



Grass Roots Newsletter

We Took a Walk on the Wild Side!



Save Crystal River and Sea & Shoreline organizations had the privilege of attending the 2025 Wildlife Corridor Connect summit at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort & Convention Center.

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. We are stronger together, and are excited for what lies ahead as we continue to restore and protect Crystal River and all of Florida's waterways.



Success!

- 850+ Spring Vents Opened
- 105+ of 171 Permitted Acres Cleaned
- 590K+ Eelgrass Plants, Hand Planted
- 680M+ lbs Lyngbya & Detrital Material Removed
- 99% Phosphorous & 50% Nitrogen Filtered From Water Before Return to River.

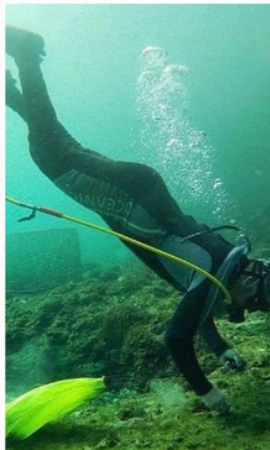
How Can You Play an Important Part?

[Donate Today!](#)



We're back with another edition of our newsletter, packed with the latest project updates, how you can get in on the action, and other cool stuff. Keep Reading!

Champions!



We couldn't do this important work without champions like them!

A huge thank you to our Florida legislators—especially Senator Ben Albritton, Senator Blaise Ingoglia, and Representative JJ Grow—for standing behind our mission and helping secure the funding we need to keep restoring and protecting Crystal River. In addition, we wouldn't be where we are today without the ongoing support of Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, Wilton Simpson, who has been a huge advocate of our organization from the beginning.

This year was an integral one for our project, due in large part to the severe weather that affected Crystal River, and their support was a key piece of the puzzle. As we continue educating government officials about the real impact of our restoration work, we're grateful to have strong legislative leadership and voices in our corner.

Big News for Save Crystal River & Citrus County!

2025 State funding has been officially approved to help us continue removing sediment by cleaning King's Bay and nearby canals, and planting eelgrass. This support is a huge win for long-term restoration and cleaner, healthier water in our local waterways!

Additionally, \$350K was approved to build a new seawall at Hunter Springs Park.

Key Takeaways for Save Crystal River:

- \$5 Million Secured! 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 \$16 million+ investment benefiting our community





TOBY TAPLEY IS A VOLUNTEER ROCKSTAR!

Captain Toby's Time-Traveling Trip to Save Crystal River

In 1850, a pirate named Captain Toby set sail on Crystal River in search of freshwater springs and adventure. As she floated, she admired beautiful trees and wildlife on the riverbanks and turquoise water that was so clear, she could see manatees, snook, and other fish swimming below. Just ahead, she saw two palm trees arching over the river like a doorway, and she drifted under them. When she came out the other side, she noticed everything looked different! Suddenly, there were less trees and wildlife, there were lots of houses with bright, green grass around them, and there was a gross, slimy algae in the river. Captain Toby realized she must have traveled into the future -- and it looked awful!

Across the river, she saw a weird machine floating on the water. She steered her ship closer for a better look. The rectangular machine had a tube on it that people were guiding into the water. Captain Toby waved and asked one of the workers, "What *arrrrre* you doing?" A surprised worker smiled and explained how it was the year 2024 and they were working on the Save Crystal River Project to remove *lyngbya* from the water. The worker explained how *lyngbya* is an invasive algae that suffocates aquatic life, makes manatees sick if they eat it, makes people's skin itchy, and blocks sunlight so that aquatic plants cannot produce oxygen. The worker also explained how the "gumbo algae" grows year-round and has no predators, which is bad because those things allow *lyngbya* to keep growing and growing... and growing.

Patting the machine, the worker explained how scuba divers use the long tube to suck up water, algae, soil, and litter. After that, it all goes into containment bags where vibrating machines are used to separate everything. Later, the algae is recycled and used as fertilizer, and the litter is thrown away. The leftover soil is piled and reused, and the clean water is pumped back into the river. Once that area of the river is cleaned, they plant fresh sea grass then place cages over it for protection. Afterwards, they maintain their work to keep the new grass safe and healthy. As interesting as that sounded, the worker pointed out how the whole project is run by volunteers, and that it's expensive, time-consuming, and only



covers a small area at a time. The volunteers raise money for the project by asking for donations, organizing fundraisers, and applying for grants.

The worker clarified that prevention is the most important part of protecting the river. The worker explained how lyngbya likes nitrogen, phosphates, and iron, which are all in the fertilizers people use to make their lawns full and green, and how after fertilizers are sprayed, they seep down into the ground. When rain falls, the fertilizers are pushed down further, into the water table where they flow into the river and invite lyngbya to grow like crazy. The worker said things would be much better if people worked together to stop littering and to stop using chemical fertilizers. In fact, the worker discussed how there are currently no laws in Citrus County that tell people what fertilizers are okay to use, when to use them, or how much to use! If there were such laws, Crystal River and other local waterways could be much healthier environments.

Captain Toby was blown away by everything she had just learned and immediately wanted to help. She quickly thanked the worker and bid farewell before spinning her ship back towards the arched palm trees. She was determined to sail back in time to warn people about the dangers of littering and using chemical fertilizers. Now knowing the importance of prevention and awareness, Captain Toby hoped she just might be able to save Crystal River from future dangers by inspiring others to make prevention and awareness a part of daily life. Just then, her ship dipped under the palm trees and warped her back to the days of Old Crystal River.

Works Cited

Various Authors. (n.d.) *Save Crystal River*. Various dates. <https://www.savecrystalriver.com/>

Various Authors. (n.d.) *Homosassa River Restoration Project*.

<https://homosassariverrestorationproject.com/>

Save Crystal River. "Various Titles." YouTube, uploaded by Save Crystal River, 2015-2024,

<https://youtube.com/@savecrystalriver7186?si=r64RYA4XatvvS9CN>

Toby Tapley, now 12, wrote this essay at age 11 for the Homosassa Pirate Invasion essay contest. She's a remarkable young lady who understands the importance of taking care of the health and beauty of our Florida waterways. (Pirate's) hat off to you, Toby!

