

DATE: December 2, 2019
TO: Matt Jordan, General Manager
FROM: Michelle Stom, Chief Communications Officer *MS*
SUBJECT: Source Water Protection Mini-Grant Program Update – *Award Grants*

SUMMARY

Community outreach through a mini-grant program is a cost-effective way to educate and involve the public in understanding the importance of protecting the drinking water supply and the public health. Non-profit groups, schools/teachers and community groups are eligible to apply for a source water protection mini-grant. This year applications by Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful, Keep Pinellas Beautiful, Pinellas County Schools and the Coffeepot Bayou Watershed Alliance were selected to receive grants.

RECOMMENDATION

Present grant awards for fiscal year 2020 source water protection mini-grant funding to Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful, Keep Pinellas Beautiful, Pinellas County Schools' Journeys in Journalism Program and the Coffeepot Bayou Watershed Alliance.

COST/FUNDING SOURCE

Uniform Rate. Fiscal Year 2020 (\$25,500).

DISCUSSION

The source water protection mini-grant program is an important component of Tampa Bay Water's outreach and education efforts for source water protection. A major line of defense in protecting drinking water sources is public awareness and support. Community outreach through a mini-grant program is a cost-effective way to educate and involve the public in understanding the importance of protecting the drinking water supply. Non-profit groups, schools/teachers, and community groups are eligible to apply for mini grants from Tampa Bay Water ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000. Funds for these activities are approved by the Board for the Fiscal Year 2020 budget.

Eligible projects must relate to protecting regional drinking water supplies such as river and watershed conservation efforts, education and information seminars, workshops, exhibits, school activities, implementation of best management practices, awareness campaigns, and river cleanups.

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This year, Tampa Bay Water received 10 applications for funding. After review by staff, the applicants outlined below were judged to have the best proposals to promote source water protection efforts throughout the region.

Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful - \$10,000

Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful will use the grant funding for their Environmental Education Program to support education initiatives and presentations to school groups and community groups. The program teaches students the importance of putting waste in its place and how their actions can directly affect the Tampa Bay watershed. This includes field trips and hands-on lessons at the Florida Learning Gardens which contains an Enviroscape Watershed Model to provide an interactive experience for understanding how different environmental conditions can affect a watershed and to their newest addition to the program, the Environmental Education Center at Reed Park in Tampa.

Keep Pinellas Beautiful - \$10,000

Keep Pinellas Beautiful will use the grant funding to increase its K-12 educational curriculum on watershed health, water quality, source water health and habitat improvement. For 2020, Keep Pinellas Beautiful will be broadening its reach within the community by growing the education that explores the health of the Tampa Bay Watershed and its many facets, minimizing anthropogenic influences and reinforcing the conservation and restoration of our natural habitats.

This includes the continuation and improvement of its Summer Workshop Series to include a High School Workshop and a Middle School Workshop, the expansion of its current educational curriculum to include new topics and paired educational projects (i.e. preserve and park field trips, garden plantings, and invasive species removals), the expansion of its Youth Advisory Council to engage students in the inner workings of Keep Pinellas Beautiful and further develop students as environmental advocates for the Tampa Bay area, the expansion of its community engagement opportunities (i.e. regular cleanups, adoptions, hotline removal, and beautification) including its biannual Kids Can Cleanups and 2020 World Oceans Day Initiative, and the introduction of a new microplastics curriculum.

Pinellas County Schools' Journey in Journalism Program - \$3,500

Pinellas County Schools' Journeys in Journalism program, which includes students from Melrose Elementary, John Hopkins Middle, and Lakewood High, will work to increase media literacy and develop a community and civic engagement campaign to promote the value of a clean and safe water system in our community. The project will incorporate skills learned in social studies, math, science, and journalism classes to research, plan, and create public service announcements and photojournalism stories on multimedia platforms. Service learning and project-based learning concepts will be incorporated to provide students with real-world applications of what they study and know.

Students will produce and publish educational videos, podcast segments, website and newspaper articles across multimedia platforms as well as design flyers, promotional giveaways and host

informational activities to promote water safety and conservation. In addition, each year the program hosts a photojournalism exhibit.

Coffeepot Bayou Watershed Alliance - \$2,000

The Coffeepot Bayou Watershed Alliance will use grant funding for quarterly volunteer cleanup events in and around the bayou located in St. Petersburg. It includes trash and invasive plant removal, horticulture services to support new native plants, monthly water sampling and bird surveys. The alliance will engage public and private schools, including the Canterbury School of Florida, North Shore Elementary, and Shorecrest Preparatory School, and will also work with Boy Scout Troop 219. Students will participate in cleanup events, invasive plant removal and water sampling.

BACKGROUND

Tampa Bay Water has been involved in source water protection for the past two decades. Protection of the public's drinking water supply is the primary goal and purpose of these programs, but also of great importance is the protection of the public investment in the regional water supply sources.