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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RESTAURANTS NEEDED TO HELP RIVER

Stuart, Fl (August 20, 2009) – Whether you are a fine dining establishment, a tavern, a casual eatery or a catering hall, the St Lucie River needs your help! Beginning in early September, project participants will be ready to collect your oyster, clam and mussel shells for use in the Oyster Reef Restoration Project in the St. Lucie River.

Shells will be collected and transported to a staging area, where area high school students and other volunteers will load them into 30lb bags. When enough shells have been collected, the filled bags will be taken to the Rio Nature Park to be part of a comprehensive shoreline restoration. Students will construct the reef and plant mangroves and cord grass as part of a living shoreline. They will then monitor the water quality of the area and overall project success for the duration of the school year.

“This is a great hands-on learning experience for the students,” explained Baret Barry of the Martin County Engineering Department. “The opportunity to understand the environmental and economic value of the River is a lesson that will last a lifetime.”

The program is a component of Martin County’s Oyster Reef Restoration project taking place in the St Lucie and Loxahatchee rivers. This large scale effort has been funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

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“Being able to connect students, environmental groups, local restaurants and other members of our business community to oyster reef restoration will benefit the health of the estuary now and in the future,” Barry added.

The goal is to create a reef at least 50 feet long, requiring about 4,000 pounds of shell to construct. Julie Preast, of the Rio Civic Club, expressed the organization’s excitement over the project. “We have long supported oyster gardening in the St Lucie Estuary,” Preast said, “and we think this new effort is very inspiring.”

Oyster habitat is critical to the health of estuaries, effectively filtering nutrients, fine sediments and toxins from the water. Just one adult oyster can filter between 20 and 50 gallons of water per day. Oyster reefs also provide essential habitat structure for many other marine life including shrimp, clams, crabs, snails and many species of fish.

Martin County will host an open house to provide more information about the Oyster Reef Restoration Project on Wednesday, September 2 at Flagler Recreation Center in downtown Stuart. To participate in the Living Shoreline, or for general information about the Oyster Reef Restoration Project contact Baret Barry at 772-221-1387 or bbarry@martin.fl.us. Look for the project website coming soon at www.oysterrestoration.com.