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DELRAY SUN

COMMUNITY NEWS

Brazilian pepper out, Florida prairie-clover in at Atlantic Dunes Park

By **BRETT SHWEKY**

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

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The Institute for Regional Conservation, a nonprofit dedicated to the protection, restoration and long-term management of ecological diversity in Delray Beach, recently had a restoration event at Atlantic Dunes Park. (IRC/Courtesy)

The Institute for Regional Conservation recently celebrated World Environment Day with a restoration event at Atlantic Dunes Park, 1605 S. Ocean Blvd., in Delray Beach.

World Environment Day, which has been observed since 1974, is annually celebrated on June 5, engaging governments, businesses and residents in an effort to address pressing environmental problems.



During the restoration initiative, the [Delray Beach-based nonprofit](#) added to the park Curtiss' hoarypea and Florida prairie-clover, which are two state-endangered and IRC critically imperiled plants. They were grown specifically for the nonprofit's program by [Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden](#) in Coral Gables.

Along with adding state-endangered plants, the IRC also removed invasive species such as Brazilian pepper and bowstring hemp throughout the park.

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Michelle Smith (IRC), John Campanola (New York Life), George Gann (IRC president IRC), Tina Pugliese (Pugliese Public Relations) and Cara Abbott (IRC) recently took part in a restoration event at Atlantic Dunes Park. (IRC/Courtesy)

“The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration calls for a global movement to protect and revive ecosystems all around the world,” IRC education and outreach coordinator Cara Abbott said in a statement. “Since ecosystem restoration is at the core of IRC’s mission, it was only fitting for us to continue the restoration work we’ve been doing at Atlantic Dunes Park since 2016 on World Environment Day.”

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The restoration event was part of the [IRC’s Restoring the Gold Coast program](#) — an initiative aimed at restoring coastal biodiversity in south Palm Beach County. The program works at restoring populations of species that historically grew in the area but are locally extinct or underrepresented.

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Dedicated to the protection, restoration and long-term management of biodiversity on a routine basis, IRC works throughout South Florida, the Caribbean and beyond to prevent the extinction of rare plants, animals and ecosystems.

“By the end of the 1970s, almost the entire dune from Key Biscayne to West Palm Beach had eroded into the sea or been developed, and along with it most of the coastal biodiversity of southeastern Florida,” IRC executive director and chief conservation strategist George Gann said in a statement.

“While sandy beaches have been renourished, sea oats have been planted and turtle nests protected, the vast diversity of coastal uplands has remained in a depleted state,” he said. “Restoring the Gold Coast seeks to restore much of that lost diversity through a

cooperative effort with stakeholders, volunteers and restoration experts.”

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