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SEA & SHORELINE RESTORES SEAGRASS IN THE CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER

Project reduces harmful algae blooms, rebuilds essential fish habitat, and provides seasonal refuge and food for manatees in Florida.

WINTER GARDEN, FLA., October 6, 2021 / PRNewswire/ -- [Sea & Shoreline](#), a leader in rehabilitating threatened aquatic ecosystems, announced today that it has completed phase two of a large-scale, multi-phase submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) restoration project in the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary to address harmful algae blooms, rebuild essential fish habitat, and provide seasonal thermal refuge and food for manatees. To date, 20-acres have been directly planted at three upstream sites.

Sea & Shoreline won the contract from Angler Action Foundation and has installed 10,250 seagrass plants and 50 herbivory exclusion devices, which will temporarily protect the plants from being grazed upon by turtles, manatees, waterfowl, and apple snails until they can take root and expand. The project will be monitored by Sea & Shoreline biologists for a three-year period.

Prior to the spring of 2000, the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary was a healthy, thriving ecosystem that consisted of vast beds of SAV. These plant beds sheltered many species including blue crab, snook, redfish, and spotted trout. The once flourishing ecosystem also functioned as a nursery for the endangered small-tooth sawfish and provided refuge for wintering manatees. Additionally, the SAV stabilized sediments, reduced the effects of wave action, improved water quality and clarity, and absorbed nutrients and carbon from the system.

In the spring of 2000, freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee and the Hoover Dike led to harmful algal blooms that shaded out much of the existing SAV. This event was followed by droughts in 2001, 2007, and 2008 that produced remarkably high salinity levels in the river. The SAV community could not handle the changing parameters, and consequently, there has been no documentation of flowering SAV in the river since 1999. Upon assessing the situation, it was determined that the drastic decline of SAV compromised the entire ecosystem.

“This large-scale restoration project builds off earlier, successful SAV restoration efforts in both the tidal and freshwater portions of the river and estuary,” says Carter Henne, president of Sea & Shoreline. “We’d like to thank Angler Action Foundation for continuing to champion this vital

project, as well as Representative Adam Botana, Senator Ray Rodrigues, and the Florida legislature for their support and continued funding of this and other water quality improvement projects in the state.”

The Angler Action Foundation, which is dedicated to protecting Florida’s game fish and essential habitats, recognizes the value of restoring the Caloosahatchee River. "After two decades of trouble, the Caloosahatchee River is finally on the mend," says Brett Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Angler Action Foundation. “These successful SAV projects are perfectly timed with the upcoming Everglades restoration projects such as the C-43 Reservoir, which will increase our chances of long-term success in the area.”

Sea & Shoreline has proven success in rehabilitating aquatic ecosystems in places such as Crystal River, the Homosassa River, Lake Istokpoga, Blue Springs, and St. Andrew Bay.

Earlier this year, the company celebrated a milestone by planting its one-millionth seagrass plant and launching its newest crusade, “Seagrass Saves Sea Life”, in an effort to raise awareness and educate consumers and legislators on the critical environmental and ecological benefits of seagrass. With the tragic increase in manatee deaths in Florida this year, the company is working closely with state agencies, water management districts, and other stakeholders to reverse this crisis, and to help marine life survive by reducing nutrient overloads, removing muck, planting seagrass, restoring wetlands, and converting septic to sewer.

ABOUT SEA & SHORELINE

Sea & Shoreline, LLC is a Florida-based aquatic restoration firm that restores fresh and saltwater habitats to healthy and self-sustaining ecosystems. Services include seagrass, oyster reef, coral reef, and propeller scar restorations, dredging, living shorelines, artificial reefs, vegetated retaining walls, wetland plantings, berm and bank stabilizations, and seagrass mitigation banking. For more information, please visit seaandshoreline.com, or follow us on social media [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

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