



# The Florida Senate

## Local Funding Initiative Request

### Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2327

1. **Project Title**
2. **Senate Sponsor**
3. **Date of Request**

**4. Project/Program Description**

Bottlenose dolphins in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) are facing unprecedented threats, and urgent action is needed to safeguard these iconic creatures and the fragile ecosystem they depend on. More than 90% of northern IRL dolphins are currently underweight or emaciated, including 97% of female dolphins with dependent calves (Durden et al. 2023). Dolphin interactions with fishermen and entanglement in fishing line are also increasing, stressing overburdened marine mammal response teams. To address this unprecedented situation, Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute (HSWRI) is requesting support to enhance marine mammal first responder capacity, accelerate water quality and habitat restoration, and conduct targeted public outreach to increase support for restoration initiatives. A related Community Project Funding request supported by Congressman Posey was included in the FY24 U.S. House Appropriations Bill, which is pending review by the House of Representatives.

5. **State Agency to receive requested funds**
- State Agency contacted?**

**6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2024-2025**

Type of Funding	Amount
Operations	784,241
Fixed Capital Outlay	200,891
<b>Total State Funds Requested</b>	<b>985,132</b>

**7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (including matching funds available for this project)**

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	985,132	64%
<b>Matching Funds</b>		
Federal	440,000	28%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	122,822	8%
<b>Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2024-2025</b>	<b>1,547,954</b>	<b>100%</b>

8. **Has this project previously received state funding?**

Fiscal Year (yyyy-yy)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		

9. **Is future funding likely to be requested?**
- a. **If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.**
- b. **Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.**
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## Local Funding Initiative Request

### Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2327

10. Has the entity requesting this project received any federal assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

If yes, indicate the amount of funds received and what the funds were used for.

HSWRI received two SBA Payroll Protection Program loans of \$533,800 that were 100% forgiven on 01/11/21 and 11/18/21 respectively. HSWRI also received two Employee Retention Tax Credits (\$149,993 for Q2 2020 and \$232,688 for Q2 2021) to pay employee nonfederal wages, related employee benefits, and \$16,188 of utilities costs.

## Complete questions 11 and 12 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

11. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

- Planning    
  Design    
  Construction    
  N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)?

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

12. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

HSWRI will leverage 60 years of experience to provide high-level care for injured and entangled dolphins and to lead public outreach underscoring the urgent need for restoration of IRL habitats. HSWRI will also work with Florida-based commercial aquaculture producers Sea & Shoreline and SEAMRI LLC to build high-capacity seagrass and shellfish nurseries to provide essential seed stock for restoration of habitats critical to dolphins, manatees, and regional fisheries.

13. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
<b>Administrative Costs:</b>		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits	Project administration, accounting, and oversight will be secured by our organization. Project administration will include, but is not limited to, supplying and directing information about the project to the media, local government, and stakeholders.	0
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
<b>Operational Costs: Other</b>		
Salary and Benefits	Three years of programmatic support for one full-time and two part-time project staff for enhanced marine mammal stranding response and prevention to decrease stranding response time, reduce dolphin entanglement in fishing gear, and improve dolphin health assessment with a focus on tracking emerging threats and ecosystem recovery.	518,627



# The Florida Senate

## Local Funding Initiative Request

### Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2327

Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Replace damaged and inoperable equipment to increase marine mammal first responder response capacity. Includes, but is not limited to, a new ultracold freezer to preserve critical diagnostic tissue samples and a new stranding response vessel to decrease marine mammal stranding/injury response time and improve health outcomes.	265,614
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
<b>Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:</b>		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering	Planning, permitting, and construction for critical repairs to the on-site seawall and boat ramp to protect partner restorative aquaculture infrastructure and to transport aquacultured seagrass and shellfish to IRL habitat restoration projects. Leverages \$552,822 in pending matching funds from project partners and FY24 House Community Project Funding (sponsored by Congressman Posey).	200,891
<b>Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)</b>		<b>985,132</b>

#### 14. Program Performance

##### a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?

Goal 1: Strengthen marine mammal response and assessment, including for mass strandings, Unusual Mortality Events, and entanglements in an area with elevated rates of human interaction. Goal 2: Complete required repairs to the Institute's boat ramp, dock, and seawall, and install electrical and potable water service to allow partner-led production and out planting of the nursery-grown seagrass plugs and shellfish seed stock needed for IRL habitat restoration. Goal 3: Conduct targeted outreach emphasizing the urgent need for restoration of IRL habitats and the connection between healthy dolphin populations and a vibrant fishing community.

##### b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

Operational support will increase marine mammal first-responder workforce capacity and improve outcomes for entangled and stranded dolphins. Understanding dolphin health trends and threats will also aid Florida Fish and Wildlife agency stock management and other obligations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). HSWRI will also work with Florida-based commercial aquaculture producers Sea & Shoreline and SEAMRI LLC to build high-capacity seagrass and shellfish nurseries to provide essential seed stock for restoration of habitats critical to dolphins, manatees, and regional fisheries.

##### c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

Direct services to citizens include outreach emphasizing the urgent need for restoration of IRL habitats and the connection between healthy marine mammal populations and a vibrant sportfishing community. We will engage with the sportfishing community through workshops, presentations, and informational placards at prominent fishing locales to increase support for marine conservation efforts, including responsible disposal of entangling fishing line. We will also work directly with Florida-based commercial aquaculture producers Sea & Shoreline and SEAMRI to build and operate high-capacity seagrass and shellfish nurseries to support ongoing IRL restoration efforts.

##### d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

The IRL is a regional economic driver, generating an inflation adjusted \$3.6 billion in lagoon related recreation and commercial fishing. Addressing loss of water quality, degrading habitats, and reoccurring marine mammal mortality events will help to improve and maintain economic conditions on which most residents, businesses, and visitors directly and indirectly depend.

##### e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?



# The Florida Senate

## Local Funding Initiative Request

### Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2327

Enhanced first responder capacity and public outreach to decrease stranding response time, reduce dolphin entanglement in fishing gear, and improve dolphin health assessment with a focus on tracking emerging threats and ecosystem recovery. Accelerated development of high-capacity seagrass and shellfish nurseries to meet surface water quality, habitat restoration, and protected marine mammal management action items identified in IRLNEP 2019 Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (pages 55, 59, and 91). Progress towards outcomes will be measured with quarterly reporting of aquaculture production by project partners, HSWRI effort tracking, and annual dolphin stranding and entanglement reporting of aquacultural production by project partners, HSWRI effort tracking, and annual dolphin stranding and entanglement reporting to NOAA Fisheries.

**f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for the contract?**

Funds for unmet deliverables will be returned to the issuing agency.

**15. Requester Contact Information**

**a. First Name**  **Last Name**

**b. Organization**

**c. E-mail Address**

**d. Phone Number**  **Ext.**

**16. Recipient Contact Information**

**a. Organization**

**b. Municipality and County**

**c. Organization Type**

For Profit Entity

Non Profit 501(c)(3)

Non Profit 501(c)(4)

Local Entity

University or College

Other (please specify)

**d. First Name**  **Last Name**

**e. E-mail Address**

**f. Phone Number**

**17. Lobbyist Contact Information**

**a. Name**

**b. Firm Name**

**c. E-mail Address**

**d. Phone Number**