

DATE: December 2, 2019
TO: Matt Jordan, General Manager
FROM: Michelle Stom, Chief Communications Officer *MS*
SUBJECT: Cross Bar Ranch Environmental Education Program Funding – *Approve*

SUMMARY

The Cross Bar Ranch Education Center is used by Pasco County School District to support its environmental education curriculum for 7th grade students. An on-site visit to the center for students includes a classroom lesson and in-field experiment, as well as a bused tour of Cross Bar Ranch. Tampa Bay Water funds a portion of the on-site classroom experience and bus tour.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve funding for the Pasco County School's Environmental Education Program at Cross Bar Ranch in the amount of \$20,657.25 for the 2019-2020 School Year.

COST/FUNDING SOURCE

Uniform Rate. Fiscal Year 2020 budgeted funds.

DISCUSSION

Pasco County School District has an agreement with Pinellas County to use the Cross Bar Ranch Education Center for in-field instruction for environmental education students. Students in the 7th grade Watershed Ambassador's Program use the Cross Bar Ranch site to support water resource education. The program runs from January to June of each school year.

This year all students will continue to study water and will receive deeper learning opportunities through the following projects:

- Longleaf Pine Forest Planting—Five acres of Longleaf Pine are planted at Crossbar Ranch to replenish lands that are clear cut.
- Gopher Tortoise Studies—Gopher tortoise burrows at Starkey Park are studied and monitored over time.
- Prescribed Burns—A burn site at Starkey Park is studied so that students can see the growth over time as the prescribed burns replenish the watershed.
- H2O Science—Deeper water quality study in which students do field testing of water from different sources at both Starkey Park and Crossbar Ranch.

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The H2O Science project will include collecting water samples from various sources at Cross Bar and Starkey Park and conducting water quality tests. This data will allow students to make informed decisions about the necessity of maintaining pristine areas to guarantee the viability of our water supplies.

Students collect data on:

- o Color
- o Clarity
- o pH
- o Temperature
- o Dissolved Oxygen
- o Aquatic organisms collected

BACKGROUND

Tampa Bay Water has helped to fund a portion of the in-field experience and the bus tour since 2012 as part of the agency's outreach and education program.