



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Brevard Zoo Completes Seagrass Nursery in conjunction with
Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute**

MELBOURNE, Fla., October 4, 2023 — Brevard Zoo's first seagrass nursery is now fully functional and growing seagrass to be used in lagoon restoration projects next year led by the Zoo's conservation team Restore Our Shores (ROS). This nursery was built in partnership with [Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute](#) (HSWRI), located in Melbourne Beach.

In addition, the Zoo's second seagrass nursery is nearly fully functional. This nursery, located in Rockledge, will give us the opportunity to learn how to use a different type of growing system that can be used at properties not directly adjacent to the lagoon.

The goal is to use plants grown at both nurseries in ROS lagoon restoration projects next year, and we plan to offer any extra seagrass to our partners.

The Zoo is one of five organizations selected by [the Indian River Lagoon NEP](#) (IRLNEP) to increase seagrass nursery capacity on the lagoon with the goal of accelerating recovery over the course of five years. The other organizations include Marine Discovery Center, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, Florida Oceanographic Society, and Sea & Shoreline. The ROS team meets regularly with the other partners and IRLNEP to collaborate and learn from one another.

The funding for these two nurseries was entrusted to IRLNEP by the EPA thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Each of our nurseries will focus on a different way to grow seagrass.

The Melbourne Beach nursery has six 880-gallon raceways, or systems of four tanks, and our staff will pull water from the nearby lagoon for the tanks. The Rockledge nursery system is essentially a concrete slab with concrete blocks and a liner forming a pool. While this system is less expensive in the initial set-up, there's no nearby source of water from the lagoon, so the ROS team will be making their own water for the seagrass. The goal is to see which system works best for our needs in terms of efficiency of seagrass production.

Seagrass is the basis of a healthy lagoon ecosystem, so long-term, successful re-establishment of this critical resource will benefit all species in the lagoon – even manatees and dolphins– and be used in ROS restoration projects throughout the lagoon.

Initially, ROS will be working with *Halodule wrightii*, or shoal grass, but the team plans to expand to other seagrass species.

While the seagrass nurseries will be overseen by staff, regular trained volunteers will assist in day-to-day care of seagrass. Prospective volunteers can email RestoreOurShores@BrevardZoo.org for more information.

Media can access photos and video of the recent planting at the Melbourne Beach nursery in this Dropbox folder.

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Brevard Zoo is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at www.brevardzoo.org.

HSWRI (www.hswri.org) is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) research organization founded in 1963 “to return to the sea some measure of the benefits derived from it.” Its areas of inquiry are marine ecology, physiology, bioacoustics and aquaculture. Based in San Diego with facilities in Melbourne Beach, FL and Carlsbad, CA, HSWRI's unique contributions are due in part to access to SeaWorld's extensive marine zoological collection, a close association with local universities and highly respected scientific staff.