



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Dedicated to Innovation:
Shoreline Resiliency
Springs Restoration
Seagrass Health





SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER IS
COMMITTED TO RESTORING
AND PROTECTING THE
BEAUTY AND HEALTH OF
CRYSTAL RIVER, IT'S SPRINGS,
AND FLORIDA'S WATERWAYS
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



FOCUS: 2025 & BEYOND

- LYNGBYA REMOVAL AND EELGRASS PLANTING •
- RESTORING BLOCKED SPRINGS •
- REBUILDING MARSH AND SHORELINES •
- RESILIENCY:

SAVECRYSTALRIVER.COM 352-257-6359



Crystal River has a storied history of recognizing the ecological importance of its waterways, for the citizens and wildlife who call it home.



Known for being the “Home of the Manatees” and for having a first magnitude spring system which discharges over 64.6 million gallons of water daily, Crystal River is cherished for its plentiful resources, as well as its exotic beauty.

Yet in 1993, Crystal River was threatened when acres of hydrilla and other freshwater vegetation were killed by the influx of a huge plume of salt water following the “No Name Storm”.



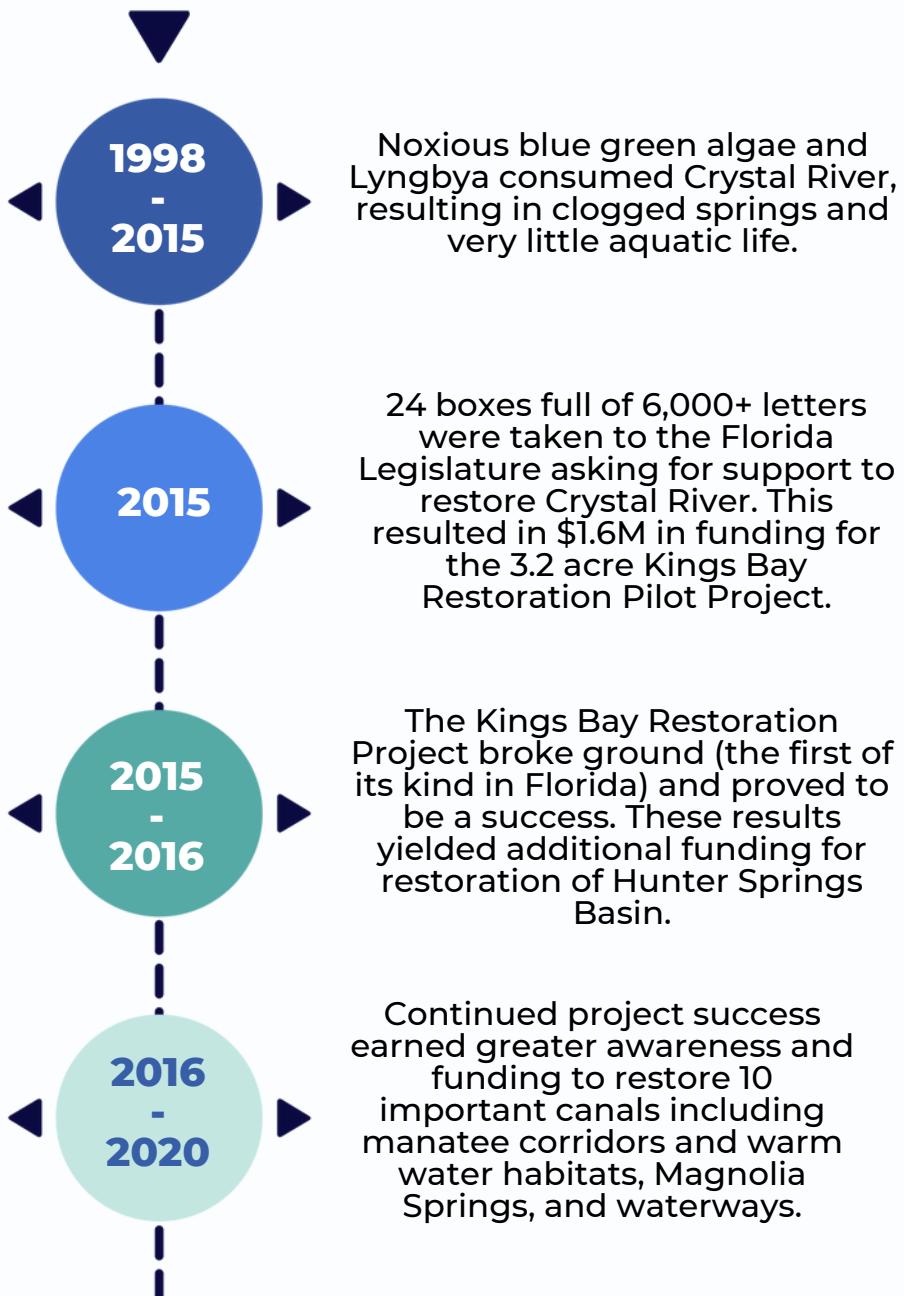
As a result of the decomposition process, an oxygen deficient environment developed, rotting vegetation clogged spring vents, and the loss of dissolved oxygen in the water and loss of food supply resulted in the evacuation of much of the aquatic wildlife which then affected bird populations as well.

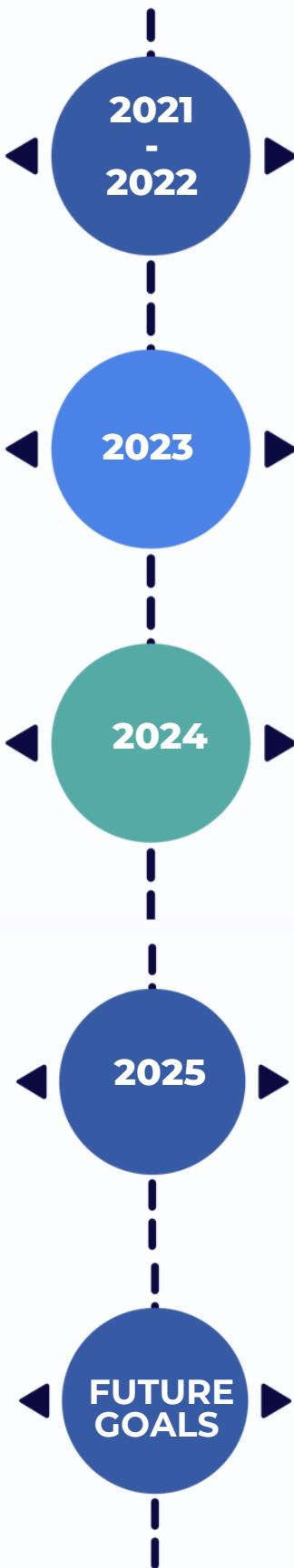
In 2012, help arrived when a group of concerned citizens formed Save Crystal River with the goal to restore and protect the beauty and health of Crystal River and Florida's waterways for future generations.

What started as an experimental initiative to eradicate the invasive Lyngbya algae and replant eelgrass evolved into a thriving success story thanks to dedicated efforts, committed volunteers, the invaluable backing of the community, and the bold actions of forward-thinking Legislators.



THIS IS THE STORY OF HOW A COMMUNITY, BUSINESSES, AND GOVERNMENT CAN WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE FEATS, BY STARTING SOMEWHERE, SETTING GOALS AND NEVER GIVING UP.





Funding received to complete the first four (4) Phases, including all upland canals, Schatz Island to Plantation Point, Palm Springs, and more.

Our first goal to restore 92 acres of Kings Bay was accomplished in time for the 100th Anniversary of the City of Crystal River in July of 2023.

Later that year, 4.75 acres of Hunter Springs Basin was restored.

An additional 85 acres were permitted of which 13 acres were successfully restored to further the restoration and protection efforts for Crystal River.

Save Crystal River removed 1200 cubic yards of algae, sand, rocks, concrete, and other debris from Hunter Springs, thereby restoring the natural flow of this 2nd magnitude spring and laying the foundation to revitalize additional springs. We also restored 12.11 acres and collaborated with experts to develop a plan to address the preservation & restoration of our sawgrass islands, our first line of defense against storm surge. Continue to remove Lyngbya and plant eelgrass in previously unrestored areas of Kings Bay.

Revitalize major springs including Miller's Creek and King Spring to their historical flows. Rebuild the marsh and shoreline on 4 barrier islands in Kings Bay.

HURRICANES & TORNADOS: Four hurricanes, along with 2 tornados in between over the past 2 years, has tested the strength of Crystal River, but they've also highlighted why our work is so crucial.

Biological surveys confirmed that the grasses are resilient and so are we! Nature is rebounding and limited supplemental planting has been needed.



FERTILIZER

Save Crystal River has been instrumental in working with Citrus County officials on a Fertilizer Ordinance.

Why the Ordinance Matters:

- **Algae Blooms:** Excess nutrients from fertilizer causes toxic algae blooms that harm the seagrass beds that wildlife depends on.
- **Spring Protection:** The restrictions help protect the quality of Florida's iconic springs from nutrient runoff.
- **Environmental and Economic Benefits:** Preventing pollution is a cost-effective way to protect the environment, tourism, fishing and scalloping industries that rely on clean water.



OUR “WHY”

Despite challenges, signs of recovery have emerged and are growing stronger every day.

Thanks to dedicated support and restoration efforts, aquatic grasses are regenerating, proving that a strong and resilient foundation has been established. The resurgence of Crystal River’s fishing industry is due to habitat improvements.

Just as nature is both unpredictable and resilient, so too is our commitment to this work.

Ongoing support for restoring aquatic grasses and habitats remains essential to sustaining the health and vitality of Crystal River’s ecosystem.



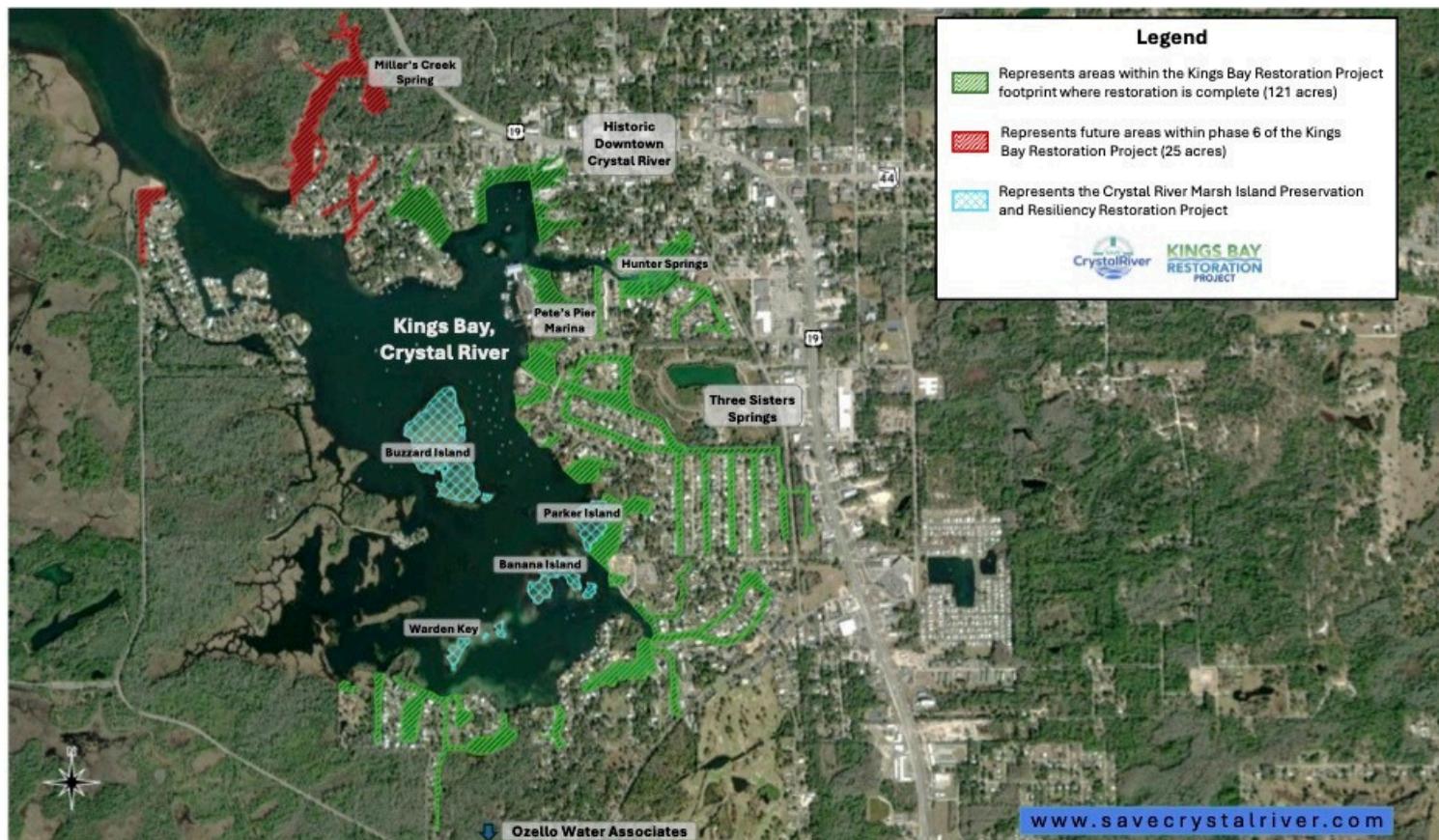


LYNGBYA REMOVAL, EELGRASS PLANTING & PROTECTION

2025 state funding helped us continue work on Lyngbya and sediment removal, eelgrass planting and long-term restoration efforts.

Key Takeaways for Save Crystal River:

- Dedicated budget funding for sediment removal in King's Bay
- All major local projects, including our friends from the Homosassa River Restoration Project, got the green light
- Funding is part of a broader \$50M+ investment benefiting our river
- Springs restoration was made possible by donations from the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners and local citizens and foundations





SPRINGS RESTORATION

In the spring of 2025, Save Crystal River removed 1200 cubic yards of algae, sand, rocks, concrete, and other debris from Hunter Springs to restore the natural flow of this 2 magnitude spring.

These spring vents were buried under decades of material which inhibited the spring flow and contributed to poor water quality.

By opening these spring vents, it both cleans the water and increases the spring flow, creating a much clearer, healthier body of water for both community and marine life to thrive.

To date, we've opened over 890 spring vents – from tiny boils to wide cracks.



ACHIEVEMENTS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Save Crystal River had the privilege of attending and presenting at the 2025 Wildlife Corridor Connect summit at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort & Convention Center to share our mission, work and results.

Hosted by Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, we met with fellow conservationists and organizations who are aligned on balancing both growth and protection of Florida's land and wildlife corridor.

In addition, we've supported several community events, including the 2025 Manatee Festival, the Grand Opening of Sea Daddy's aquarium, Hope Lutheran Church in the Villages for the Women of Hope group, and Crystal River's annual Stone Crab Jam Music Festival, where we highlighted our restoration work and its impact on local waterways.



EDUCATION - FUTURE GENERATIONS

ROCKSTAR EELGRASS CURRICULUM

In May 2025, Save Crystal River and Crystal River Primary School held an EcoWeek event where 5th grade students planted classroom-grown eelgrass and planted at the City of Crystal River's Hunter Springs Beach. The hands-on experience, focused on conservation and restoration, aligned with ongoing spring rehabilitation funded by the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners. Food for students was generously donated by Publix and their volunteers. Guests and media joined students in learning how small actions can make a lasting impact on Florida's waterways.



EDUCATION - FUTURE GENERATIONS

ANNUAL PLANTING DAY

Since 2007, Crystal River Primary School teachers have worked with their students showing them how eelgrass grows and teaching them how to plant it in Hunter Springs once a year during “Eelgrass Planting Days.” The success of this critical project is designed to ensure a legacy that will protect this unique gem of the Nature Coast for future generations. Several partner organizations, such as Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Publix, Scubanauts, Mertailor, and Guyer’s Ice Cream, play a key role in bringing this annual event to life.



RESPONSIBLE ANCHORING PROGRAM

Eelgrass is resilient but vulnerable to damage from harmful anchoring practices, such as dragging anchors or propellers in shallow water, which can uproot plants and scar the riverbed for decades.

To help protect restored areas, Save Crystal River launched the Responsible Anchoring Program, offering rebates to qualifying tour operators toward the purchase and installation of anchor poles and spud anchors — minimizing damage and supporting long-term restoration efforts in Crystal River.

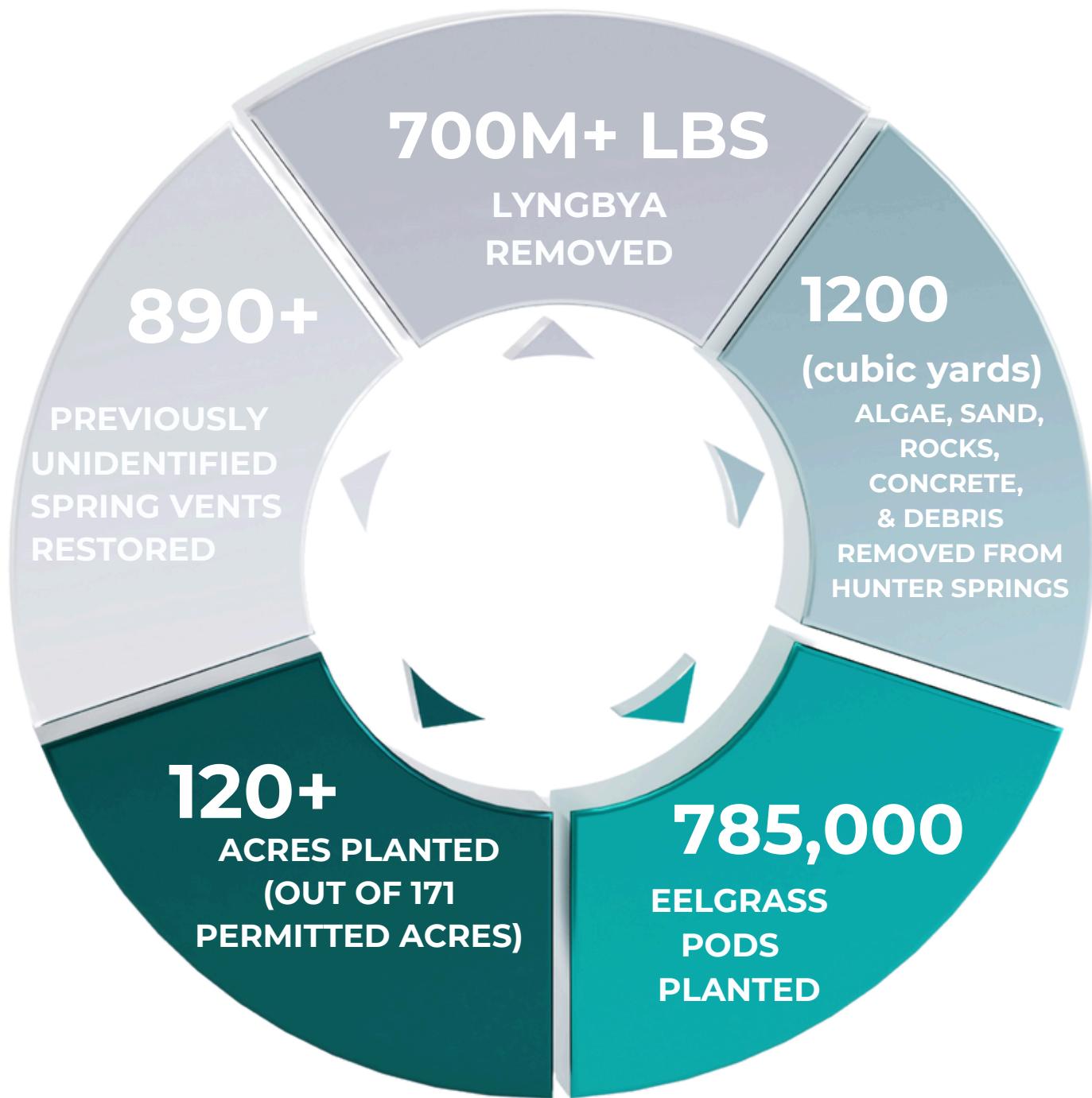
Local tour boats and fishing charter companies are witnessing the impact of anchor dragging firsthand and are stepping up to protect the river. Many have been early adopters of spud pole installations, with customers showing interest and enthusiasm for the environmentally friendly solution. The application process is simple, the installation worthwhile, and the results—healthier, more beautiful riverbeds—speak for themselves.



Thank you to all of the tour operators that have taken advantage of our rebate program and all of the captains that practice responsible anchoring.

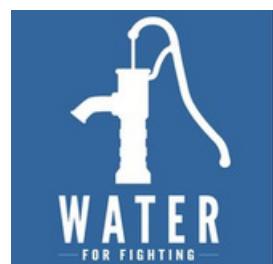


CRYSTAL CLEAR RESULTS



**SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER 2025 MEDIA COVERAGE
GENERATED AN AUDIENCE REACH OF OVER
350M VIEWERS & READERS.**

**THE KINGS BAY RESTORATION PROJECT CONTINUES
TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR SUCCESSFUL AQUATIC
PROJECTS ACROSS THE GLOBE.
SUCCESS HAS GARNERED ATTENTION FROM
JOURNALISTS, REPORTERS, AND TELEVISION
PERSONALITIES WORLDWIDE.**



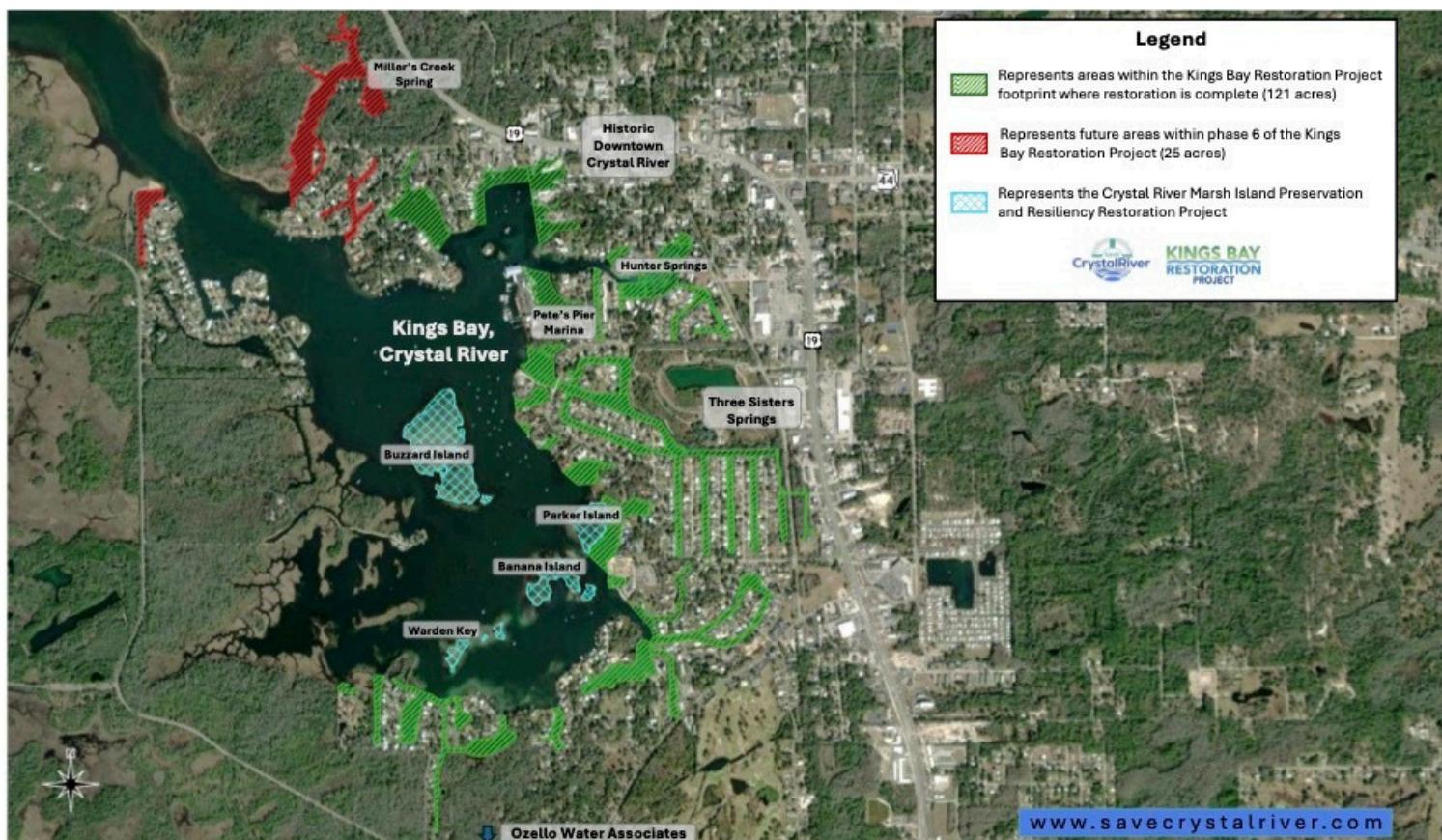
Southern Living

Orlando Sentinel

2026 GOALS & BEYOND

A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, YET MUCH REMAINS: EELGRASS PLANTING AND PROTECTION INITIATIVES

- Clean, Plant and Protect Phases 5-7 (85 acres) in Cedar Cove, Magnolia cove, Pete's Pier, as well as Miller's Creek and Spring, Montezuma Waters, Crystal Shores, and other upland residential canals
- Revitalization and restoration of additional targeted springs throughout Kings Bay
- Ongoing maintenance to protect the thriving eelgrass from negative environmental impact and regrowth of harmful algae
- Manatee Munchies (grass collection) Initiative to feed the manatees in rehabilitation centers (and extending to other areas)
- Continue to partner with the local students at all levels
- Expand the Crystal River experience to include adults in our seagrass restoration initiative



2026 GOALS & BEYOND

MARSH & SHORELINE RESILIENCY INITIATIVES

- The Marsh and Shoreline Resiliency Protection Project is underway to restore the natural shorelines and vegetation of Parker Island.
- Initiatives include: Removal of the land bridge forming between the island and the mainland to restore the natural water flow, protect bird colonies, and eliminate the formation of a detrital material sink in the recently restored eelgrass beds behind the island.
- Focus is on restoring and protecting the severe erosion of sawgrass marshes surrounding the islands in Kings Bay that serve as storm surge barriers to the community and provide critical fish and bird habitats.

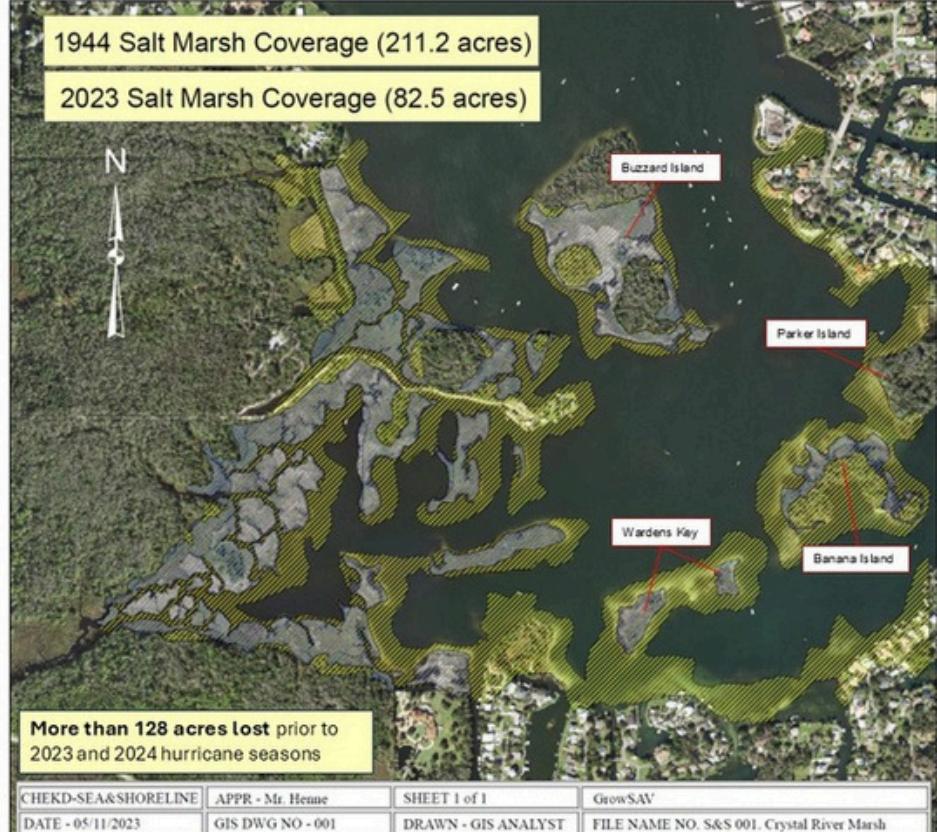
Disappearing Islands



A healthy marsh grass island has all but disappeared in less than 2 decades



Crystal River Salt Marsh Cover 1944 vs 2023



ISLAND RESILIENCY

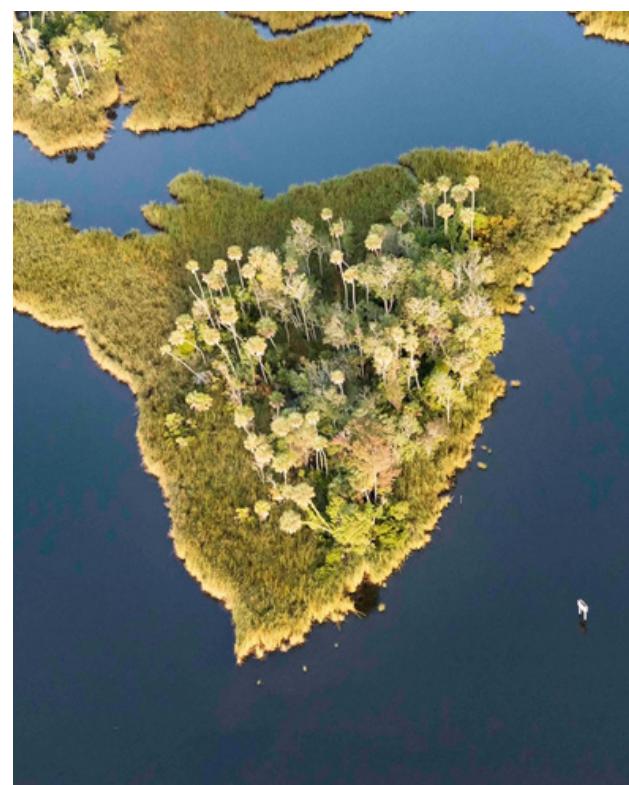
SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER ANNUAL REPORT 2025

As stewards of Crystal River's springs and coastal ecosystem, we are deeply concerned about the accelerating loss of the barrier islands that protect our waters, wildlife and community. These islands buffer Kings Bay and our world-famous springs from storm surge, rising seas and sediment intrusion, yet they are disappearing at an alarming rate. Our recent assessments show the Kings Bay system has lost an average of 2.8 net acres of land per year from 2010–2021. As these islands deteriorate, sediment washes into spring vents, smothering eelgrass, clouding our waters and threatening the ecosystems and tourism economy that define Crystal River.

In response, we have expanded our mission to include restoring the shoreline and islands that sustain the health of the springs. Over the years, we've restored more than 120 acres of eelgrass, removed nearly 800 million pounds of muck and algae, and uncovered more than 890 buried spring vents.

Now we are working to rebuild sawgrass barriers, stabilize vulnerable shorelines, and educate boaters and the broader community about responsible practices to protect this fragile system.

What's happening in Crystal River reflects a growing global challenge, but it also demonstrates how committed local action, science-based restoration and community partnerships can help safeguard these critical natural resources before they are lost.



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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS, DONORS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND PARTNERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE SUCCESSFUL RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF CRYSTAL RIVER.

SCIENTISTS & PARTNERS



JIM ANDERSON
Sea & Shoreline
Founder



CARTER HENNE
Sea & Shoreline
President &
Lead Biologist



Sea & Shoreline is the foremost expert in rehabilitating aquatic environments into thriving ecosystems. Based in Florida, this knowledgeable, experienced team is able to utilize scientifically proven, patented processes to successfully restore waterways throughout the Southeastern US and the Caribbean.



David W. Ceilley, M.S. is a Certified Senior Ecologist by the Ecological Society of America with 33 years of experience conducting aquatic and wetland biological assessments in Florida.

Mr. Ceilley is principal ecologist and owner of Ceilley Aquatic Science & Ecology, LLC working specifically on aquatic and wetland restoration projects for State and Federal Agencies and NGOs. He is a graduate faculty member at Florida Gulf Coast University.



DAVID CEILLEY
Senior Ecologist



SPONSORS

Save Crystal River is humbled and grateful
for the outpouring of consistent community support.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:



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for Save Crystal River is alive due to the
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MEMBERS, AND THE
GENEROSITY OF MANY DONORS
THAT THIS OVERWHELMINGLY
BRAVE RESTORATION PROJECT
HAS BEEN POSSIBLE AND
SUCCESSFUL.
OUR SINCERE AND HUMBLE
APPRECIATION,



Phone Number
352.257.6359



Email Address
info@savecrystalriver.com

THE TEAM AT SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER



Website
SAVECRYSTALRIVER.COM



Address
**915 N. Suncoast Blvd,
Crystal River, FL, 34429**