



Office of the
**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY
ADMINISTRATOR**

Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Jason E. Brown
County Administrator

DATE: October 26, 2017

SUBJECT: Sebastian Lionfish Fest

I respectfully request the information contained herein be given formal consideration by the Board.

BACKGROUND:

The red lionfish is an invasive species native to the Indo-Pacific Ocean. Following their introduction in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea and due to lack of natural predators, the lionfish population exploded. As a way to mitigate the impacts on local ecosystems, several Florida organizations, including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) promote and sponsor lionfish fishing tournaments and educational outreach events throughout the state. On January 12, 2016, the Commissioners voted to become a supporting sponsor of the Sebastian Lionfish Fest. County Coastal Division staff, with the help of the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce acting as fiscal agent and supporting organization, has put on this event for the past two years. This event has grown exponentially each year while raising awareness and increasing public outreach efforts by County staff.

Due to the success of the Sebastian Lionfish Fest, the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce, would like to step back as fiscal agent and graduate the Sebastian Lionfish Fest to a 501 (c) 3 organization. Recently, a Florida non-profit named Coastal

Connections Inc. has formed with representation from volunteers associated with the Sebastian Lionfish Fest to continue this event with the intent of restoring and conserving the health of the marine ecosystem. The organization's mission is to "Foster a connection to wildlife within our community by restoring and conserving the function and beauty of our coastal ecosystems". Once graduated to this new non-profit organization, the structure of the festival including, community and County Staff support, would continue. However, the proceeds of this event would go to benefit the mission of Coastal Connections Inc.

IRS Tax ID: EIN 35-2606320

FUNDING:

The item does not require expenditure of County funds

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Indian River County's continued support of the Sebastian Lionfish Fest as it transitions to Coastal Connections Inc.