PROPOSED

RESOLUTION NO.

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA, EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR SECTION 2 OF SB 1386/HB 1557, AS INTRODUCED, WHICH ADDS THE KRISTIN JACOBS CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION AREA TO THE LIST OF FLORIDA AQUATIC PRESERVE AREAS; URGING THE LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNOR TO CONTINUE TO INCREASE THEIR SUPPORT FOR CORAL REEF RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT BY SUPPORTING LONG-TERM RECURRING REVENUE SOURCES FOR CORAL REEF DISEASE RESPONSE AND RESTORATION, INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTION AND PROPAGATION OF CORALS FOR FUTURE RESTORATION EFFORTS, AND RESEARCH FOCUSED ON PATHOGEN IDENTIFICATION AND DISEASE RESPONSE STRATEGIES; URGING THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION COLLABORATE TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A LONG-TERM REEF CONSERVATION STRATEGY; REQUESTING THAT RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES ENGAGE LOCAL PARTNERS ON COASTAL PROJECTS TO ENSURE THESE EFFORTS ARE REASONABLY ACCOMMODATED AS PART OF COASTAL CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT EFFORTS; DIRECTING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO TRANSMIT A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE GOVERNOR, FLORIDA LEGISLATURE, SECRETARY OF THE FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND REGIONAL CORAL REEF STAKEHOLDERS; AND PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

(Sponsored by Vice-Mayor Beam Furr)

WHEREAS, Florida's Coral Reef runs parallel to the coastline from the Dry Tortugas north to Martin County and is a unique and valuable national resource that protects our shorelines, beaches, and upland resources by reducing wave energy from storms and hurricanes, thereby providing flood protection values of over $675 million per year and more than $1 billion during extreme weather events;

WHEREAS, Florida's Coral Reef provides essential marine habitat to over 6,000 species of marine life including several threatened and endangered species, and is designated as a critical habitat for Staghorn (Acropora cervicornis) and Elkhorn (Acropora palmata) corals listed under the Endangered Species Act;

WHEREAS, protection of Florida's Coral Reef is essential for ensuring the continued protection of our shorelines, coastal food sources, cultural practices, biomedical opportunities, and coastal economies that are direct results of our coral reefs;

WHEREAS, coastal ocean waters are under great user pressure and suffer from water quality degradation that has compromised the resiliency of Florida's Coral Reef and its habitat;

WHEREAS, in 2003, a collaborative multiagency effort founded the Southeast Florida Action Network ("SEAFAN"), which was renamed the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative ("SEFCRI") in 2005 with the addition of non agency representatives, to foster conservation planning activities for the coral reefs of the Southeast Florida area;

WHEREAS, local officials were eager to provide an additional forum and engage policymakers in a framework that could aid in advancing technical recommendations through policy and action;

WHEREAS, this resulted in Broward, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, and Martin counties adopting enabling resolutions in 2012 to create the Coastal Ocean Task Force ("COTF"), with representation from each of the four counties, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and other stakeholders, to provide recommendations for coastal ocean resources and conservation priorities and strategies;

WHEREAS, the COTF finalized and approved a Recommendations Report in June 2015, supported by each of the partner counties, and approved by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners via Resolution No. 2016-525 in December 2016;

WHEREAS, in 2018, after many years of determined efforts of State Representative Kristin Jacobs and regional stakeholders, including the joint South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils, the Legislature established the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Conservation Area, which encompasses sovereign submerged lands and state waters offshore of Broward, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, and Martin counties;

WHEREAS, in 2021, the Legislature and Governor honored the late Representative Kristin Jacobs by commemorating her many contributions on behalf of the environment and coral reefs and renaming the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Conservation Area the Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area ("KJECA");

WHEREAS, the KJECA covers 105 miles of the northern portion of Florida's Coral Reef, from the northern boundary of Biscayne National Park north to the Port St. Lucie Inlet;

WHEREAS, Broward County staff continues to participate in the development of goals, objectives, and strategies for the conservation and restoration of both Florida's Coral Reef and the KJECA;

WHEREAS, Broward County and the region have long valued the reef habitat as essential to the state's commercial, recreational fishing, and tourism industries, as it supports more than 71,000 jobs within the Southeast Florida region and generates more than $6 billion in positive economic impact annually;

WHEREAS, Florida's Coral Reef is the region's first line of defense against the impacts of rising seas and storm surge, and environmental conditions continue to threaten the adaptative capacity of the Reef to rising seas, temperatures, disease, and ocean acidification;

WHEREAS, coral reefs are facing increasing global threats and impacts, and, coupled with local stressors, are declining at an alarming rate, particularly in light of the 2014 Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease epidemic causing near total mortality of vulnerable and endangered species present on Florida's Coral Reef;

WHEREAS, in the summer of 2023, the coral disease epidemic was compounded by record-hot ocean temperatures, which triggered widespread coral bleaching and additional coral mortality throughout Florida's Coral Reef;

WHEREAS, the Broward County Climate Change Action Plan includes several strategies focused on ongoing coral reef restoration and resilience activities, the status of coral reefs, and the effects of climate change and sea-level rise;

WHEREAS, the Aquatic Preserve Act of 1975, as codified in Part II of Chapter 258, Florida Statutes, establishes a list of state-owned aquatic preserves that are administered on behalf of the state by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to ensure "that state-owned submerged lands in areas which have exceptional biological, aesthetic, and scientific value be set aside forever as aquatic preserves or sanctuaries for the benefit of future generations";

WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature is currently considering SB 1386/HB 1557, Section 2 of which amends Section 258.39, Florida Statutes, to add the KJECA to the list of Florida Aquatic Preserves; and

WHEREAS, on February 1, 2024, the Broward County Climate Change Task Force passed a motion urging that the Broward County Board of County Commissioners ("Board") support the inclusion of the KJECA in the list of Florida Aquatic Preserves, NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA:

Section 1. The Board supports the designation of the Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area, described in Section 2 of SB 1386/HB 1557, as a Florida Aquatic Preserve, under Section 258.39, Florida Statutes.

Section 2. The Board urges the Legislature and the Governor to continue to increase their support for coral reef restoration and management, and supports a long-

term, recurring revenue source to provide adequate and flexible funding to support: (i) dedicated staff resources for coral reef disease response and restoration efforts; (ii) infrastructure and capacity needed for assisted reproduction and propagation of corals and coral reef-associated species for future ecosystem restoration efforts; and (iii) in-water and land-based priority research focused on pathogen identification and disease response strategies.

Section 3. The Board urges the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop, and promptly implement, a long-term coral reef conservation strategy for the KJECA before adverse impacts to the reef cannot be reversed.

Section 4. The Board requests that responsible agencies actively engage local partners on coastal projects deemed to be in the public interest to ensure these efforts are reasonably accommodated as part of coastal conservation and management efforts.

Section 5. The Board directs the County Administrator to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the Governor, the Florida Legislature, the Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the regional coral reef stakeholders.

Section 6. Severability.

If any portion of this Resolution is determined by any court to be invalid, the invalid portion will be stricken, and such striking will not affect the validity of the remainder of this Resolution. If any court determines that this Resolution, in whole or in part, cannot be legally applied to any individual, group, entity, property, or circumstance, such determination will not affect the applicability of this Resolution to any other individual, group, entity, property, or circumstance.

Section 7. Effective Date.

This Resolution is effective upon adoption.

ADOPTED this day of , 2024. **PROPOSED**

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency:
Andrew J. Meyers, County Attorney

By: */s/ Deanna Kalil* 02/16/2024
Deanna Kalil
Assistant County Attorney

By: */s/ Maite Azcoitia* 02/16/2024
Maite Azcoitia (date)
Deputy County Attorney

DK/dp
KJCREA Aquatic Preserve Resolution
02/16/2024