

# A VISION FOR THE Indian River Lagoon

## WE ALL WANT...

1. A **HEALTHY** lagoon that is resilient to changing environmental factors such as flooding, drought, cold and heat.
2. A **BOUNTIFUL** lagoon that is home to an unmatched diversity of plants, fish and other animals.
3. A **VIBRANT** lagoon that brings great economic value and unique identity to the communities that live, work and play along its shores
4. A **MAGNIFICENT** lagoon that engages and rewards our community for their involvement in restoration and outreach projects.

The Indian River Lagoon is sick and is functioning like a person with a compromised immune system who cannot fight off natural infections. So every time we get too much heat, too much cold, too much rain or too little rain – the lagoon shows debilitating symptoms.

## WHY IS THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON SICK?

For years, we have washed our waste in the form of excess nutrients and particles like dirt and grass clipping, into the lagoon. The nutrients feed the massive algae blooms and together with the suspended particles block the sun from reaching the sea grass. As a result, the sea grass dies, oxygen levels fall, and fish suffocate. The rotting fish produce more available nutrients which leads to more blooms. It's a vicious cycle.

## WE ARE THE PROBLEM. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE CAN BE THE SOLUTION!

There is no silver bullet to fixing the lagoon. It requires a long-term, systematic commitment. We need to remove excess nutrients and prevent nutrient-rich water from entering the Lagoon. There are several major areas to focus our efforts to help the Northern Indian River Lagoon:

1. **REMOVE** the nutrient-rich muck on the bottom. This has taken years to accumulate and will take years and significant resources to remove. Our current efforts are just the beginning.
2. **REDUCE** the current flow of nutrients and sunlight-blocking particles into the lagoon. These pollutants come from three main sources: groundwater from septic systems and aging wastewater systems, stormwater runoff that washes waste from our yards and streets into the lagoon; and air pollution.
3. **RESTORE** natural filtration and oxygenation systems through increased oyster beds, mangroves, wetlands and seagrass beds.
4. **RESEARCH** problems and solutions so we can be more targeted in our efforts. We have to monitor, map and model the lagoon in order to pinpoint what interventions work best.

We are the solution!

## WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

1. Support public projects that remove the muck, treat wastewater and increase the health and safety of our septic and sewer systems.
2. Ask elected officials and government at all levels to support legislation that protects the lagoon and funds its clean up.
3. Change our personal habits. For most of us living east of I-95, our stormwater drains into the lagoon, so we need to be very careful about how we maintain our properties.

Never blow grass clippings into the street. Use the minimum amount of slow-release fertilizer or none at all and never in the rainy season. Pick up after your dog and don't wash your car in your driveway where the soap and dirt runs into the street, down the drains and eventually into the lagoon.

If you own a septic system; maintain, upgrade or replace, if necessary to make sure it is working properly and not leaking or leaching into the lagoon.

4. Volunteer with one of the many groups working on improving the estuary and who have demonstrated a long-term commitment.
5. Donate money to one or more of these groups. Support groups who have a track record of doing good work in the Indian River Lagoon.
6. Support the partnership and work of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program hosted by the Indian River Lagoon Council as they advance a comprehensive restoration strategy for the Indian River Lagoon through a coalition of government agencies, scientific research organizations, stakeholders and citizens.

## CURRENT PARTNERS



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