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## 21st Indian River Lagoon Community Action Assembly
## July 24-25, 2024

Presented by



Hosted by
## Florida Institute of Technology
150 W University Blvd, Melbourne, FL

# ASSEMBLY SUMMARY, ACTION ITEMS, AND PROGRESS REPORTING

The Indian River Lagoon (IRL), one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in North America, faces a multitude of complex and interconnected problems. Decades of population growth, urban development, and agricultural expansion have exerted immense pressure on this vital ecosystem. Key issues include (but are not limited to), nutrient pollution, habitat loss, stormwater runoff, septic systems, climate change, overfishing and species decline, and invasive species. These problems have collectively diminished the ecological integrity and resilience of the Indian River Lagoon, threatening its ability to support a diverse range of species and provide essential ecosystem services. The urgency to address these issues is paramount, requiring coordinated efforts and innovative solutions to restore and protect this invaluable natural resource for future generations.

In July, Marine Resources Council hosted a two-day Indian River Lagoon Action Assembly on the Florida Institute of Technology campus to address critical issues and develop actionable strategies for restoring and protecting the IRL. One hundred and forty-seven delegates and facilitators representing almost 100 different nonprofit organizations, businesses, and municipalities, along with a significant number of independent concerned citizens, volunteered their time and experience. The Assembly focused on seven key Consensus Challenge Questions:

- As a region, what is needed to elect the best leaders?
- How can we improve collaboration among organizations in the region?
- How can we improve communication among organizations?
- What needs to be communicated to the public?
- How can we improve communication to the public?
- How do we implement Low Impact Development + Green Stormwater Infrastructure?
- What new technologies and policies are needed to restore balance to the Lagoon?

Delegates were divided into 10 small groups with the goal of outlining critical needs and actions for each of the seven Consensus Challenges. Summative lists of the top action items submitted by each group were generated by ChatGPT 3.5 and are presented in Appendix I. Those action items formed the framework of the Town Hall discussion on day two. More extensive lists summarizing all action items produced by small groups were generated by ChatGPT 3.5 and are provided in Appendix II.

## Recommendations for Actions

During the Town Hall, delegates identified and discussed action items to address immediately. Discussions included information about existing resources, which organizations/individuals can and will take ownership over initiatives, and possible ways to share information. Top-priority action items are summarized below. Note that this list is not ranked; rather, order relates to how action items were presented to delegates.

1. *IRL Political Action Committee (PAC):* **Establish a PAC focused on IRL issues.**

Individuals and organizations with political interests will work together to explore a PAC for IRL advocacy. Vote Water, Right to Clean Water, Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition, Sierra Club, and others have volunteered to lead PAC-related discussions and group organization. Right to Clean Water and the IRL Roundtable have crafted a 501(c)4 organizational concept to start discussions; this is provided in Appendix III.

2. *Directory Development:* **Create a regional directory of organizations and resources.**

Representatives from Marine Resources Council, Elliott Museum/Martin County Historical Society, and Sebastian River Chamber of Commerce are developing a directory of IRL organizations. A form to register your organization's contact information can be found here: [Join our Directory!](#). More information will follow regarding where the list will be hosted. With additional funding for database development, this has the potential to develop into a knowledge repository.

3. *Lagoon-wide Listserv***: Create a listserv/info blast divided by topics/fields of work.**

Florida Estuary Restoration Teams (ERTs) already have listservs by region that organizations can join to share information about events, ask questions, etc. ERT networks and contact information can be found in Appendix IV. [Corridor Connect](#) is another network. Additionally, a Slack group for Lagoon-focused East Central Florida has been created for organizations; this includes channels related to education, outreach, meetings, social events, and other topics to facilitate inter-organizational communications and collaborations. [Join the IRL Communications Slack Workspace](#)!

4. *Regular Meetings***: Promote and host regular engagement of IRL organizations in professional meetings.**

Delegates called for more, regularly-timed meetings focused on conversations, collaboration, and learning about the Indian River Lagoon. ERT listservs and Slack can be used to pass along information. IRLNEP was suggested as an organization to help with meeting organization, but hosting responsibilities should ideally rotate among organizations to share associated costs and staff time needed to coordinate events.

5. *Social Events***: Organize social events to foster networking.**

Separate from more academic and institutionally-oriented events, delegates called for more social events to help break down the barriers caused by "egos and logos". Austin Fox (FIT) and Josh Mills (Res) volunteered to help coordinate communication; the listserv and/or Slack can also be used (a social events channel is available in the Slack workgroup). The Florida Association of Environmental Professionals was recommended as a good resource for information.

6. *Gap Identification*: **When communicating with the public, identify and address knowledge gaps with a timeline.**

The IRLNEP website, the IRLNEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan, and Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition website were identified as good sources of information for crafting narratives. The action item can be supported by #11 below with the development of infographics.

7. *Event Outreach*: **Advocate at non-environmental events to reach a broader audience.**

Delegates suggested leaning into Chambers of Commerce and Tourism Boards to promote organizations and their work. Working with churches, scout groups, neighborhood community centers, etc can help extend reach. Organizations should consider adding these recommendations to their own science communication best practices.

8. *Storytelling Narratives*: **Create narratives that highlight Lagoon-healing actions and community involvement.**

This can be addressed by changing the protagonist of our stories from the Lagoon to individuals and communities. Science through storytelling is a growing trend in science communication that can be utilized towards this action item. Science communication experts from organizations can create a network to share best practices and other resources and organizations should consider adding these recommendations to their own science communication best practices. Resources about webinars to support storytelling can be shared on listservs/Slack.

9. *Positive Messaging*: **Focus on positive stories and successes to inspire the public.**

This is something every organization can improve upon. There is a need to highlight successes of other regions as inspiring examples for the IRL, as well as  individual/community/business champions (Lagoon Heroes), rather than focusing on problems, set-backs, and destruction. This can also help build community, help communities see themselves in the health of the Lagoon, and incorporate storytelling narratives. Positive messaging extends to LID and GSI stories that highlight developers and communities that showcase environmentally responsible infrastructure, design, and policies. Science communication experts from organizations can create a network (or use the Slack channel) to share best practices and other resources.

10. *Youth Engagement*: **Involve youth in creating and sharing content about the Lagoon.**

We are making decisions that impact younger generations without giving them a voice. Gen Z and Gen Alpha get their information from social media, so empowering members of those demographics to create Lagoon messaging can provide more inclusive voices and extend reach of Lagoon-friendly messaging. Little Growers, River Kids, Stella Maris, Environmental Learning Center, and other education-focused individuals volunteered to further this initiative. Creating and sharing best practices can help other organizations get youth in their communities involved.

**11.** *Infographics*: **Develop visuals to explain water pollution sources and public actions.**

This is something every organization can improve upon. There are regular science communication webinars about using graphic to relay messaging. Best practices and resources can be shared in listserv and/or Slack channels. Creating a map of where different organizations are located and/or working on projects could be a good starting point and can be coordinated through Slack..

**12.** *Permitting Process*: **Streamline permitting with incentives for LID and GSI.**

It was brought to the attention of the Assembly that the University of Florida (UF) is working on this and there is no reason to reinvent the wheel. UF/IFAS ([https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/](https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/)) has a lot of resources, including ways to get involved with their SHED (sustainable human and economic development; [https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/shed/](https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/shed/)) initiative.

**13.** *Education Program*: **Educate stakeholders on the economic benefits of LID and GSI.**

These education programs should be aimed at individuals, communities, and developers regarding low impact living. Little Growers (especially utilizing their Make Green Noise initiative), Marine Resources Council, and Ferguson Waterworks will help develop materials and programs that can be used throughout the region. Resources are also available from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), including grant information: [https://floridadep.gov/wra/319-tmdl-fund/content/nonpoint-source-pollution-education](https://floridadep.gov/wra/319-tmdl-fund/content/nonpoint-source-pollution-education)

**14. Code Upgrades: Encourage regional planning councils to prioritize code/policy upgrades.**

Like with permitting processes (#12 above), UF/IFAS is working on this initiative. DEP has technical resources, including a link to the UF-developed LID + GSI Code Audit Tool ([https://gsi.floridadep.gov/resources/technical-resources/](https://gsi.floridadep.gov/resources/technical-resources/)). This action item is also something that can be pursued by the Political Action Committee proposed above.

**15.** *Millage Rate Policy*: **Advocate against rolling back millage rates to secure funding for Lagoon restoration.**

Brevard IRL Coalition and Right to Clean Water were put forward as organizations that can work toward this goal. Both groups have representatives working on the IRL PAC, so this action item can likely be incorporated into the PAC agenda.

**16.** *Technology Incentives*: **Promote and fund the development and testing of new technologies while sustaining existing projects.**

Delegates were running out of steam (and time) when discussing technology and policy, but RioVation ([https://riovation.com/](https://riovation.com/)) was mentioned as an example of successful new tech for septic issues. Delegates noted that the DEP/Protecting Florida Together provides grant information for project funding ([https://protectingfloridatogether.gov/state-action/grants-submissions](https://protectingfloridatogether.gov/state-action/grants-submissions) . The policy/permit aspect of testing new technologies may be something within the realm of the PAC.

This summary encapsulates the key action items and collaborative efforts discussed during the 21st IRL Action Assembly, aiming to restore balance to the Indian River Lagoon through strategic leadership, improved communication, and innovative technologies. It was prepared by Marine Resources Council, but ideas, actions, and solutions reflect the work, expertise, and input by almost 150 individuals invested in the health of the Indian River Lagoon.

## Progress Reporting

Marine Resources Council will create a matrix based on action items identified in Appendix II to track progress. The document will be shared via established communication channels (ERT listservs, Slack, etc.) and organizations will be able to self-report their work on action items. Progress information will be accessible to all participating organizations.

# APPENDIX I
# Top-ranked action items compiled from each small group and presented to delegates during the Town Hall

## Challenge 1: Electing the Best Leaders

- *Scorecard Development:* Partner with VoteWater.org, League of Women Voters, Florida League of Cities, Rotary/Kiwanis clubs, and other established institutions to create a scorecard rating elected officials based on environmental actions.
- *Education:* Implement hands-on programs for elected leaders and candidates, and integrate environmental modules into leadership programs like those by Lead Brevard.
- *IRL Political Action Committee (PAC):* Establish a PAC focused on IRL issues.
- *Resonant Messaging:* Develop unified messages that resonate with politicians and constituents, highlighting positive environmental impacts.
- *Political Engagement:* Encourage community involvement in politics, supporting young people to become effective leaders and candidates.

## Challenge 2: Improving Collaboration Among Organizations

- *Directory Development:* Create a regional directory of organizations and resources.
- *Regular Meetings*: Promote regular engagement of IRL organizations, including ERTs.
- *Knowledge Repository*: Develop a repository of institutional and local knowledge.
- *Lagoon-wide Listserv*: Create a listserv/info blast divided by topics/fields of work.

## Challenge 3: Improving Communication Among Organizations

- *Shared Calendar*: Create a calendar for Lagoon events to avoid conflicts.
- *Institutional Knowledge*: Maintain knowledge by providing engagement opportunities for entry-level employees.
- *Action Assembly Meetings*: Hold more meetings with clear objectives and shared ideas.
- *Interactive Directory:* Create a comprehensive directory of organizations and their services.
- *Lessons Learned*: Share both successes and failures among organizations.
- *Communication Plan*: Implement a communication plan for the entire IRL ecosystem.
- *Quarterly Meetings*: Hold quarterly liaison meetings for improved coordination.
- *Coordination Role*: Fund a position or hire a firm to collate information from various organizations.
- *Private Channels*: Establish private communication channels for organizations.
- *Social Events*: Organize social events to foster networking.

## Challenge 4: Communicating to the Public

- *Gap Identification*: Identify and address knowledge gaps with a timeline.

- *Relatable Communication*: Explain the value of Lagoon actions in relatable terms.
- *Lagoon Storytelling*: Share the story of the Lagoon and how people can engage with it.
- *Cost Recognition*: Communicate the public costs required for Lagoon restoration.

## Challenge 5: Improving Public Communication

- *Event Outreach*: Advocate at non-environmental events to reach a broader audience.
- *Storytelling Narratives*: Create narratives that highlight Lagoon-healing actions and community involvement.
- *Positive Messaging*: Focus on positive stories and successes to inspire the public.
- *Youth Engagement*: Involve youth in creating and sharing content about the Lagoon.
- *Infographics*: Develop visuals to explain water pollution sources and public actions.
- *Publicity Funding*: Lobby for increased funding for professional publicity.
- *Diverse Communication Tactics*: Use varied communication methods for different generations.
- *Catchy Slogans*: Develop engaging slogans to raise awareness.
- *Community Involvement*: Encourage community participation in Lagoon activities, fostering a sense of responsibility.

## Challenge 6: Implementing Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)

- *Permitting Process*: Streamline permitting with incentives for LID and GSI.
- *Education Program*: Educate stakeholders on the economic benefits of LID and GSI.
- Code Upgrades: Encourage regional planning councils to prioritize code/policy upgrades.
- *Success Stories*: Share examples of successful LID and GSI projects.

## Challenge 7: New Technologies and Policies for Lagoon Restoration

- *Adaptive Management Policies*: Develop policies specific to lagoon management.
- *Manager Education*: Educate managers on adaptive and resilient coastal management principles.
- *Policy Enforcement and Funding:* Enforce and fund existing policies, streamline outdated ones.
- *Millage Rate Policy*: Advocate against rolling back millage rates to secure funding for Lagoon restoration.
- *Technology Incentives*: Promote and fund the development and testing of new technologies while sustaining existing projects.
- *Impact Fees*: Recommend impact fees for new development to support Lagoon restoration.

# APPENDIX II
# Summative list of all action items produced from small group discussions

## Consensus Challenge Question: As a region, what is needed to elect the best leaders?

- **Candidate Identification and Support**
  - Identify and elevate IRL-friendly and vetted candidates.
  - Champion supporters of important local issues and candidates with a history of positive IRL actions.
  - Inform citizens through candidate forums and debates.
- **Public Engagement and Education**
  - Educate public leaders and staff on IRL issues through Lagoon/environmental modules
  - Create messaging that resonates with politicians and their constituents.
  - Engage politicians in current IRL efforts.
- **Political Action Committees (PACs)**
  - Explore the potential of forming an IRL PAC or 501-C4.
- **Scorecards**
  - Create and distribute environmental/IRL scorecards to a wider audience..
  - Create a candidate report card/questionnaire for public access.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships**
  - Partner with organizations that can endorse and support IRL-friendly candidates.
  - Partner with environmental-based businesses to advocate for IRL issues.
  - Form alliances with local organizations and advocacy groups for unified messaging.
- **Funding and Resources**
  - Secure more funding for candidates prioritizing environmental protection.
  - Identify and direct lobbyists to advocate at state and federal levels.
- **Youth and Leadership Development**
  - Support young people in becoming effective leaders/candidates.
  - Develop leadership programs targeted at potential candidates.
  - Celebrate success and encourage leadership to follow through on commitments.
- **Accountability and Transparency**
  - Establish accountability systems for elected officials with regular report cards.
  - Verify advocacy on a local candidate level.
  - Ensure politicians provide public information on specific issues and questions.
- **Unified Messaging and Strategy**
  - Coordinate with all IRL groups to develop a unified platform and candidates.
  - Identify key officials, staff, and appointed persons, and develop relationships with them.
- **Civic Engagement and Development**
  - Encourage civic-mindedness in both young and old.
  - Become a resource for politicians, providing information and engagement on current IRL work.
  - Involve the public by posing questions submitted by citizens during forums and debates.

- **Political and Community Forums**
  - Create an IRL watershed forum for candidates to speak on specific issues.
  - Involve the IRL League of Cities and Association of Counties in lagoon-related issues during regular meetings.
- **Long-Term Planning and Cultivation**
  - Create a long-term plan to identify people interested in public service and cultivate town leaders.
  - ID individuals with good relationships with potential candidates and leverage these connections.

## Consensus Challenge Question: How we can improve collaboration among organizations in the region

- **Create Directories and Contact Lists**
  - Develop a comprehensive directory of organizations, including staff, assets, and contact information.
  - Ensure the directory includes who's doing what and updates periodically.
- **Regular Meetings and Gatherings**
  - Increase the frequency of in-person meetings (weekly, monthly, bi-annually) and Zoom/phone meetings to foster better collaboration and solutions.
  - Host periodic social gatherings to foster informal collaboration.
  - Organize biannual conferences for sharing lessons learned.
- **Unified Mission and Goals**
  - Develop a united mission/goal aligned with NEP's initiatives.
  - Encourage organizations to be part of the NEP management conference.
- **Communication Platforms**
  - Create listservs covering different topics (e.g., citizen science) to facilitate communication.
  - Establish a centralized website for submitting questions and receiving expert answers.
  - Develop an app for engagement, similar to iNaturalist/PokeMon Go, with location tagging.
- **Shared Calendars and Maps**
  - Create a multi-organizational calendar of meetings, events, and project dates.
  - Develop an interactive map for organizations and the public, detailing projects and monitoring schedules.
- **Data and Resource Sharing**
  - Create shared data resources and a centralized database independent of individual organizations.
  - Implement QA/QC on water quality data with consistent definitions.
  - Establish a repository for institutional knowledge, local knowledge, and past and present work.
- **Collaboration at Project Start**
  - Ensure collaboration begins at the start of projects to avoid conflicts and improve coordination.
  - Submit joint grant applications and seek funding together to support collaborative projects.

- **Educational and Outreach Programs**
  - Increase opportunities for kids to get intern/volunteer/work hours with organizations.
  - Forge partnerships with HOAs, Chambers of Commerce, Biz Development Boards, real estate agents, the scientific community, 4H groups, schools, and engage diverse/underserved communities.
- **Centralized Coordination and Leadership**
  - Appoint an overarching group or central hub to coordinate meetings and collaborations.
  - Appoint ambassadors from each county to advocate for collaboration initiatives.
  - Form subcommittees for specific tasks, such as conceptualizing new ideas and seeking buy-in from groups.
  - Appoint ambassadors from various counties to promote collaboration efforts and initiatives.
  - Develop a centralized information hub modeled after the United Way method, with a contact list for resources and information.
- **Promote Collaboration Across Sectors**
  - Foster better collaboration between diverse groups such as businesses, scientific communities, and schools.
- **Organizational Strengths and Expertise**
  - Develop a hierarchy of self-identified strengths and weaknesses to identify subject matter experts.

## Consensus Challenge Question: How can we improve communication among organizations? [largely duplicative of challenge question list above]

- **Comprehensive Directory and Contact Lists**
  - Develop a comprehensive directory of organizations, including staff, assets, and contact information.
  - Include details about who is doing what, with periodic updates.
  - Implement a color-coding system for types of experts.
- **Regular and Structured Meetings**
  - Schedule regular/quarterly in-person meetings, workshops, and Zoom meetings, coordinated by NEP.
  - Host periodic gatherings with a social aspect to foster informal networking and collaboration.
  - Hold biannual conferences for sharing lessons learned and building relationships.
  - Organize "Speed Dating for the IRL" events to facilitate in-person connections at meetings.
- **Unified Communication Platforms**
  - Create a listserv covering different topics (e.g., citizen science, outreach, education, maps) to facilitate interorganizational communication.
  - Expand existing listserv platforms (e.g., ECERT, NERT).
  - Establish a centralized website for submitting questions and receiving expert answers.
  - Develop an app for engagement, similar to iNaturalist/PokeMon Go, with location tagging.

- ○ Establish private communication channels (e.g., WhatsApp, Discord, Facebook) for all organizations.
- **Shared Calendars and Maps**
  - ○ Create a multi-organizational calendar to inform other organizations and the public about meetings, events, and project dates.
  - ○ Develop an interactive map detailing projects and monitoring schedules for public and organizational use.
  - ○ Ensure organizations populate their own entries to avoid time conflicts.
- **Data and Resource Sharing**
  - ○ Implement QA/QC on water quality data with consistent definitions.
  - ○ Establish a repository for institutional knowledge, local knowledge, and past and present work.
- **Collaboration at Project Start**
  - ○ Ensure collaboration begins at the start of projects to avoid conflicts and improve coordination.
  - ○ Use a collaborative approach without allowing any single entity to become too powerful.
  - ○ Submit joint grant applications and seek funding together to support collaborative projects.
  - ○ Encourage organizations to collaborate on events and explore joint funding opportunities.
- **Educational and Outreach Programs**
  - ○ Increase opportunities for kids to get intern/volunteer/work hours with organizations.
  - ○ Forge partnerships with diverse groups (e.g., HOAs, Chambers of Commerce, Biz Development Boards, schools) to engage underserved communities.
- **Centralized Coordination and Leadership**
  - ○ Appoint an overarching group or central hub to coordinate meetings and collaborations.
  - ○ Appoint ambassadors from each county to advocate for collaboration initiatives.
  - ○ Form subcommittees for specific tasks, such as conceptualizing new ideas and seeking buy-in from groups.
- **Promote Collaboration Across Sectors**
  - ○ Foster better collaboration between diverse groups such as businesses, scientific communities, and schools.
  - ○ Target widening the net for assemblies to include people from diverse backgrounds and locations.
- **Organizational Strengths and Expertise**
  - ○ Develop a hierarchy of self-identified strengths and weaknesses to identify subject matter experts.
  - ○ Ensure that new hires and volunteers understand the goals and history of ongoing projects.
- **Consistent Communication and Coordination**
  - ○ Coordinate messaging and ensure all organizations follow a standard operating procedure (SOP).
  - ○ Share monthly topics with shared messages from various groups.
- **Enhance In-Person Engagement**
  - ○ Increase the frequency of in-person events to twice a year to foster better collaboration and solutions.
  - ○ Maintain consistency in communications by utilizing virtual options as well.

- ○ Build opportunities for entry-level employees to engage with other groups to maintain institutional knowledge at all levels.
- **Commitment and Accountability**
  - ○ Ensure a commitment from organizations to complete action items from the Action Assembly.
  - ○ Outline clear timelines and structures for achieving goals.
  - ○ Identify which organizations are best suited for specific action items and goals.

## Consensus Challenge Question: What needs to be communicated to the public?

- **Highlight Success and Engage Communities**
  - ○ Communicate personal success stories about the lagoon using diverse media.
  - ○ Create storytelling narratives that highlight Lagoon-healing actions and community involvement.
  - ○ Show positive changes and success stories from other regions.
  - ○ Engage military veterans, civic groups, and local stakeholders for broader outreach.
- **Utilize Various Platforms and Trends**
  - ○ Seek non-environmentally focused events for advocacy.
  - ○ Use all major social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok) and traditional media (radio, TV) for outreach.
  - ○ Match communication strategies with current trends and technology (e.g., using apps for event engagement).
  - ○ Incorporate influencer marketing, especially targeting younger demographics.
- **Engage and Educate**
  - ○ Involve youth by creating content and sharing their voices on social media.
  - ○ Educate new residents and homeowners through materials in USPS packets, realtor packets, and AirBnB welcome info.
- **Develop Communication Tools**
  - ○ Create and distribute visual graphics explaining water pollution sources, ongoing actions, and what the public can do.
  - ○ Develop a central location for tools, information, and messaging.
- **Promote Through Professional Services**
  - ○ Employ professional marketing services using pooled funds from organizations.
  - ○ Utilize marketing firms to standardize and simplify messaging across different channels.
- **Focus on Inclusive  Messaging**
  - ○ Use positive messaging and emotional motivation to connect with diverse audiences.
  - ○ Adjust messages to fit the audience's level of understanding (e.g., 6th-grade reading level).
  - ○ Provide simple, accurate, and accessible information across various formats (physical, digital).
- **Leverage Community and Business Networks**
  - ○ Promote "Lagoon Loyal Businesses" and collaborate with local stakeholders.
  - ○ Partner with tourism boards and chambers of commerce for wider reach.
- **Create Educational and Interactive Experiences**
  - ○ Develop Lagoon-focused curricula and educational programs in collaboration with NGOs.

- ○ Host events like LagoonCon for showcasing projects and fostering interactions.
- **Implement a Unified Communication Plan**
  - ○ Standardize messages and avoid overloading the public with information.
  - ○ Use slogans and creative messaging (e.g., "Microbes to Manatees to Mangroves to Man") for engagement.
  - ○ Maintain consistent signage and standardized communication methods throughout the Lagoon area.
- **Promote Community Responsibility**
  - ○ Foster a sense of ownership and personal responsibility for the lagoon.
  - ○ Engage with diverse and underserved communities to ensure broad participation.
- **Encourage Collaboration and Sharing**
  - ○ Create a shared calendar and directory of Lagoon-related activities and organizations.
  - ○ Facilitate the sharing of lessons learned and progress updates among stakeholders.
- **Enhance Visual and Experiential Outreach**
  - ○ Use creative place-making and signage to engage the public (e.g., interactive signs).
  - ○ Highlight active restoration projects with detailed signage about the involved organizations and benefits.

## Consensus Challenge Question: How can we improve communication to the public?

- **Advocacy & Outreach**
  - ○ Seek events outside of the environmentally-focused realm for advocacy.
  - ○ Lean into positive messaging, highlighting successes and community champions.
  - ○ Emphasize "experiences" and "cool things to do" on social media, showcasing community efforts.
  - ○ Engage the youth to create and share content on social media.
  - ○ Promote Lagoon Loyal Businesses through local relationships.
  - ○ Lean into tourism boards and chambers of commerce for promoting organizations.
- **Storytelling & Community Engagement**
  - ○ Create storytelling narratives to highlight Lagoon-healing actions and build community.
  - ○ Turn the community into protagonists of the story.
  - ○ Utilize influencer marketing to highlight the IRL treasures.
  - ○ Participate in A Community United, offering solutions and opportunities for community involvement.
- **Education & Curriculum Development**
  - ○ Develop an inter-NGO network for Lagoon-focused curricula.
  - ○ Collaborate on education grants.
  - ○ Create internships focused on communication, especially for youth on social media.
- **Marketing & Publicity**
  - ○ Lobby Brevard County Commission for a larger allocation of the ½ cent tax for professional publicity.
  - ○ Use professional PR/marketing firms to deliver messages.
  - ○ Employ professional marketing services through pooled funds from organizations.
  - ○ Put printed IRL materials in USPS resident packets, realtor packets, and AirBnB welcome info.
  - ○ Use simplistic media snippets that link actions to results.

- **Visual & Informative Content**
  - Develop graphics to illustrate water pollution sources, ongoing actions, and public contributions.
  - Create an asset valuation model to communicate the value of the lagoon visually.
  - Utilize consistent signage for projects, animals, and plants throughout the Lagoon.
  - Mark active restoration projects with informative signs about organizations and benefits.
- **Communication Strategy**
  - Be strategic with diversified messaging and stay up with trends.
  - Tailor communication to diverse communities and age groups, using multiple platforms.
  - Standardize and simplify messages across the Lagooniverse, breaking science into sound bites.
  - Use a marketing company to unify messaging across organizations.
  - Avoid information overkill but keep the public informed.
- **Community Collaboration**
  - Partner with local stakeholders like "Keep ... Beautiful" for broader public engagement.
  - Develop creative placemaking with signs and messages that resonate with the community.
  - Find community champions to advocate and meet people where they're at.
- **Youth & Future Generations**
  - Engage youth as part of the Lagoon community, giving them a voice.
  - Increase internships and opportunities for young people to help with communication.

## Consensus Challenge Question: How do we implement Low Impact Development + Green Stormwater Infrastructure?

- **Streamlining Permitting Process**
  - Simplify and expedite the permitting process, including incentives for LID and GSI projects.
  - Implement differential stormwater tax rates for developers utilizing LID.
- **Education and Outreach**
  - Organize LID conferences for builders, involving UF Sea Grant/IFAS for zoning and ordinances.
  - Develop educational programs for homeowners, developers, and municipalities on the economic benefits of LID and GSI.
  - Use League of Cities as an education modality for officials.
  - Educate stakeholders on how to maintain GSI features (BMPs).
  - Promote life cycle analysis of LID/GSI installations to show cost-effectiveness over time.
  - Engage HOAs on current codes and encourage self-reporting of issues.
  - Showcase successful LID/GSI projects to demonstrate their benefits.
  - Utilize media coverage during flooding events to highlight the advantages of green infrastructure.

- **Task Force and Standards**
  - Assemble a task force, including city engineers, to raise and enforce higher standards for development codes.
  - Support the implementation and enforcement of existing stormwater rules.
- **Financial Incentives and Fees**
  - Introduce a fee for reclaimed water to prevent overuse.
  - Implement a fertilizer tax based on the cost of pollutant removal from waterways.
  - Offer incentives for developers and municipalities for LID projects, such as faster permitting.
  - Create a model code and make it mandatory and incentivized for local governments.
  - Develop policies to offset LID/GSI costs for disadvantaged communities.
- **Collaboration and Funding**
  - Encourage Regional Planning Councils (RPCs) to push for funding options to upgrade codes and policies.
  - Develop joint funding and implementation strategies with NEP, League of Cities, IRL Council, and the private sector.
  - Collaborate with environmental lawyers and organizations like NRDC and The Nature Conservancy to protect land trusts and promote LID/GSI.
- **Community Engagement**
  - Educate new residents about LID/GSI and provide resources through realtors and title companies.
  - Engage civic groups such as veterans and the military in educational campaigns.
  - Promote lagoon interaction through community events and activities.
- **Communication and Marketing**
  - Use professional marketing services to create a unified communication plan.
  - Develop campaigns with local stakeholders to promote LID/GSI.
  - Maintain consistent messaging across all communication channels (social media, TV, radio, newsletters).
  - Promote emotional, humorous, and positive messaging to engage the public.
  - Normalize LID/GSI practices as standard in Florida, emphasizing their benefits.
- **Training and Capacity Building**
  - Offer LID/GSI training for developers to understand their impact.
  - Provide scholarships to educators and students for LID conferences.
  - Create a checklist for developers to ensure compliance with LID/GSI codes during permitting.
- **Research and Demonstration**
  - Promote the use of green infrastructure evaluation tools, such as UF's audit tool.
  - Conduct demonstration projects to showcase the effectiveness of LID/GSI.
  - Include estimates for ecosystem services and social benefits in cost analyses.
- **Innovative Approaches**
  - Create a "dream team" to advocate for LID/GSI implementation.
  - Utilize new terms and relatable messaging to make LID/GSI concepts more accessible.
  - Engage in creative placemaking with signs and kiosks to educate the public on LID/GSI projects.
- **Reporting and Monitoring**
  - Redirect funds to enforce LID/GSI codes and implement anonymous reporting for infractions.
  - Establish mechanisms for regular and efficient enforcement of LID/GSI codes.
  - Encourage reporting of code infractions and provide tools for HOAs to self-report.

- **Youth and Educational Institutions**
  - Develop lagoon-focused curricula in collaboration with educational institutions.
  - Involve youth in creating and sharing content related to LID/GSI.
- **Tools and Resources**
  - Create central locations for tools, information, and messaging about LID/GSI.
  - Develop a comprehensive checklist and educational materials for maintaining LID/GSI features.

## Consensus Challenge Question: What new technologies and policies are needed to restore balance to the Lagoon?

- **Permitting and Testing**
  - Allocate permitted areas for testing approved technologies.
  - Streamline permitting for pilot projects and upscaling adopted projects with appropriate safeguards.
  - Customize, incentivize, and create parallel permitting for restoration project systems.
- **Funding and Incentives**
  - Advocate against rolling back millage rates by water management districts to ensure more funding for Lagoon restoration.
  - Incentivize developers utilizing LID by implementing differential rates on stormwater tax.
  - Promote improved funding for vetted projects and technologies with oversight and stronger enforcement.
  - Develop better financing options for homeowners to help offset their costs.
  - Create incentives for lagoon-friendly technology adoption.
  - Provide incentives for small companies to bring new technology to the region.
- **Legislative and Policy Changes**
  - Advocate for legislative changes to make Basin Management Action Plans enforceable.
  - Revise policy and regulation language to include enforcement, using "must do" rather than "recommended" language.
  - Enforce existing frameworks and increase support staff with better pay.
  - Promote adaptive management policies specific to the lagoon.
  - Eliminate convoluted and duplicative language in policies.
  - Focus on implementing existing policies effectively instead of creating new ones.
- **Education and Public Engagement**
  - Educate the public to hold governments accountable.
  - Promote SeaGrant Living Shoreline Workbook and Florida Master Naturalist course on shoreline restoration.
  - Educate the public about tools and opportunities available for engagement in policy and permitting processes.
  - Prepare future generations for leadership roles in lagoon management.
  - Promote education programs for homeowners, developers, and municipalities on the economic benefits of LID and GSI.
  - Develop education policies to promote pilot testing programs and technological innovation.

- **Community and Stakeholder Collaboration**
  - Enhance opportunities to promote projects that support community desires and needs.
  - Collaborate with responsible businesses on policy and permitting issues.
  - Create an IRL Political Action Committee (PAC) to address policies and permitting problems.
  - Promote local government-sponsored projects with state and federal cost-sharing.
  - Engage in growth management strategies that are lagoon-wide focused.
- **Technology Validation and Data Sharing**
  - Promote third-party validation and evaluation of technology.
  - Ensure all data is accessible in public repositories like STORET and IWR.
  - Consistently implement a state-wide technology-testing pathway with some flexibility for pilot programs.
  - Share Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide policy development.
- **Enforcement and Accountability**
  - Enforce the IRL Act and existing environmental protection regulations.
  - Move some enforcement responsibilities to local levels.
  - Educate and bolster enforcement options for policies dealing with stormwater and pond maintenance.
  - Maintain consistent technology-testing pathways state-wide.
- **Public Communication and Outreach**
  - Communicate about the importance and necessity of the permitting process.
  - Utilize a marketing company to unify and disseminate information across organizations.
  - Use professional PR/marketing firms to deliver messages effectively.
  - Promote the economic, social, and recreational benefits associated with new technologies.

APPENDIX III

Proposed Organizational Structure
for the
Indian River Lagoon Assembly

Proposed starting point: A not-for-profit, 501(c)4 volunteer-driven organization whose purpose and vision is to educate and unify the voice of the public about the IRL.  This is accomplished by disseminating information through an engaging and reoccurring public, using experiential learning practices[1] to share current scientific knowledge and to educate.

The top of the organization is comprised the Executive Committee (EXCOM).  The EXCOM includes the organization's executive director, directors of Membership, Fundraising, and Communications, plus the Chair of the Conference Committee, and a representative member[2] of member each organization.

The EXCOM has fiscal responsibility for the organization and has oversight of the Indian River Lagoon Assembly, managed by a Conference Committee (CC) and a small operating staff.

The CC captures and disseminates information, educating the public, and with the EXCOM, helps define future topics of special interest.  The staff supports the organization; makes IRL Assembly-produced content available to the public, and supports the special interest group forums.

The IRL Assembly therefore, becomes a (bi) annual conference that is put on by the CC, operating as an all-volunteer organization comprised of Special Interest Groups (SIG) that meet in conference-managed forums, over mailing lists and the web.  Each forum topic is:

- proposed by volunteer public participation
- garners sufficient interest (# of volunteers? >5?) to establish/sustain a forum
    - SIG approved by CC
    - Resource oversight CC/EXCOM approval required
- SIG elects their own forum chair, vice chair, and secretary
    - Elections are held within the Forum
    - The elected facilitators then conduct the forums
    - Forum secretary gathers & submits data to staff for assimilation
- CC oversight maintains IRL Assembly long range Focus
- SIG Forum Chairs comprise the Conference Committee
        Staff supported and volunteer run

In summary, the IRL Assembly is a gathering of scientists, stakeholders and the public to share, interact and collaborate on information pertinent to the IRL.  The Conference Committee which oversees the IRL Assembly, is comprised of the chairs of the Special Interest Groups (SIG) Forum Chairs.  The CC self-nominates and elects its own chair and vice chair. The CC Chair and

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[1] e.g., jigsaw, streaming workshops, working groups, etc.
[2] Define member organizations –  sponsors?? Much to think about here.

Vice Chair have seats on the EXCOM, though only 1 vote.  The CC secretary will be provided by staff.

The IRL Assembly staff oversees the day to day operations of the conference and manages the necessary on-line presence to facilitate the sharing of data, listserv, website, distributed streaming and other technologies as necessary to meet their objectives. The EXCOM provides fiscal oversight and directs resource management.

The bulk of the work product: information, education, dissemination; is accumulated, managed, published and shared through a (bi) annual conference called The IRL Assembly.  The CC prepares and operates the (bi) annual Assembly to share/publish findings of SIG forums, plenary presentations, invited papers, and member organization reports through a series of expert forums, workshops, and working groups.

Some final thoughts…

SIG Forums will need resource support, possibly a shared google drive, weekly zoom meetings, etc. Shared tool-sets and on-line resources help keep operational costs low. (but not free.) The cost of knowledge.

# Florida Estuary Restoration Teams (ERTs) by region with contact information



## Florida's Estuarine Restoration Teams

### Panhandle Estuarine Restoration Team (PERT)
**Contacts**
- Chair: Kim Miller, kim.miller@floridaDEP.gov
- Co-chair: Matt Posner, mjposner@ppbep.org
- East Panhandle Lead: Anita Grove, anita.grove@floridadep.gov
- West Panhandle Lead: Melody Ray-Culp, melody_ray-culp@fws.gov

**Counties**
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Escambia | 4. | Walton | 6. | Gulf |
| 2. | Santa Rosa | 5. | Bay | 7. | Franklin |
| 3. | Okaloosa | | | | |

### Northeast Estuarine Restoration Team (NERT)
**Contacts**
- Chair: Ron Brockmeyer, rbrockmeyer@sjrwmd.com
- North Regional Lead: Katie Conrad, katie_conrad@fws.gov
- South Regional Lead: Annie Roddenberry, annie.roddenberry@myfwc.com

**Counties**
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Nassau | 3. | St. Johns | 5. | Volusia |
| 2. | Duval | 4. | Flagler | 6. | Brevard |

### Big Bend Estuarine Restoration Team (BigBERT)
**Contacts**
- Co-chair: Tiffany Lane, tiffany_lane@fws.gov
- Co-chair: Anna Laws, anna.laws@myfwc.com

**Counties**
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Wakulla | 4. | Dixie | 7. | Hernando |
| 2. | Jefferson | 5. | Levy | 8. | Pasco |
| 3. | Taylor | 6. | Citrus | | |

### East Central Estuarine Restoration Team (ECERT)
**Contacts**
- Chair: Irene Arpayoglou, irene.arpayoglou@floridadep.gov

**Counties**
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Indian River | 3. | Martin |
| 2. | St. Lucie | 4. | Palm Beach |

### Southwest Estuarine Restoration Team (SWERT)
**Contacts**
- Co-chair: Kevin Kalasz, kevin_kalasz@fws.gov
- Co-chair: Mindy Brown, melynda.a.brown@floridadep.gov

**Counties**
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Manatee | 3. | Charlotte | 5. | Collier |
| 2. | Sarasota | 4. | Lee | | |