Natural Resources, Marine/Aquaculture, Wildlife, Forestry

Marine Science Education at the St. Lucie County Marine Center
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The St. Lucie County Marine Center (SLCMC) was established in 2001 through a partnership of St. Lucie County, the Smithsonian Institution, the St. Lucie County School District, Indian River Community College, the St. John’s and South Florida Water Management Districts, and private businesses in the community. This 5,141 facility features live aquatic displays representing coral reef ecosystems, sea grass, mangrove and fish communities reflecting the biodiversity of the Indian River Lagoon and the near and offshore reef habitats of east central Florida. A major emphasis of the exhibit is educational programming for the marine sciences through the public school system.

Objective: To establish a marine science program at the SLCMC for 4th and 7th grade students that is consistent with the Sunshine State Standards which incorporates teacher in-service within its curriculum planning.

Methods: Teacher manuals and student field guides were promulgated for 4th and 7th grade science students based upon Sunshine State Standard Criteria. Teachers attend in-service training at SLCMC and were provide materials to prepare students for the ½ day field trips at the facility. Teachers, extension staff, and personnel from the Smithsonian Marine Ecosystem Exhibit provided hands-on instruction to students in a variety of topics pertaining to marine ecology, scientific method and data collection, and marine habitats of the Indian River Lagoon and coastal east Florida.

Results: Students gained knowledge of marine ecosystems and ecology, adaptations of marine organisms, water chemistry, and data collection. Teachers were provided additional educational materials to utilize in the classroom as a follow-up to the field trips.