



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Department of General Services /
Parks & Recreation

Date: April 10, 2023
To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners
Through: Michael C. Zito, Interim County Administrator
Beth Powell, Director Parks and Recreation/Acting General Services Director
From: Wendy Swindell, Conservation Lands Manager
Subject: Celebration of Earth Week in Indian River County

BACKGROUND:

Earth Day is the annual celebration that raises awareness of issues that affect the planet. Initiated in 1970 by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, this unique annual celebration preceded Congress authorizing the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. The overwhelming support of the Earth Day concept is thought to be a catalyst for the passage of the Clean Water Act (1972) and the Endangered Species Act (1973). As young people are often the group with the enthusiasm to take on challenges, the date of April 22nd was chosen for Earth Day to maximize the participation by students of all ages.

As we look to appreciate nature's beauty this month, Indian River County Conservation Lands Program has developed a series of events that are dedicated to this year's theme "Invest in Our Planet." Each day between April 18th and April 22nd, our Program will be holding an event that aligns with investing in the environment. Below is a summary of the week's planned events:

Tuesday April 18th – Presentation to the Board of County Commissioners

Florida scrub-jays are a federally threatened species endemic to our State. For over 23 years, the Conservation Lands Program has been restoring habitat and monitoring the population of scrub-jays guided by the adoption of the Sebastian Area-Wide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). From dwindling populations in the 1990's, the County now has over 32 scrub-jay territories within the HCP lands; these territories are occupied by over 100 scrub-jays within 4 of our northern conservation areas. This success is due to the 23 years of habitat enhancement and management work completed by Beth Powell, the County's first Conservation Lands Manager. The scrub-jay program is fortunate to have many trained volunteers who monitor the jays year-round. Dr. Monica Folk will provide the Board with an overview of the scrub-jay program, which will be followed by an opportunity to thank some of the Program's hard-working volunteers.

Wednesday April 19th – Pollinator Planting at Captain Forster Hammock Preserve (10:00 – 11a.m.)

Learn about pollinators and the importance of landscaping with native plants while we augment the County's pollinator garden located at the entrance to the Captain Forster Hammock Preserve on Jungle Trail.

Thursday April 20th – Spring Scavenger Hunt (April 20th to May 31st)

This day will be the kick-off of the Conservation Lands Program Spring Scavenger Hunt. Using the County's OuterSpacial App, participants will meander through County Conservation Lands following a series of clues and challenges to complete the Scavenger Hunt Form. The clues and challenges will all be based on this year's Earth Day theme. This event will be a fun way to learn about nature while hiking through our beautiful conservation lands. The first team to complete the challenge will receive an award celebrating their achievement.

Friday April 21st – Pre-K Nature Adventure at the iG (10:15am, 1:00pm and 4:00pm)

A fun family event will be held outdoors at the Intergenerational Center to inspire Pre-K kids (Ages to enjoy and appreciate nature. The Pre-K Nature Adventure will include a pollinator garden walk, a nature-based circle time story, creating a fun nature-based craft with each child participating, and other outdoor activities to entertain the kids.

Saturday April 22nd – Watershed Clean Up (9:30am – 11:30am)

The St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD) is celebrating Earth Day by coordinating a watershed clean-up event on the 22nd. For this final day of Earth Week, the Conservation Lands Program is coordinating a debris clean-up along CR 512, west of Fellsmere. Groups will meet at City Hall in Fellsmere to kick-off this event.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item does not require any action by the Board.

APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR APRIL 18, 2023