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THE PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO CONSERVING AND PROTECTING FLORIDA'S MARINE RESOURCES

Sea Watch is published three times a year by CCA Florida, a nonprofit state affiliate of the Coastal Conservation Association.

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Editorial/business inquiries and information requests: Mary Hillyer Walther, P.O. Box 568886, Orlando, Florida, 32856-8886 407-854-7002

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CCA Florida, P.O. Box 568886, Orlando, Florida, 32856-8886

407-854-7002 • ccaflorida.org

Managing Editor Mary Hillyer Walther

Creative Director Debbie Dewell Great Minds, Inc.

PrinterDurraprint, Tallahassee

CCA FLORIDA STAFF

Brian Gorski Executive Director

Adam Miller Chief Operating Officer **Trip Aukeman**Director of Advocacy

Frank Gidus
Director of Habitat
& Environmental
Restoration

Mary Hillyer Walther Director of Communications

Denise PerineController

Zack BatleySenior Regional Directo

Mandy Tuckus
Director of Events
& Membership

Will Ramsby Regional Director

Jimmy Michaels Regional Director

John Woodward Regional Director

Kyle King Regional Director

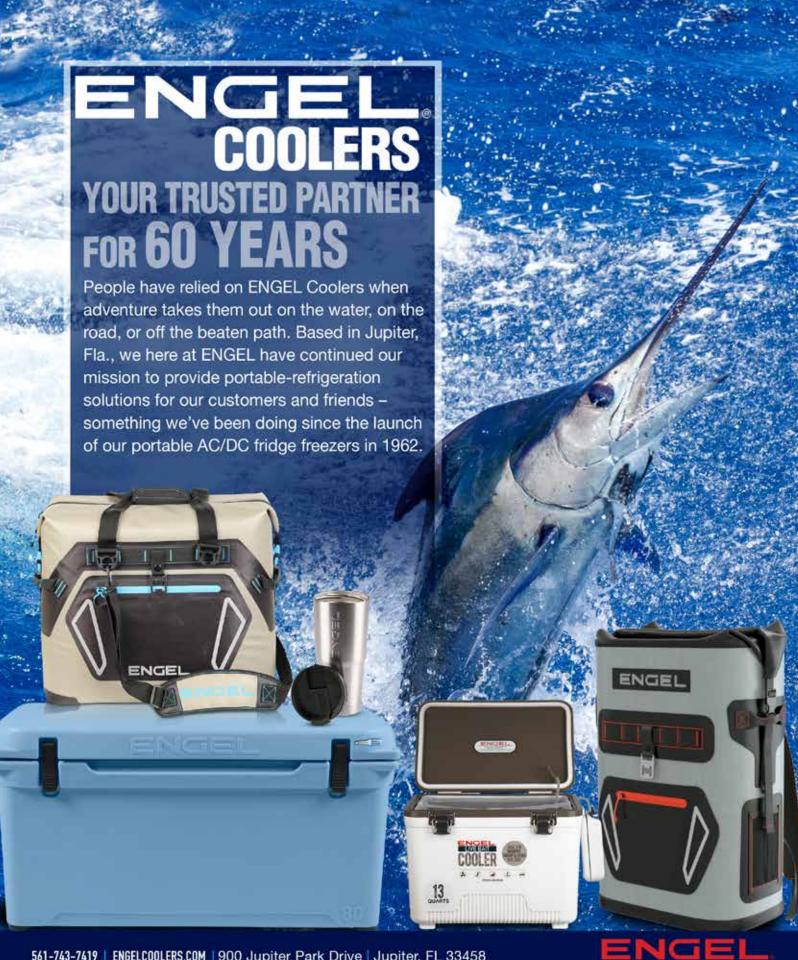
Colton Wadsworth Assistant Regional Director Joey Wadsworth Assistant Regional Director

Logan Kennovin
Assistant Director of
Habitat and Environmental
Restoration

Maria Arguello Logistics, Procurement and Inventory Manager

Leiza Fitzgerald STAR Director

Andrea Gillispie Assistant STAR Director



CONTRIBUTED \$12 MILLION



SINCE 2010, CCA FLORIDA, CCA'S
BUILDING CONSERVATION TRUST AND
ITS PARTNERS HAVE CONTRIBUTED \$12
MILLION TO REBUILD FLORIDA'S MARINE
HABITAT

200 TONS OF OYSTERS



WERE SAVED FROM WASTE BY CCA FLORIDA IN THE LAST THREE YEARS. THUS FAR, 156 OF THE 200 TONS HAVE BEEN RECYCLED AND REDEPLOYED TO CREATE ARTIFICIAL REEFS



MORE THAN 19,000 MEMBERS ACROSS FLORIDA'S 67 COUNTIES

ADVOCATED GAMEFISH STATUS FOR REDFISH

ADVOCATES AND CREATES
AWARENESS
FOR IMPROVING
STATEWIDE
WATER QUALITY

WORKED
WITH FWC TO
ENSURE MAXIMUM
ANGLER ACCESS
FOR RED SNAPPER

PROTECTING FLORIDA'S MARINE RESOURCES AND ANGLERS' ACCESS FOR NEARLY

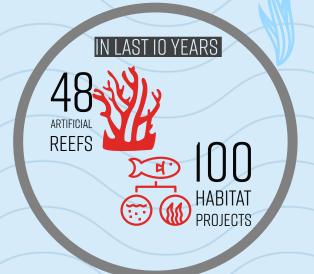
40 YEARS

INITIATED NET BAN CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

HELPED CONGRESS
INTRODUCE DESCENDING
DEVICE BILL AND
FORAGE FISH
CONSERVATION ACT

HELPED BAN LONGLINES
FOR BILLFISH
AND PELAGIC SPECIES





5,000 SNOOK
RESTOCKED AND RELEASED

560,000 REDFISH
RESTOCKED AND RELEASED

290,000 SEA TROUT
RESTOCKED AND RELEASED





\$25 FROM EACH TAG GOES DIRECTLY TO CCA FLORIDA'S STATEWIDE WATER QUALITY, HABITAT AND RESTOCKING INITIATIVES CCA FLORIDA WORKED
WITH THE FLORIDA
LEGISLATURE
TO CREATE THE
CONSERVE FLORIDA'S
FISHERIES FLORIDA
LICENSE PLATE







June 4, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick Secretary U.S. Department of Commerce 1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230



Secretary Lutnick,

We write today to jointly request state management of red snapper and other reef fishes in the South Atlantic. Federal management is driven by flawed data and regulations that threaten the economies of our coastal communities. Our states are committed to helping our recreational fishing communities, while also conserving our fisheries resources for future generations. The first step to correcting course on federal mismanagement is to stop the harmful impacts of Amendment 59 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

As Governors of coastal states, we are fortunate to boast over 8,500 miles of shoreline along our combined Atlantic coastlines. This geographic position supports each of our state's economic competitiveness and quality of life, and that includes abundant natural resources within the South Atlantic Fishery. Unfortunately, decades of inaction by career bureaucrats within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), combined with actions in the waning hours of the Biden Administration to cut-off public access to the fishery, have hampered access for our recreational angling communities from exercising their God-given right to fish and support their local economies and way of life.

We are thankful to you and President Trump for your willingness to empower states to assume management of their own natural resources, including red snapper, in the South Atlantic. Look no further than to Florida's own success in proving just how effective state management is. Since assuming management in the Gulf of America, Florida's recreational Red Snapper season has increased from just 3 to 127 days.

For too long, management of Atlantic red snapper has failed to keep track with the successful growth of the stock. Although fishermen have seen explosive growth in the number ofred snapper, harvest opportunities have dwindled, and NOAA Fisheries has threatened to prohibit all snappergrouper fishing along a portion of our coastline as part of Amendment 59.

The current situation in the South Atlantic is clear: I) there is an unprecedented abundance of red snapper; 2) red snapper is no longer overfished or undergoing overfishing, and 3) a large quota increase is warranted. While prior leadership at the Department has struggled with accepting these facts, our states are equipped to effectively manage the stock to balance public access to the resource while maintaining a healthy stock for the long-term health of our fishery.

This presents an extraordinary opportunity to make state management in the Atlantic a resounding success, much like in the Gulf of America, where southern states have proven that utilizing stateled management, sound data, and prudent decision making have allowed the fishery to thrive.

To that end, please consider this letter as a joint formal request on behalf of our angling communities for a new Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to jumpstart state management of red snapper and other reef fishes in the South Atlantic as soon as possible. In Florida, this could be implemented within the year, with both Georgia and South Carolina to follow. This would mirror the method used by Gulf states in assuming management of red snapper in the Gulf of America.

Empowering our states to manage our own resources will negate the harmful impacts sought through Amendment 59 and allow our recreational anglers to access the fishery using sound science and proven techniques.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting Americans' rights on the water. We welcome and look forward to your partnership in advancing state management forward for the benefit of anglers, our economy, and way of life.

Sincerely,

Governor Ron DeSantis State of Florida Governor Brian Kemp State of Georgia

Governor Henry Dargan McMaster State of South Carolina

ph OF

Bith













- Show your support for Florida's fisheries, coastal habitats and marine resources on the road with a "Conserve Florida's Fisheries" specialty license plate!
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- Funds from the sale of this license plate support protecting and enhancing saltwater marine resources, expanding habitat restoration efforts and promoting coastal environmental education

For additional information, please visit REDFISHTag.com







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Christopher Columbus High School Launches New CCA Florida Miami Dade Youth Chapter

Christopher Columbus High School in Miami has taken a major step in marine conservation and youth engagement by launching its new Coastal Conservation Association Florida Miami-Dade Youth Chapter, the fourth high school of its kind supported by CCA Florida. This new Chapter carries forward the Coastal Conservation Association's mission of education, stewardship, and habitat advocacy in a fresh, student-led format. Coastal Conservation Association Florida, founded in 1985, is a non-profit dedicated to conserving Florida's marine and coastal resources, advocating for habitat restoration and water quality improvements, and engaging anglers and the public in fishery management and conservation.

The driving force behind the new Chapter comes from students already active in Christopher Columbus High's Anglers Club and Spearfishing Club, with guidance from faculty coach Michael Dukes. The club's elected board of six members, Hunter Connell, Andres Anez, William Wilkening, Aiden Martinez, Jesus Pertierra, and Carlos Cosio met with CCA Dade committee members Oli Larrauri and Raymond Anderez, and as a group, put pen to paper on this new endeavor. Carlos notes, "My Grandpa introduced me to fishing at the age of four, often doing trips down to the Florida Keys. It gets me out in nature, meeting new people, and I can't wait to do work with CCA FL." The Youth Chapter and angling club are committed to advancing both conservation work and sporting opportunities under the CCA umbrella.

Since the Columbus Angling Clubs forming in 2014, the students have taken concrete action. They have conducted trash cleanups in Biscayne Bay and around Virginia Key, removing marine debris and practicing the kind of conservation stewardship CCA actively promotes. They have organized bass and saltwater fishing tournaments open to the entire student body, partnered with the International Game Fish Association (IGFA), and led boating safety courses for

their peers. Beyond local waters, the group has traveled together to Guatemala and Louisiana on fishing excursions, learning outdoorsmanship, conservation practices, and fishery stewardship in diverse ecosystems.

The Miami-Dade Youth Chapter is more than just a fishing or outdoors group. It is a hands-on conservation organization that helps instill in its members an appreciation for healthy fisheries, marine habitats, and responsible angling, echoing CCA Florida's statewide efforts from habitat restoration and oyster reef projects to redfish restocking and trash cleanups. CCA Florida has long emphasized the importance of removing marine debris, advocating for clean water, and expanding youth engagement as cornerstones of sustainable coastal fisheries.

Coach Michael Dukes, the faculty sponsor of the club, has emphasized how important it is to train young anglers not only in fishing skills but also in conservation ethics, proper fish handling, and marine habitat protection. These values align closely with CCA Florida's work. As the club and Chapter continues to grow, it plans to expand its conservation education efforts, participate in more statewide CCA Florida initiatives, and host additional club events ranging from habitat restoration days to youth fishing clinics.

The launch of the Chapter reinforces how youth and school-based leadership can be vital partners in marine conservation. By combining field experience, stewardship projects, and competitions, the students are building a model for how young anglers can become active conservation advocates and future leaders in preserving Florida's coastal ecosystems.

As this Chapter develops, CCA Florida looks forward to supporting the students with mentorship, habitat projects, and access to statewide events, continuing our shared mission of conserving Florida's marine resources for future generations.





Living Shoreline Oyster Reef

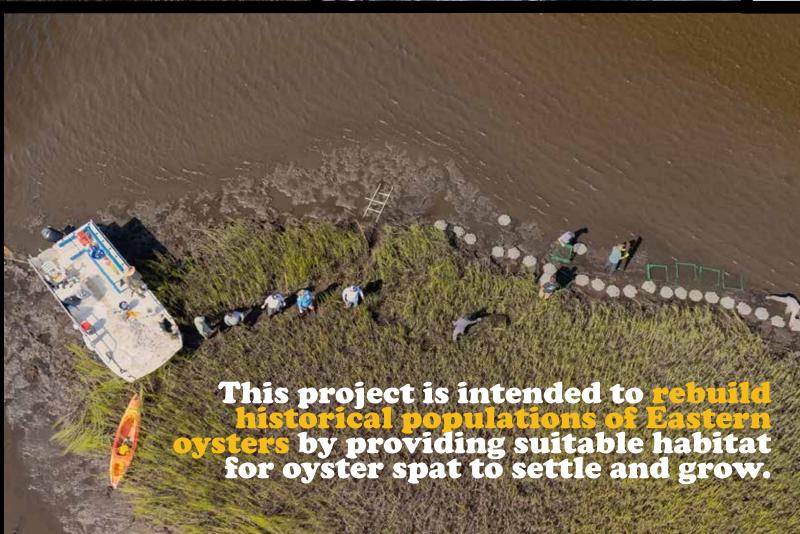
CCA Florida partnered with the UNF Coastal and Marine Biology program and the Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS® to develop a "Living Shoreline - Oyster Reef" project in northeast Florida.

Twenty-five cementbased substrates known as Pervious Oyster Shell Habitat (POSH) units were deployed by a dozen CCA Florida and **NEFAR** volunteers at a site where historic oyster beds once occurred within the UNF's 1,050acre property in the **Atlantic Intracoastal** Waterway, the William C. Webb Coastal Research Station. CCA Florida contributed \$10,000 to the project for supplies, labor, construction, and monthly monitoring of the POSH units.













The project involved the placement of twenty-five (25) Florida Limestone Artificial Reefs (FLARS), manufactured by Walter Marine, in state waters at coordinates 30° 21.729'N, 86° 37.753'W, at a depth of 66 feet. The reef site is located approximately 6.2 nautical miles from Destin's East Pass and roughly 2 nautical miles offshore.



\$10,000 toward the initiative, joining a strong coalition of community members and partners who came together in support of this important reef project.



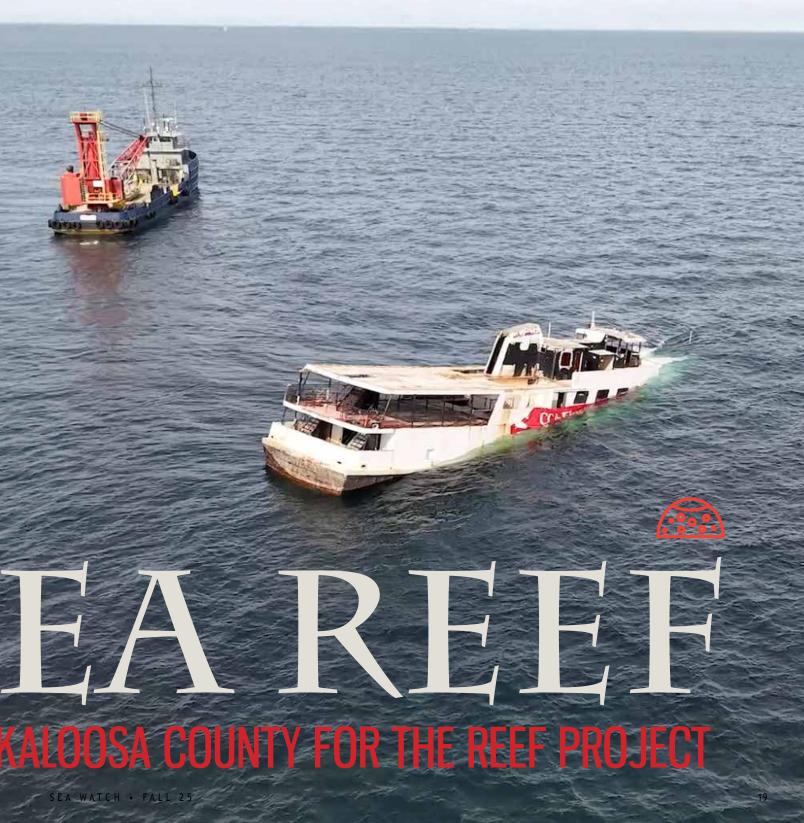


CCA FLORIDA AND OKALOOSA COUNTY DEPLOYED A 144 FOOT LONG BY 37-FOOT-TALL VESSEL TO CREATE THE ALEX AND ANNA JERNIGAN FANTASEA REEF!

FANTAS

CCA FLORIDA CONTRIBUTED \$65,000 TO 0

THE REEF HONORS THE LIFELONG WORK ALEX AND ANNA JERNIGAN PUT INTO FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION THROUGH CCA FLORIDA. THE REEF WAS DEPLOYED APPROXIMATELY 8 NAUTICAL MILES (NM) SOUTH OF DESTIN IN 86 FEET OF WATER.







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In July, 50,000, hatchery-reared juvenile spotted seatrout (averaging three to five inches) from the CCA Florida and Duke Energy Mariculture Center were released at Ozello Community Park in Citrus County. In total, the CCA Florida restocking team has released 290,000 spotted seatrout along Florida's West Coast. It was an awesome day celebrating the freedom to fish!



In August, the CCA Florida Habitat Team traveled to Crystal River to host a vertical oyster garden (VOG) workshop with staff from Duke Energy. This event was in honor of Patty West, the Director of Environmental Field Support for Duke Energy Florida. Patty is set to retire in September, concluding a respected, long-tenured career as an environmental leader for countless individuals within Duke Energy.

(continued on page 24)



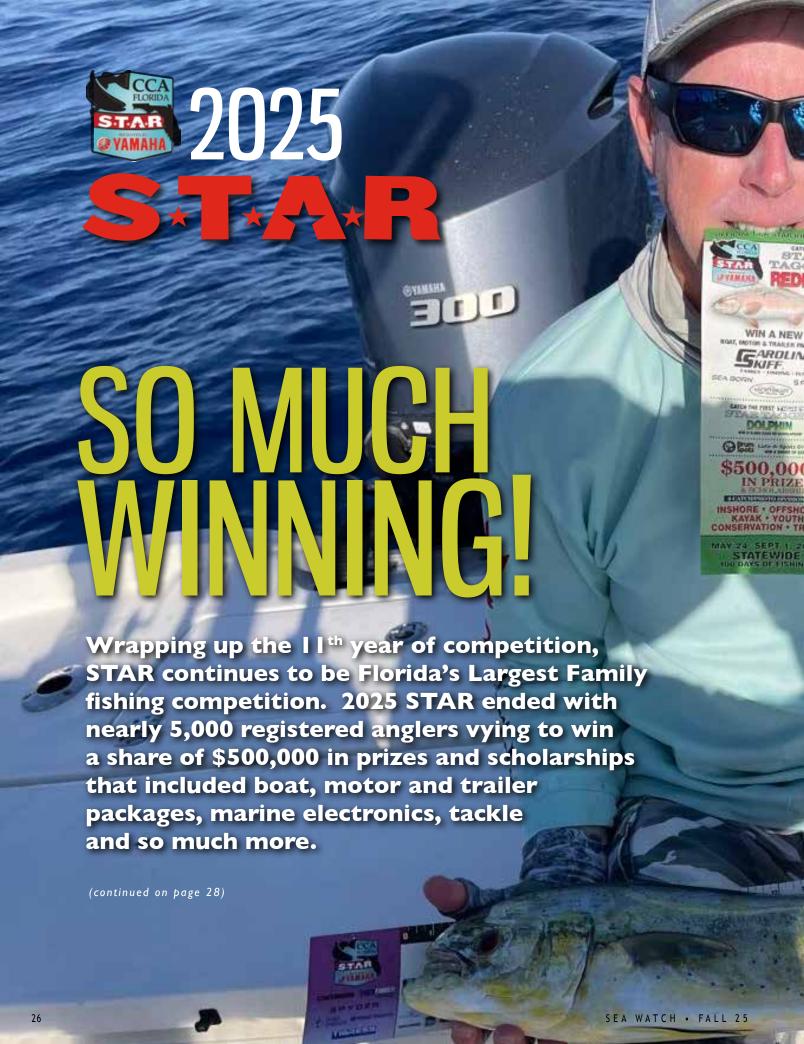




Patty has always been a staunch supporter and advocate of the CCA/Duke Energy Mariculture Center, which has played a key role in CCA Florida's restoration efforts.

During the event, more than 30 Duke Energy staff members joined to assemble vertical oyster gardens and celebrate Patty's impactful career. The Duke Energy team assembled over 100 VOGs that will be deployed throughout Crystal River to monitor oyster spat recruitment and help improve water quality. All of the oyster shells used to create these VOGs were recycled locally by Seafood Seller and Café and cured at the CCA Florida Duke Energy Oyster Recycling Facility.







S*T*A*R STAR

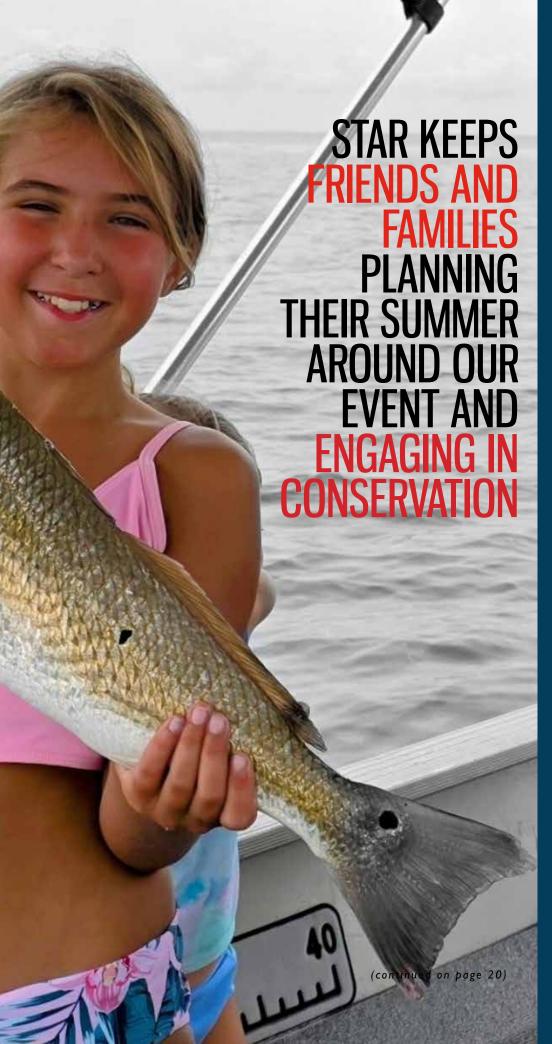
The definition of a winner is to obtain a victory in a contest; to succeed in coming in first in a contest usually by one's own efforts, well in the CCA Florida STAR competition presented by Yamaha the efforts were being a CCA member, registering for the competition and having fun catching fish or picking up buckets of trash then submitting those catches or buckets in the STAR app. Most of the STAR winners were determined by a random drawing of the catch entries giving anglers of all skill levels the opportunity to win.

The Custom Gheenoe Inshore Division presented by Minn Kota trolling motors was one of the most popular divisions and awards 12 winners terrific prizes with the first and second place winners taking home a new Custom Gheenoe, Yamaha and Minn Kota trolling motor. The Engel Cooler Open Offshore Division presented by AFTCO had 12 winners taking home amazing prizes and the first and second place winners taking home a new Yamaha motor. The Native Watercraft Kayak Division presented by Humminbird experienced the greatest growth in entries for this year and the first-place winner takes home a new Native Watercraft Slayer Max 10. The additional divisions were the Power Pole Conservation Division presented by Bull Bay Rods with 3 winners and the Costa Kick Plastic Trash Division presented by Papa's Pilar with a staggering total of nearly 1,000 five-gallon buckets full of trash removed from our coastal waters. The newest division the Drumspots Lots-A-Spots Divisions offered the most fun for anglers by submitting photos of redfish with the most spots. Six winners will take home nearly \$25,000 in prizes. This division was a huge hit with the anglers.

The highlight of the competition will be awarding

(continued on page 30)





Yamaha

Carolina Skiff

Sea Born

Spyder

Micro Draft Skiff

Duke Energy

Realtree Fishing

Tigress Outriggers & Gear

Humminbird

Minn Kota

Guy Harvey Foundation

West Marine

Power Pole

Engel Coolers

Bull Bay Tackle

Drum Spots

Custom Gheenoe

T H Marine

Infinity Trailers

Discover Crystal River

Punta Gorda Englewood Beach Visitors and Convention Bureau

Florida Sports Coast

Academy Sports + Outdoors

Costa

Cannon

Papa's Pilar

SHAR SHAR

Digital Sportsman

Florida Cracker Ladies Tournament

> Gulf States Automation

Millers Marine

Sodium Fishing Gear

Ross Curington Art

Florida Sportfishing Association

Abyss Battery

Native Water Craft

Ashton Howard
Fine Art

Power Tech Propellers

Florida Fishing Products

AFTCO

King Sailfish Mounts

Deck Gear

STAR Brite

Mud Hole Rod Building & Tackle Crafting

Elemental Methods

iAngler Tournament App

Road King

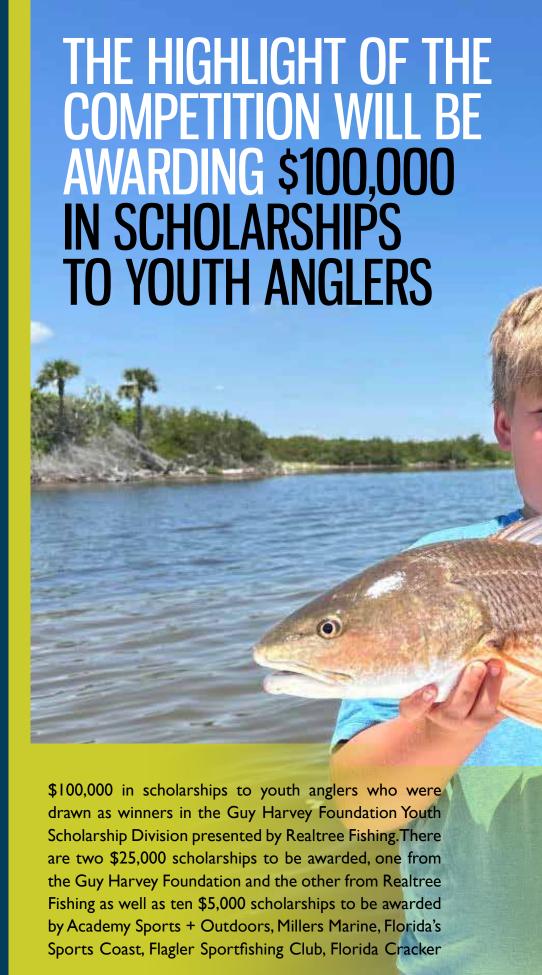
Nextfish

Paddletails Waterfront Lodge

RCI Optics

Toadfish

Reliable Fishing Bags





Ladies Tournament, Florida Sportfishing Association, Digital Sportsman, Sodium Fishing Gear, Suncoast Classic Events and Coastal Conservation Association.

The signature division the T H Marine Tagged Redfish Division, had 13 unregistered anglers recapturing a prize winning fish and missing the opportunity to win new boat, motor and trailer

packages from Carolina Skiff, Sea Born, Spyder and Micro Draft Skiff all powered by Yamaha. The sale of the unclaimed donated boats will help to underwrite the Youth Scholarship fund which as stated earlier is over \$1.1 million dollars in Youth Scholarships.

The state's leading organization dedicated to

(continued on page 32)

Kahuna Wagons Bajio Sunglasses

Rod Runner

Sea Sucker

Florida Insider Fishing Report

> Reel Animals Television

Guidelines TV

Blair Wiggins Outdoors

Florida Sportsman Radio

Beyond the Surface

Bay Flats Lodge

No Live Bait Needed

Ocean Tamer Bean Bags

Relentless Knives

Z-Man

Anisa Stewart Jewelry

Talon

Fish Bites

Thrash Can Bucket topper habitat restoration projects, water quality initiatives and fisheries advocacy has for the eleventh year produced a great competition which since its launch in 2015 will have awarded over \$4 million in donated prizes with \$1.1 million of that being Youth scholarships to anglers from Florida and other states in our catch-and-photo event.

STAR continues to be an effective tool for CCA to bring awareness to our organization by creating conservation partnerships with our sponsors and to encourage anglers to implement conservation practices all while enjoying a really cool fishing competition.

CCA Florida STAR is not only a fun fishing competition where any fish or bucket of trash can win the angler a prize but it gives everyone a chance to do their part for conservation while enjoying time on the water. Please take the time to patronize the many partners and sponsors of STAR as we would not be able to offer such a wonderful event without their support.







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PROTECTION & PERFORMANCE



A GREAT REASON TO FISH AND WIN BIG! REGISTRATION TODAY FOR THE 2026 CCA FLORIDA STAR COMPETITION PRESENTED BY YAMAHA

2026 STAR begins May 24. Get registered today and if you recapture any year's STAR tagged redfish you will win a \$1,000 gift card from Engel Coolers.

To win, just snap a picture of the tagged redfish with the tag still in the fish, submit your photo via our FaceBook page, report to the phone number on the tag and be a current member and registered for 2026 STAR before you catch the fish for the win.

Start planning your fishing trips now to Citrus County (www.discovercrystal river.com) or Charlotte County, Englewood/ Punta Gorda (www.pureflorida.com) they are all our destination counties and have more tagged redfish than any other counties.

STAR is Florida's largest family-friendly fishing competition giving anglers of all ages endless summer-long fun!

For more information on STAR, please visit www.CCAFLSTAR.com





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POMPANO BEAC JAMES DEMARC HOME TOP \$3,00 SCHOLARSHIP PI



H'S OTAKES OO RIZE





In its fourth consecutive year fostering environmental leadership through Florida high school students, the CCA Florida Fred Crabill Youth Scholarship Program presented by the Mud Hole Custom Tackle Education Program announced the 2025 scholarship winners at the Awards Banquet on Thursday, June 19. Participating students, parents, and officials from CCA Florida and Mud Hole Custom Tackle enjoyed a catered dinner, video recap of the week's activities, and the announcement of this year's winners. First place was awarded to James Demarco of Pompano Beach, who takes home a \$3,000 scholarship. Kendall Kreuscher of Lake Worth earned the \$2,000 second place prize, and the \$1,000 third place award went to Homestead's Candela Valerio.

"In our fourth year supporting CCA Florida's scholarship efforts, we continue to be impressed by the quality of students competing in this program," said Anthony Youmans, Mud Hole Custom Tackle Education Program Director. "Reaching kids, adding value to their education experience, and helping to develop the future conservation leaders in our communities is in perfect alignment with our Education Program goals and is also extremely rewarding for me and the whole Mud Hole organization."

Mud Hole's \$6,000 financial contribution is supported through the Matt McGuffee College Scholarship Initiative, honoring the beloved former employee who passed away at age 28 in 2022. In addition, the Mud Hole team hosts the program's kick off and Awards Banquet and documents the week of activities for the students with the Mud Hole videography team capturing the experience throughout the week. The 10 competing students came from schools across the state,





from Miami to Orange Park. This year's efforts had the competitors traveling coast-to-coast, from the CCA Florida Duke Energy Mariculture Center in Crystal River to Bajio Sunglasses in New Smyrna Beach, learning how these companies help preserve our environment as a key component of their business strategies. The students were also able to build a custom fishing rod at Mud Hole and fish for barramundi at Osceola Outback Adventures. Throughout the week of activities, students were graded on their attention, focus, creativity, presentation, and overall engagement in the learning experiences.

"This year's competitors were extremely professional and thoughtful about how they can support the preservation of our natural resources" CCA Florida

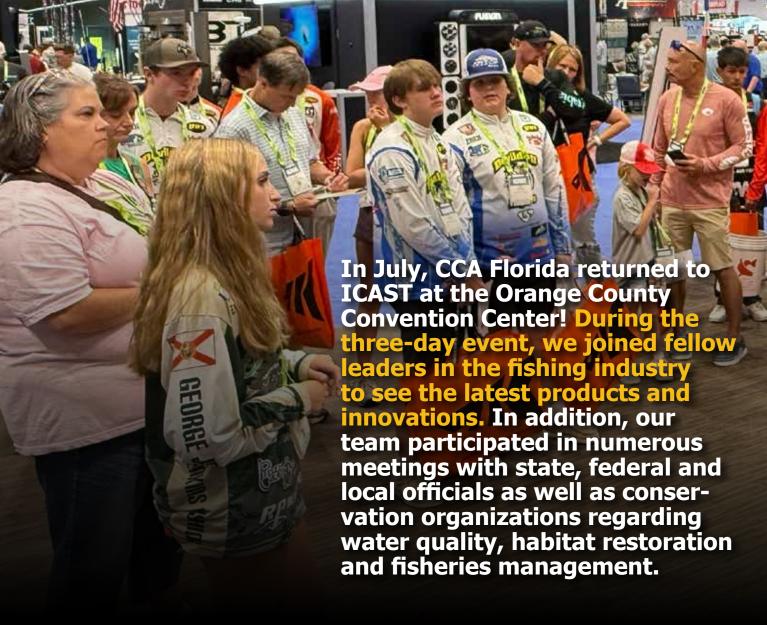
Regional Director, Jimmy Michaels stated. "CCA Florida is honored to bring this scholarship opportunity to the students each year, and we really appreciate the partnership with Anthony and the Mud Hole Education program. Together, we are making a difference for the students and for the environment."

For the third consecutive year, the ten 2025 program participants have the opportunity to earn the \$5,000 Grand Scholarship by returning to their high schools to create conservation-focused programs that positively impact their communities. To learn more about the CCA Florida Fred Crabill Youth Scholarship Program presented by the Mud Hole Custom Tackle Education Program, visit https://ccaflorida.org/event/ysp/.



CCA Florida ICAST 2025 ir

GARMIN





















HABITAT PROJECTS





Since 2010, CCA Florida in collaboration with the **Building Conservation Trust and our partners, have** contributed over \$12 million in habitat projects statewide. Join us in these efforts!



Artificial Reefs



Coastal Cleanups



Research/Monitoring



Clam Restoration



Oyster Restoration



Mangrove Restoration



Seagrass Restoration



Living **Shorelines**



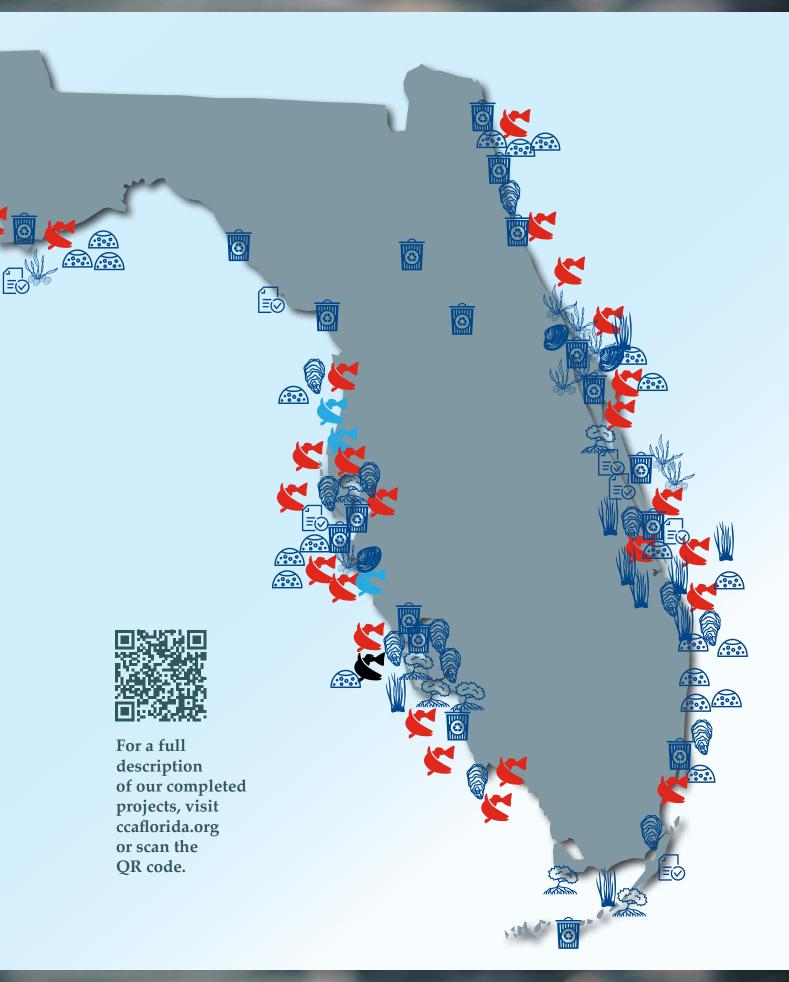
Redfish Stock Enhancement Locations - 490,000 (3"- 30")



 Snook Stock Enhancement Locations - 5,150 (4"- 6")



Spotted Seatrout Stock Enhancement Locations -150,000 (4"-6")











Since 2010, CCA Florida in collaboration with the Building Conservation Trust and our partners, have contributed over \$12 million in habitat projects statewide. Join us in these efforts!



Artificial Reefs



Coastal Cleanups



Research/Monitoring



Clam Restoration



Oyster Restoration



Mangrove Restoration



Seagrass Restoration



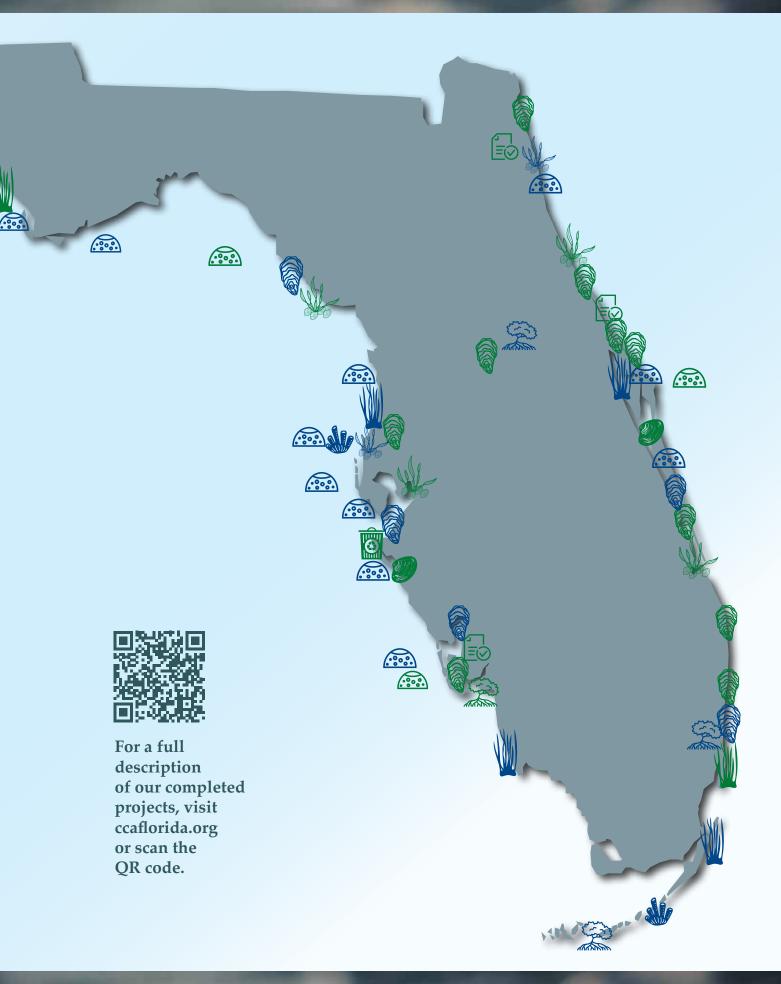
Living Shorelines

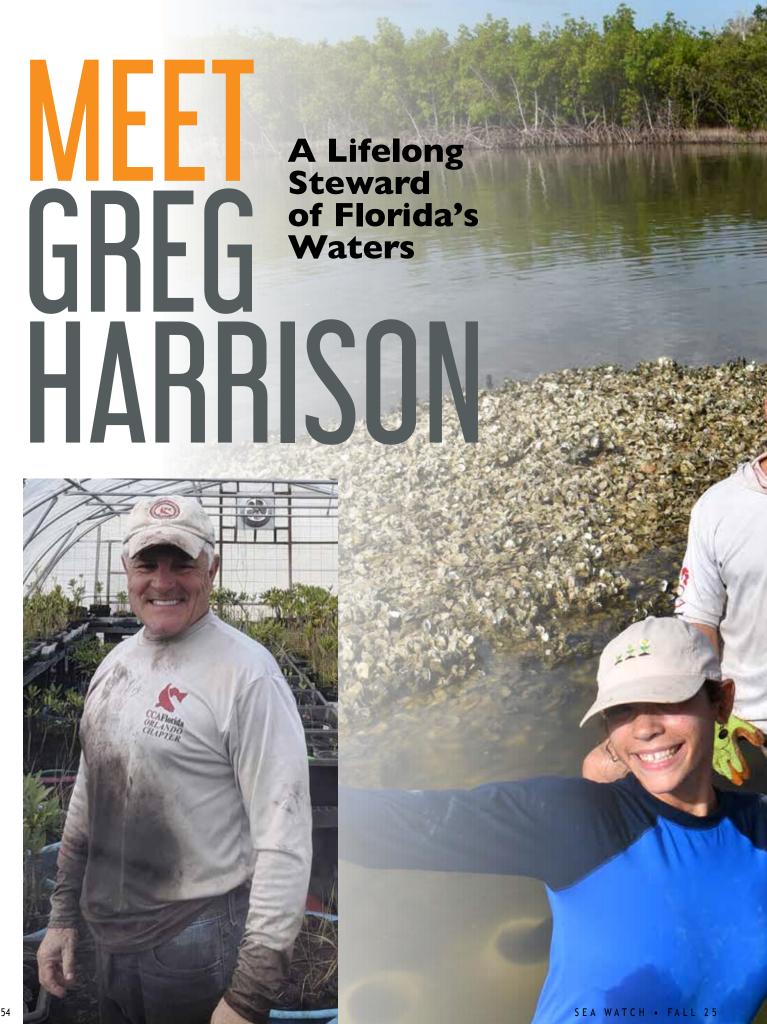


Coral/Sponge Restoration











Some people spend their lives near the water; others dedicate their lives to protecting it. Greg Harrison is one of the rare few who has done both. From his early days exploring Kentucky creeks to his years as a U.S. Navy diver and later as a leader in Florida's conservation community, Greg's story is one of service, resilience, and unwavering devotion to the environment. What began as a childhood love of fishing has grown into a lifelong mission to restore and protect Florida's coastal ecosystems. Along the way, he has inspired countless volunteers,

built bridges between science and community, and proven that one individual's passion can spark extraordinary change.

FROM NAVY DIVER TO HABITAT HERO

Greg Harrison grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where his love for water began early. "I was always in the water, from a huge lake to a muddy ditch," he recalls. That deep connection only grew stronger as he joined the U.S. Navy, serving as a diver and electronics technician on a submarine. After

his military service, Greg brought his skills to the Kennedy Space Center, where he worked as both an electronics technician and a diver on the space shuttle rocket-booster retrieval ship. However, it wasn't just high-tech missions and deep-sea diving that defined Greg's career. His roots in fishing, inspired by his father and grandfathers, always kept him tied to the natural world. "I grew up fishing," Greg says, "My dad was a hardcore bass fisherman, and both of my grandfathers fished."



HOOKED ON CONSERVATION

Greg's transition into marine conservation came naturally. When he learned about CCA Florida, and their success in removing destructive gill nets from local waters, he knew he had found his next mission. "With my desire to volunteer and restore native habitat, I knew CCA Florida was a perfect fit for me," he says. After attending his first CCA Orlando Chapter meeting, Greg found himself among like-minded individuals passionate about protecting Florida's

coastal ecosystems. "I was hooked," he adds with a grin. In 2011, Greg became a Life Member of CCA Florida.

RESTORING LIFE TO MOSQUITO LAGOON AND BEYOND

One of Greg's most impactful contributions has been his leadership in oyster reef restoration by partnering with the University of Central Florida (UCF) and Dr. Linda Walters, UCF's Pegasus Professor of Biology. "I have worked directly with Greg since 2007 on oyster reef restoration, living shoreline stabilization, and seagrass restoration projects along the east coast of Florida with a focus on Mosquito Lagoon (northern Indian River Lagoon)," said Walters.

Inspired by an article he read in a magazine, Greg saw the opportunity for CCA Florida to partner with scientific institutions to make a real difference. Greg's involvement in oyster reef restoration began back in 2007, when he hosted one of the very first oyster mat-building events, right in his own backyard. What started as a gathering of vol-



unteers at a stranger's house quickly turned into a lasting impression of Greg's generosity and leadership. He's continued to spearhead community involvement in building oyster mats, used to reconstruct degraded reefs. These reefs not only provide habitat for marine life but also improve water quality, contributing to the return of seagrass, a foundational species in the lagoon's ecosystem. "As a matter of fact, early on, seagrass was found to be reestablishing next to restored oyster reefs after the first year," Greg proudly notes. By 2011, he had become a crucial on-the-water asset, supporting restoration teams with boat logistics and equipment, stepping in countless times to keep projects afloat—literally and figuratively. Thanks to efforts like this, the Mosquito Lagoon has seen the restoration of over 20 million oysters, a number Greg describes as "conservative." The success of this project is due in large part to the collaboration between CCA Florida and a range of partners including the University of Central Florida, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Marine Discovery Center, Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program, Brevard Zoo, and many others.

According to Walters, Greg is always wonderful on the day of a restoration event - first, he regularly provides much-needed boat support. And this isn't just any type of boat support - Greg's boat is an old "beater" so there is no need to worry about scratching it or getting it dirty. He somehow thinks that his pontoon boat is "magic" and can hold an infinite number of people and supplies. Beyond that on event days, Greg helps welcome people and make sure





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CONSERVATION WORLDWIDE

W W W . F L I N T A N D F L A M E U S A . C O M + 1 8 5 5 7 1 S H A R P (7 4 2 7 7)

they know what the plan is for that day, he gives everyone a CCA hat to help protect them from the sun (and make them feel special), he helps problem solve (and there are always problems to solve), and most important, he brings with him enthusiasm and energy to make even the most laborintensive projects fun! This is important as loading supplies generally starts at 6:30 AM when the mosquitos and no-see'ums are converging on everyone in the summer. Greg is always willing to dig in the mud or make runs back to the staging area to get more restoration supplies. Moreover, Greg also shows up with food on occasion that has ranged from fresh mangos from his garden to rotisserie chickens."I know my students remark on how much they appreciate both for years afterward. They may not remember what reef we were restoring that day, but the gift of chicken after 5-6 hours of

hand-leveling an area with a rake or shovel lives on," joked Walters.

UCF has restored 114 reefs in Mosquito Lagoon waters and they encourage the volunteers on the event day to suggest reef names. Greg has helped name more reefs than anyone else. These include CCA Reef, Donna Sue Reef (named after his mother), Mango Reef and Watermelon Reef. The two fruit reefs were the result of foraging frenzies with Greg feeding everyone like little birds with him on the boat and them in the water during short breaks from digging or deploying restoration materials. "One last topic for restoration days is that Greg takes the opportunity to train my UCF students in basic boat skills. No one leaves his boat without knowing how to throw lines or tie a bowline knot," Walters said.

(continued on page 62)





Annie Roddenberry with FWC's Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration division added, "Greg's dedication to conservation has accelerated our habitat restoration work in Mosquito Lagoon, Volusia County. He shows up season after season with a reliable boat, camaraderie, and a desire to make a difference. Greg not only has helped rebuild damaged oyster reefs, stabilize eroding shorelines, test new restoration materials, and plant seagrass, but he encourages students and young scientists along the way. Greg always takes time to help teach boating skills and stewardship while on the water, and everyone leaves with swag and an appreciation for CCA's proactive efforts toward habitat conservation. Greg's tireless actions are having a positive impact on the Lagoon, as well as the people around him. He's a true example of a conservation hero!" Roddenberry said.

BEYOND THE LAGOON

Greg's help extends beyond restoration event days. One of UCF's research goals is to improve community-based coastal restoration by testing novel non-plastic materials as well as understanding how biodiversity beyond target species is impacted by these efforts. Greg has advocated for UCF for CCA Florida funding to obtain materials, written support letters, and recruited volunteers for restoration materials production days and mangrove gardening days. On days when UCF is making materials, Greg's presence always makes the day better. He is a motivator, a friend, and understands the importance of both making sure each person feels valued and ensuring that they maximize their time to produce as many restoration units as possible.

Greg's conservation efforts extend far beyond oyster reefs. He has been actively involved with the Space Coast Artificial Reef Program, representing CCA Florida in enhancing offshore habitat. While living in Titusville, he volunteered with Keep Brevard Beautiful, organizing cleanups and even dressing up as their beloved mascot, Pelly-can, to educate children at schools and community events. He also extensively contributes to mangrove restoration, helping to pot over 1,000 mangrove propagules for the Marine Resources Council and replanting red mangroves with UCF, further bolstering shoreline resilience and water quality in the region.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Greg sees the future of CCA Florida and the Orlando Chapter in particular, as increasingly science-driven. "One of the great things that CCA does is follow the science," he says. "This gives us the opportunity to benefit from the research of the previous year to improve habitat restoration every year." His pride in the organization's fast pace is evident: "Whenever I give someone a list of what CCA Florida has done or is doing, I tell them by the time this list is printed, it's already out of date."

A DECORATED CONSERVATIONIST

Dr. Linda Walters once stated, "Very few people are as doggedly determined and committed to habitat restoration as Greg is." As a result, Greg's work has not gone unnoticed. He has received several prestigious awards, including:

- CCA Florida Volunteer of the Year
- Coastal Conservation Association Conservationist of the Year
- Field & Stream Magazine Hero of Conservation
- Marine Resources Council Volunteer of the Year

A LEGACY OF ACTION

Greg Harrison embodies the spirit of hands-on conservation. Whether it's collecting mangrove propagules or building oyster reefs, he's always making a difference where it counts. "For more than a decade, Greg has been a driving force behind habitat restoration at CCA Florida. What makes his contribution so special is not just the number of hours he's put in, but the heart he brings to every project. Week after week, and often on weekends too, Greg volunteers his time to help restore and protect our natural resources. He even uses his own boat to transport hundreds of fellow volunteers to restoration sites, ensuring that others can join in the effort. His passion for conservation is evident in everything he does, and he truly embodies the idea that actions speak louder than words. Greg's commitment continues to inspire those around him and serves as a reminder of the impact one dedicated person can make," CCA Executive Director Brian Gorski said. His story serves as a reminder that dedicated individuals can help restore ecosystems, inspire communities, and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.





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Seafood and Chorizo Paella

PAELLA:

4 ½ c chicken stock

- $^{1\!/_{2}}$ tsp saffron threads
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- ½ red bell pepper, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 oz chorizo sausage, either ground or links sliced into thin half-moons
- 3 c Jasmine or short-grain rice
- 1 14 oz can fire-roasted diced tomatoes, not drained
- 1 c frozen green peas
- 1 lb large shrimp, peeled, deveined
- 1 lb mussels, rinsed, scrubbed
- 1 lb clams, rinsed, scrubbed

GARNISH:

1 c fresh parsley, chopped Lemon wedges On your stovetop, bring the chicken stock to a boil. Stir in the saffron and turn off the heat. Let the saffron steep for at least 15 minutes while you prep the other ingredients. Season with salt if needed.

In a 12 or 14-inch cast iron pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, bell pepper and chorizo and cook for about 7 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the garlic and sauté another 3 minutes.

Pour in the rice and fry, stirring often, for about 5 minutes, until the rice is coated with oil and combined.

Slowly pour in the stock, tomatoes and peas and lightly stir to combine.

Make sure the rice is evenly distributed over the bottom of the pan. Cover the pan and simmer the rice without stirring for 15 minutes, or until the rice absorbs most of the stock. If your pan does not have a lid, seal with foil.

Burrow the mussels and clams down into the rice with the hinge sides up so they release their juices into the rice. Then place the shrimp on top of the rice, arranged evenly around the shellfish.

Cover the pan again and cook for 5 to 10 minutes longer, until the rice and shrimp are both cooked through and the mussels and clams are open. (Discard any shellfish that stayed tightly closed once everything else is cooked.)

Using a spatula, check the bottom of the paella to see if you have achieved a golden brown crust. If not, set the pan over the heat, uncovered, for a few minutes to lightly caramelize the rice on the bottom. This crunchy, browned crust or the "socarrar" is considered a key element of a well-made paella.

Garnish with parsley and lemon wedges and serve immediately, family-style.

Substitutions or notes: The above recipe is adapted for cooking on an indoor stovetop, but I made this dish on an outdoor grill over hot coals. Either works great as long as you have consistent heat, a good cast iron pan and a lid. To make this dish more impressive, add in a few lobster tails, squid rings or scallops on top when you place in the seafood.



CCA FLORIDA AND DI DONATE \$100,000 TO M



JKE ENERGY FLORIDA ARINE SCIENCE STATION



FUNDING WILL SUPPORT CITRUS COUNTY STUDENT FIELD EXPERIENCES AMID HURRICANE HELENE RECOVERY



In August, Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida joined Duke Energy Florida to present a \$100,000 donation to the Marine Science Station, ensuring the continuation of student-field experiences while the facility undergoes restoration from Hurricane Helene.

The powerful storm surge from Hurricane Helene caused significant structural and operational disruptions at the Marine Science Station, a critical hub for marine and environmental education in Citrus County. This joint contribution will be fully dedicated to sustaining educational programming while restoration efforts are underway.

"This funding represents a crucial lifeline for a program that brings science to life for thousands of students each year," CCA Florida Executive Director Brian Gorski said. "We are proud to, yet again, work alongside Duke Energy Florida and support this vital educational resource while the facility continues to rebuild."

The funds will be used across a consecutive, two-year period to help offset the costs incurred by the Citrus County School District, including student transportation aboard research vessels, boat maintenance, field-sampling equipment and safety gear used by students and staff.



"The Marine Science Station is more than just a facility – it is a gateway to environmental education, stewardship and discovery," Duke Energy Florida President Melissa Seixas said. "We are honored to invest in a program that empowers the next generation to explore and protect Florida's marine resources."

The mission of the Marine Science Station is to increase student environmental literacy through hands-on laboratory and field-based educational experiences in local aquatic, estuarine and marine ecosystems. The Marine Science Station hosts 160 field-trip days and serves more than 2,000 Citrus County students per year.

"The Marine Science Station and the Citrus County School District are extremely grateful for the outstanding level of support from both CCA Florida and Duke Energy Florida with their generous donation," Supervisor of the Marine Science Station Earnie Olsen said. "This funding will greatly support our mission momentum and

program resiliency, allowing us to continue providing our Citrus County School District students and teachers with conservation-based field experiences within our coastal ecosystems as we continue working towards a more storm resilient facility."

"The Marine Science Station is one of the most unique and impactful learning opportunities we offer." Superintendent of Citrus County Schools Scott Hebert said. "Thanks to CCA Florida and Duke Energy, we can continue to provide hands-on, real-world science education that inspires future generations of environmental leaders. This is a shining example of what community partnership can accomplish."

CCA Florida, the state's leading organization dedicated to marine fisheries and conservation, education and advocacy, first established a relationship with Duke Energy Florida in 2017 with a shared vision for responsible environmental stewardship and conservation promotion through education.



As a CCA Florida Life, Heritage or Legacy member, you help support Florida's marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more.

Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida's fishing future.





THE STATES HABITAT

Welcome to the future of environmental conservation in Florida. CCA Florida is proud to announce the launch of a monumental grass-roots initiative – The \$1,000,000 Habitat Pledge.

OUR GOAL Elevating Conservation

At the heart of this initiative is a clear and compelling goal: to substantially elevate CCA Florida's conservation commitment through the successful completion of 20 additional coastal habitat projects across the state. These projects represent more than just environmental restoration; they symbolize our collective commitment to conserving Florida's natural beauty and biodiversity for future generations.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW A Statewide Call to Action

Spanning over two years, this initiative places a strong emphasis on engaging our statewide CCA chapters in meaningful local habitat projects. It's an invitation for chapters to actively participate and contribute to our statewide conservation efforts. Throughout the duration of the program, CCA Florida is set to disburse 20 grants, each valued at \$50,000, to CCA chapters that successfully complete the grant application process and receive approval from our Director of Habitat and Environmental Restoration. This initiative has been made possible through the generous donations of CCA Florida members and our dedicated partners, reflecting a community united in its passion for conservation.



OO CEDE

Launched in January 2024, this groundbreaking effort marks a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to sustainable coastal habitat restoration.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS A Snapshot of Our Commitment



A Pledge of \$1,000,000: We've dedicated a substantial sum to support the success of CCA habitat projects across the state.

Focus on CCA Statewide Chapters: CCA Florida chapters are encouraged to participate and make a difference in their local communities. All grant applications must be approved and submitted by a local CCA Chapter committee.

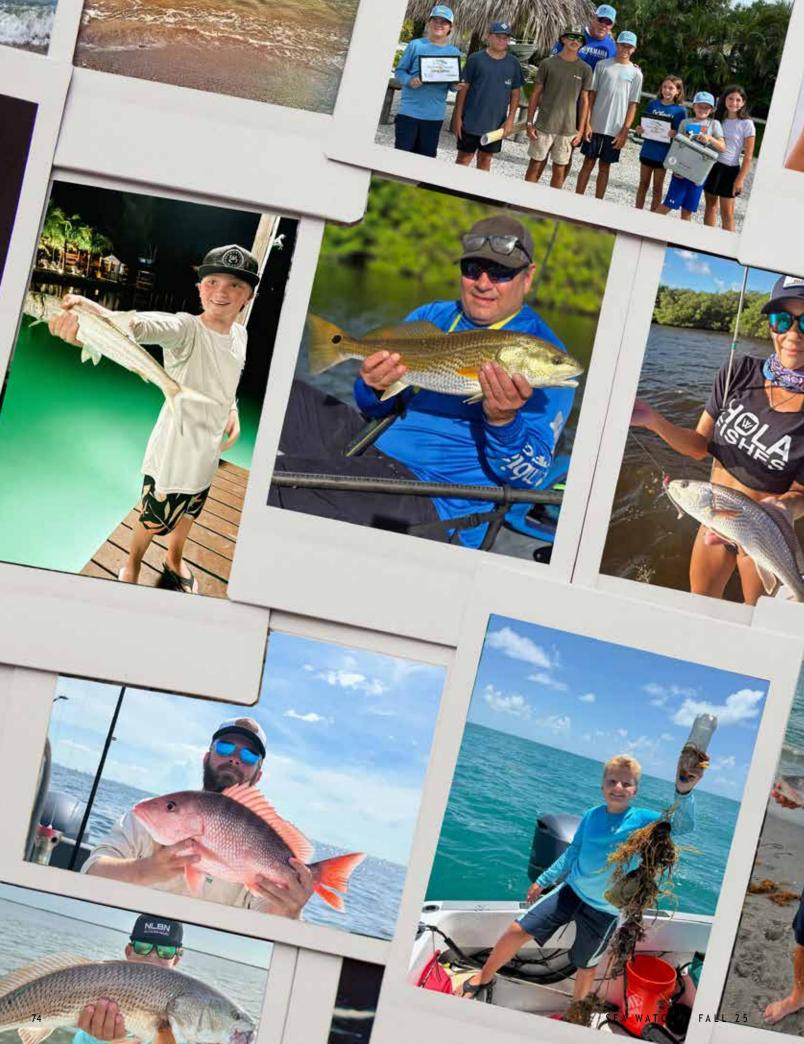
A Two-Year Initiative: This is a sustained effort, supporting long-term conservation measures and stakeholder engagement.

Annual Donations: \$500,000 will be allocated each year, reflecting our ongoing commitment to this cause.

Selecting 20 Projects: CCA Florida will select 20 habitat projects, each will receive a \$50,000 grant to spearhead this conservation commitment.









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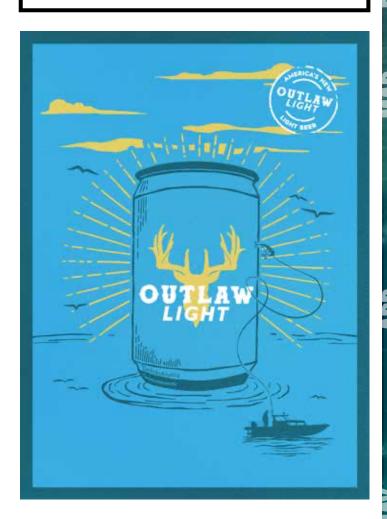






As a CCA Florida Life, Heritage or Legacy member, you help support Florida's marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more.

Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida's fishing future.





- PEACE RIVER BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 18 TREASURE COAST BANQUET AND AUCTION
- **13** CLERMONT BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 20 DADE COUNTY BANQUET AND AUCTION
- PINELLAS COUNTY BANQUET AND
- 4 LAKE MARY BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 4 SOUTH WALTH BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 11 40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
- 12 BLACK DIAMOND
- 31 PIG-A-PALOOSA
- 2 PIG-A-PALOOSA
- 5 MIDCOAST BANQUET AND AUCTION
- **19** KEYS BANQUET AND AUCTION
- **26** MANATEE BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 5 CITRUS COUNTY BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 6 OCALA BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 12 MARTIN COUNTY BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 19 FORT MYERS BANQUET AND AUCTION
- **20** QUAIL CREEK
- 26 STEINHATCHEE BANQUET AND AUCTION
- **26** TAMPA BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 2 POLK COUNTY BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 2 HOMESTEAD BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 11 NAPLES BANQUET AND AUCTION
- 16 BIG BEND BANQUET AND AUCTION
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