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Brevard Zoo Begins Using Seagrass Grown at Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute Nursery

MELBOURNE, Fla., April 4, 2025— Brevard Zoo's Restore Our Shores (ROS) team has begun using seagrass grown at its own nursery in restoration and research projects in the Indian River Lagoon. This nursery was built in partnership with [Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute \(HSWRI\)](#), located in Melbourne Beach in 2023. The funding for this nursery was entrusted to IRLNEP by the EPA thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Seagrass is the basis of a healthy lagoon ecosystem, so long-term, successful reestablishment of this critical resource will benefit the lagoon itself as well as the species that call it home like manatees. As seagrass restoration efforts continue in the lagoon, there was a need to increase available seagrass stock, making this nursery important.

The nursery currently grows *Halodule wrightii*, or shoal grass under the care of our ROS team and volunteers. We'll be using our nursery-grown seagrass for the first time in the lagoon in a research project investigating potential interactions between the macro algae *Caulerpa prolifera* and shoal grass.

"This project is important to better understand the relationship between *Halodule wrightii* and *Caulerpa prolifera*, so that we can more effectively choose sites for restoration efforts," said Vonn Schneider, Conservation Restoration Coordinator with ROS.

This project was funded through the Florida Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative administered by Mote Marine Laboratory through the Florida

Department of Environmental Protection and implemented by the zoo, University of Central Florida and the Florida Institute of Technology.

The shoal grass shoots were planted in two experimental beds at a site in Palm Shores, the first of three sites selected for this 2025 project. All three sites will use seagrass grown at the zoo's nursery. The ROS team along with a team from UCF will monitor these sites for the next year.

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Brevard Zoo is home to more than 800 animals representing 170 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at [BrevardZoo.org](https://www.brevardzoo.org).

HSWRI (www.hswri.org) is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) research organization founded in 1963 "to return to the sea some measure of the benefits derived from it." Its areas of inquiry are marine ecology, physiology, bioacoustics and aquaculture. Based in San Diego with facilities in Melbourne Beach, FL and Carlsbad, CA, HSWRI's unique contributions are due in part to access to SeaWorld's extensive marine zoological collection, a close association with local universities and highly respected scientific staff.