Agenda Report

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way
Viera, FL 32940

Resolution/Award/Presentation

C.6. 1/12/2026

Subject:

Presentation - Economic Impact of the Indian River Lagoon - Chris Peterson, St. Johns River Water Management District Member

Fiscal Impact:

Dept/Office:

Requested Action:

Summary Explanation and Background:

Clerk to the Board Instructions:

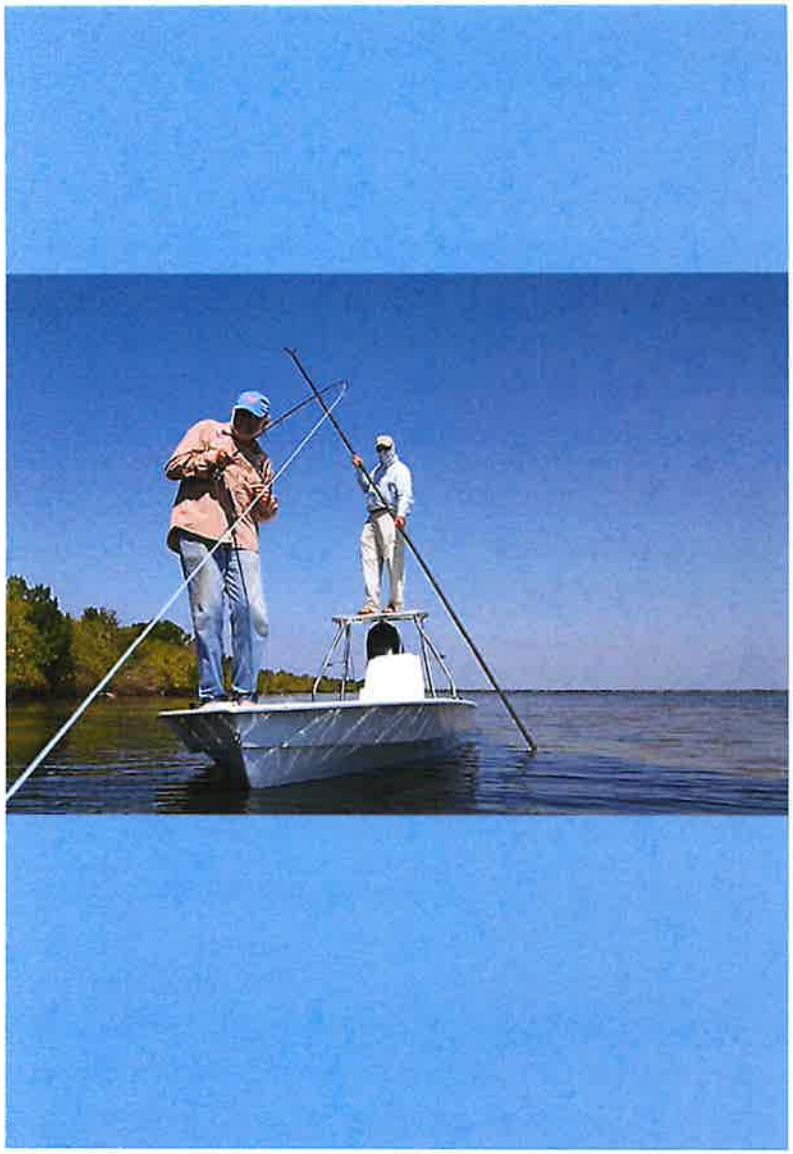
The Business of Water

Chris Peterson

HELL'S BAY BOATWORKS

Chris Peterson

President, Hell's Bay Boatworks
Titusville, Florida



Economic Output & Angler Spending

Saltwater recreational fishing alone generates about **$9.2 billion** in economic impact and supports about **88,500** jobs in Florida.

When combined with freshwater fishing, the total is estimated at **$13.8 billion** and about **120,000** jobs across Florida.

Clean Water is Critical to Business

If we do not have clean water, you do not have healthy estuaries, without healthy estuaries you do not have good fisheries, without healthy fisheries you do not have great fishing and therefore.... nobody needs the "World's Finest Shallow Water, Light Tackle Fishing Skiff"

-Chris Peterson, Hell's Bay Boatworks

Historic Commitment to Water —

From the State Capitol to the Indian River Lagoon

- The FY 2025–26 state budget **includes $1.4 billion** dedicated to ecosystem restoration and water quality.
- The same budget declares that since 2019, Florida has invested **nearly $9 billion** in restoring and protecting the state's waterways.
- In the 2025 -26 budget includes **$600 million** for "targeted water quality improvements and springs protection efforts."

Targeted Estuary Funding

- In the 2025–26 budget, $25 million was allocated for the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) Protection Program for priority water quality projects.
- Also, in that same budget, $382 million is set aside for "expanded Water Quality Improvement Projects" including wastewater, stormwater, septic conversions, etc.

Since 2019, **nearly $390 million** has been invested in lagoon restoration. In the most recent budget, **$100 million** was set aside for water quality projects in the IRL basin — from septic-to-sewer conversions to wastewater treatment upgrades and stormwater retrofits.

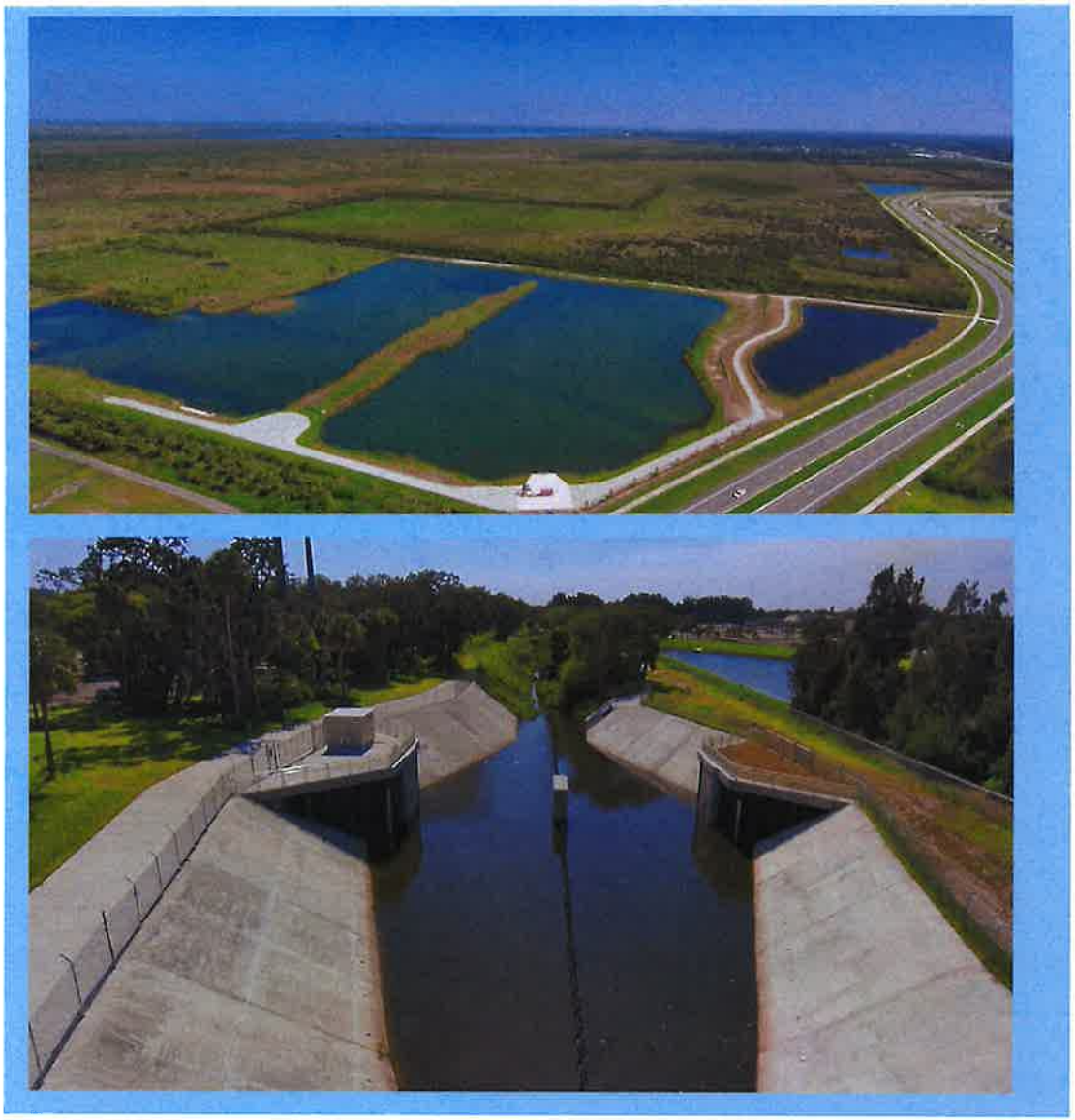
Local Leadership: Brevard County's ½-Cent Sales Tax and the Indian River Lagoon

Through that tax, Brevard County has already:

- Planned and implemented **hundreds** of projects — or put them into progress — all designed to reduce and remove excess nutrients and pollution that undermine the health of the lagoon.
- Reduced and prevented nitrogen and phosphorus from entering the lagoon, with projected annual pollutant reductions measured in hundreds of thousands of pounds once all projects are complete.
- Supported upgrades to septic systems, stormwater improvements, sewer expansions, and innovative approaches to reduce pollutant inputs.

Some of the standout local projects funded through this tax include:

- **Crane Creek M-1 restoration**
- **Installation of baffle boxes and stormwater treatment facilities**
- **Installation of Living shoreline**



Crane Creek /
M-1 Canal Flow Restoration Project

Titusville Causeway Multi-Trophic Restoration and Living Shoreline

Local investment is not separate from state funding.

It is the key that unlocks it.

Because of this local investment :

- Brevard County has been able to meet required local match thresholds, often 50 percent or more, for state water-quality grants.
- Projects funded through the Save Our Indian River Lagoon program are structured to align with state priorities, making them eligible for funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Water Management Districts.
- Every local dollar invested through the half-cent sales tax has been leveraged to attract additional state dollars, multiplying the impact well beyond what local funding alone could achieve.

Florida's Water is Florida's Soul