

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: Jason E. Brown,
County Administrator

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

FROM: Kendra Cope, M.S.
Coastal Resources Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Revised Draft Outline for Indian River Lagoon Management Plan
Recommendation for Moving Forward**

DATE: July 8, 2019

BACKGROUND

On April 17, 2018, the Board approved a contract with Tetra Tech, Inc. (Tetra Tech) for professional Water Resources/Stormwater design services for a three-year term. Tetra Tech is the selected County Consultant for professional services relative to the development of a County Indian River Lagoon Management Plan.

On June 19, 2018, under Commissioners Matters 14.C.1, the Board discussed and approved pursuing an Indian River Lagoon Management Plan (IRL Plan). At the time it was unclear how comprehensive the IRL Plan needed to be. It would combine all the work the County is undertaking in the Utilities, Public Works, and Parks Departments into a cohesive effort in maximizing funds for an efficient return on investment for upcoming projects to improve the health of the Lagoon. As such, staff entered into a work order with Tetra Tech on July 17, 2018 to develop an IRL Plan Outline which would lay the foundation for how the County will focus on potential water quality projects, habitat restoration projects, and education efforts. The IRL Outline will also list partnerships the County may enter into to leverage funding through grants to continue its efforts in revitalizing the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) throughout the lifetime of the plan.

Staff presented the initial draft IRL Plan Outline to the Board on May 7, 2019. There was considerable dialogue and Commissioner recommendations discussed during the meeting. Staff has incorporated Commissioner and public recommendations into a revised draft Outline for the IRL Plan. Staff believes the revised Outline provides a clear foundation for how staff will first analyze existing research regarding the IRL and how they will develop a comprehensive IRL Plan following an extensive research review.

DESCRIPTIONS AND CONDITIONS

A revised draft IRL Plan Outline was prepared by staff following the May 7, 2019 commission meeting discussions. The revised draft Outline provides a timeline for developing the IRL Plan, a detailed framework for the phases of the Plan's development, a list of funding opportunities, and a list of County projects that either will or could occur simultaneously during the Plan's development. The three phases of the IRL Plan's development identified within the revised draft Outline are as follows:

1. Research Review Phase

Indian River County will work with to gather and analyze available data from multiple IRL stakeholders, including Florida Department of Environmental Protection, St. Johns River Water Management District, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This information will be used to identify knowledge gaps and recognize areas in need of more research in relation to the number of research topics identified in the draft Outline. Information gathered and analyzed as part of this phase will drive the Plan Development Phase, including what will become measurable goals and objectives. The Research Review Phase will take approximately 12-18 months to complete.

2. Plan Development Phase

During this phase, Indian River County will work with a consultant and the public to identify multi-pronged objectives and measurable goals for the County's IRL Plan. This phase will also include the writing of the IRL Plan. The layout of the IRL Plan will be similar to the County's Beach Preservation Plan so it is reader-friendly, but recommendations for management strategies and projects identified will be strongly supported by the data analyzed during the Research Review Phase. The Plan Development Phase will take approximately 8-12 months to complete.

3. Implementation Phase

Recommendations, goals, and objectives written into the comprehensive IRL Plan will be applied throughout a 3-5 year period. The IRL Plan will work with all existing Indian River County Departments that have diverse skill sets and the knowledge, ability, and mission to affect change in the Lagoon. The IRL Plan is meant to be adaptive in nature and will be continuously updated every 3-5 years to address and reevaluate goals, incorporate new strategies, evaluate current projects, and create new recommendations for management strategies and project focus areas.

The draft IRL Plan Outline also identifies current, ongoing, upcoming, and potential local projects that can provide a positive impact on the IRL ecosystem. The County will continue to implement these projects during the Research Review and Plan Development Phases. During the Plan Development Phase, staff will indicate how those projects meet IRL Plan goals and objectives, while also meeting water quality targets set by the State, and improve the health, productivity, aesthetic appeal, and economic value of the Lagoon.

Staff intends to include funding for the development of the comprehensive IRL Plan in the proposed budget for next fiscal year and has already begun applying for supplemental grant funding for the Research Review Phase identified in the revised draft IRL Plan Outline.

FUNDING

Funding is not necessary for the approval of the revised draft IRL Plan Outline.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is requesting feedback from the Board on the draft IRL Plan Outline and is requesting approval of the revised draft IRL Plan Outline. If approved, staff will work with a consultant to generate a scope of work to work on the Research Review Phase identified in the Outline of the comprehensive IRL Plan. The scope of work will include staff working in conjunction with the consultant to evaluate available quality data from partner organizations affiliated with the IRL.

ATTACHMENT

1. Revised Draft IRL Plan Outline
2. Map of Indian River Lagoon Project Locations

APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR: JULY 16, 2019