC's LagoonWatch Program awarded the President's Environment and Conservation Challenge Award.
- 1991-1995 Coordinated annual "Lagoons Assemblies" to build consensus on issues of coastal management.

1992

- Awarded 1st Governor's Environmental Education Award.
- Coordinated Hands Across the Lagoon.

1997

- Established the Right Whale Volunteer Sighting Network to prevent vessel strikes of right whales.
- Submitted Indian River Lagoon Blueway application to purchase 9,000 acres of buffer lands.

1998-2005

- Applied for funding to acquire Malabar Scrub Sanctuary, Turkey Creek Sanctuary, the Melbourne Harbor House Park, Castaway Point, Queen's Island, and 46 acres on Jupiter Island. MRC still manages these properties today.

2000

- Established US1 and A1A as a Florida Scenic Highway and in 2001 established it as a National Scenic Byway.

1985

1990

1995

2000

# Turning Science into Action

and community participation to benefit the habitats in the Indian River Lagoon coastal estuary system.

2003

- MRC Volunteers won the National Make a Difference Day for restoring 4 acres of lagoon shoreline in one day in honor of a young boy who lost his life in the 9/11 tragedy.



The 2013 Hands Across the Lagoon event, which engaged 5,000 people on 8 different causeways.

2013

- Participated in State Capitol Clean Water Summit event in Tallahassee.
- Coordinated the Melbourne Causeway in the Hands Across the Lagoon event.
- 2013 - 2015 Supported the passage of 42 local fertilizer ordinances in the lagoon watershed.

2014

- Initiated East Coast Be Floridian Now education campaign.
- Lagoon Action Assembly reached consensus on 113 priority actions for the Lagoon.
- Held the inaugural LagoonFest music and learning festival.
- Initiated a groundwater study to investigate the extent to which septic tanks are polluting the lagoon.

2015

- 2nd Annual LagoonFest music and learning festival.
- Launched first STEM Youth Summer Camp at the Ted Moorhead Lagoon House.

2016

- Lagoon Communications Assembly initiated Lagoon SMART Committee.
- 3rd Annual LagoonFest brought George Clinton and the P-Funk, walking billboard scientists, and live mermaids to the Lagoon House.
- MRC advocated for SOIRL sales tax in Brevard County.

2017

- 2017 - 2019 MRC received legislative funding from Brevard County to study groundwater pollution.
- 2017 - 2020 MRC released Annual Comprehensive Indian River Lagoon Health Report Card.



Executive Director, Dr. Leesa Souto, lobbying in Tallahassee, FL.

2019

- Installed a breakwater at the Lagoon House to protect the bluff from erosion and to showcase oyster substrates.

2020

- Launched IRL Climate.org, the first website dedicated to climate issues and the IRL.
- Accelerated the use of Low Impact Development practices to reduce stormwater pollution.

2005

2005

- Ted Moorhead Lagoon House opened in Palm Bay as the Welcome Center for the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway.
- Acquired St. Sebastian Greenway property of rare coastal hammock, forested wetland, and southern flatwood habitats.

2010

2015

2020



# Science

Founded by scientists who shared a goal of integrating science into the community, MRC has a long standing commitment to citizen science and research to support strategic actions.

## LagoonWatch

MRC's oldest running program continued during the 2020 Covid-19 crisis with the majority of our Citizen Scientists conducting their weekly water quality monitoring from their own home docks where they could keep track of the lagoon's health while preserving their own. LagoonWatch data including pH, salinity, secchi depth, temperature, water depth and dissolved oxygen values are all on MRCs' website. Volunteers can view and access their data online through the ZiScape platform, developed and donated by Blue Siren, Inc.

## Spoil Island Surveys

MRC citizen scientists conducted surveys of recreational users of the spoil islands from Brevard to St. Lucie Counties to help state agencies update spoil island management plans.



- 2,310 survey data collected
- 4,116 water quality data collected
- 2.2 million data analyzed

## Brevard County Groundwater Study

MRC continued to partner with Brevard County and Applied Ecology, Inc. to conduct groundwater monitoring of 45 wells in communities with septic tanks, those with sewer systems, and those with sewer systems and reclaimed water for irrigation. To date, nearly 10,000 groundwater data have been collected to guide, prioritize, and evaluate septic to sewer conversion and wastewater upgrade projects.

## North Atlantic Right Whale Program

The 2020 right whale calving season brought 25 individual whales to the southeast U.S. calving grounds, 4 of whom were yearlings. Ten calves were born, and one was to a first time mom, Catalog #3560. MRC tracked the new mom and her calf south through Vero Beach before she took her calf into the Gulf of Mexico. Sadly, at 6 months of age, the calf was found dead off the coast of New Jersey as the result of two different vessel strikes.



NOAA permit 20556-01

# Muck Finders

In 2020, MRC volunteer “Muck Finders” collected about 500 muck thickness measurements in Turkey Creek. The data were used to create muck maps to help the city of Palm Bay plan and prioritize muck dredging projects. Muck kills sea grasses and benthic organisms, dirties the water, and releases pollutants. It must be removed for the lagoon to recover.





# Restoration

The lagoon needs natural shorelines and buffer lands that filter sediments, absorb pollutants, and prevent erosion.

## Mangrove Nursery

MRC has a licensed mangrove nursery where we cultivate and sell mangroves for shoreline stabilization and restoration projects. These plants provide nutrient uptake, wildlife habitat, storm protection, and erosion control. In 2020, MRC sold over \$30,000 in mangroves.

## Jupiter Island Greenway

The Jupiter Island Greenway is a 45 acre Florida Communities Trust conservation property owned by the Town of Jupiter Island and managed by MRC. Every year, MRC staff and volunteers remove and treat acres of invasive plants in order to allow native habitat to return.

## Sebastian Greenway

MRC owns and manages 8 acres of conservation land on the South Prong of the St. Sebastian River. The Greenway was funded by the Florida Communities Trust, and provides important wildlife habitat, a buffer for the Sebastian River, and flood protection to surrounding neighborhoods. MRC will be launching the Sebastian Greenway Capital Campaign in 2021 to build an outdoor classroom and composting lavatory, mark trails, build a boardwalk and create a welcome center.





# Living Shorelines

With volunteer support, MRC completed two Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) funded living shoreline plantings: one at Suntree Rotary Park and one at Fisherman's Landing. In addition, MRC provided 550 nursery-grown mangroves to the community, as well as provided design and permit assistance to homeowners pursuing living shorelines.







# Education

Education and community engagement are critical to protecting the Indian River Lagoon. Social science provides the research framework for targeting audiences, prioritizing projects, and evaluating behavior change.

## Youth Education

MRC continued to expand youth education programs, holding a modified Covid-safe summer camp in 2020. With the addition of virtual programs and field-trips, we were able to reach over 2,600 students aged 4-18, covering topics related to stormwater, mangroves, and ecosystem dynamics.

## Lunch and Learn Seminars

MRC revamped our long-standing Brown Bag Lunch events to virtual, online Seminars, viewed by almost 1,000 attendees. Area experts spoke on a wide range of topics such as manatees, the history of the lagoon, fishing gear solutions to protect North Atlantic right whales, and coral reefs.

## Lagoon SMART Committee

The Lagoon SMART Committee met virtually to develop messages for lagoon stewardship, to create a directory of existing lagoon education programs, and to share social marketing research that help guide and evaluate programs.

## Rain Barrel Workshops

Reducing the flow of stormwater into the lagoon will help restore the Lagoon's water quality. MRC distributed 169 rain barrels to homeowners in 2020, preventing 219,700 gallons of stormwater from entering the Lagoon.

## Indian River Lagoon Report Card

The Indian River Lagoon Health Report Card translates water and seagrass quality into easy to understand info-graphics and grades. The report has successfully been used to guide scientific investigation, raise awareness, inspire advocacy, and inform policy-makers. In 2020, MRC produced the 3rd Annual State of the Lagoon Report Card which included:

- 137,202 agency data including 25 years of seagrass and 23 years of water quality data
- 10 lagoon regions and 12 tributaries from Ponce Inlet to Jupiter Inlet
- Scored and color-coded tables and maps to easily see changes over time and space



## Be Floridian Now Partnership

MRC continued to coordinate the East Coast Be Floridian Now partnership of ten municipalities that share resources and messages to raise awareness about fertilizer ordinances. The program, which initiated on Florida's West Coast, uses fun, flamboyances of flamingoes to attract residents who may otherwise be disinterested in learning about fertilizer. In 2020, the City of Miami Beach joined the partnership to educate S. Florida residents about their new fertilizer ordinance, which goes above and beyond what others have passed!





# *Launching in 2021!*

## **MRC's Lagoon Castaway Camp and Lagoon Explorers After-School Program**

MRC is excited to announce the launching of its updated Lagoon Castaway summer camps as well as a brand new Lagoon Explorers after-school STEM program. In summer 2021, we will be offering 8 weeks of full-day summer camp for kids aged 8 to 12 complete with hands-on, feet-wet learning experiences focused around the lagoon and the unique history and ecosystems of the Space Coast. Starting with the 2021 school year, MRC will also be launching the Lagoon Explorers after-school program for 6th-8th graders. Students who attend after school will explore, create, and dive into topics relating to the Indian River Lagoon, conservation, and ecology, while building STEM skills. For more information on these exciting new programs, visit [www.SaveTheIRL.org](http://www.SaveTheIRL.org)!

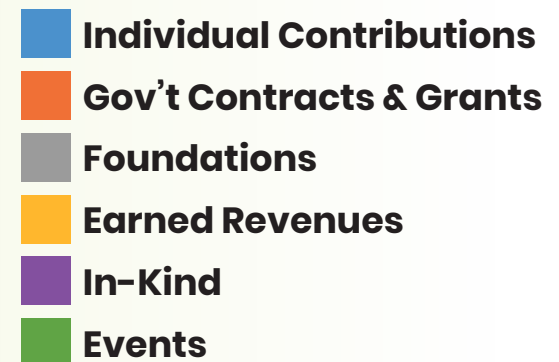
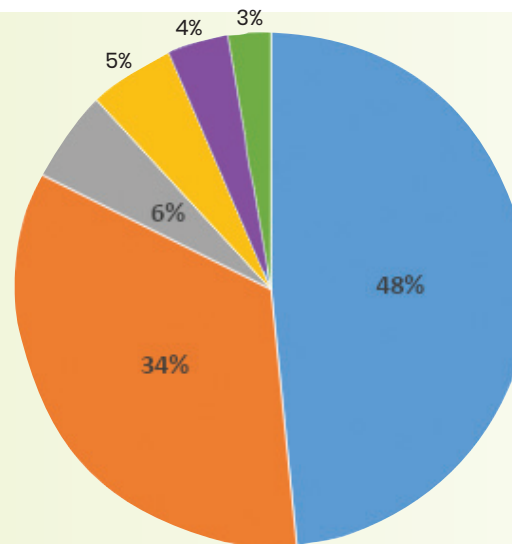
**58 Presentations • 14,000 adults reached • 2,617 youth reached**



# 2020 Financials

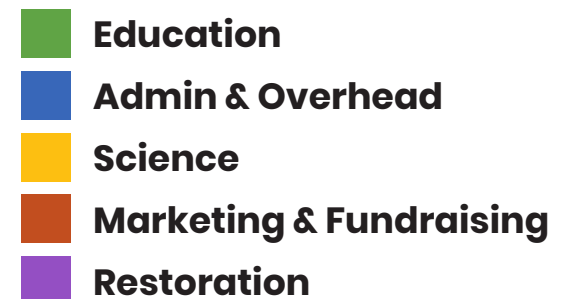
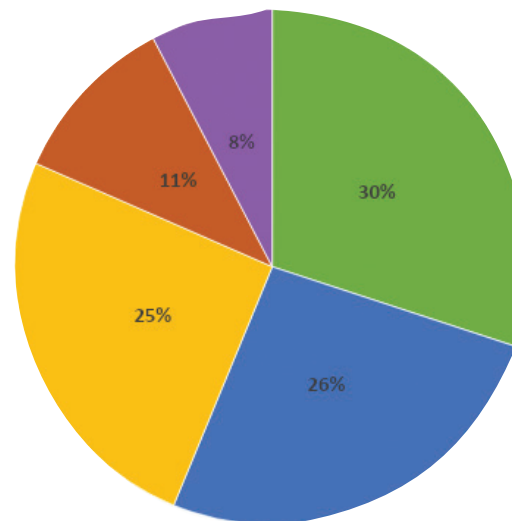
## REVENUE

Revenue	
Individual Contributions	\$410,918
Gov't Contracts/Grants*	\$288,362
Foundations	\$48,925
Earned Revenues	\$45,617
In-Kind	\$32,154
Events	\$22,899
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$848,875</b>



## EXPENSES

Expenses	
Science	\$166,621
Education	\$197,672
Restoration	\$50,350
Marketing & Fundraising	\$70,996
Administration & Overhead	\$172,430
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$658,069</b>





# Board of Directors & Staff

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### **Vice Chair**

Jim Moir

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Maureen Rupe  
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## Staff Directory

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### **Science and Restoration Director**

Caity Savoia

### **Marketing Director**

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Kara Woods

### **Right Whale Program Coordinator**

Julie Albert

### **Youth Education & Summer Camp Coordinator**

Angie Oswalt

### **Field Scientist**

Bill Prendergast

## Advisory Board

Richard Baker, Ph. D  
Stefani Byrd, Ph.D  
Grant Gilmore, Ph.D  
Ted Moorhead  
Jim Swann





# We our members!

MRC ended the year 2020 with 456 members, over 9,300 newsletter recipients, and 732 volunteers. We could not have made it through this year without your support. When we come together and leverage our collective power, we can achieve great things for our lagoon. Stand with us in 2021 to help make it the best year yet! Visit [www.SaveTheIRL.org](http://www.SaveTheIRL.org) to become a member.

Nancy Abbott  
Larry Abdullah  
Frank Adams  
Gary and Sandra  
Aguinaga  
James and Renee Ahrens  
Charles and Sheryl  
Alberga  
Nancy Alderman  
Bert Alm  
Carolyn Amos  
Annette Anastasia  
Tara Anderson  
TJ Anderson  
Edward and Jeanne  
Andre  
Charles Andreski  
Edward Arabian  
Bill Arbogast  
Joel Askinazi  
Debra Bailey  
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Keith and Peggy Ball  
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Thomas Barratt  
Brad Bates  
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Patricia Baughan  
Glenn and Kaci Beckett  
Kate Beckett  
Catherine Beirne  
Shirley Beirne  
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Bob Bell  
Kathie Benson  
Peggy Bentley  
Susan Beumel  
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John Buck  
Brian and Helen Buckley  
Steffani Burd  
Geraldine Burke  
Todd Burris  
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Bill Cox  
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Tom Draus  
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Michael Dunn  
Stephen Dunn  
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Peter and Karen Dyson  
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R.J. and Kathleen Edwards  
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Lisa Littleton  
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William and Anita Lytle  
Joan Macdonald  
John Macdonald  
George and Denise  
Macklin



# Thank you for being part of the MRC Family!

Kay Macmillan  
Trudie Mailepors  
Tamara Majkrzak  
Jan Makowski  
Eric Mallen  
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Rusty Neff  
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Valerie Taylor  
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The Viera Company  
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Laurilee Thompson  
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Joe Torkelson  
Jim and Joann Torpey  
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Thomas and Jeanne Tremblay  
Glenn Turner  
Richard and Kathy Turner  
Sally Turner  
Susan Turner  
Two Roger Professional Association  
Wayne and Kathryn Tyson  
Michael Ullian  
James and Charlotte Underwood  
Suzannek Valencia  
Thomas and Caroline Vanderspool

Brian Vargecko  
John and Catherine Vecchio  
Lucy Venable  
Charlie Venuto  
Shari Wardlaw  
Joyce Wasserman  
MJ Waters  
Ann Watts  
Tomiko Watts Bowman  
Marilyn Webster  
Corry Westbrook  
David White  
David White  
Emily White  
Herbert Whittall  
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Cari Wiggins  
Alison Williams  
Roger and Barbara Williams  
Dylan Wilson  
John and Karen Windsor  
Carl Winebarger  
Jeff and Dolly Winget  
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**Palm Bay, FL 32905**  
**321-725-7775**  
**[www.SaveTheIRL.org](http://www.SaveTheIRL.org)**



**[SaveTheIRL.org](http://SaveTheIRL.org)**

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