



# Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program

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IRL Council, host agency  
for Indian River Lagoon  
National Estuary Program  
(2021)

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April 26, 2021

ATTENTION: Matt Sexton, Senior Vice President and Southeast Regional Director for Conservation Acquisition, The Conservation Fund.

On February 12, 2021, the IRL Council voted unanimously to support the Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative sponsored by The Guardians of Martin County and the Treasured Lands Foundation contingent on support for the conservation land acquisition project by the Martin County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). The Martin County BOCC endorsed the project on March 9, 2021.

Willing seller-willing buyer land acquisition has been a foundation for Indian River Lagoon watershed conservation and restoration. The Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program (IRLNEP) has been a strong supporter of conservation land acquisition since the creation of the IRLNEP in 1990. Land conservation through fee-simple or less than fee simple agreements is one of 31 Vital Signs of Lagoon health identified in the IRL Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan adopted by the IRL Council and IRLNEP in 2019.

The Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative envisions a protected ecological corridor that will connect the sources of the Loxahatchee River and St. Lucie River. The IRL Council and IRLNEP support that vision. If acquired, the combined properties would form a conservation area for plant and wildlife, connecting a land mass of nearly 70,000 acres for conservation.

This initiative is a complex, multi-year project that begins with a Phase 1 acquisition of a 138-acre parcel that has been for sale for several years. Acquiring this anchor parcel of land at fair market value and successful completion of future acquisitions will protect water quality, wetland hydrology and species, expand public access to nature, enhance local economies and quality of life. It will also help address saltwater intrusion into surficial aquifer wells, protect the portion of the Loxahatchee River that has been designated by the federal government as a Wild and Scenic River, and improve coastal resilience.

As this conservation land acquisition initiative moves forward in partnership with The Conservation Fund, please do not hesitate to contact the IRLNEP if we can be of assistance.

Regards,

Duane De Freese, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, IRL Council & Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program