

FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION



**2019
Legislative
Preview**

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**Hospitality Workforce:
Get Out of the Box
Recruiting Gen Z**

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**SPECIAL SECTION
TECHNOLOGY**

Keeping Up With New Innovations



Healthy Coasts = Healthy Business

By GRAHAM A.J. WORTHY, Ph.D.

Florida attracted more than 116 million tourists in 2017, with many wanting to enjoy our historically healthy and beautiful coastline. But for weeks, potential visitors have seen national media coverage focused on the health impacts of red tides, brown tides and blue-green algae.

Not every part of the state has been impacted equally. In some regions, visitors and residents have been exposed to thousands of dead fish, turtles, dolphins and manatees as well as toxic algae and signs on the beaches telling them to avoid contact with the water. Southwest Florida was impacted by a major hurricane in 2017, and while they still struggle to recover from that storm, they're hammered with a red tide event. Southeast Florida had a bloom of a different color — blue-green algae — but the economic impacts hurt just the same. Central-east Florida has had multiple years of brown tide, and the Indian River Lagoon is receiving failing grades on its report card. Piles of dead fish have reached Pinellas County, and this will have significant economic impacts when the beaches of Tampa and Clearwater are affected. Years of inattention and avoidance of the issues are coming to a head all at the same time. The future of our tourism economy is intimately tied to how we manage our waterways, oceans and beaches. And we need to do a lot better than we've been doing.

These problems won't be solved easily, but it is imperative we begin developing smart solutions.

The environmental and economic future of Florida will depend on the ability of scientists to work together with businesses, community leaders and government agencies to develop solutions. Unless we address the state's environmental issues, the numbers of visitors that we're enjoying now will not be sustainable as there are plenty of other beach destinations that visitors can choose from.

Great hospitality is a team effort, which requires getting a million things right every day — from employees to facilities to marketing to maintenance. Get one of those things wrong, and your business will

suffer. The same is true for restoring our coastal systems — it requires juggling multiple approaches at the same time. Our problems are complex, and they won't be solved using simple solutions.

UCF Coastal takes a unique inter-disciplinary team approach, and we want to work with the FRLA to develop a path forward that will result in healthy coastal communities and stronger more resilient businesses. We have over 40 faculty, with expertise in biology, environmental chemistry, engineering and biomedical research as well as community vulnerability, policy development, community planning, emergency management and ecotourism economics, ready to work together with all stakeholders to enable smart, resilient development which will ensure the sustainability of Florida's coastal resources and economy for future generations.

To learn more about UCF Coastal and ways we can partner to find solutions to the threats that Florida is facing, visit sciences.ucf.edu/ucf-coastal-booklet/#1.

Dr. Worthy is a Department Chair and Pegasus Professor at The University of Central Florida and the Director, National Center For Integrated Coastal Research, Provost's Distinguished Research Professor Of Biology, and Hubbs-Sea World Endowed Professor Of Marine Mammalogy.



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