

Application

Please email back to rmott@inwater.org no later than June 30th, 5pm

Organization Name Indian River County (Habitat Conservation Plan)

Address 1801 27th street, VB, Florida 32960

Contact Name Kendra Cope - HCP Coordinator

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Organization's mission:

Our HCP is specific to improving nesting habitat for sea turtles. "When fully implemented the HCP will increase productivity of the County's beaches". Staff believes that one of the most important ways of accomplishing this goal is through education of public, young and old.

Number of education staff 1

School district(s) you plan to reach with this program:

Indian River County Public and Private Schools

Questions

1. Why do you believe this program will benefit both your organization and your surrounding schools?
2. Do you have a current relationship with local school districts? If yes, please explain in a few short sentences. If not, please explain how you plan to develop these relationships.
3. Do you currently offer school programs? If yes, please explain and include grade levels, program information, and average amount of students you reach each year.
4. Who will be the project leader on this program? Please provide their name and a couple of short sentences on their experience working in education.
5. This program can take time to get started but will last for years to come. Is the project manager willing to commit the time to creating the trunk contents, developing relationships with schools, maintaining the trunk's contents, and liaising with teachers?
6. What is your three year plan for using the trunk? Please explain how you will garner interest from teachers/district staff and how many classes you feel you may be able to reach each year.
7. Do you foresee any problems with incorporating this program into your organization?
8. Do you have any questions on how you are allowed to utilize the program?

Answers

1. Indian River County (IRC) is located in the middle of the most productive loggerhead nesting beach area in the U.S. and Western Hemisphere. All residents of IRC live only up to 15 minutes from a beach no matter where their home may be, yet many do not know any of the ecological treasures this place has to offer. Our beaches are beginning to be over developed, surrounded by lights and buried in trash. The county has 13 public elementary schools (eight of which are Title 1). The County was a recipient of the original Traveling Turtles Trunk which is currently being utilized in 5th grade science classrooms. Students from these 13 schools get organized into 4 public middle schools where they are challenged with applied curriculum, especially in the fields of STEM. After elementary school students do not have mandatory field trips to learn and experience coastal wildlife. This new lighting trunk is perfect for challenging our 7th grade students with a hands-on opportunity to understand real-life threats to sea turtles and to apply their knowledge about the human dimension of the coastal environment to create an innovative way to fix and manage these threats. Hands-on opportunities like this can supplement this lack of interaction with a nearby-critical coastal habitat. In addition, everyone knows that children are some of the most influential people in the world and still have passion and a drive to make their surrounding area better. One of the ways the county began making efforts to biologically improve their coastline is through the implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan, specifically designed to improve nesting habitat for sea turtles. The HCP was implemented in 2005 and in 2015 the HCP coordinator expanded the management program to include education and public outreach using multiple venues. If accepted for this new sea turtle lighting trunk program the County will be able to enhance its education program and get our youth more involved in local conservation and STEM related fields.
2. Yes. Staff does have a relationship with the local school district which began in 2015 in concert with the beginning of marine conservation presentations given to 5th graders. This presentation was aligned with the 5th grade adaptations curriculum and taught students about sea turtle and marine mammal biology, the difference between inherited and taught traits, and specific adaptations for sea turtle survival. These relationships were developed by first reaching out to school Principals and AP then through contact with the science teachers. This relationship grew in the 16/17 school year by expanding the number of schools which received a presentation and the start of the Florida's Traveling Turtle Trunk Program with the original 6 elementary schools who started the County-School relationship.
3. As the answer to the previous question described, currently the IR Sea Turtle Program education team made up of multiple volunteers and one county staff member who gave presentations about marine conservation and adaptations to 5th grade students at six schools in the county during the 15-16 school year and three more during the 16-17 school year, four of which were TITLE 1 schools. These were wildly successful and requests for visits the following school year were made by all teachers. Pre/Post tests were administered to students and are currently being graded and analyzed to answer the question "Was there any information learned during the presentation?" Additionally the 16-17 school year was the first year of the traveling trunk program. This is a 3-year grant and will be continued during the 17-18 school year. An additional trunk had to be purchased by Indian River County to supply enough schools with the successful program.
4. The project leader will be Kendra Cope, the HCP/Sea Turtle Coordinator for IRC. She is a recipient of the Florida's Traveling Turtle Trunk Grant in 2016 and has been successful in fostering relationships with the teachers of the 13 public elementary schools in the school district. She also created a presentation that is given to 5th grade students about conservation and adaptations. Her background is with general public education programs. Her MS thesis analyzed the community impacts (economic and long-term education/behavior) of the popular turtle walks. She is also started a successful program in IRC during the 2016 nesting season called "Turtle Digs", which are public nest evaluations in the City of Vero Beach.

5. The project leader is a full-time employee with IRC and her position manages sea turtle nesting and other sea turtle activity outlined by the HCP. She plans to be in this position long-term. As part of the Sea Turtle Program she manages a large group of dedicated volunteers which has grown from 12-20 people in the last year and will continue to grow in coming years. There will be plenty of volunteers available to help create the trunk contents, a handful of them already have experience with presenting at schools and are dedicated to keeping good relations with currently involved schools, and the volunteers will be happy to help build a foundation for this new program. The project leader will be responsible for maintaining the trunk contents over time and all contents will be stored in the county office with other education materials used for various programs. She will also continue to keep relations with the teachers and is dedicated to building relations with the school district board and private school teachers so all students in IRC have an opportunity to learn more about sea turtle conservation and biology.
6. During the first year of the program I plan on introducing the truck program to all 4 public middle schools in the county school district. 7th graders in these schools will be the first cohort of students that received a marine adaptations and conservation presentation in 5th grade during the 15/16 school year. During the first year relationships will be built with these 4 public schools and the 2 charter schools in the school district. By the 2nd year of the program the goal would be to have the trunk in all 6 middle schools. This will happen through teacher relations, word of mouth about the program, and presentations to the county commission and school board after the 1st of "learning impact" data has been analyzed.
7. I cannot see any reason why there would be an issue implementing this program. As the application outlines all training will be done by IRG staff before the school year begins with program volunteers and staff and I plan on conducting additional training with IR turtle education volunteers now that the first year of the FL's Traveling Turtles program is complete and all volunteers already have experience helping with other sea turtle education programs.
8. Not at this time. Through presentations, workshops, one year of turtle trunk experience and personal communication I have a very detailed idea of how the program works. I fully support this program and cannot wait to use it if chosen.