

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
BOARD MEMORANDUM**

**PUBLIC NOTICE
(INFORMATIONAL)**

TO: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator

THROUGH: Richard B. Szpyrka, P.E., Public Works Director

THROUGH: James D. Gray, Jr., Coastal Engineer

FROM: Kendra L. Cope, M.S., Environmental Specialist

SUBJECT: **Sebastian Lionfish Fest is back!**

DATE: April 13, 2017

REQUEST

It is requested that the following information be given formal consideration by the Board of County Commissioners during the regularly scheduled meeting on May 2, 2017.

This is an announcement to inform the residents of Indian River County (IRC) about the upcoming 2nd annual Sebastian Lionfish Fest. As one of the county's largest conservation-based programs, this event aims to help residents and guests become aware of the rising lionfish invasion, encourages the removal of these fish from coastal habitats and introduces a new management tool through the process of consumption. Additional information can be found on the event website www.SebastianLionfishFest.com and on the event Facebook page: @SebastianLionfishFest.

BACKGROUND

Biology and Invasion History - The red lionfish is a carnivorous fish species native to the Indo-Pacific Ocean. Commonly found as beautiful aquarium fish, the first lionfish was spotted off the coast of South Florida in the mid 1980's. Due to the lack of natural predators and their desire to eat a wide variety of prey options, following their introduction and subsequent population increases in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, the lionfish population is now growing exponentially. This growth is causing negative impacts on indigenous marine ecosystems and fish, and indirectly economic impacts across the state of Florida and now other locations on the east coast. As a way to mitigate these impacts, 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.

Event History – On January 12, 2016, the IRC commissioners made a motion to become a supporting sponsor of the inaugural Sebastian Lionfish Fest. County Coastal Division staff, with the help of other stakeholders, worked alongside the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce and Captain Hiram's to organize a fun and interactive event focused on the state's goals of removal and educational outreach, but added one more twist, a lionfish cook-off.

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BCC Agenda Item for May 2, 2017

Sebastian Lionfish Fest is back!

The first event was held on FWC's Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day (LRAD) and quickly became one of the county's most successful conservation programs. A total of 31 lionfish were removed through the tournament and another 1750 lionfish were removed to supply enough food for cook-off guests. Over 400 people participated in the day's activities and enjoyed delicious lionfish dishes from 6 local restaurants.

The inaugural Sebastian Lionfish Fest committee was also recognized and awarded the 2017 Keep Indian River Beautiful (KIRB) Environmental Award.

2017 PROGRAM UPDATES

The Sebastian Lionfish Fest (#SLF) is now recognized as the second largest LRAD event in Florida. Due to the success of the inaugural event, the event planning team including County staff, Captain Hiram's and other local stakeholders has made many updates to the 2nd annual event to encourage more of the community to learn about the lionfish invasion and help reduce and manage the negative impacts caused by these fish in our coastal habitats. The 2017 event will be held at Captain Hiram's on LRAD weekend (May 20-21st). There will be a 2-day fishing tournament with the captain's meeting on Friday night, May 19th, and the education festival and cook-off will be held on May 21st. The number of local restaurants making delicious dishes has increased to 8, the number of educational organizations presenting has increased to 12 and for the first time there will be coastal conservation-based vendors with a variety of products.

Event Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Time</u>
May 19 th	Late Tourney Registration	6 pm
May 19 th	Tourney Captains Meeting	7pm
May 20 th	Tourney	ALL DAY
May 21 st	Educational LRAD Festival	12-4pm
May 21 st	Tourney Weigh-in	11a-1pm
May 21 st	Cook-off	1-3:30pm
May 21 st	Awards and Prizes	4pm

FUNDING

Funding for this event comes from local sponsoring companies and individuals through generous donations. All sponsors are recognized on the Sebastian Lionfish Fest website and during the event.

ATTACHMENTS

Event Flyer, Tournament Flyer, Hiram's Portfolio Ad

APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR: MAY 2, 2017