



# ON-THE-GROUND PROJECTS

## Spotlight on Restoring the Mangroves of the Indian River Lagoon

### Project Partners

Marine Resources  
Council of East Florida

US Fish and Wildlife  
Service

Atlantic Coastal Fish  
Habitat Partnership

The Indian River Lagoon is a 156-mile bar-built coastal estuary that covers an area of approximately 3,575 square kilometers. It supports coastal mangrove wetlands, salt marshes, intertidal and subtidal flats, and riparian wetlands and floodplains, which provide important habitat to numerous fish species. Unfortunately, the rate of shoreline and wetland destruction has increased, due to decades of urbanization and the spread of invasive plant species. This project will restore over 10 acres of coastal habitat wetlands to the Lagoon.

The project sites are located in the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent public lands and will involve removing 5 acres of invasive plants and planting over 8,500 linear feet of shoreline with wetland species such as mangroves and *spartina* grass to create new fish nursery habitat. Volunteers will help remove invasives, plant natives, and remove trash and monofilament line for recycling.



**Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge**

A unique aspect of this project is the restoration of mangrove forests, which in addition to providing nursery habitat for commercial and game fish species, are critical to maintaining the overall health of the coastal ecosystem by helping to trap and cycle organic materials, chemical elements, and nutrients. Nearly 80% of mangrove forests have been destroyed or isolated from the Indian River Lagoon, which is significant considering that mangrove forests found in the Lagoon constitute about 20% of the total amount of mangroves found in the eastern United States.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership with conservation dollars to fund numerous components of the project, including the removal of invasives and the purchase and installation of plants. On-the-ground, local level efforts, such as the Restoring the Mangroves of the Indian River Lagoon project, are helping to address regional habitat priorities and coastwide conservation objectives identified by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership.

Project text and photo provided by Marine Resources Council of East Florida.



For more information on the Partnership visit us at:  
[www.atlanticfishhabitat.org](http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org)