

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Titusville Cocoa Airport Authority and Brevard Zoo
Completes Seagrass Restoration Demonstration Project
in Indian River Lagoon at the Merritt Island Airport**

*Newly Created Seagrass Island Demonstrates Airport Authority and Brevard Zoo's
Environmental Stewardship, Commitment to Community*

Tampa, Fla. (October 11, 2017) - Titusville Cocoa Airport Authority and Brevard Zoo announced the completion of a seagrass restoration demonstration project (project) as part of a larger safety improvement program at Merritt Island Airport in Brevard County, Florida. Titusville Cocoa Airport Authority contracted Michael Baker International, Inc. to design the seagrass island as part of the Runway 11-29 Safety Improvements project. Sediment containing benthic invertebrate, nutrients and seagrass rhizomes where seagrass thrived was relocated from the impact area at the end of the airport's Runway 29 to the north side of the runway where the island was created. Sea and Shoreline, LLC harvested seagrass from the end of Runway 29, grew it in a nursery and replanted it at the one-acre seagrass island that was created as mitigation for the environmental impacts associated with the Merritt Island Airport Runway 11-29 Safety Area Improvements project.

On March 16, 2017, Titusville Cocoa Airport Authority named the island, the Rodney Thompson Seagrass Restoration Island. The project was generously funded by Laurilee Thompson and her partners. Her father, Rodney, is the namesake of the newly created seagrass island. Ms. Thompson's partners include Rodney and Mary Jean Thompson, Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant, Wild Ocean Seafood Market, Jim and Jonnie Swann, and Malcolm Kirschenbaum.

The project at Merritt Island Airport established specific methods for designing, planting and growing seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon. The newly planted seagrass was injected with a non-eutrophying subaqueous growth enhancing formula into the sediment where the seagrass was planted to promote rhizome growth. SAVGROW® herbivory protection devices were used to prevent grazing until the seagrass was established.

To measure the project's success, Florida Institute of Technology students led by Professor Jonathan Shenker are monitoring the seagrass growth. Since the initial seagrass installation in September 2016, the plants have successfully thrived in the lagoon, covering more than half of the entire island.

To commemorate the completion of the seagrass restoration project, the site will be open to members of the media on Thursday, November 2, between 10:00 a.m. and noon EDT. **Interested parties should contact Mariben Andersen at MAnderesen@mbakerintl.com on or before October 23 to sign a waiver form so they can be escorted to the site.**