







Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world.

In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead-



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SURFACE SNAPSHOTS

- VISION
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VISION

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



HISTORY

Crystal River, Kings Bay, and Florida's waterways were damaged by human and environmental factors over several decades making the waters unviable for native plants and aquatic life, and undesirable for recreation.

In 2012, Save Crystal River formed an all-volunteer, non-profit organization through which a group of concerned citizens took action to revitalize Crystal River into a beautiful, thriving home for native plants and animals, the community, and visitors.

Work began in Kings Bay, where Lyngbya "algae" was outcompeting underwater vegetation and leaving cloudy, slimy water where it once was turquoise and clear. As the community banded together to clear out the muck and rehabilitate the waters, it became obvious these efforts were needed elsewhere.

TODAY

Thanks to active volunteers, generous support of the community and legislators willing to take risks, what began as a test project to remove invasive Lyngbya and plant eelgrass has now spanned almost a decade, with over 92 acres of Crystal River to be restored by July 2023.

Manatee health, economic growth, plentiful and clean waters for anglers have set Save Crystal River and The Kings Bay Restoration Project apart as a model for other communities across the world.

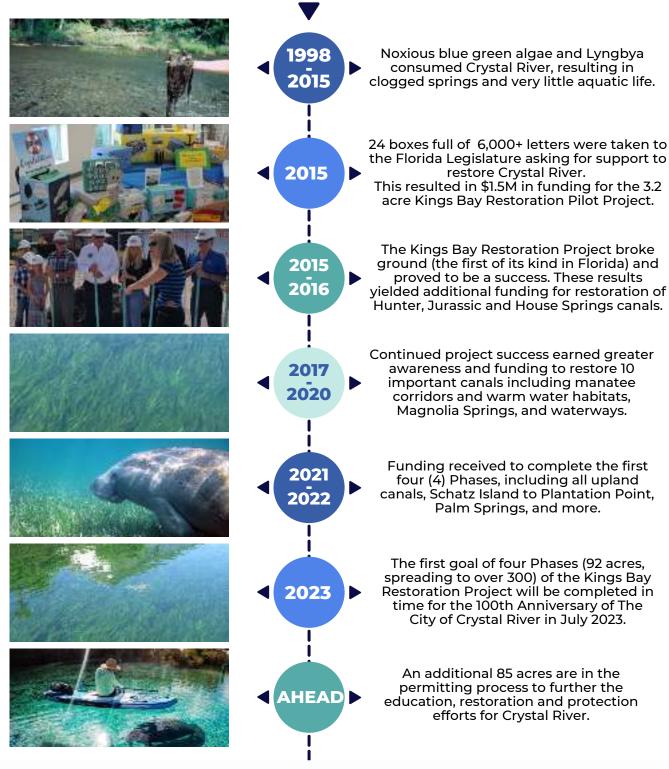


TOMORROW

Preservation of what has been accomplished, as well as proactive efforts (i.e. cleaning, eelgrass planting and nurturing) and future preventive measures (i.e. erosion mitigation, bank support, salt marsh stabilization) must continue.

Save Crystal River is permitting an additional 85 acres to continue the restoration work in Kings Bay, Hunter Springs Basin, Cedar Cove (adjacent to the City of Crystal River's boardwalk) Magnolia Cove, Crystal Shores, Woodland Estates and Miller's Creek.





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.

RESULT HIGHLIGHTS

Acres cleaned (vacuumed removal of Lyngbya algae and detrital material)

300+

83+ hand-planted acres have spread to over 300 acres of rich, lush eelgrass!

400M

Over 400 MILLION lbs of Lyngbya and detrimental material have been removed from **Kings Bay**

850+

Previously unidentified spring vents opened

420k+

420,000 "Rockstar" & "Salty Dog" eelgrass peat pods planted

*Stats are as of December 31, 2022

DEEP DIVES

- CHALLENGES
- SOLUTIONS
- PROGRAMS
- HABITAT ASSESSMENT
- ACCOLADES
- MEDIA COVERAGE



Lyngbya Invasion

In the 1980's, invasive Hydrilla began outcompeting the native plants in Crystal River. A mixture of man-made and natural activity, especially the enormous salt water plume of Gulf waters driven into the river by the 1993 No-Name Storm, killed off the freshwater Hydrilla that then fell to the bottom of the river and decayed. The bacterial decomposition process enabled the invasive blue-green algae, Lyngbya, to take over the river and prevent the regrowth of the native eelgrass. The ecosystem lost its critically important native eelgrass, a natural cleanser and primary food and shelter source for the freshwater aquatic sea life. In this low oxygen environment, the invasive blue-green algae took over the Bay.

Threatened Conditions for Sea Life & The Environment

Eelgrass was buried under the Lyngbya muck, unable to reach sunlight and thrive.

Eelgrass and Seagrass serve as the primary food source for manatees, but also support 40,000 fish and 50,000 small animals, acting as the basis of the food chain and a shelter haven. As the eelgrass began to disappear, so did the sea life, in "The Home of the Manatees".

Seagrass also plays a vital role in the offset of carbon emissions. Seagrass can sequester as much as 50 times the amount of carbon in its soil per hectare as a tropical rainforest, and for a longer period.

Economic Impact

In Florida, healthy aquatic ecosystems are vital to local economies, commercial fishing, and ecotourism.

Florida seagrass and eelgrass beds contribute more than \$20 billion a year to the State's economic health by stabilizing the seafloor and filtering pollution, which keeps the water clear and healthy for marine species and human enjoyment.

SOLUTIONS & PROGRAMS

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- CLEAN, PLANT, PROTECT, MAINTAIN
- GRASS COLLECTION + REPURPOSING
- RESPONSIBLE ANCHORING
- **EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS**
- MANATEE FEVER
- MANATEE MUNCHIES
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- CASE STUDY



CLEAN, PLANT, PROTECT

Save Crystal River partners with aquatic restoration expert, Sea & Shoreline, to remove Lyngbya and detrital material in Crystal River. With funding provided by the Florida Legislature and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Save Crystal River contracted with aquatic restoration experts, Sea & Shoreline. Utilizing a three step process, Sea & Shoreline, and Save Crystal River have successfully rehabilitated the waters:

CLEAN

Before the ecosystem can be restored, decades of decay and muck must be removed. Biologists remove the grime and clean down to the river bed floor utilizing specially designed vacuum equipment that doesn't disturb the existing sand and sediment. The suctioned material is pumped through tubes into a mechanical separator located on shore at a dewatering site. The water is further filtered through a geotube bag system before it is returned to the canal. This approach removes 50%+ nitrogen and 95% phosphorus from the water before it is returned to the ecosystem. The remaining detrital material is then trucked to a DEP approved disposal site at a local ranch where it is used as fertilizer, another benefit of this process.

PLANT

Once the sandy bottom is cleared, varieties of eelgrass including "Rockstar" and "Saltydog" are planted, with protective cages to help them take root and grow without the risk of fish or animals disturbing them. This new eelgrass stems from Sea & Shoreline's Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) nursery- the largest in the world.

Once rooted, cages are removed and the eelgrass does its job as a cleaner, protector, and also serves as the primary food source for manatees and other sea life.

PROTECT

Planting is not the finish line, but rather a starting point. Monthly, these devices are inspected and cleaned to remove any biofouling materials so light from the surface can penetrate the devices and help the plants grow. To address any Lyngbya that re-enters the area, maintenance is conducted in planted areas to keep the bottom and the water crystal clear.



GRASS COLLECTION + REPURPOSING

As a result of the work being done, lush, native, healthy eelgrass has replaced the invasive Lyngbya, with the grass growing up to four (4) feet tall with up to 15 leaves per plant, spreading up to seven (7) feet in each direction!

The plentiful conditions have resulted in a boost in tourism and boating; however, not all boaters and anglers understand how their prop and anchor can negatively impact newly flourishing eelgrass meadows. Anchors being dragged and props too low in shallow water add to floating eelgrass in the river.

Additionally, as days get shorter and sunlight is less plentiful, the eelgrass releases most of the leaves, much like oak or maple trees.

To mitigate this situation, Save Crystal River worked with Sea & Shoreline to bring in a custom-designed eelgrass collecting machine to gather the floating grass and remove it from the surface.

The removal of the floating eelgrass has several important benefits:

- When gathered, Save Crystal River and Sea & Shoreline are providing the clippings as "Manatee Munchies" to feed manatees in rehabilitation centers. Unlike lettuce, this is more nutritious and teaches manatees to forage for the same food they will find in nature. (Reference PROGRAMS in this report or at SaveCrystalRiver.com for more information on "Manatee Munchies" & Feed the Manatee efforts.)
- The removal of the floating eelgrass reduces the shading of the eelgrass growing on the bottom, so it can continue to thrive, grow, and spread in the ecosystem.









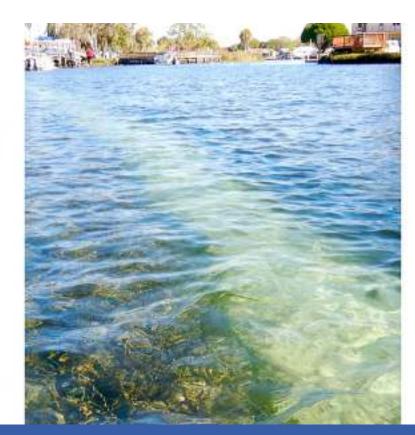
RESPONSIBLE ANCHORING

As beds of eelgrass are restored, it's important they stay protected in order to grow and flourish for years to come. Some of the biggest threats to the river floor are hazardous anchoring practices and damage caused by propellers in shallow water.

Significant efforts have been made to educate boaters that anchors must not be dragged, and propellers need to be propped up when passing through shallow water. Even if a boater is only moving a few feet, it can cause scars to the bottom of the waterways, creating scars for decades. This slows the growth of beneficial native vegetation, removes the primary food source and safe havens for manatees and other sea life, and destroys eelgrass that was carefully planted to rehabilitate the area.

Save Crystal River's Responsible Anchoring Program offers rebates towards the purchase and installation of spud poles for qualifying tour operators operating in Crystal River.







EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS

Save Crystal River has pioneered eelgrass education programs for K-8 students in Citrus County and beyond with a variety of educational programs.

ROCKSTAR EELGRASS CURRICULUM

In partnership with Crystal River Primary School, Save Crystal River works with teachers and students from K-5 on a "Rock Star Eelgrass Curriculum" to show them how eelgrass grows, teach them how to plant it (in Hunter Springs once a year), and the benefits to the ecosystem. This curriculum is available at savecrystalriver.com for use by educators around the world.

BOOK, LINE AND THINKERS

For 5th graders, Save Crystal River, along with the Homosassa Guides Association, and Citrus County Education Foundation, provides students with the greatest of all learning opportunities – hands–on, real–world experiences through "Book, Line and Thinkers"! Students are led by fishing captains on a field trip that brings science and math to the great outdoors. Children learn through watching wildlife, fishing, planting eelgrass, and taking part in fun question and answer sessions that provide insight into topics like animals, the water cycle, erosion, responsible anchoring and more.









EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS

WEDU, PBS and the CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING PROGRAM

Saving Crystal River is an interactive program for middle school students in grades 6–8, thanks to a partnership with WEDU (West Central Florida's Public Broadcasting Station), Public Broadcasting System (PBS), Tampa and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Students can explore the negative effects of Lyngbya, and those environmental impacts for the plants and wildlife in Crystal River and Kings Bay. They virtually examine methods used to restore and maintain these important habitats. As a final assignment, students gather information from the lesson's readings, activities, and video segments from WEDU Quest to complete a final writing assignment.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC ALLIANCES, PROGRAMS and INITIATIVES

Save Crystal River "Planting Days" Citrus County Public Library's "Ocean of Possibilities" Summer Programs Central Florida "SCUBAnauts" Chapter Meetings





PROGRAMS



MANATEE FEVER

Manatee Fever is an art movement created by Save Crystal River to bring awareness and funding to feed the manatees in Crystal River, the original "Home of the Manatees."

Large fiberglass manatee sculptures were created as an art installation fundraiser with artists painting the unique sculptures offering individuals and businesses the opportunity to own their own custom-designed manatee! Proceeds from the art installation are used to restore Crystal River and provide the much-needed food source for its large manatee population.

This program was created to bring to light that manatees are classified as Threatened Species on the Endangered Species list and must be fed and protected.

There are efforts underway to grow this program in 2023.











PROGRAMS



MANATEE MUNCHIES

As previously mentioned, plentiful conditions have resulted in a boost in boating. When props are not lifted in shallow waters, they "trim" the grass, resulting in floating eelgrass gathering on the surface.

Additionally, as fall and winter set in and sunlight is less plentiful, the eelgrass releases most of the leaves, much like oak or maple trees.

As a secondary program to all planting and protection efforts, Save Crystal River works with Sea & Shoreline who utilize a surface skimmer, which traverses the waters of Crystal River and collects the grasses. These grass clippings are offered to rehabilitation facilities for manatees to give them access to their natural food source, making it easier for them to reacclimatize when they return to the wild.

In addition, plants that are accidentally unearthed from the roots are collected and used in education programs for schools, teaching future generations about the valuable necessity of seagrass and eelgrass in the environmental continuum.



The Manatee Munchies Program to feed the manatees generated significant buzz and an opportunity to directly engage younger generations in the conservation conversation.

As a result, both organizations are evaluating feasibility, funding and additional partnership opportunities for 2023.

PROGRAMS



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Save Crystal River is an organization founded by a team of all volunteers, passionate about making a difference.

The commitment of this group paired with financial support from community champions and legislators have collectively made the project flourish.

Save Crystal River was pleased to gather these stakeholders to thank them, showcase all that has been achieved and share future plans.

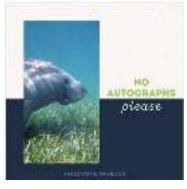
Themed after the name of the grass that has been so successful in Crystal River, the "ROCKSTAR" Event brought together 300 partners, sponsors, leaders and prominent influencers at The Plantation on Crystal River.

This is an annual community event, with this year's gathering set for March 17, 2023.

















2022 **HABITAT ASSESSMENT**

BY: DAVID CEILLEY; CERTIFIED SENIOR ECOLIGIST CEILLEY AQUATIC SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY, LLC.

During the year of 2022, habitat and biological assessments were conducted by collecting baseline information of existing conditions in selected areas prior to any restoration activities. This included the collection of sediment core profiles in the study areas.

The sediment core assessments show how much organic matter and mud/muck needs to be removed to restore habitat conditions suitable for the growth and spread of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) or eel grass (Vallisneria americana).

Restoration of the sediment habitat is also critical for successful spawning of many desirable species of fish, including largemouth bass, bluegill, and redear sunfish. Loosely packed organic material and muck deposits were generally much worse at the dead ends of canals in Kings Bay. These areas do not support diverse invertebrate or fish communities and the biological monitoring program in the study areas documented significant improvements in the diversity and abundance of aquatic life postrestoration.

Baseline fish and macroinvertebrate reports are currently being prepared for future comparison with post-restoration surveys to document changes in biological conditions. Replicate artificial substrates, named after the inventors "Hester and Dendy" were placed in each study area and allowed to colonize for 28 days. These Hester-Dendy substrates are like small housing units that supply protective cover from tidal flow and predators for small invertebrates. After four weeks in the water column, they are retrieved and processed so that all organisms can be preserved and identified in the laboratory. Hester-Dendy substrates have been used for several decades to assess water quality and are recognized by both the US Environmental Protection Agency and Florida Department of Environmental Protection for macroinvertebrate studies.

In one study area a total of 873 individual invertebrates, representing only 18 species were collected and identified. The most abundant species found was an amphipod, Hyalella azteca (452), followed by a snail in the Hydrobiid family (126), and the isopod, Cassidinidea ovalis (124). The dominance of a few species in samples with low species richness can indicate degraded habitat or water quality. In a second study area a total of 448 individual invertebrates were collected and identified representing 20 species. H. azteca (242) was again the most abundant species, followed by C. ovalis (85) and Hydrobiid snails (55). Both areas appear to be degraded by a combination of poor sediment quality and water quality. Post-restoration assessments are pending in each of these areas and should be conducted approximately one year after the baseline and completion of de-mucking and SAV planting. We expect increases in both diversity and abundance of fishes and macroinvertebrates in the post-restoration assessments as has been found in all previously studied areas of the Kings Bay Restoration Project.

> For the complete biological assessment reports, please visit www.SaveCrystalRiver.com/Annual-Reports

ACCOLADES

Save Crystal River amplified branding, social media and public relations efforts in 2022, sparking greater conversation and garnering international recognition for efforts through top media outlets.

Recognized as the "2021 Non-Profit of the Year" by *The Citrus County Chronicle* at the beginning of 2022, Save Crystal River's work was further recognized as the top recipient of the elite *One Bay McIntosh Award* by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. This award recognized Save Crystal River for excellence and distinction in regional "visioning" and supporting One Bay's Guiding Principles including preserving natural systems, sustaining the role of agriculture and strengthening economic development.

SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER TOP MEDIA COVERAGE























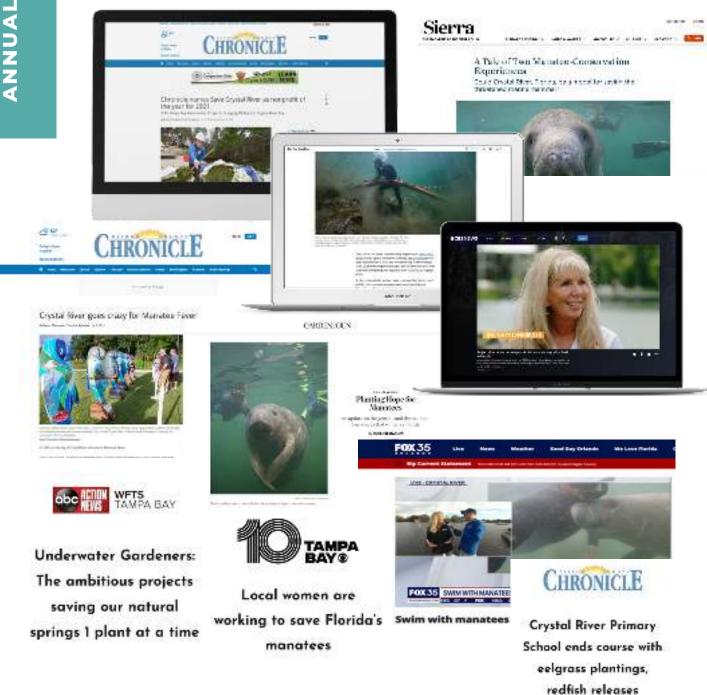
"2021 NON-PROFIT OF THE YEAR" *
CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE

*ANNOUNCED IN JANUARY 2022

"THE ONE BAY MCINTOSH" AWARD
2022 TAMPA BAY REGIONAL
PLANNING COUNCIL



MEDIA COVERAGE



2022 Media Coverage generated an audience reach of over 190M viewers & readers.



NEXT STEPS

- 2023 GOALS & BEYOND
- CASE STUDY (FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES)

CrystalRiver 2023 GOALS & BEYOND

A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, YET MUCH REMAINS:

- 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)
- COMPLETION OF THE RESTORATION OF HUNTER SPRINGS
- CLEAN AND RESTORE THE EELGRASS MEADOWS IN CEDAR COVE, MAGNOLIA SHORES, PETE'S PIER, AS WELL AS WOODLAND ESTATES, MONTEZUMA WATERS, CRYSTAL SHORES, AND OTHER UPLAND RESIDENTIAL CANALS.
- RESTORE SHORELINES BETWEEN THE MAINLAND AND PARKER ISLAND BY RELOCATING THE WASHED-IN LAND BRIDGE THAT HAS FORMED. ESTABLISH LIVING SHORELINES TO PROTECT THE ISLAND AND MAINLAND FROM FURTHER EROSION
- RESTORE AND PROTECT THE SEVERE EROSION OF SAWGRASS MARSHES
 SURROUNDING SIX ISLANDS IN KINGS BAY THAT SERVE AS STORM SURGE
 BARRIERS TO THE COMMUNITY AND PROVIDE CRITICAL FISH AND BIRD HABITATS.



MARSH & SHORELINE RESILIENCY PROTECTION







CASE STUDY

"A GROUP OF HOMOSASSA CITIZENS WERE INVITED BY LISA MOORE (SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER PRESIDENT) TO VISIT KINGS BAY TO SEE WHAT WAS BEING DONE TO HELP RESTORE THAT SECTION OF CRYSTAL RIVER.

WITHIN THE FIRST 10 MINUTES WE DECIDED THE SAME PROJECT HAD TO BE BROUGHT TO THE HOMOSASSA RIVER. WITHOUT THE KINGS BAY RESTORATION PROJECT WE WOULD NOT, ON OUR OWN, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP THE PROJECT OR OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FUNDING."

Homosassa River Restoration Project President, Steve Minguy

After almost a decade of success, the Homosassa River Restoration Project is a great example of the role Save Crystal River has played in developing a successful and transferable method.

Save Crystal River is dedicated to sharing these programs with other communities through extensive media relations efforts, posting of information on social media and on SaveCrystalRiver.com.

Members of Save Crystal River also share information about the restoration through public seminars at schools, libraries and with community organizations, including meeting with representatives from Indian River Lagoon, Biscayne Bay Foundation, and many more.



ROCKSTARS

- SCIENTISTS & PARTNERS
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- SPONSORS
- COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS



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



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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.



SPONSORS

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

We feel added recognition is in order to the superlative support of a few companies that go the extra mile.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:





crystalharley.com













SUPPORTERS

The community engagement and enthusiasm for Save Crystal River is alive due to the generous, continued support by:

Advanced Septic Services

American Century Investments

American Marine Contractors

B4Signs

Bay Area Air Conditioning, Inc.

Billy Hudson

Birds Underwater Dive Center

Blast It Brannen Bank

Bree Lajoie

Breezy Oaks RV Park

Capital City Bank

Carpet One Floor and Home of Gainesville

Christus Finley & Daron Diecidue Citrus County Chamber of Commerce

Citrus County Chronicle

Citrus County School Board Citrus Hills Golf & Country Club

Citrus Medical Marijuana Clinic

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Crystal River Water Sports

Cunningham Farms

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Dawn & Tony Bowling

Diane Damron

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Don & Marie Bienkowski

Doug & Jo Sonerholm

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Gulf Breeze Vacations

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Hal and Sandy Deck

Heritage House

Homosassa River Restoration Project

Howard Miller

Howard Sheppard Inc.

Hunter Springs, Inc.

In Memory of Bob Mercer

In Memory of Frank Fusick

Independent Network Services LLC.

J H and Carol Kimbrough

Jack & Renee Reiner

Jack Reynolds

Janis and Chuck Tripp

Jim & Kay Yancy

John Morgan

Kent and Annie Greer

Kevin & Karen Cunningham

Kings Bay Rotary Club Land Title of Citrus County

Lauren Stringer APRN LLC

Lees' Famous Recipe Chicken Love Honda

Lowman Law Firm

Mallard's

Manatee Ecotourism Association (META)

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Mark & Tina Champagne

Mark Shelnutt

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Mary & Bob Sierra Family Foundation

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Mike & Rebecca Bays

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Secure Backup Systems

Seven Rivers Community Hospital

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Steve and Betsy Latiff

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WEDU, Public Broadcasting System

William M. and Mary M. Lyons Charitable Fund

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IT IS WITH THE SUPPORT OF LEGISLATORS, THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTNERS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AND THE GENEROSITY OF MANY DONORS THAT THIS OVERWHELMINGLY BRAVE RESTORATION PROJECT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE AND SUCCESSFUL.

OUR SINCERE AND HUMBLE APPRECIATION,
THE TEAM AT SAVE CRYSTAL RIVER



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