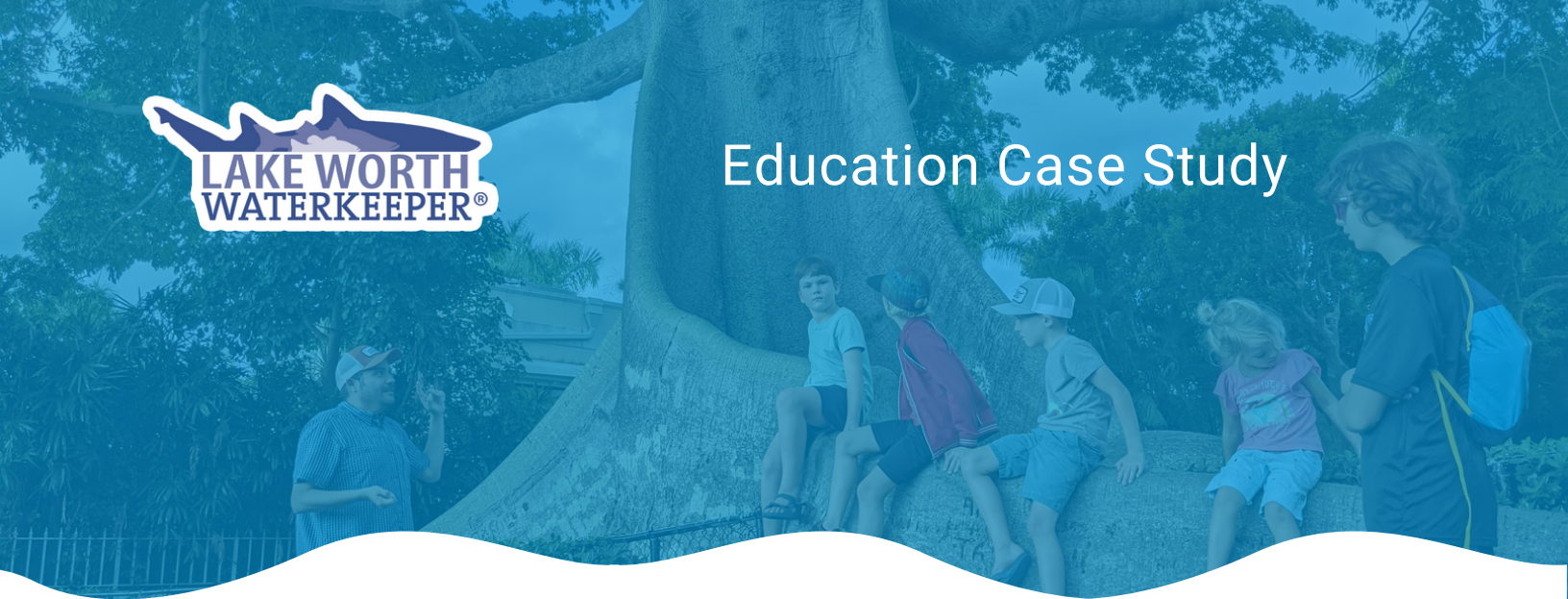




Education Case Study



Lake Worth Waterkeeper is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to the advocacy of the Lake Worth Lagoon watershed, which encompasses most of Palm Beach County between and including Lake Okeechobee to the west and the Atlantic ocean to the east. The Lake Worth Lagoon and its watershed is a northern estuary of the Greater Everglades ecosystem, thus it suffers many of the same environmental issues found throughout the Everglades.

Lake Worth Waterkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, a 501(c)(3) protecting our right to drinkable, fishable, and swimmable water worldwide. **We believe that real and longstanding environmental change is made through education.** Research and policy reform are of course crucial for environmental work, but that work cannot happen if we do not have a supportive community. Through education, we seek to build a community that is dedicated to protecting the Lake Worth Lagoon for generations to come.

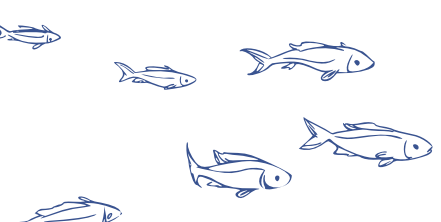
Your Waterkeeper, Reinaldo Diaz, started the LaGoonies program in the summer of 2020 at the request of a local homeschool parent wanting to provide science excursions to her daughter's homeschool group that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. We kept the program small to start, as a summer camp for that homeschool group of friends. In just two years, it has reached upwards of around 80 children, including their parents, as many stay to enjoy the learning experience.

CHALLENGES

- Lack of connection to nature
- Need for Alternative Education
- No funding for low income areas

BENEFITS

- Develop respect for nature
- Connect with your community
- Fill growing need for alternative education options**





The LaGoonies program stands out from other environmental education programs, including those of fellow Waterkeepers. Our LaGoonies program offers **so much more than narrowly focused field trips**. It is a comprehensive approach to learning as we encompass the systems that affect our watershed. LaGoonies learn through a **systems theory approach** that includes but is not limited to:

- the history of Florida
- key events and figures
- changes in the Florida landscape/plants/animals/policies/careers
- government process
- and their place within the system.



LaGoonies also **experience the watershed** in much the same way as your Waterkeeper. They learn how to hike, paddle, fish, surf, snorkel, and other skills that allow them to **experience and appreciate the natural world** around us.

SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION DEFINED

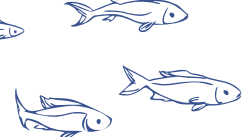
The community will more deeply appreciate our environment when we **build that deep personal connection** between people and the natural spaces around them. The depth of that connection is profound when that natural environment is our own backyard.

Substantial change is needed in how we educate our community to more effectively cultivate tomorrow's environmentalists. Lake Worth Waterkeeper believes that sustainable and environmental education should be inherent in all education, not treated as separate subjects. As the United States' - and especially in Florida's - education exists now, there is little flexibility in the curriculum to make the connections needed between the different subjects to our environmental needs.

Recently with the pandemic, the community at large has taken a critical look at our education system for various reasons. **Many parents have taken their children out of the traditional school system** to embark on a journey into homeschooling and other alternative education.

Additionally, there is a community-wide recognition of the **importance of incorporating nature and leisure into the lifestyle**, starting at a young age. We believe that there is an opportunity here to offer education programs that will bring in the systems theory approach to education so that we can **provide an opportunity** to children in our community **not previously offered**.





LaGoonies seeks to **meet the growing demand for alternative education by providing comprehensive, sustainable, environmental education** through experiential and community-based practices. Currently, the majority of those who go through the program are homeschoolers, however, we have begun to expand its reach into local public schools and other programs dedicated to **servicing those who have historically been underserved**. With proper funding, Lake Worth Waterkeeper may continue reaching out to more partnership opportunities in our local communities.

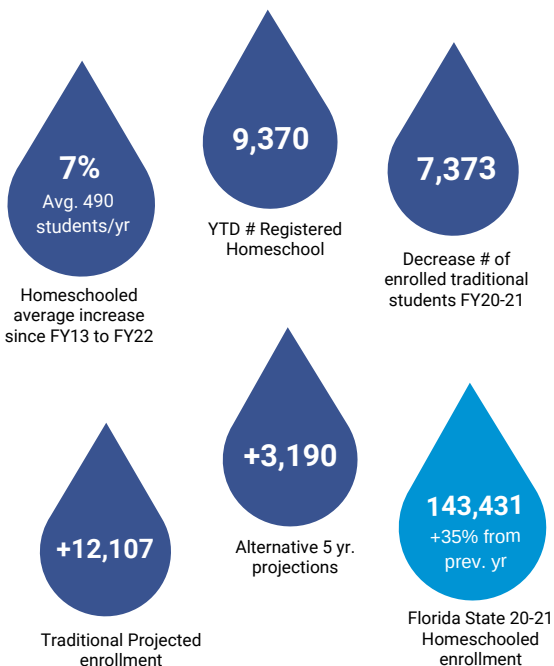


COMING THIS FALL

Minnows+Mangroves is our next-level response to fulfilling the schooling needs within the community. It will be 3 days a week for each age range. It will focus on experiential learning - providing practical and hands-on uses for content and curriculum learned.

The younger children will have an emphasis on building love and appreciation for where they live, while older children will begin learning about the complexity of our systems and how they may solve real-world problems. Core math and literacy skills will be intertwined in all activities and projects.

(Specific to Palm Beach County)
(Specific to State of Florida)



We are witnessing more parents in Palm Beach County removing their children from traditional schools and seeking alternative forms of education.

Our main concerns with the traditional schooling projections presented on the left are:

1. Where are they putting the extra students, when schools are already overcapacity and losing teachers at alarming rates?
2. What kind of support are teachers receiving with this influx of students?

Our belief is that these projections for alternative schooling are low and more parents will be looking for other educational options for their children. So we have to ask, what options are available to them, especially for those in lower-income communities?

We would like to fill this increasing need in our communities by expanding our LaGoonies program.

OUR ASKS:

SALARIED EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Lake Worth Waterkeeper's education programs are already competitively priced at below the price of similar programs in our area. We accomplish this through our **efficient financial management and strong partnerships** with other organizations. We strive to make our programs as accessible as possible. 60-70% of the tuition goes towards the facilitation of the program, which unfortunately does not even include the hours necessary in planning the curriculum and setting up each outing. We would be able to **substantially lower the tuition** of our programs **if our staff were salaried**. Currently, our education department consists of two employees - an Education Director and Education Specialist. Additional part-time employees will be needed for the Minnows and Mangroves program. Our goal is to increase salaries to \$60k for our Director and \$40k for our Education Specialist.

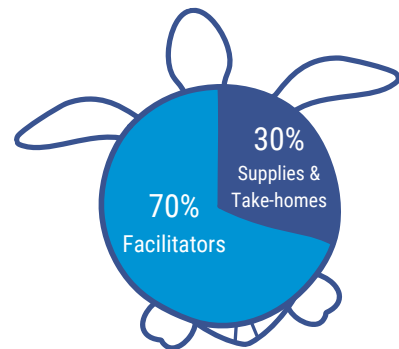
RENT FOR EDUCATION CENTER

It is our **long term plan** to operate Lake Worth Waterkeeper out of our own **Education Center**. For now, we are looking to rent space for a consistent home base for our Minnows and Mangroves program, somewhere in the Lake Worth Lagoon area. We estimate rent at approx. \$2,000-3,000/mo.

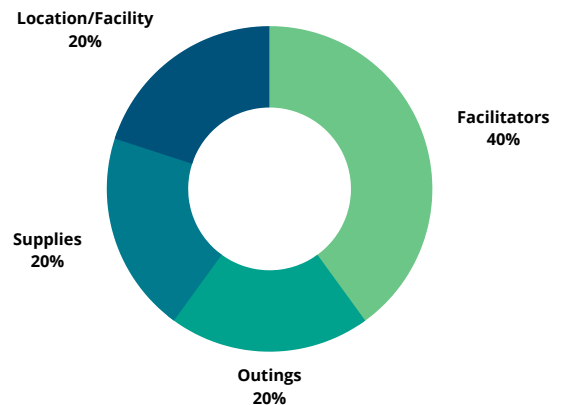
TRANSPORTATION

As explained above, the **biggest financial burden to most outdoor education programs is transportation costs**. We would like to provide transportation to our under-served communities in the form of a bus or van. A 15 passenger van is estimated to cost approximately \$60k, so that is our transportation funding goal.

LaGoonies Breakdown Costs



Minnows and Mangroves Costs



CONCLUSION

Your support would help Lake Worth Waterkeeper take our already popular and growing LaGoonies program to its full potential, and ensure we can fill our community's need for alternative education options!