

Florida's 'Protect Marine Wildlife' Specialty License Plate Awards Nearly \$140,000 for Florida Conservation Initiatives

Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance has awarded nearly \$140,000.00 for 2023-2024 to protect and preserve marine wildlife and coastal habitats across Florida.

FLORIDA KEYS, FL, UNITED STATES, February 12, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization based in the Florida Keys, has awarded nearly \$140,000.00 in grants during

2023-2024 to protect and preserve marine wildlife and coastal habitats across the state of Florida. These grants advance critical scientific research, rescue operations, and educational initiatives, supporting dolphins, sea turtles, shorebirds and benefit all marine wildlife in Florida.

“

Each project contributes to our mission of protecting marine wildlife and their habitats, while promoting public awareness and scientific understanding.”

Steve McCulloch

All funding for the grants was generated from sales of the 'Protect Marine Wildlife' specialty license plate which was spearheaded by State Representative Jim Mooney (R-Florida Keys), sponsored by Representative Allison Tant (D-Tallahassee) and Senator Dennis Baxley (R-Lady Lake), approved by the Florida State Legislature and, after completing the required 3,000 pre-sale voucher phase required by statute, went on general sale to Florida motorists on April 1, 2023.

Through strategic partnerships with leading research institutions, rescue organizations, and education providers, Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance continues its mission to safeguard marine ecosystems for future generations. Florida's marine wildlife is vital to the ecosystem because it helps maintain the balance of the ocean's complex food web. The diverse marine life in Florida's coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests provide food, habitat, and other benefits. Seagrasses evolved from terrestrial plants which recolonised the ocean 70 to 100 million years



The 'Protect Marine Wildlife' Specialty License Plate

ago.

Other larger organizations, such as Hubbs Seaworld Research Institute (HSRI), are anticipating changes in federal spending that could significantly impact their ability to conduct critical conservation research. According to an appeal sent out by HSRI on February 10th, 2025, over 90% of their research budget is reliant upon competitive grants, and a reduction is a threat to their ability to plan and execute essential research projects.

Grant awards from the 'Protect Marine Wildlife' specialty license plate include support for ongoing dolphin population and behavioral ecology program in the Upper Florida Keys through enhanced technologies for dolphin population studies; capacity building for marine mammal research in Florida Bay through Florida Bay small Cetacean remote biopsy sampling; and comparative acoustic monitoring between wild dolphins and managed care environments through bioacoustics research analysis.

Grant recipients include Florida Institute of Technology, University of Florida Animal Rescue, Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center, The Turtle Hospital, The Coastal Stewards, and Dolphins Plus Marine Mammal Responder.

Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance also supported Clearwater Marine Aquarium through a \$25,000 hurricane relief and disaster recovery grant for emergency care support for threatened, endangered, and protected marine wildlife. Funding all came from sales of the 'Protect Marine Wildlife' specialty license plate.

The design of the license plate was by renowned marine artist Istvan 'Steve' Diossy, a self-taught artist, based in Vero Beach, Florida who at the age of 16 won first place and presidential recognition for a sculpture depicting Michelangelo's The Florentine Pietà. Steve also helped design Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institutes top-selling 'Protect Wild Dolphins' specialty license plate and other Protect wild dolphin license plates in Louisiana and South Carolina, as



A Young Dolphin Entangled in a Fishing Net



Entangled Green Sea Turtle

well as the nation's top-selling 'Endless Summer' specialty license plate, which now generates more than \$3 million annually, having launched a decade ago. He also collaborated with world-renowned marine artist Wyland on the 'Protect Florida Whales' specialty license plate.

Other Board members of Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance include NASA astronaut and former chief clinical veterinarian for the United States Navy Marine Mammal Program, Rick Linnehan, as well as Brian Joseph, who retired as a Major in the Army Reserve Veterinary Corps and participated in missions over ten years in Afghanistan, Africa, Alaska, Central America and the Middle East.

Stephen D McCulloch, President and Founder of Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance, is an internationally recognized marine mammal health and welfare specialist with five decades of service to the zoological, research and conservation communities. Steve has authored more than forty scientific publications, led seventeen successful health and environmental risk assessments, passed legacy legislation, and raised more than seventy-million dollars to support marine conservation programs in three coastal states.

"These ongoing grants represent the commitment of Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance to support marine wildlife conservation through scientific research, rescue operations, educational outreach, and direct conservation efforts." Says Steve McCulloch. "Each project contributes to our mission of protecting marine wildlife and their habitats, while promoting public awareness and scientific understanding."

Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance will be distributing more grant proceeds throughout the coming year as sales of the license plate increases through new sales and renewals. For more information about the Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance grant program through the 'Protect Marine Wildlife' specialty license plate, or to learn about future funding opportunities, please [contact the Program Manager](#) at Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance, Inc.

You can [learn more about the 'Protect Marine Wildlife' specialty license plate](#) grant opportunities at protectmarinewildlife.org and you can order it online (with additional fees to a third party vendor) at www.mypl8.org.

Stephen D McCulloch
Protect Wild Dolphins Alliance, Inc.
info@protectwilddolphinsalliance.org
Visit us on social media:
[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/785373242>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something

we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.