

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH SEPAC ANNOUNCES ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

[St. Augustine Beach, Fla., June 27, 2022] – The City of St. Augustine Beach’s Sustainability and Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (SEPAC) has selected the winners of the 2022 Anastasia Island Environmental Stewardship Awards. These awards recognize individuals, businesses, groups, and educational institutions that are working to protect the Island’s natural resources and enhance its ecosystem.

The recipients are Fish Island Community Alliance (Group), Native Plant Consulting (Business), Walter Coker (Individual, Business), and Lauren Trice (Individual, Non-Profit).

Fish Island Community Alliance is a non-profit group that has been instrumental in preserving the 33-acre City of St. Augustine-owned “Fish Island” land on the north side of 312 (separate from Fish Island Preserve on the southside of 312) as a passive park. They also aim to educate/empower residents on environmental issues. The group focuses on resilience, sustainability, and flood mitigation as well as protecting wildlife and their habitats on Anastasia Island. Elizabeth Smith founded FICA, which boasts more than 650 members.

Native Plant Consulting is a local landscaping firm specializing in the use of native plants. It helps restore impacted natural resources and enhance ecosystems by holding monthly native plant sales at Ron Parker Park, distributing thousands of native plants to St. Augustine Beach (SAB) residents. Native Plant Consulting and owners Laura Pitts and Renee Stambaugh specialize in the creation or redesign of Florida landscapes with plants native to SAB. They have transformed new and existing landscapes for SAB residents using Florida native plants that provide a natural habitat for birds, butterflies, and other pollinators.

Walter Coker and **Lauren Trice** are the 2022 winners in the “individual” category.

Coker is a professional photographer and videographer who has been documenting environmental threats for the past 40 years. He has contributed to The Surfer’s Journal and Folio Weekly among other publications. Coker has lived on Anastasia Island for four decades and is a passionate environmentalist.

Trice joined the Matanzas Riverkeeper as its Outreach Coordinator in 2021. She organizes cleanups, including beach and waterway cleanups, and works to educate the public on environmental stewardship. Prior to joining the Riverkeeper, Trice organized many cleanups on her own. Most recently, Trice worked with SEPAC to create an Environmentally Friendly Landscaping Program for the City of St. Augustine Beach. This new program is designed to recognize residents and businesses that are planting mostly native plants, which require less water, less fertilizer, and less pesticides.

SEPAC also recognizes **Dr. Lonnie Kaczmarzsky** for his years of community involvement. Kaczmarzsky, a professor at St. Johns River State College, is an expert in Florida ecology. He is a former SEPAC member, and he continues to help the committee on an ad hoc basis. In addition to his other accomplishments, Kaczmarzsky was instrumental in the development of the City’s Urban Forest Management Plan in 2019. SEPAC will recognize Kaczmarzsky by putting his name on a plaque on a tree on the Avenue of Palms.

SEPAC presented the awards at the July 11 City Commission meeting.

The objective of environmental stewardship is to reduce impacts on the environment, thereby protecting our natural resources through conservation and sustainable practices. To be considered for recognition, nominees must demonstrate significant achievements through:

Reducing environmental impacts
Enhancing ecosystems

Conserving resources
Restoring impacted natural resources

Questions about the awards, SEPAC, and its other activities can be directed to Dariana Fitzgerald, deputy city clerk, at dfitzgerald@cityofsab.org or by phone at 904-471-2122 or fax at 904-471-4108.

###