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IN TITUSVILLE

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March 28, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro,

I am requesting \$540,000 in funding for the Accelerating Restoration of the Indian River Lagoon project in fiscal year 2024. The funding recipient for this project is Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, located at 4020 S. Hwy A1, Melbourne Beach, FL 32951.

The funding would be used for a research and restoration program to accelerate recovery of Indian River Lagoon habitats and to evaluate the habitat restoration outcomes, including changes in the health of federally protected marine mammals, manatees, sea turtles, and bottlenose dolphins. Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, a non-profit scientific research organization, is the sponsor of this project, and the beneficiaries are the people of the SpaceCoast of Florida and the nation. The Institute has the necessary funding to provide any required local share.

With the requested federal support, Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute will work with Florida-based commercial aquaculture producers Sea & Shoreline and SEAMRI LLC to operate high-capacity seagrass and shellfish nurseries that will provide essential seed stock for planned Indian River Lagoon habitat restoration efforts while also reducing impacts on wild stocks. To accelerate these efforts and the restoration of the Indian River Lagoon habitats, Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute requires operational support for infrastructure (vessel use, utilities, maintenance, office rental). These activities will take place on Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute's existing properties in Melbourne Beach, FL, immediately adjacent and with direct access to the Indian River Lagoon.

In addition to being recognized as an estuary of international significance, the Indian River Lagoon is a very important regional economic driver for the wellbeing of the SpaceCoast of Florida, generating more than \$7.6 billion annually, including more than \$1.2 billion in recreational boating, fishing, and lagoon-related economic contributions. But, the 156-mile-

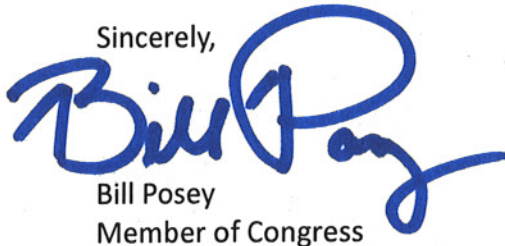
long Indian River Lagoon is also facing an ecological crisis. Historically known for its stand-out biodiversity and productivity, the Indian River Lagoon has experienced severe impacts from increasingly frequent harmful algal bloom outbreaks that threaten the region's natural and economic resources. Large-scale restoration of essential habitats and reduction of impacts to wild stocks are required to protect the ecologically and economically important resources of the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem. Decades of increasing nutrient loading have led to recurring, record intensity harmful algal blooms, widespread habitat loss, and mass animal mortalities.

Lagoon restoration provides national economic benefits through contributions to improving livelihoods and making the community more resilient. Clean water and healthy seagrass beds are critical to subsistence, fishermen, and the local economy.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized in the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. § 1451 et seq.).

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Posey". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Bill Posey
Member of Congress