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First Lady Casey DeSantis Joins DEP, FWC, CCA and Duke Energy for Red Tide Recovery Redfish Release

Naples, Fla. – Today, First Lady Casey DeSantis and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Noah Valenstein joined representatives from Coastal Conservation Association Florida, Duke Energy and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to continue red tide recovery efforts with the shoreline release of more than 2,000 redfish in Collier County.

The release included approximately 2,000 juvenile fish and 30 adult redfish, which were all hatchery-reared and donated from the Duke Mariculture Center in Crystal River. Over 10,000 juvenile and adult redfish were released in February in Pasco, Hillsborough, Pinellas, Sarasota and Manatee counties, and another 6,000 will be released in Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties this month. The organizations joined together to address the loss to the redfish population due to red tide.

“Today’s event was important as the community works to restock the redfish population due to the devastating impact of red tide,” **said First Lady Casey DeSantis.** “With the release of this new life in the water, there is new life in our efforts to protect and restore our environment. I’ve heard from those throughout Florida who understand that our water must be safe for our families, visitors and economy. That’s why the budget the Governor has recommended to the legislature includes an unprecedented \$625 million to support water quality efforts and ensure a clean and abundant supply of water for our future.”

“This is a great day to celebrate not only the release of these 2,000 plus new redfish, but this tremendous showing of partnership,” **said DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein.** “It is opportunities like this for collaboration and innovation that will help us achieve more now for Florida’s environment, continue our recovery from this red tide event and accomplish the water quality improvements set forth in Governor DeSantis’ executive order.”

“This event represents a tremendous conservation effort by Governor and First Lady DeSantis,” **said FWC Executive Director Eric Sutton.** “We are grateful to continue this partnership working towards enhancing the world-class fisheries that support Florida’s ecosystems and economy. We remain unwavering in our support to anglers and other residents who have seen impacts of red tide.”

“Thank you First Lady DeSantis for traveling to Southwest Florida to assist in the red tide recovery efforts,” **said State Representative Bob Rommell.** “Today provided an opportunity for us to continue to work together to replenish the redfish stock and clean our waterways. Clean water is vital for our small businesses, boat captains and fisherman.”

“We’re extremely excited to be leading an effort that will bring positive change to our marine resources, and our partnerships are what allow us to support this fishery, one redfish at a time,” **said CCA Florida Executive Director Brian Gorski.** “Between these releases, encouraging anglers to catch-and-release and promoting conservation, we’re going to see this fishery improve and we’re honored to have the support of our Governor and other statewide offices to help make it happen.”

“Duke Energy is committed to helping protect and preserve Florida’s natural environment,” **said Duke Energy Florida President Catherine Stempien.** “Our Mariculture Center advances environmental stewardship throughout the state by partnering with state and local agencies and universities on restoration projects. The redfish we are donating will have long-term positive environmental impacts in the affected areas and we’re proud to play a small part in the solution to the recent red tide occurrence.”

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