

**Indian River County, Florida
Solid Waste Disposal District
Board Memorandum**

Date: July 1, 2021

To: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator

From: Matthew Jordan, Interim Director of Utility Services

Thru: Himanshu H. Mehta, PE, Managing Director, Solid Waste Disposal District (SWDD)

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Subject: Beach Basket Pilot Campaign - One-Year Update

Descriptions and Conditions:

In February of 2020, the Solid Waste Disposal District (SWDD), Indian River County Parks and Recreation, and Coastal Connections, Inc. (CC) began a joint collaborative project to pilot a new program to encourage self-guided beach cleanups at county beach parks. This program, called the Beach Basket Program, made coastal cleanups easy, accessible, and flexible for all people interested in cleaner, healthier beaches. Beach basket stations were initiated at three county beach parks: Tracking Station, Round Island, and Wabasso Beach. Beach basket stations included a post, informational sign, and basket holder for four baskets. These stations were located at beach access locations where there was also a trash receptacle available for people to grab a basket on their way to the beach and then dump their debris findings on their way out. CC is a 501(c)(3) Vero Beach-based nonprofit organization, and their role for this collaborative pilot project was to track and monitor the basket station setups, clean and sanitize the baskets weekly, maintain basket availability, and report on use observations and basket tracking data.

Almost immediately, CC began reporting basket usage, either through pictures provided by beachgoers, phone calls of support, or people posting about this new free resource on social media. By June 2020, there was enough community support that the pilot program was expanded by adding five City of Vero Beach oceanside parks or access points, including: Jaycee, Sexton Plaza, Humiston, Flamevine, and South Beach Park.

Program Summary:

CC has continued to monitor, maintain, and report on all eight public beach basket stations since installation in February of 2020 and shown themselves to be a valuable project partner. Basket tracking data and quarterly reports have provided County staff with critical project information needed to determine if this resource has been useful and cost effective over the one-year pilot program timeframe.

Basket Maintenance

Baskets provided for this pilot program have metal handles, which took only three months for the handles to become rusty. CC personnel conducted two handle cleaning sessions to maintain the quality of this public resource. CC personnel also made sure that lost or stolen baskets were replaced quarterly to coincide with quarterly reports and to keep baskets available at all eight stations. Weekly basket monitoring and tracking via a code on each basket, has shown to be critical for knowing how baskets move between stations and determining when a basket is lost or stolen.

Basket Rate of Loss (ROL)

2020 Q3 – ROL - 9 baskets (28%)
2020 Q4 - ROL - 7 baskets (21%)
2021 Q1 - ROL - 10 baskets (32%)
2021 Q2 - ROL - 9 baskets (28%)

Rate of loss has remained consistent between 20-30%, or 7-10 baskets/quarter. The rate of loss is highest at Sexton Plaza, located in the heart of the visitor regions of Vero Beach. Based on a recent quote to replenish baskets at \$8.98/basket, an assumed "materials fee" is approximately \$89/quarter, or \$360/year, to maintain the materials necessary for this program.

Basket Use Stories

During the month of May 2021, baskets had to be returned back to their coded stations three separate times when found at other parks. On May 1, 2021, a basket coded for Humiston was found at South Beach Park. On May 10, 2021, a basket coded for Jaycee was found at Humiston, and once returned, a basket coded for Humiston was found at Jaycee. Lastly, on May 31, 2021, a basket coded for Flamevine was found at Sexton Plaza. Stories of basket use like these are recorded weekly by CC personnel and reported in the program's quarterly reports.

Program Influence

The program has generated not only support from local community residents, but from visitors of Indian River County. Requests for program expansions at new beaches have been received by community groups in Broward County and County staff from Okaloosa County. This program has also received positive media coverage from WPEC Channel 12, TC Palm, Vero Beach Magazine, and 32963 news.

Funding:

No funding is requested for this agenda item. The Beach Basket program is currently part of the approved Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Recycling Budget, which is funded from SWDD assessments and user fees.

Conclusion:

Based on the positive impact this project has had within our community and on our environment, along with the low-budget expense of the project, the Beach Basket Program will become a permanent resource available at all 13 beach parks within Indian River County. In July 2021, some of the beach baskets will be replaced with new baskets having plastic handles for user safety. Furthermore, matching baskets with plastic handles and new basket Stations will be installed by the Parks and Recreation Department in 2021 at the remaining five County beach parks, including: Ambersands, Goldensand, Treasure Shores, Seagrape Trail and Turtle Trail. These installations will allow this resource to be available for the public at all county and city beach parks within the County's 22.4 miles of coastline.