

Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative

5th Technology Advisory Council Meeting

Kevin Claridge

Vice President of Sponsored Research & Coastal Policy Programs

February 13, 2026



Meeting Agenda

- Welcome to Mote SEA
- Logistics and Meeting Overview
- TAC Roll Call
- Co-Chair opening comments
- Florida Sunshine and Public Records Laws and FAR Notice
- Seagrass Initiative Overview
- Initiative Partners - DEP, UF, Mote
- DEP Grant Agreement and Reporting Requirements– Eve Iavarone
- Seagrass Initiative Progress Overview
- Facility Updates – Liz Longstreet
- Genetic Management Plan update – Dr. Dom Gallery
- 10-Year Seagrass Restoration Plan – Becky Prado, Moffatt & Nichol
- Funded Projects Presentations - Year 2
- Funded Projects Presentations - Year 3
- RFP for Year 4 Discussion
- TAC Discussion
- Public Comments – 3 minutes each or via card/email



Technical Advisory Council

Dr. Michael P. Crosby – Mote, Co-Chair

Dr. Laura Reynolds – UF, Co-Chair

Beau Williams – Governor Appt

Carter Henne – House Speaker Appt

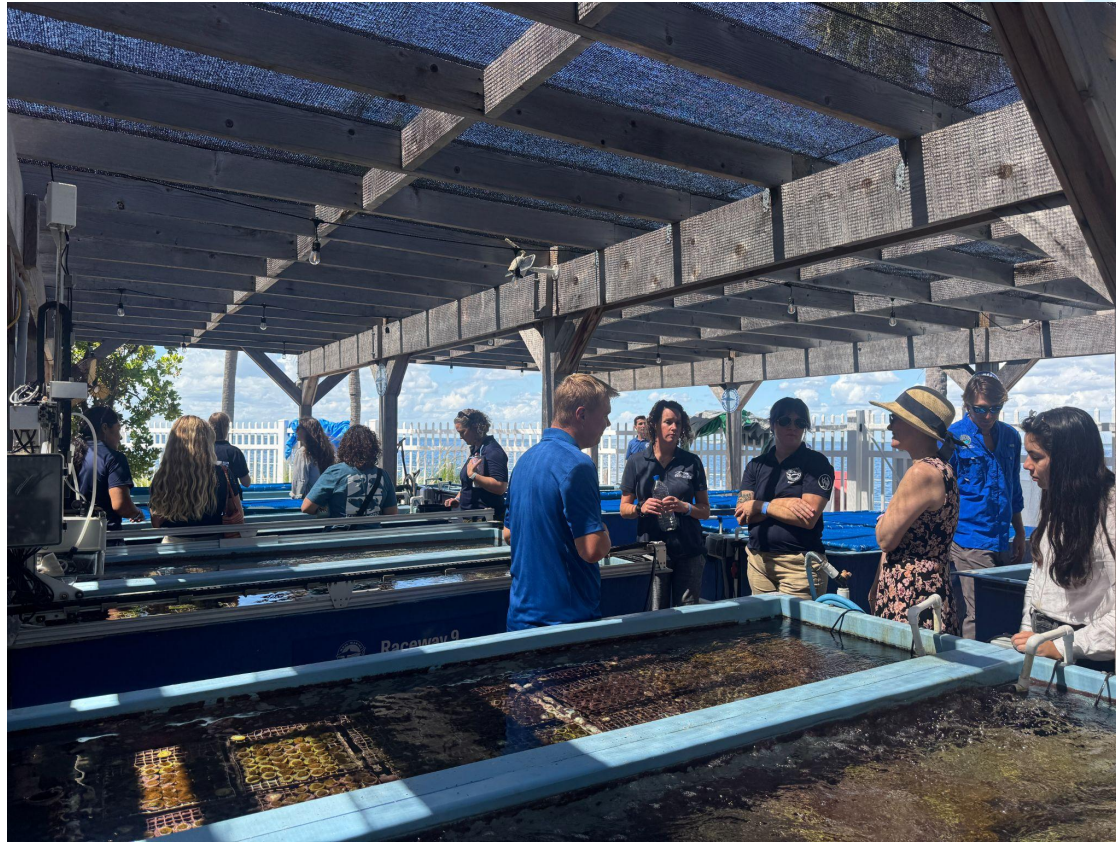
Dr. James Douglass – Senate President Appt

Dr. Bradley Furman – FWC Appt

Scott Eastman – DEP Appt



TAC Opening Comments



Florida's Sunshine Law

(Review from previous meetings)



Florida Sunshine Law

- The **Florida Sunshine Law applies** to the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative, Technical Advisory Council.
- Florida's Sunshine Law was created to protect **every Floridian's right to public access of meetings and records** concerning government programs, which provides transparency.
- **This applies to any meeting** where official acts are to be taken or **public business will be discussed.**



Reasonable Notice of Meetings

- The **public must be given reasonable notice of meetings** that are to occur.
- DEP generally recommends notice for public advisory group meetings to be published in the **Florida Administrative Register** no less than 7 days before the meeting and ensure that it is posted on the **Initiative website**.
- Posted on January 30th, 2026



Minutes of Meetings

- **Minutes of meetings must be taken** and documented, but do not have to be verbatim.
- This meeting's minutes will be posted on the Mote Seagrass Ecosystem Research & Restoration website with previous meetings' minutes, agenda, and presentation.
- Advisory Boards are not required to have audio recordings of their meetings; but if a meeting is recorded by a member or staff then it is a public record.



Restrictions on Outside Discussions

- Any discussion between two or more members of the Technical Advisory Council discussing a topic which may foreseeably come before their board **must occur in the sunshine**.
- You are not restricted from socializing with other members of the Council, **but you may not discuss anything that may foreseeably come before the board**.
- Discussion of official matters outside of a public meeting is a violation of the Sunshine Law.



Public Records

- **This Technical Advisory Council is subject to Florida's Public Records Law** (even if you yourself are not a government employee), because records relating to the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative are made or received in connection with the transaction of the official business of the State.
- Public Records are **ALL** documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, etc. regardless of the physical form...or means of transmission made or received in connection with official action of an agency. Sec. 119.011(12), F.S.
- **Public records must be open and available for the public to inspect and copy.**
- **This includes emails, text messages, and social media.**



Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative Overview



Seagrass Initiative Overview

- Signed into law by Florida Governor DeSantis in July 2023
 - 403.93344 Florida Statutes
 - Partnership with DEP and UF
- \$10 million over 5 years contracted by DEP to Mote
 - Grant Agreement Executed February 2024
- Legislative intent:
 - establish a collaborative and coordinated effort among **public and private research entities to develop restoration technologies** and approaches to address the loss of seagrass and the cascading ecological and economic impacts of that loss to communities in this state
 - department shall award funds specifically appropriated by the Legislature for the initiative to **Mote Marine Laboratory, which shall function as the lead administrative component** to achieve the goals of the initiative
 - initiative shall **leverage state-appropriated funds with additional funds from private and federal sources**
 - Mote Marine Laboratory and the University of Florida shall **create a 10-year Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan** to implement tools and technologies developed under the initiative



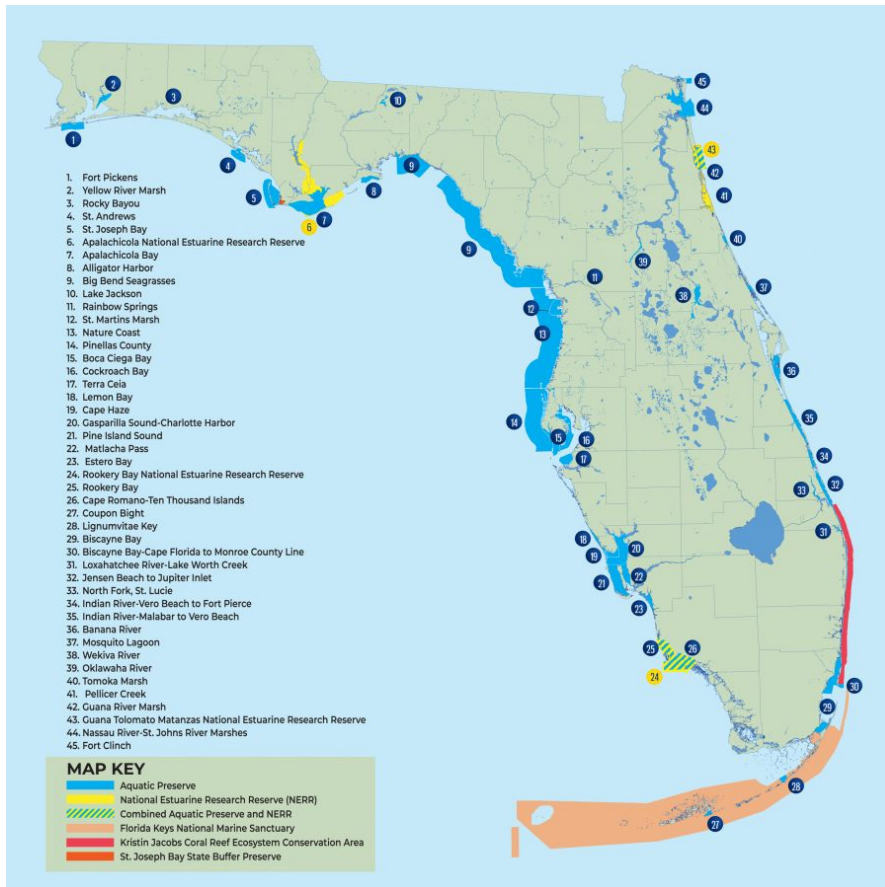
Initiative Partner: University of Florida

- Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences
- Coastal and Marine Ecology Laboratory
- Dr. Laura Reynolds, Assistant Professor Coastal Ecology
- Genetics Lab for Seagrass Initiative





Initiative Partner: DEP Aquatic Preserve Program



- Aquatic Preserve Act
 - 258.35-258.46 F.S
 - “Ensure continuation of natural conditions of aesthetic, biological and scientific value”
- 43 Statewide Preserves
- 2.6 Million Acres
- Place-Based Experts on:
 - Natural resources, ecological trends, stressors, research conducted/underway, recreational uses, partners, stakeholders, etc.



Initiative Reporting Requirements

- Beginning **January 15, 2024**, and each January 15 thereafter until its expiration, **the initiative shall submit a report that contains an overview of its accomplishments** to date and priorities for subsequent years to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of Environmental Protection, and the executive director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- DEP Contract Technical and Financial Reports
- Public Website
- TAC Meetings – FAR, Presentations, Public Comments and Minutes
- Public Records



Seagrass Initiative Progress



SEAGRASS RESTORATION TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE 403.93344(3)(e) F.S.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PRIORITIES REPORT

JANUARY 2026

Seagrass is critically important to the ecology and economy of coastal ecosystems, serving vital functions for various fisheries, nursery habitats, and food for a variety of keystone species. Seagrasses provide shoreline/sediment stabilization, absorb nutrients, sequester carbon, and enhance coastal resilience. Unfortunately, seagrasses have significantly declined over the past decades and continue to be rapidly lost in Florida due to both indirect and direct anthropogenic impacts as well as the broader effects of global change.

A science-based restoration effort is needed to address diminishing seagrass habitat, distribution, and diversity. This applied research and restoration initiative builds upon the ongoing partnership between seagrass nursery restoration practitioners and top marine and genetic scientists to generate

a sustainable source of genetically resilient and naturally reproducing seagrass, in both land-based nurseries and in-water seagrass field nurseries, as well as large-scale seagrass gene banks.

This report is being provided to meet the requirement of 403.93344(3)(e) Florida Statutes which states: "Beginning January 15, 2024, and each January 15 thereafter until its expiration, the initiative shall submit a report that contains an overview of its accomplishments to date and priorities for subsequent years to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of Environmental Protection, and the executive director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission."

- ✓ Mote Administrative Structure
- ✓ 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Accomplishments and Priorities Report
- ✓ Leveraged Funding
 - ✓ NOAA
 - ✓ Philanthropic
 - ✓ Publix Seagrass Genetics Research Hub
 - ✓ Wolf Foundation Biogeochemical Carbon Sequestration Building
- ✓ Initiative Technical and Financial Reports submitted
- ✓ Released competitive 1st RFP
 - ✓ Funded 8 projects that are now wrapping up
 - ✓ Receiving Final Reports
- ✓ Released 2nd competitive RFP
 - ✓ Funded 8 projects (excluding UF)
 - ✓ Subcontracts sent and executed
 - ✓ Projects underway
 - ✓ Funded 6 more utilizing Year 3 funds
 - ✓ Subcontracts executed, projects underway
- ✓ Continued work with consulting firm, Moffatt & Nichol, on the 10 Year Seagrass Restoration Plan
 - ✓ 122 management documents reviewed
 - ✓ Florida Seagrass Restoration Sites website completed
 - ✓ Draft Plan Framework
 - ✓ Draft habitat suitability model in progress
- ✓ Greenhouse structure operational
 - ✓ Projects in progress and completed
 - ✓ Working on expansion
- ✓ Outfitting "house" for visiting researcher lodging



Initiative Research Infrastructure

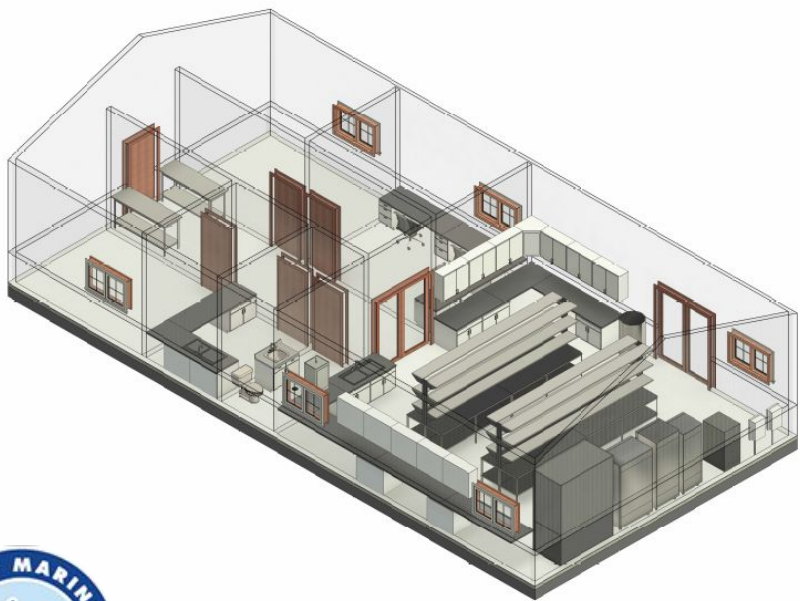
- Greenhouse expansion in development
- New design for additional 12 tanks
- To book a tour or reserve tanks reach out to Liz at LLongstreet@mote.org





Coming soon: Publix Seagrass Genetics Research Laboratory Hub

- Planned completion late 2025
- Equipment and training available for genetics experiments at MAP



Genetic Management Plan Update

- We have received samples from 6 projects so far!
- SOP was sent to Years 1-3 funded projects
 - Approximately 8-12 cm of tissue sample should be collected per individual
 - Place samples into a teabag, place teabags into ziplock bags and add blue-indicator silica gel to the ziplock
 - Mail samples at ambient temperature overnight to Mote



Genetic Management Plan Update

- SOP was sent to Years 1-3 funded projects
 - Website from Big Sea is now operational
 - Please submit your metadata using the intake form

Welcome to the Mote Seagrass Genetic Sampling Intake

Please provide..... [BRIEF PARAGRAPH OF INSTRUCTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS PROVIDED HERE]

Please contact Dom Gallery (dgallery@moteorgdev.wpengi.com) with any questions.

PI NAME (REQUIRED)

First

Last

CONTACT EMAIL (REQUIRED)

SEAGRASS SPECIES (REQUIRED)

NUMBER OF SAMPLES (REQUIRED)

FILE UPLOAD (REQUIRED)

Choose File No file chosen

Max. file size: 50 MB.

Please upload the .CSV file



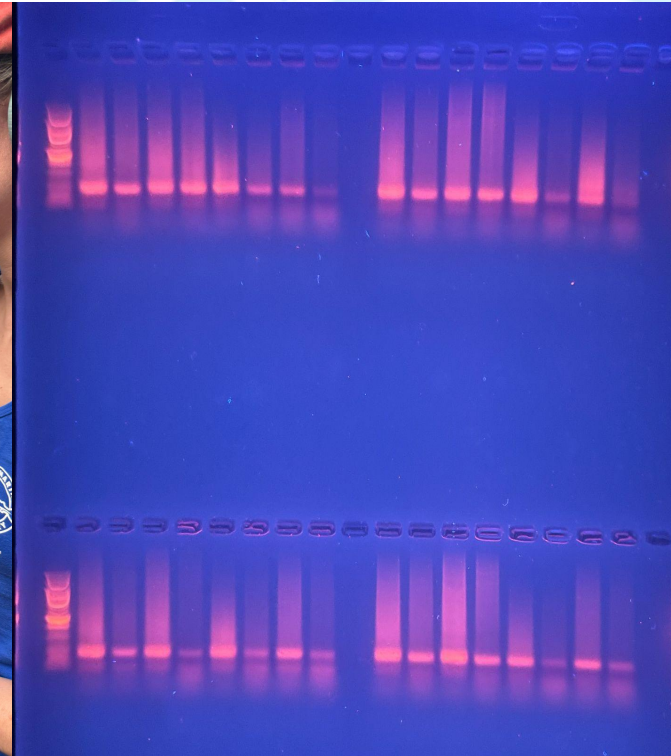
Genetic Management Plan Update

- We have contracted BreedBase at the Boyce Thompson Institute located at Cornell University to track genotypes and associated metadata
 - Built the initial accession for individuals we have received so far
 - Began integrating the two platforms together



Genetic Management Plan Update

- Extracted over 800 samples of 4 species of seagrass for the genetic library
- Optimized the seagrass extraction protocol
- Library preparations for 400 samples are ready for sequencing (including those with previous microsatellite sequencing)
- First batch has been sent to UF for sequencing



10-Year Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan

- 403.93344(3)(d) F.S.:
 - “In collaboration with the program, Mote Marine Laboratory and the University of Florida shall create a 10-year Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan to implement tools and technologies developed under the initiative.”
- DEP Grant Work Plan:
 - This work may, in part, be subcontracted by Mote to an external entity selected by Mote.
 - The Department, Mote, and University of Florida will oversee the development of the plan over the five years of the Initiative, may publish/release drafts and updates with the legislatively required Annual Report, may conduct workshops with seagrass research/restoration partners to facilitate practitioner/public input, and shall submit a Final Plan to the Department for implementation by June 30, 2028.
- Moffatt & Nichol, Coastal Resilience Lead, Becky Prado presentation of the 10-Year Plan Framework and TAC Discussion



Initiative Research Engagement

- 403.93344(3)(C)(1): Mote Marine Laboratory may, with the concurrence of the department, use a portion of the awarded funds to facilitate additional engagement with other pertinent marine science and technology development organizations in this state and around the world to pursue applied research and technology for the successful restoration of seagrass ecosystems.

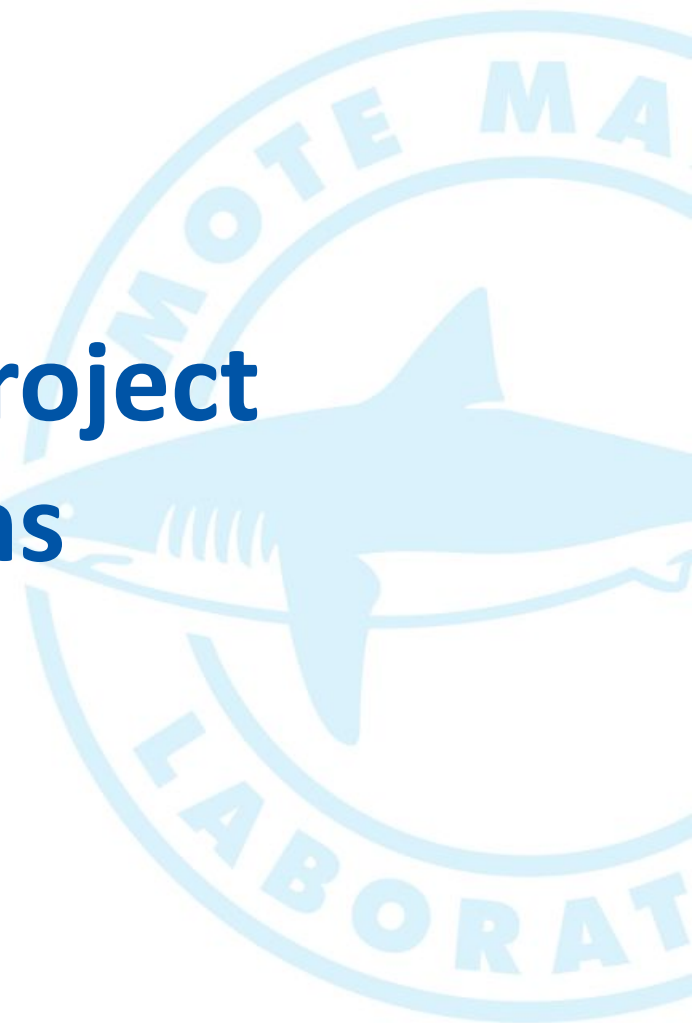


Year 2 Request For Research Proposals

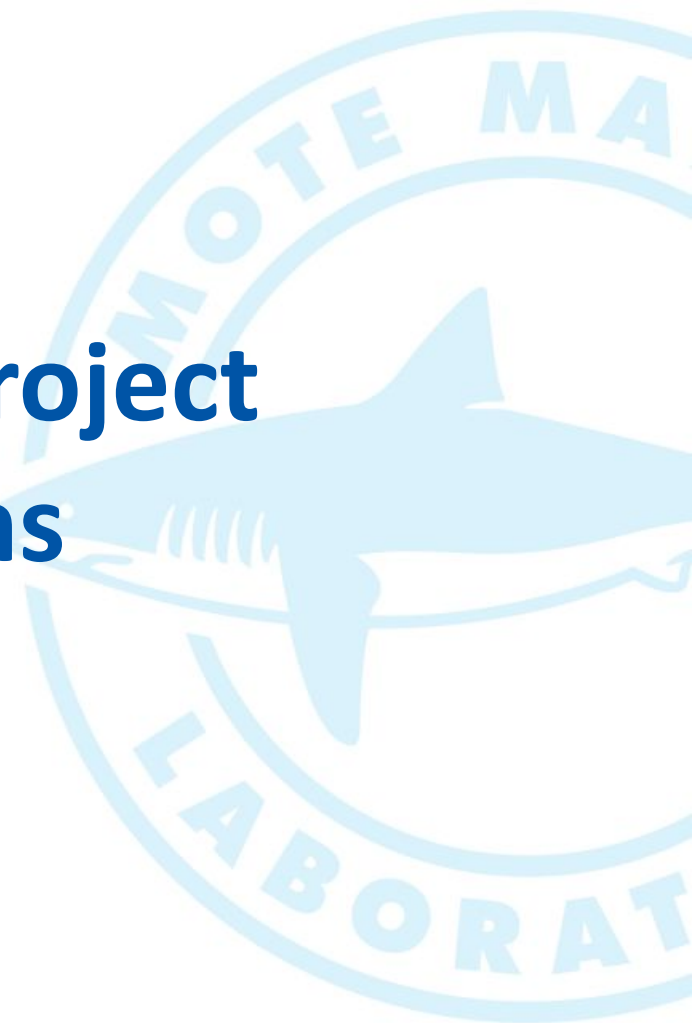
- Opened December 13th, 2024 through January 31st, 2025
- Use of Mote facilities/infrastructure is free of charge
- Collaboration with Mote, UF, and DEP encouraged but not required
- 8 projects funded in Year 2 (plus continued research from University of Florida)
 - Contracts executed and projects underway
- 6 projects funded utilizing funds from Year 3
 - Contracts executed and projects underway



Year 2 Funded Project Presentations



Year 3 Funded Project Presentations



Next RFP Update

- Will be putting out a Year 4 RFP in the spring (for projects to start summer/fall 2026)
- What research objectives would you like to see the RFP focus on?
- Year 2 RFP Funding priorities:
 - identifying the genetic diversity of seagrass populations and associated environmental stressors across Florida;
 - developing a genetic library of Florida seagrass;
 - testing the resilience of different statewide seagrass populations to multiple environmental stressors in controlled lab and nursery settings;
 - testing for specific genes that confer resilience to multiple environmental stressors within statewide seagrass populations
 - examining existing seagrass restoration technologies and planting techniques, and/or conduct planning efforts and pursue regulatory approval for testing novel seagrass restoration technologies;
 - organizing and encouraging collaboration among the scientists and restoration practitioners working on Florida seagrass genetics to achieve the goals of the Initiative (this will be partially accomplished through this RFP and Initiative Technology Advisory Council meetings).



TAC Comments and Recommendations

Potential Discussion Topics:

Codifying 10-Year Restoration Plan

Leveraging Opportunities

Agency/Company/Institution Seagrass Update

Next TAC Meeting Location



**Public Comments:
Please limit to 3 minutes or less
or via Comment Card or Email**

