

THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100



SENATOR DEBBIE MAYFIELD
Majority Leader
17th District

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Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,
Tourism, and Economic Development
Governmental Oversight and Accountability
Judiciary
Rules

JOINT COMMITTEE:
Joint Legislative Budget Commission

August 25, 2022

Florida Communities Trust
Division of State Lands
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 103
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

Dear Ms. Reeves,

I am writing in support of the Brevard County Blue Crab Cove Phase II project. Brevard County (BC) is seeking \$1.25M from the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts Florida Forever Grant program for Phase II. Twelve years ago, the BC Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved the grant contract for acquisition of the original Blue Crab Cove Phase I.

The creation of the Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts Florida Forever grant program by the 2008 Florida Legislature acknowledged the importance of the traditional seafood harvesting and aquaculture industries in Florida. The program receives 2.5% of the total Florida Forever appropriation. This particular grant request from Brevard County will effectively support the expansion of the Blue Crab Cove Phase II project.

The economic benefits of this industry to Brevard County are proven. Small water dependent business and aquaculture development create and retain local jobs while generating nearly 86 million pounds of harvested seafood, and over \$170 million in dockside revenue. Notably, Brevard County produces more than 25% of all blue crabs on Florida's East Coast.

Another important element of the grant project is the developmental partnership Brevard County has established with the Brevard Zoo, which will serve as tenant for management of the Blue Crab Cove Phase II. More than 400,000 people visit the Brevard Zoo annually, and its economic impact exceeds \$59.5 million, ensuring an effective collaborative partnership.

Across Florida, the accelerated acquisition and conversion of working waterfront properties to private, restricted-access or non-water-dependent use facilities has been eroding the natural and economic heritage of Florida's aquatic resources. On the Indian River Lagoon, working waterfronts are a critical

REPLY TO:

- 900 East Strawbridge Avenue, Melbourne, Florida 32901 (321) 409-2025 FAX: (888) 263-3815
- 330 Senate Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5017

Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

WILTON SIMPSON
President of the Senate

AARON BEAN
President Pro Tempore



link connecting people with the area's fish, wildlife, and other natural resources for commercial and recreational activities.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to lend my support to this important project. It would be my pleasure to answer any further questions you may have, anytime.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Mayfield".

Debbie Mayfield
Senator Majority Leader
Florida Senate District 17



"Wildlife Conservation through Education and Participation"

August 24, 2022

Florida Communities Trust
Division of State Lands
Attn: Linda Reeves
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Blvd, MS 103
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

Re: Blue Crab Cove Phase II
500 West Merritt Island Causeway,
Merritt Island, FL

Dear Ms. Reeves:

Brevard Zoo's mission is "We Share Our Joy of Nature to Help Wildlife and People Thrive." To do this important work, we focus on local conservation efforts to restore wildlife populations and habitats. Nothing is more valued to Brevard and its residents than the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) as both an economic engine and source of recreation. We are working with the community to preserve, protect and repair this biologically diverse estuary to serve both purposes

Brevard Zoo's *Restore Our Shores* program focuses on restoration and enhancement of oysters, clams, seagrass, mangroves, marsh grasses and other ecosystem services in the IRL. The program has engaged over 65,000 volunteers in lagoon restoration.

To date, with the assistance from many partners, the program has installed over 42,000 square feet of oyster reef, planted 100 clam beds, installed over 2,000 linear feet of native shoreline plants, and launched a seagrass restoration program to begin growing seagrass for IRL restoration projects in Brevard County and a significantly larger footprint in surrounding counties. With this program expansion, we have outgrown the physical home we have at Brevard Zoo and are looking for space to expand.

Although we anticipate having a continued presence at Brevard Zoo as well as the future aquarium at Port Canaveral, the *Restore Our Shores* team needs a devoted field site for this important work. Under a coordinated site management agreement, the



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"Wildlife Conservation through Education and Participation"

proposed Brevard County Blue Crab Cove Phase 2 project site would support our team with a location providing direct access to the fisherman and waterman that depend on the health of the Indian River Lagoon. The Phase 2 site's Maritime Education Center/Maritime Museum would provide the Restore Our Shores staff a home-base and a site for our many volunteers, our public education efforts, workshops, and outreach to both commercial waterman and the community in general. The proposed Aquaculture Support Facility would be used to manage restoration efforts and materials (metal gabions, oyster shell bags, oyster shell, mangroves, marsh grasses, and a seagrass nursery) along with any other provisions necessary for lagoon restoration and enhancement of the local fisheries.

We would like to introduce ourselves as valuable conservation partners representing the East Coast Zoological Society dba Brevard Zoo. We look forward to working together as partners with the County to proceed with the application and site planning for the Stan Mayfield Working Waterfront Grant and continue this important work, creating a *Restore our Shores* working waterfront and aquaculture headquarters at this Merritt Island location.

Sincerely,

Keith Winsten
Executive Director



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MERRITT ISLAND
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

August 26, 2022

Mr. Matt Culver,
Boating & Waterways Program Coordinator,
Brevard County Natural Resources Management Department 2725
Judge Fran Jamieson Way
Building A, Room 219 Viera, FL 32940

RE: Grant application for additional land acquisition for the Florida Community Trust, Working Waterfronts Program. Additional Parcels for Acquisition: 24-36-35-1-25; 24-36-35-30-1-28 and 240-36-35 *-R.1 (vacated alley) and 24-36-35-29-0-1-1.01

Dear Mr. Culver:

After your team's outstanding presentation to the Merritt Island Redevelopment Agency (MIRA) Board of Directors, it is with great pleasure that I am pleased to provide this letter of support, on behalf of the MIRA Board for your above referenced grant application to the Florida Community Trust Working Waterfront Program.

We deeply appreciate what the Florida Forever Program has accomplished in preserving the Merritt Island Griffis Landing Blue Crab Cove Working Waterfront. Approval of your grant application will provide for an incredibly outstanding working waterfront capstone project, impacting restoration of the Lagoon, Lagoon Education, and lead to restoration of a healthy Working Waterfront. In addition, we see this project accelerating the working use of the waterfront. We especially appreciate the 65,000+ community members, who have been involved with the Restore our Shores program to date.

Our Board Members are very excited to see this project become a reality and are willing to engage in any way we can to help bring the project about. The collaboration of the Florida Forever Working Waterfront Program, with the Brevard County Natural Resources Department, Brevard Zoo Restore our Shores Program, and the Merritt Island Redevelopment Agency, will form a great synergy, making a difference for generations.

After reviewing the location of the properties adjacent to Griffis Landing (at 630 W. Merritt Island Causeway), it is my pleasure to say that the referenced properties are within the Merritt Island Redevelopment Area and this project is in alignment with our Community Redevelopment Plan.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 321-454-6610

Larry J. Lallo
Executive Director, Merritt Island Redevelopment Agency

