



Winter 2016

# Landmarks

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## Land Water Wildlife A Benefit to Care for Our Lagoon

Nearly 400 supporters gathered at Rock City Gardens on a warm November night for one of the first events of the Vero Beach season. Together, friends and neighbors celebrated to raise funds for conserving and protecting OUR Indian River Lagoon. During the buffet dinner, Land Trust guests were entertained by the Sebastian High School Choral Department's Encores, a group of 14 girls who performed four well-polished classics for the crowd. The performance was followed by a live auction, professionally called by County Commissioner and auctioneer, Wesley Davis. The auction raised more than \$80,000 to directly support the establishment of a trailhead entrance, a waterfront pavilion and a mangrove forest boardwalk along a multi-use trail on more than 165 acres of pristine coastal wetlands known as Oyster Bar Marsh.

The generous sponsorships and ticket sales for the event netted

\$148,000 for IRLT's continuing operations. Ann Taylor, Director of Marketing and Philanthropy and coordinator of the event, remarked, "it was the most well-attended benefit in 12 years and netted more than any other year." She owes the financial success to the increased support of numerous sponsors, led by presenting sponsors Orin and Stephanie Smith (see page inside for a complete list). The Benefit Committee Co-Chairs, Kathleen Schulke and Lee Moore, were delighted by the success of the event. They were appreciative of the entire Committee, and quite pleased with the highly imaginative creative table center-pieces created by Monti from Monti's Flower Market. Honorary Chairs Bill and Laura Buck and Virginia and Warren Schwerin were delighted with the turnout and the delicious dinner. As always, the Board and staff appreciate the community's support and everyone is looking forward to the Benefit in 2016!





Rendering of waterfront pavilion by Moor, Baker & Associates, Architects, P.A.



Newly opened view of Clive Hinton Creek at Bee Gum Point.

## Oyster Bar Marsh Trail Gains Traction

South Vero Beach will soon have a new coastal trail system. The Indian River Land Trust has been acquiring key parcels of land on a 165-acre peninsula south of the Moorings, north of Round Island Park in order to establish a two-mile coastal trail for residents to enjoy. IRLT has been working with several landowners to either sell or donate their land to provide access along the Lagoon for walking, jogging, and bicycling. One such landowner, Susan Hopkins and her children, Adam Baslow and Jessica Nowak, generously donated their 2.6-acre parcel to the Land Trust. Susan, the daughter of the late Vero Beach philanthropist, Dan Richardson, is following in her father's footsteps with her very generous donation. Susan commented, "The Land Trust is doing a great thing for the public. I wanted to contribute my family's part to this important project."

The project will include an old-Florida style trailhead and parking area, an over-the-water pavilion and a boardwalk through a mangrove forest. In November, IRLT raised over \$80,000 toward the project during a live auction at its Annual Benefit. Executive Director, Ken Grudens, said, "These funds are a tremendous start for getting this project off the ground." Grudens plans to meet with the County Commission to partner on this trail project much like the Lagoon Greenway on Indian River Boulevard. The County previously acquired more than 96 acres of the Oyster Bar peninsula more than 10 years ago with an eye toward establishing the trail. With the Land Trust in the picture, this is certain to happen now.

## Winter Beach Salt Marsh Restoration

In October, 2015, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program awarded a \$60,000 grant to the Indian River Land Trust for the restoration of the 45-acre Winter Beach Salt Marsh. The primary goal of this important project is to restore and expand the remaining coastal salt marsh environment found on the property by restoring the hydrologic connectivity between the diminishing salt marsh and the Indian River Lagoon. This will, in turn, increase the diversity of fish and wildlife along the Lagoon and bolster habitat for threatened species such as the federally endangered wood stork. The Winter Beach Salt Marsh Restoration Project will be completed in four phases. Phase I will include hydrologic mapping, engineering design, and permitting in year one. Phase II includes exotic plant control, and Phase III focuses on restoring wetland hydrology. Phases II and III should be completed within six months. Phase IV, ecological monitoring, will continue for three years following completion of restoration activities.

The total projected cost for the project equals \$120,000. The \$60,000 awarded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will go toward completion of Phases I, II and III of the project. The Indian River Land Trust has committed \$60,000 to the project including \$40,000 in cash and \$20,000 in-kind as staff time.





Culverts ready to be installed.

# Bee Gum Hydrologic Restoration

The practice of impounding coastal wetlands for mosquito control in Florida began in the early 1940's. As was the case with Bee Gum Point, impoundments were constructed along the edge of the mangroves to build a perimeter dike. The dikes were designed to impound higher than normal water levels, disrupting the mosquito life cycle. Unfortunately, the impoundment method of mosquito control, while effective as a public health measure, can have negative effects on the Lagoon's ecology. The composition of plant species within estuarine swamps is reduced by the unnatural hydroperiods imposed by the management of the water level. Water quality within an impoundment is often lower. Additionally, the breeding habitat for coastal species normally provided by the wetlands is significantly altered by impoundments.

One of the primary objectives of the Land Trust when it acquired the 111-acre Bee Gum Point was to increase the fish and bird habitat by increasing connectivity with the adjacent Lagoon. At the time the property was acquired, a single culvert provided the only hydrologic connection between Bee Gum Point and the Indian River Lagoon. In order to improve water quality and the function of the wetland as nursery grounds for estuarine species and foraging areas for wading birds, six additional culverts were recently installed. Culverts were located where historic tidal creeks intersect with the perimeter dike in order to provide the greatest ecological benefit. Two more culverts will be installed in the spring. Land Trust staff are observing improved ecosystem functions as a result of a more naturalized tidal flow provided by the new culverts.

## Fish Study

The Indian River Land Trust, Florida Institute of Technology, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, and IRLT's Ladies of the Lagoon giving circle of 54 women are partnering to examine the effects of wetland management on juvenile sport fish (e.g., tarpon, snook, redfish). The Bee Gum Point Nature Preserve has remained minimally connected to the Indian River Lagoon for decades. In spite of this, young sport fish regularly found their way in. The lack of connectivity makes it difficult for them to leave this nursery habitat when they are ready to enter the Lagoon proper. Using tiny Passive Integrated Transponder tags and monitoring antennas, we are tracking their emigration through several recently installed culverts. We will correlate this movement in relation to several parameters to determine when connectivity is most beneficial for these species of fish during the year. This may allow managers to simultaneously manage wetlands to limit mosquitos while facilitating sport fish production.



Florida Tech scientists collecting fisheries data.





# The Board and Staff of the Land Trust

Would like to thank the sponsors of the annual benefit  
Land Water Wildlife: Caring for Our Lagoon

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## To protect wildlife, consider other sites for cell tower

The Indian River Land Trust fully supports the installation of a cell tower in the Town of Indian River Shores to provide residents and visitors with reliable cell service. However, we believe it is extremely important that town leaders constructively and thoughtfully consider all options and factors, including reception reliability and environmental impacts, in its deliberations on where best to place a tower.

It is well established that the construction of towers close to important bird habitat, such as that found on Bee Gum Point, can significantly impact the birds using these natural areas.

The Indian River Land Trust owns and manages the 111-acre Bee Gum Point Nature Preserve in Indian River Shores. The primary purpose for purchasing Bee Gum Point was to protect and enhance the important habitat for wetland dependent residents and migratory birds. Comprised of environmentally sensitive coastal wetlands and containing a mile of Indian River Lagoon shoreline, its protection supports the major objectives of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. That is why the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported the preservation of Bee Gum Point by providing a \$1 million grant toward its acquisition in 2011.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act was enacted in 1989 in an effort to provide matching grants to carry out wetlands conservation projects across the United States, Canada and Mexico for the benefit of wetlands associated migratory birds and other wildlife. The act conserves North America's waterfowl, fish and wildlife resources while producing a variety of environmental and economic benefits. Its success is driven by partnerships involving federal, state and local governments, and nonprofit organizations like the Land Trust.

Many of the bird species at Bee Gum Point

include state or federally-listed species. More than 135 species of birds have been documented using this preserve, including the federally threatened wood stork. Many birds use this sanctuary to feed and rest as they migrate along the Treasure Coast and beyond on the well-documented Atlantic Flyway. Others nest there and live on the preserve year-round.

The proliferation of new cell towers and studies conducted by wildlife biologists have brought the issue of avian (bird) collision mortality to the attention of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is estimated that as much as 90 percent of bird mortality could be avoided by implementing simple conservation measures such as considering the location of towers with regard to bird concentration areas.

Indian River Shores and other coastal towns in the region can help achieve better protection of migratory and endangered birds by following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines when considering the location of a new communication tower. Specifically, the guidelines state towers should not be sited in or near wetlands, other known bird concentration areas, in known migratory or daily movement flyways, or in habitat of threatened or endangered species. Additionally, the guidelines state if significant numbers of breeding, feeding or roosting birds are known to habitually use the proposed tower construction area, relocation to an alternate site should be recommended.

The Indian River Land Trust is encouraging Indian River Shores to continue to protect our local wildlife by constructing a tower at other proposed sites that would have less of an impact on birds and wildlife, rather than next to the critical coastal wetlands of the Bee Gum Point Nature Preserve.

## Engage Participate and Learn!

### Upcoming Land Trust Events – Available Free of Charge:

*There is no need to RSVP (except as noted)*

*Please check our website for weather cancellations prior to the event.*

*Questions? Call the office: 772-794-0701*

#### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY -**

**Tuesdays in February, meet at 8:30 am**

Join us every Tuesday for a couple of hours to help eliminate invasive plants and maintain trails at the Lagoon Greenway.

**First and Third Wednesdays in February, meet at 8:30 am**

Join us the first and third Wednesday for a couple of hours to help eliminate invasive plants and maintain trails at the Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail.

#### **BIRDING -**

**Bee Gum Point:  
February 13 and March 12 - 7:00 am**

Amateurs and experienced birders are invited to grab a cup of coffee and head to the Land Trust's conservation land for a morning walk.

#### **CONSERVATION TOUR -**

**Bee Gum Point:  
February 24 and March 23 9:00 am**

Situated on the Atlantic Flyway, this 111-acre property is part of an important block of conservation lands acquired by the Land Trust along the Indian River Lagoon.

#### **CONSERVATION TOUR -**

**Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail:  
February 6 - 1:00 pm**

This 50-acre block of conservation lands contains oak trees, scrub forest, mangroves, and beautiful views of the Indian River Lagoon.

#### **CONSERVATION TOUR -**

**Lagoon Greenway:  
February 12, February 26 and March 18 - 9:00 am**

This exciting property boasts an ecologically diverse three-mile trail system for hiking, jogging or bike riding.



*Check our website [www.irlt.org](http://www.irlt.org) for more great events!*

If you are interested in volunteering, there are opportunities both in the office and on the land. Look on our Website ([irlt.org](http://irlt.org)) or Contact us

**772.794.0701.**



**Saturday February 27, 2016**

Race Begins at 7:30 a.m.

**Lagoon Greenway**

Only Trail Run in Vero Beach

Proceeds to benefit the Indian River Land Trust

- Course Begins and ends at IRLT Lagoon Greenway
- Professionally timed by Runner's Depot

Entry Fee: \$25 in advance  
\$35 on race day  
T-Shirts guaranteed to the first 125 registered

**FOR INFORMATION and to REGISTER**

**Stop by Runners Depot  
or visit [RunnersDepotvb.com](http://RunnersDepotvb.com)**



## The Lagoon Is a Reflection of us...

The Indian River Land Trust has protected over 950 undeveloped acres, including nine miles of shoreline along the Indian River Lagoon. More work is needed to restore the fish and wildlife habitats of the Lagoon – the Cradle of the Ocean.

*Be a part of the Solution – Become a Member – donate today!  
Join us in our efforts to save the Indian River Lagoon.*

Visit: [www.irlt.org](http://www.irlt.org) | Call 772.794.0701

## Special thanks to:

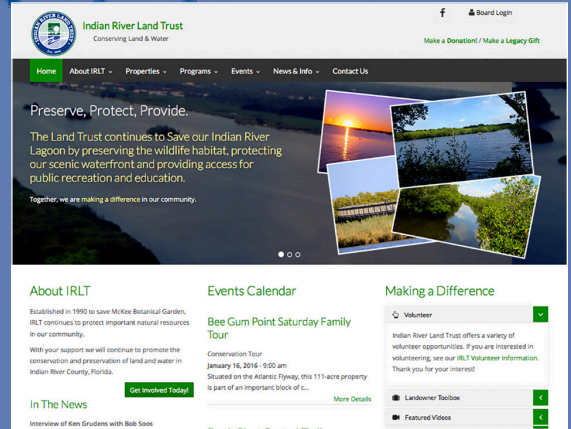
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**Visit our website!**  
For more information on the projects and events described in this newsletter, visit us at [www.irlt.org](http://www.irlt.org).



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