

# HARBOR BRANCH OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE

## FOUNDATION

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### **Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation Announces One Million In Funding For Seagrass Restoration**

**Vero Beach, FL (February 13, 2024):** The Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation (HBOIF) is pleased to announce an important and much needed \$1 million grant to FAU Harbor Branch for a large-scale seagrass restoration project in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL).

This grant will provide funding for a wide-spread seagrass restoration project led by Harbor Branch's Dennis Hanisak, Ph. D., a leading expert on Indian River Lagoon health. "This grant will finance the establishment of innovative nurse grown seagrass habitats, one of the most valuable communities in the marine environment, in numerous locations in the Indian River Lagoon," said Dr. Hanisak.

Seagrasses play a significant role in the health of the IRL, by providing habitat for juvenile lagoon fishes and more importantly, are the primary food source for Florida manatees. Over the past several decades, environmental stressors like nutrient runoff, salinity issues, and harmful algal blooms have led to catastrophic losses of these lagoon seagrasses. "HBOIF recognizes that seagrass loss is a major issue affecting lagoon health and marine life; we are always seeking ways to help resolve these issues," said Michael O'Reilly, HBOIF's Board Chair.

In providing this funding, HBOIF Executive Director, Staci Rosalia, notes, "Dr. Hanisak is one of the leading scientists studying seagrass and our Foundation is confident this grant will be an important beginning for seagrass restoration in the IRL."

Work on this project is scheduled to commence in early April 2024.

For more information about the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation, please contact Staci Rosalia, Executive Director, at 772-466-9876, ext. 100 or [sroalia@hboifoundation.org](mailto:sroalia@hboifoundation.org).

#### **About Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation:**

*The mission of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation, Inc. (HBOIF) is to support the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, a research institute within Florida Atlantic University. HBOIF provides funding and support for research and education in marine sciences and ocean engineering. Our goal is to support FAU's Harbor Branch as it increases understanding of oceans and coastal areas through exploration and scientific investigation. For more information, visit [www.hboifoundation.org](http://www.hboifoundation.org).*

**About Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute:**

*Founded in 1971, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University is a research community of marine scientists, engineers, educators and other professionals focused on Ocean Science for a Better World. The institute drives innovation in ocean engineering, at-sea operations, drug discovery and biotechnology from the oceans, coastal ecology and conservation, marine mammal research and conservation, aquaculture, ocean observing systems and marine education. For more information, visit [www.fau.edu/hboi](http://www.fau.edu/hboi).*

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