

KEEP MARTIN BEAUTIFUL
**Environmental
Stewardship**
Awards 

2026 NOMINATION LIST





Apogee Golf Club

Designed with conservation at its core, Apogee Golf Club features more than 200 acres of lakes that help remove nutrient-laden water from the St. Lucie Canal. This water is stored on site, reused for irrigation, and naturally treated through a carefully designed system of manmade marshes and lakes. This thoughtful water management strategy helps protect local waterways while supporting responsible course maintenance.

Across more than 1,200 acres, Apogee's three 18-hole championship golf courses were intentionally designed around the protection of native habitats. Their development included the relocation of native trees and the restoration of wetlands and marshes, creating thriving spaces for native wildlife species. By prioritizing ecological preservation alongside recreation, Apogee Golf Club demonstrates how large-scale development can coexist with environmental responsibility.

Bryan Buxton, Adopt-A-Road


Bryan has been an active volunteer and lead adoptee of a section of Indian River Drive in Jensen Beach since May 2023. To date, he has logged more than 45 hours across 17 roadside litter cleanups, held every other month for about two hours each, and he shows no sign of slowing down in his mission to keep our community clean and beautiful.


Through his dedication, Bryan has played an important role in reducing litter and promoting environmental responsibility. He regularly gathers friends and family members to join him, turning each cleanup into a shared effort that strengthens both our environment and our sense of community. His commitment helps maintain cleaner roadways, enhance public spaces, and inspire others to take pride in keeping Jensen Beach beautiful.

The Children's Museum of the Treasure Coast, Children's Garden Transformation

In partnership with Sunshine Land Design, the Huizenga Family, Donna Follmer, Marsha Cetta, Home Depot of Jensen Beach, and Pinder's Nursery, the Museum reimaged their Children's Garden into a vibrant outdoor learning environment. The renovation preserved the majestic live oak trees while adding lush landscaping, butterfly-shaped musical instruments, and a new educational amphitheater for outdoor programming.

Interactive signage is being added to teach children about the vital roles of bees, butterflies, and other insects, expanding hands-on environmental education beyond the museum walls. Made possible through \$95,000 in community support, this project reflects an inspiring investment in environmental stewardship and the future of our children.





City of Stuart & Coastal Conservation Association Florida, Vertical Oyster Gardens

Launched in 2024, this collaborative restoration effort installed approximately 300 hanging oyster gardens along the downtown St. Lucie River Riverwalk and fishing pier using recycled oyster shells donated by restaurants across Florida. Volunteers assembled the gardens, creating a nature-based solution that improves water quality and enhances marine habitat.

Each oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day, helping remove pollutants, improve clarity, and support local marine life. Monitoring has shown strong growth, with projections of 50 to 75 new oysters per garden and potential for future expansion into intertidal reef restoration. Through community involvement and innovative design, this project demonstrates the power of partnership in protecting and restoring our local waterways.

Community Redevelopment Agency, City of Stuart Gateway & District Signage

Designed to create a true sense of arrival along NE and SE Federal Highway and S. Kanner Highway, the project introduced a cohesive family of gateway, downtown, and district signs that reflect the vibrancy and coastal identity of our community. Through three public surveys conducted between 2021 and 2022, residents overwhelmingly selected the “Wave” themed concept, inspired by movement, flow, and our natural surroundings.


With completed designs for eight gateway and district signs and additional monument-style welcome markers underway, the project enhances key entry corridors while blending artistic expression with environmental sensibility.

More than signage, this initiative strengthens community identity, beautifies public spaces, and demonstrates how thoughtful design can elevate everyday infrastructure into lasting civic art.

Community Redevelopment Agency, Traffic Box Wrap Program

This innovative initiative transforms standard traffic signal control boxes into vibrant works of public art that celebrate the natural beauty, waterways, and historic character of the City of Stuart. As a pilot program, the CRA partnered with a local professional photographer to capture imagery that reflects the community’s environmental identity and sense of place.

Twelve traffic control boxes within the CRA district were wrapped with nature inspired designs, enhancing neighborhood corridors and promoting environmental awareness through everyday infrastructure. Completed in Spring 2025, the program stands as a lasting example of how art, stewardship, and civic pride can come together to beautify and inspire our community.





Ed Griffith of The Hutchinson Shores Resort and Spa

Under Ed's care, the resort is a proud 3 Palm Certified property through Florida's Green Lodging Program, integrating responsible practices across daily operations, including LED lighting, water conservation systems, recycling programs, native landscaping, and energy efficient equipment. These efforts significantly reduce energy and water consumption while maintaining a high quality guest experience.

Ed also actively supports Keep Martin Beautiful by hosting sponsorship events and organizing beach cleanups, further demonstrating hands on environmental leadership. The resort is now pursuing the Leave No Trace Gold Standard Designation, reinforcing its commitment to education, conservation, and protecting natural resources for future generations.

Through measurable action and continued innovation, Ed Griffith and Hutchinson Shores Resort exemplify true environmental stewardship.

Fritz Ayers, Conchy Joe's Waterfront Restaurant Restoration Project

The project introduced an elevated riverwalk along scenic Indian River Drive, enhanced with native landscaping that supports local ecosystems. Critical drainage improvements were also completed, preventing harmful discharges into the Indian River Lagoon and improving water quality.

Fritz authorized the use of innovative green infrastructure techniques, including bioswales and a living shoreline with sustainable mangrove plantings. These features create valuable shoreline habitat while helping protect Indian River Drive from erosion.


Designed by Lucido & Associates and reviewed by Martin County Environmental and Public Works Departments, this project demonstrates how thoughtful redevelopment can strengthen both our environment and our community.

Jay Mann of Martin County Environmental Resources, Prescribed Fire Program

Jay oversees carefully planned prescribed burns that restore pine flatwoods, scrub, and other fire dependent ecosystems, reducing hazardous underbrush while promoting healthy regrowth and biodiversity. By returning nutrients to the soil and improving wildlife habitat, these science-based burns strengthen the health and resilience of our natural areas.

As a certified prescribed burn boss, Jay evaluates weather, fuel conditions, and site factors to ensure every burn is conducted safely and effectively, protecting both conservation lands and





nearby communities from uncontrolled wildfires. He works closely with the Florida Forest Service, combining local restoration goals with statewide fire management expertise.

Through skill, leadership, and collaboration, Jay helps preserve Martin County's natural heritage for future generations.

Jessica Garland and Lauren Theis of Martin County's Environmental Resources Division, The Boo McCulley Artificial Reef

The Boo McCulley Artificial Reef, completed by Martin County's Environmental Resources Division on November 18, 2025 under the leadership of Coastal Manager Jessica Garland and Coastal Coordinator Lauren Theis.

In partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the County transformed a 227 foot former cargo freighter into a thriving artificial reef at the federally permitted Sirotkin Reef Site, nine miles offshore in nearly 150 feet of water. The vessel was carefully cleaned, prepared, and scuttled by Resolve Marine, ensuring it would serve as safe and sustainable marine habitat.


Named in honor of John "Boo" McCulley, a dedicated contributor to Martin County's Artificial Reef Program, the reef supports coral and sponge growth, attracts fish and invertebrates, strengthens local fisheries, and enhances recreational diving and fishing opportunities.

This project reflects Martin County's continued commitment to restoration, coastal resilience, and protecting marine ecosystems for future generations.

Jessica Garland of Martin County Public Works Department, MacArthur Blvd Improvement Shoreline Armoring

Facing severe erosion and repeated storm damage, the Martin County Public Works Department, led by Jessica Garland, constructed an engineered seawall buried beneath the natural dune line to preserve the beauty of the beach while strengthening shoreline protection. Designed below sea level to refract and dissipate wave energy, the structure reduces the impact of storms, king tides, and rough surf while protecting critical infrastructure behind the dune.

By stabilizing the shoreline and minimizing the need for emergency sand replacement, the project safeguards the reef, tidal pools, and safe public access that make Bathtub Reef Beach so treasured. Even after hurricanes and challenging winter conditions, the beach has remained open and accessible, demonstrating the effectiveness of this thoughtful, nature sensitive approach. This project ensures this beloved shoreline can be enjoyed for generations to come.





Jessica Namath, State Park Advocacy

Jessica founded Floridians for Public Lands, building a grassroots movement of more than 49,000 supporters to oppose the development proposal of a golf course in Johnathan Dickinson State Park. Her efforts helped drive legislative change that resulted in the Florida State Parks Protection Act.

Through organized outreach, public education, collaboration with environmental partners, and consistent engagement with elected officials, Jessica helped elevate the issue from a local proposal to a broader conversation about the future of Florida's state parks. The movement emphasized transparency, environmental review, and the long term value of preserving natural landscapes for recreation, wildlife habitat, and water protection.

Julie Boynton, Tropical Charms


Julie Boynton, Age 9, started her own business called Tropical Charms this year. She finally got her first pair of Croc sandals and wanted to decorate them like all the other kids did. When she started shopping for the Gibbitz (Croc decorations) she said " These are all just tiny pieces of plastic that will end up in the ocean!" She had the idea to create Croc charms from things found in the ocean, and Tropical Charms was born.


She uses sea glass, tiny shells and stones that she finds on the beaches here and in the Bahamas to create beautiful Croc charms. She also educates her customers on ocean plastic pollution and thanks them for supporting and eco-friendly business. She recently participated in the Young Entrepreneurs fair at the Environmental Studies Center. She is not only learning about starting a business but also helping to educate people so maybe they will stop and think about their plastic purchases and how they can affect the world around them.

City of Stuart, Stormwater Calendar

The City of Stuart is uniquely connected to the St. Lucie River, Indian River Lagoon, and the nearby Atlantic Ocean, where stormwater runoff flows directly into sensitive waterways without treatment. Recognizing the importance of protecting water quality, wildlife, and public health, the City produces a biannual stormwater education calendar to guide residents in reducing pollution and flooding throughout the year. Each edition highlights practical, seasonal actions such as responsible fertilizer use in the spring and proper disposal of leaves and yard waste in the fall.

By translating environmental requirements into clear, actionable steps, the calendar strengthens community awareness and supports compliance with MS4 stormwater regulations. This proactive initiative empowers residents to take part in safeguarding local waterways while promoting long term environmental health and resilience.





Florida Oceanographic Society's Krista McCoy & Research Team, Halodule Wrightii Genome Sequencing


Florida Oceanographic Society proudly nominates Krista McCoy & Research Team for becoming the first in the world to fully sequence and annotate the genome of shoal grass, *Halodule Wrightii*. In collaboration with CD Genomics, the team completed the first ever Hi C genomic sequencing of this vital native seagrass species. This breakthrough provides a comprehensive view of the plant's genetic structure, allowing scientists to identify genes linked to resilience, stress tolerance, and adaptation to changing environmental conditions.

By comparing the genetic profiles of surviving seagrass from past restoration projects in the Indian River Lagoon to their original parent populations, researchers can now determine which genes are associated with survival during die off events. This knowledge will support the creation of a living gene bank and guide targeted restoration using more resilient genotypes in vulnerable areas. The shoal grass genome will serve as a reference for future studies, including testing individual plants for tolerance to heat, low light, and other stressors. Through innovation and scientific leadership, Florida Oceanographic is advancing conservation strategies that will strengthen coastal ecosystems along the Treasure Coast and beyond.

Martin County Forever, Conservation Lands Acquisition Tax Referendum Campaign

Martin County Forever, led by Jim Snedeker, spearheaded the grassroots campaign to place the 2024 half cent sales tax referendum for conservation on the Martin County ballot. With a clear mission to preserve the natural beauty, ecological health, and water quality of Martin County, the organization mobilized residents, partnered with local conservation groups, and worked alongside County staff to build informed community support. Through outreach, education, and coalition building, Martin County Forever elevated conservation as a countywide priority and inspired voters to take action.

Their leadership and persistence resulted in the referendum passing by a significant majority, establishing a dedicated funding source for future land acquisition and protection. This achievement represents one of the most impactful citizen led conservation efforts in Martin County's history. By creating a clear path to preservation, Jim Snedeker and Martin County Forever have empowered the community to protect the landscapes that define the region's quality of life for generations to come.





Martin County Environmental Resources, Twin Rivers Living Shoreline


Martin County Environmental Resources department completed the Twin Rivers Park Living Shoreline project in March 2025, a model of resilient and environmentally responsible shoreline protection. The project blends ecological restoration with smart engineering to address erosion, wave impacts, and habitat loss while safeguarding public infrastructure and parkland. Coastal Manager Jessica Garland and Coastal Coordinator Lauren Theis guided the effort from planning through construction, providing technical expertise and steady leadership throughout the process.

Working in partnership with Taylor Engineering and Dickerson Infrastructure, the department oversaw the installation of rock revetment and sand fill for stabilization, offshore breakwaters to reduce wave energy, and extensive mangrove and native plantings to restore natural shoreline function. By prioritizing a living shoreline approach over traditional hardened structures, the project delivers long term resilience while preserving the natural beauty of this treasured waterfront. The result is a stronger, more sustainable shoreline that improves habitat, enhances water quality, and protects a beloved public space for generations to come.

Martin County Board of County Commissioners, Land Acquisition Program

Martin County Board of County Commissioners is nominated for establishing and advancing the Martin County Land Acquisition Program following voter approval of the 2024 half cent sales tax for conservation. Expected to generate more than 180 million dollars over the next decade, the program is dedicated to protecting water quality, preserving wildlife habitat, safeguarding drinking water sources, and maintaining the natural landscapes that define Martin County's character. Guided by four priority areas including the Indian River Lagoon watershed, Loxa Lucie, Pal Mar, and Blueways, the County has implemented a clear and transparent process for identifying and evaluating high value conservation lands.

Working in partnership with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection through its Florida Forever Program, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services through its Rural and Family Lands Program, and Martin County Forever, the County ensures each property is carefully assessed for habitat quality, connectivity, and long term management value. The Environmental Lands Oversight Committee provides independent citizen review and recommendations to the Board. Nearly 11,000 acres have already been approved for potential acquisition, including 387 acres secured in Pal Mar and the permanently protected 1,799 acre Bar B Ranch Conservation Easement.





Martin County REALTORS of the Treasure Coast, Adopt-A-Road

Martin County REALTORS of the Treasure Coast are nominated for their dedicated participation in the Adopt-A-Road program. They are responsible for the section of Willoughby Boulevard between Monterey Road and Indian Street. Since adopting their roadway segment in March 2025, the organization has completed six cleanups for 12 hours and removed an impressive 595 pounds of litter.

Through their consistent efforts, Martin County REALTORS of the Treasure Coast are helping maintain safer, cleaner roadways while demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental stewardship. Their hands on involvement not only improves the appearance and health of this important corridor, but also sets a positive example of civic leadership within the community.

Mattamy Homes, Newfield's Experiential Environmental Education Initiatives


Mattamy Homes' Newfield community is nominated for its meaningful and ongoing partnership with Citrus Grove Elementary School, creating hands on environmental learning opportunities that extend far beyond the classroom. Since 2024, Newfield has supported the school's Go Green Club through annual Arbor Day tree plantings, helping students' plant more than 40 trees within the protected Kiplinger Conservancy at Newfield. The company also enhanced the Martin County School District Reads program by rewarding top student readers with guided educational hikes through the conservancy alongside Harmony Hope Stables, blending literacy, nature, and memorable outdoor experiences.

Mattamy further invested approximately 20,000 dollars in a campus beautification project featuring upgraded irrigation, improved signage, and predominantly native landscaping to create a welcoming and sustainable school entrance. In addition, the company established Martin County's first gopher tortoise recipient site, earning approval from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and inviting students to participate in educational celebrations tied to this important conservation milestone. Through preservation of open space, environmental restoration, and direct student engagement, Mattamy Homes exemplifies corporate stewardship while helping cultivate the next generation of environmental leaders in Martin County.

Martin County Redevelopment Agency, Palm City Place & Patio

Martin County Community Redevelopment Agency is nominated for transforming an underutilized stormwater site into Palm City Place and Patio, a vibrant community destination that now serves as the heart of Palm City. In partnership with Palm City residents, the CRA Board, the Old Palm City Neighborhood Advisory Committee, Martin County Field Operations,






and Parks and Recreation, the project was brought to life with strong support from the District 5 Commissioner and a 395,000 dollar Land and Water Conservation Fund grant approved by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.


What began as a simple community sketch evolved into a thoughtfully designed 20 acre central gathering space featuring scenic walking trails, a freshwater fishing pier, shaded picnic areas, recreational amenities, and a signature Patio Pavilion. A 3,700 linear foot trail winds through a restored Stormwater Treatment Area framed by native landscaping, blending Old Florida character with modern water quality infrastructure. By integrating placemaking, environmental stewardship, and recreation, the CRA has created a welcoming public space that strengthens neighborhood identity and supports continued investment. Palm City Place and Patio now stands as a model of community driven redevelopment and a lasting asset for generations to come.

Michael Yustin & Zach Hughes of Martin County Environmental Resources, Seagrass Restoration

Martin County's Environmental Resources Department (ERD) is nominated for its leadership in advancing innovative, science-driven seagrass restoration efforts that are improving the health and resilience of the region's waterways. Under the guidance of Senior Project Managers Micheal Yustin and Zach Hughes, the County implemented two major restoration initiatives between 2024 and 2025, including the successful planting of 15 acres of seagrass in the St. Lucie Estuary. This effort was supported by restoration pilot studies conducted in collaboration with Tetra Tech Inc. and the Great Florida Shellfish Company, evaluating seagrass planting techniques, water quality, and soil chemistry, while also addressing the impacts of Dapis, a harmful macroalgae common in nutrient-rich estuaries. The project further advanced innovative methods for spawning Lucinid clams, a species that plays a critical role in improving sediment conditions for seagrass growth, while expanded monitoring efforts are providing valuable data to guide future restoration strategies.

Building on this momentum, ERD is also leading a 20 acre seagrass restoration project in the Indian River Lagoon as part of a statewide initiative coordinated by the Ecosphere Restoration Institute and funded through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. With Aquatech providing materials and labor, the County is overseeing permitting and technical coordination to restore 20 of the 100 acres of shoal grass planned across Florida. Together, these efforts are restoring essential marine habitat, improving water clarity, and supporting vital species such as fish and manatees. Through collaboration, innovation, and a strong commitment to long-term environmental health, Martin County's Environmental Resources Department is setting a powerful example of local leadership in coastal restoration and stewardship.





Mike Gonzalez, Adopt-A-Road


Mike Gonzalez, a 2022 Environmental Stewardship Award recipient, continues to exemplify a lasting commitment to protecting and enhancing Martin County's natural beauty. A Jensen Beach native who grew up on Savannah Road, Mike has remained deeply connected to his community through his ongoing participation in the Keep Martin Beautiful Adopt-a-Road program. By adopting and regularly maintaining Savannah Road, he has gone beyond simple volunteerism, demonstrating a consistent, hands-on dedication to keeping local roadways clean and preserving the environment he has long called home.


What sets Mike apart is his ability to turn everyday stewardship into a source of inspiration for others. For years, he has documented each cleanup effort through engaging videos shared on social media, using his platform to raise awareness about litter prevention and promote the Adopt-a-Road program. His enthusiasm and authenticity have encouraged others to get involved, amplifying the impact of his work far beyond a single roadway. Through both action and outreach, Mike continues to lead by example, reinforcing his belief that it is up to each of us to care for and protect Martin County for generations to come.

The Pine School, Florida Panther Skeleton

The Pine School's Honors Florida Environment and History class is nominated for transforming a unique educational opportunity into a powerful, hands-on conservation experience centered around the skeletal remains of a Florida panther known as FP 250, or "Tres." After receiving state authorization and the prepared skeleton from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, students stepped into the role of forensic scientists, carefully cleaning, studying, and assembling the remains. Tres's story, including his survival of a severe car accident, complex surgeries, and eventual reintroduction into the wild, deeply resonated with students. His tragic death just nine months later during a territorial dispute provided a sobering look at the real challenges facing this endangered species. Evidence preserved on the skeleton, including puncture wounds and a broken canine, allowed students to analyze and better understand the realities of wildlife survival.

Beyond the lab work, the project expanded into a multidisciplinary exploration of conservation, culture, and history. Students researched panther habitats, analyzed tracking data, studied a pre-Columbian panther artifact, and read *Cat Tale* by Craig Pittman to deepen their understanding. Demonstrating creativity and teamwork, they even used ceramics to recreate missing bones, completing the skeletal display that now serves as an impactful educational tool. Through this immersive experience, students not only gained scientific knowledge but also became advocates for conservation, using Tres's story to educate others and inspire action to protect Florida's wildlife.





River Kidz, Ongoing Youth Stewardship


River Kidz of Martin County is nominated for its ongoing commitment to community engagement, youth leadership, and environmental stewardship, led by a dedicated group of young advocates including Eleanor Kniffin, Hazel Kniffin, Finley Doré, Maisie Doré, Zoe Glover, and Asher Glover. Over the past two years, these students have played an active role in advancing waterway protection and conservation education throughout Martin County. They have participated in public policy discussions, including speaking before the Martin County Board of County Commissioners in support of land conservation initiatives and raising awareness about the impacts of Lake Okeechobee discharges. Their advocacy has extended to regional efforts, representing River Kidz at a press conference in Stuart in support of protecting Jonathan Dickinson State Park and participating in community rallies focused on preserving the health of the Indian River Lagoon.


In addition to their advocacy work, River Kidz members have demonstrated a strong commitment to education and hands-on stewardship. They co-presented at the Indian River Lagoon Forum, sharing youth-driven perspectives on lagoon restoration and the importance of community collaboration, while also earning recognition for leadership in topics such as ethical fishing. Beyond the classroom, they have participated in extensive cleanups following recent storms, helped create oyster gardens to improve water quality in the St. Lucie River, and supported local conservation efforts through volunteerism and outreach. Through their passion, action, and ability to inspire others, River Kidz exemplifies how empowered youth can make a lasting impact on the environmental future of Martin County.

Todd Warren, State Champion Black Mangrove

Martin County is home to Florida's new State Champion Black Mangrove, a remarkable native tree officially verified as the largest of its kind in the state. This discovery began with the Martin County Public Works Field Operations team, whose tree experts noticed the impressive size of a mangrove along the boardwalk near Bathtub Beach. Suspecting it might be record-breaking, the team partnered with Senior Forester Michelle Danielson of the Florida Forest Service to conduct official measurements. With a circumference of 233 inches, a height of 35 feet, and a 31.5-foot crown spread, this mangrove surpassed the previous state record, highlighting both its ecological significance and the success of ongoing conservation efforts to protect coastal and estuarine habitats.

Beyond its impressive size, the State Champion Black Mangrove represents the resilience and importance of native Florida ecosystems. These trees stabilize shorelines, improve water quality, support fisheries, and provide critical habitat for countless species. By identifying, documenting, and celebrating this tree, Martin County is raising awareness about the value of mangrove





ecosystems and the importance of conserving them for future generations. The project demonstrates effective collaboration between County staff and the Florida Forest Service while inspiring public interest and engagement. This champion tree stands as a living testament to Martin County's dedication to environmental stewardship, public education, and the preservation of unique natural assets.

Young Friends of the Everglades, The Everglades Edudome Experience

Since 1969, Friends of the Everglades, founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas, has been a leading force for environmental protection in Florida through science, education, and advocacy. Its youth program, Young Friends of the Everglades, provides free in-house field trips, classroom resources, scholarships, and mentorship to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. With support from Impact100 Martin, the organization recently launched the Everglades Edudome Experience, an immersive 360-degree, planetarium-style program that brings Martin County students on a virtual journey through the Everglades, complemented by interactive lessons and local field trip opportunities. Reaching schools and community audiences alike, and available for broader public viewing online and at events, the Edudome Experience deepens understanding of clean water issues, restoration efforts, and Martin County's vital connection to the Greater Everglades.

