

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON Update

Quarterly newsletter of the
Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program

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About the photo

Live oak hammocks and ferns comprise some of the 187 acres of a Lagoon Greenway project being developed in Vero Beach.



Ken Grudens

Lagoon greenway project moving forward

Wooded hiking trails, a raised boardwalk and riverfront paths are all part of a plan for a 187-acre setting in Vero Beach.

Ground could be broken later this year on the "Lagoon Greenway" site, an amalgam of contiguous properties along the Indian River Lagoon owned by the Florida Inland Navigation District, Indian River Land Trust, Indian River County, St. Johns River Water Management District and a private developer.

The greenway will run along a one-mile stretch of the lagoon's western shore, beginning about one-half mile south of the western end of the 17th Street Bridge, and continuing south to wetlands located behind Vista Royale and McKee Botanical Garden.

"I think this project will benefit Indian River County residents and

visitors alike by creating access to the lagoon close to shops and neighborhoods," says Ken Grudens, executive director of the Indian River Land Trust. "There will be miles of walking and bicycling trails and educational opportunities about our environmentally important resources."

The Indian River County Commission in March supported the greenway by committing \$100,000 in recreation impact fees and agreeing to be the lead agency in applying for grants.

"The commission's commitment of funds will be a match to two grants that the Land Trust assisted in submitting, a Florida Inland Navigation District grant and a Recreational Trails Program grant," Grudens says. "The hope is that if we

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Phone: (800) RALLY-22.

Visit us on the Internet at floridaswater.com.

For additional information about the *Indian River Lagoon Update* or the lagoon program, please call Ed Garland, communications specialist, at (321) 676-6612.

Editorial

Beth Hickenlooper, Editor
Susan Glassey, Copy Editor
Jeff Cole, Director of Communications and Governmental Affairs

Text

Ed Garland

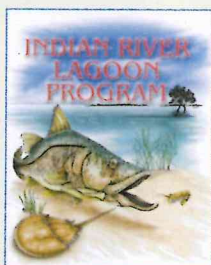
Program Director

Troy Rice
(800) 226-3747

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Lagoon greenway Continued from Page One

get both grants, we could break ground as early as December 2010.”

The Land Trust and the county are jointly coordinating design and development of the greenway, which will ultimately include picnic areas, an elevated boardwalk, observation deck, trails and parking.

The availability of such a large undeveloped area along the lagoon was the result of foresight among various entities. During the 1990s, several properties along the lagoon south of the 17th Street Bridge in Vero Beach were protected from development by a combination of property purchases or with development mitigation easements resulting from projects along Indian River Boulevard. They were protected to conserve the native wetland habitat and buffer the shoreline of the lagoon. These properties are primarily mangrove swamps

ringed by impoundment roads managed by the Indian River County Mosquito Control District for minimizing the mosquito populations of eastern Indian River County.

The mangrove swamps along the lagoon are an important nursery for spawning and early growth stages of a variety of native fish species. They also provide an important natural protection during tropical storms to prevent erosion and destruction of shoreline and nearby structures from wave action, wind and flooding. The swamps harbor a large variety of native plants and wildlife important for maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

Visit the Indian River Land Trust website at irlt.org (click on “Projects” and “Lagoon Greenway”) for more information about the Lagoon Greenway.