

# **PALM BEACH COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL TEAM**



**Strategic Planning and Performance Management  
December 15, 2020**

# TEAM



- **Community Revitalization (OCR):** *William Wynn, Houston Tate*
- **Cooperative Extension Service (CES):** *Ron Rice, Laurie Albrecht*
- **Engineering & Public Works (EPW):** *Steve Carrier*
- **Environmental Resources Management (ERM):** *Deb Drum, Mike Stahl*
- **Facilities Development & Operations (FDO):** *Rebecca Dougherty, John Tierney*
- **Palm Tran:** *Sean Smith*
- **Parks & Recreation:** *Greg Atkinson, Dave Farmer*
- **Planning, Zoning & Building (PZB):** *Robert Santos-Alborna, Sussan Gash*
- **Resilience (OOR):** *Megan Houston, Katelyn Cucinotta*
- **Financial Management & Budget (OFMB):** *Ken Nash*
- **Water Resources:** *Jeremy McBryan*
- **Water Utilities (WUD):** *Krystin Berntsen*



# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION GOALS



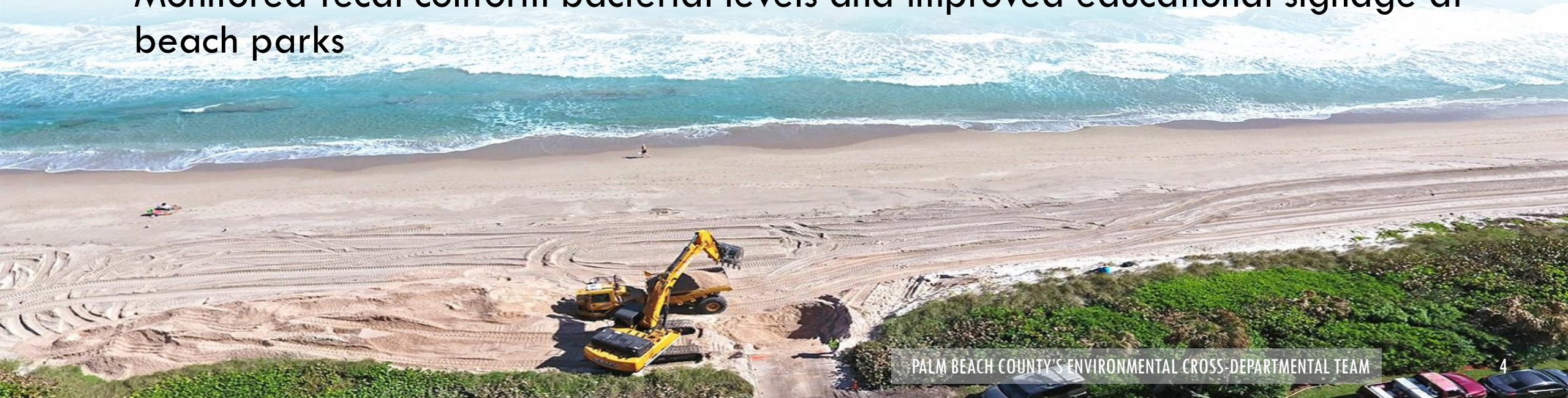
1. Sustain healthy, vibrant beaches
2. Maintain diverse, resilient ecosystems
3. Protect and support human health, safety, water quality and quality of life
4. Ensure positive environmental experiences for residents and visitors
5. Promote sustainable, resilient practices and principles
6. Preserve and enhance our thriving agriculture



# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 1. Sustain healthy, vibrant beaches

- Placed ~3.1 million cubic yards of sand, second only to 2006 for sand volume placement in the County
- Conducted three rounds of regulatory sea turtle lighting inspections, with follow-up visits to achieve compliance
- Monitored fecal coliform bacterial levels and improved educational signage at beach parks





# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 2. Maintain diverse, resilient ecosystems

- Managed PBC Natural Areas (**31,635 acres**) to achieve less than 5% invasive/exotic vegetation coverage
- Actively managed parks and natural areas through inspections, monitoring, exotic plant removal, and prescribed fire
- Hosted green infrastructure training with Earth Economics in October 2019
- Held **joint (Environment and Infrastructure) CDT meeting** to discuss challenges and opportunities for increasing green infrastructure in PBC
- Logged **≈ 8,400 volunteer hours** related to residential horticultural best practices and Florida Friendly Landscaping (FFL) principles
- Completed social media campaign to advertise a multi-county citizen science effort to document the presence of invasive Tegu and Nile Monitor lizards, to coincide with **National Invasive Species Awareness Week**

# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 3. Protect and support human health, safety, water quality and quality of life

- Completed **13 community improvement projects** within Countywide Community Revitalization Team (CCRT) Areas (E.g., community gardens, neighborhood parks, and roadway improvements)
- Formed new **Stormwater Section** to alleviate flooding and to advance County's water quality improvement activities by inspecting, operating/conveying, and maintaining stormwater infrastructure
- Initiated a project to map the County's stormwater infrastructure
- Completed **seven prescribed burns on 540 acres** of natural areas and parks





# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 3. Protect and support human health, safety, water quality and quality of life (continued)

- Installed **three new Lake Worth Lagoon surface water quality monitoring stations** to better assess the ecological health of the Lagoon and any impacts related to freshwater releases
- Inspected private and County-owned facilities for compliance with wellfield protection and petroleum storage tank regulations to protect drinking water and facilitated remediation activities to ensure compliance
- Developed new parks/features to increase park acreage-to-resident ratio
- Completed Community Development Block Grant, which funded **improvements to three County parks** (Canal Point and Westgate)
- Continued greening efforts at County Parks (LED lighting, septic-to-sewer conversions, bioswales, water reuse, irrigation well conversions)

# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 4. Ensure positive environmental experiences for residents and visitors

- Added Conservation Future Land Use designation to lands adjacent to existing conservation lands
- Added **new map to Comprehensive Plan identifying** all lands with Conservation Future Land Use and the diversity of ownership (County, state, federal agencies and local municipalities)
- Established a new Master Plan for West Delray Park that includes adding **~3 miles of hiking and biking trails** to connect its many uses
- Established a **new trailhead at Burt Aaronson South County Regional Park** to connect the park to the many miles of biking, hiking and equestrian trails





# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 4. Ensure positive environmental experiences for residents and visitors (continued)

- Completed the largest and most successful **LagoonFest** yet (Nov 2019) and planning for LagoonFest and Natural Areas Festival in 2021
- Organized an expedition with three PBC School District youth to film footage for a **30-minute documentary that will be integrated into all 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade science curricula**
- Developed and launched web-based map tools for all trails within Natural Areas ([pbcnaturalareas.com](http://pbcnaturalareas.com)) and Jeaga Wildways systems ([jeagawildways.com](http://jeagawildways.com)) to facilitate a safer and more user-friendly experience for residents and visitors
- Opened **new paddling trail and public use facilities** at Loxahatchee Slough, the County's largest natural area





# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 5. Promote sustainable, resilient practices and principles

- Converted **350/13,231** parking lot and street lights and **466/2,939** sports lighting to LEDs through **Infrastructure Sales Tax Initiative** to improve lighting quality, reach energy efficiency goals and significantly reduce operational costs
- Continued to **convert County facilities to LED lighting**. At present **100%** of **Water Utilities** facilities, **30%** of **Airports**, **50%** of **Fire Rescue**, **30%** of **Parks** and **15%** of **FDO** managed properties have been upgraded to LED
- Converted **paper applications to online/electronic application** process for new housing programs launched in 2020 and existing Community Services programs
- Conducted native tree canopy education with residents and **distributed 766 native trees** through live giveaways and eVoucher redemptions at local plant nurseries
- Initiated process to update code of ordinances and ULDC to better align with South Florida Water Management District's Mandatory Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures Rule



# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 5. Promote sustainable, resilient practices and principles (continued)

- Based on Board direction, staff **initiated amendments to the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC)** to implement requirements for electric vehicle (EV) charging
- Under contract negotiations for **installation of Electric Vehicle chargers** for public and employee use at Governmental Center, with more locations to follow
- **Updated the Comprehensive Plan** to bring PBC into compliance with the Peril of Flood Act
- Implemented **3-day permit turnaround times for small-scale solar projects**, contributing to the County's recognition as a SolSmart Gold community
- **Worked with Infrastructure CDT to submit grant-funded application for LEED** for Cities and Communities certification – expected certification in FY 2021



# PROGRESS ON METRICS

## Goal 6. Preserve and enhance our thriving agriculture

- Provided **grant support for a Loxahatchee farmer** to expand his non-caged pasture-raised poultry operation
- Provided grant funding and created a direct-to-consumer **(drive-thru) Sweet Corn Fiesta event**
- Delivered educational **outreach to 4,975 clients** while also **delivering 3,182 CEUs** to support state-required licenses and certifications, including Green-Industry Best Management Practices, Restricted Use Pesticides, and Worker Protection Standards
- Continued to **engage with federal, state and local partners** on Lake Okeechobee-related operations that have the potential to impact regional water supplies



# EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON OUR GOALS

- More teleworking = less commuting = fewer vehicle miles traveled
- Virtual meetings = less travel time = more work productivity
- Virtual presentations/workshops = wider audience, more attendees;  
For example, Youth Services virtual retreat enjoyed record participation; Mounts Botanical Garden (with UF) hosted **5 webinars reaching > 1,300 people**; **6 virtual field trips** highlighting County natural areas **captured ~ 300 PBC School District students**
- People spending more time outdoors = increased use of natural areas (**28% increase in visitors over 2019**)
- Social distancing requirements = innovative “virtual” field inspections for regulatory programs = increased efficiencies
- Food supply chain limitations = more awareness of food **availability from local farms**



# ADDITIONAL SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

- Remediated a degraded facility in the western communities to serve as an **emergency COVID-19 care facility** and later as a **homeless resource center**
- Coordinated/advertised **Direct-to-Consumer farm produce sale** opportunities for over **20** local agricultural operations
- Utilized virtual technologies during the COVID shutdown to deliver **52 educational trainings** to **1,568 agriculture and plant nursery** clients. Topics included COVID-safety recommendations for labor contractors and agricultural workers, in English and Spanish
- Created communication network with all farming operations on breaking news relevant to COVID-19, including USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, Nikki Fried/FDACS policies, H2A labor updates, and UF/IFAS Ag/Nursery COVID loss surveys
- Staff was **able to pivot to support local community needs** during the pandemic





# NEXT STEPS

- Continue to deliver educational programming featuring environmental stewardship to our agricultural community
- Continue to actively manage County beaches, natural areas, and parks in coordination with volunteers
- Continue to pursue partnerships with community organizations to improve diversity and inclusivity in our environmental efforts
- Continue to explore additional opportunities for County progression to green-focused practices
- Continue to launch new initiatives that prioritize climate resilience



**PALM BEACH COUNTY  
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DISCUSSION**



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