

Where Are They Now? Past Students Weigh in on how the ESC shaped their career



An ESC-grown Ocean Innovator: Amanda Alker

Before becoming a professor and leader in marine science, Amanda Alker's interest in the ocean was cultivated at the Environmental Studies Center. When Amanda moved to Florida in elementary school, there were few ways for her to explore the natural riches of the treasure coast. A scholarship to Camp WET provided her with an opportunity to experience the beach, appreciate the biological diversity and explore the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) for the first time. Aboard the River Scout around age 10, Amanda decided she would like to become a marine biologist so she could continue to have these experiences.

Amanda returned to ESC yearly, first as a camper and on school field trips, and eventually as a Camp Counselor and volunteer. Each year, she gained leadership skills and opportunities to inspire younger students through hands-on learning and mentorship. Amanda was also a dedicated volunteer with the Earth Saver Crew, the volunteer youth organization of the

Environmental Studies Council, where she developed a strong connection to environmental stewardship. Together, these experiences motivated her to pursue a career that involved teaching in marine biology. When Amanda started her journey to college, ESC supported her in the form of the Environmental Studies Council College Scholarship, which she said was integral in helping her take the next steps toward a career in science.

Today, Amanda is a professor at the University of Rhode Island and a marine microbiologist whose work uses cutting-edge genome editing tools, including CRISPR, to better understand the roles of bacteria in ocean ecosystems. Her research explores microbial solutions to global challenges, with applications ranging from protecting coral reef ecosystems to reducing disease in aquaculture systems. Following her graduate training at the University of California (UC), San Diego, Amanda completed a postdoctoral fellowship (2023–2025) at the Innovative Genomics Institute at UC Berkeley in the Rubin and Doudna Labs. With over a decade of experience in marine fieldwork, diving, coral reef research and microbiology, Amanda also brings a strong passion for teaching and mentoring the next generation of scientists. Despite her global impact, she credits her early experiences with ESC as foundational to her success.



“The ESC showed me that passions, such as caring for your local environment, can be sparked at any time, even as a kid on a boat in the middle of the IRL. For me, acting on that passion started with finding a supportive community, getting involved and believing you can make a difference,” Amanda shared.

From an ESC Camp Counselor and Earth Saver's Crew volunteer to university professor and innovator, Amanda Alker's story is a powerful example of how early environmental education and community support can shape futures—and change the world.

Please consider leaving a legacy by naming the Environmental Studies Council in your estate plans.



The Environmental Studies Council, Inc.

2900 NE Indian River Drive
Jensen Beach, FL 34957
Council Office: (772) 219-1887 x 121
Center Office: (772) 219-1887

Mission Statement

To protect and enhance the education programs of the Environmental Studies Center and to promote and extend environmental awareness through community education.

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From the desk of the President

2026 brings renewed energy, fresh ideas, and a shared commitment to advancing environmental education and stewardship. Our council continues to grow in purpose and collaboration, and we are grateful for the dedication of our members, partners, and supporters who make our work meaningful and impactful. We want to take a moment to reflect on the exciting momentum within the Environmental Studies Council and share a few highlights that will shape the months ahead.

The Council is heading up an initiative to research and purchase a new boat for the Center. This important investment will expand our ability to provide hands-on, experiential learning opportunities on the water. From field studies to educational outings, the new boat will enhance our capacity to connect students and the community directly with the ecosystems we work to protect and understand.

We are also proud to celebrate VIP/Grandparents Day, a special occasion that reminds us of the importance of intergenerational connection and shared learning. It is always a joy to welcome families, and showcase the work being done through the Council and Center. Events like this strengthen our community and highlight the lasting impact of environmental education across generations.

As we look ahead, I am confident this year will bring continued growth, meaningful experiences, and new opportunities to inspire environmental responsibility. Thank you for your continued support.

ESC is the place to BE!

Kaija + Kari

Did Your Membership Expire?

Have you renewed your membership to the Environmental Studies Council? We need your support!

To sign up, log on to www.escmc.org or call (772) 219-1887 x 121

Martin County Science Nights with the ESC



The Environmental Studies Center proudly supports Science Nights throughout Martin County public and private schools, bringing hands-on learning to life for families and students. From hermit crab races and plankton labs to meeting Casey the snake and exploring interactive shell collections, ESC teachers lead engaging activities that make science fun and accessible. Through these events, our educators extend learning beyond the classroom—sparking curiosity and excitement across our community.

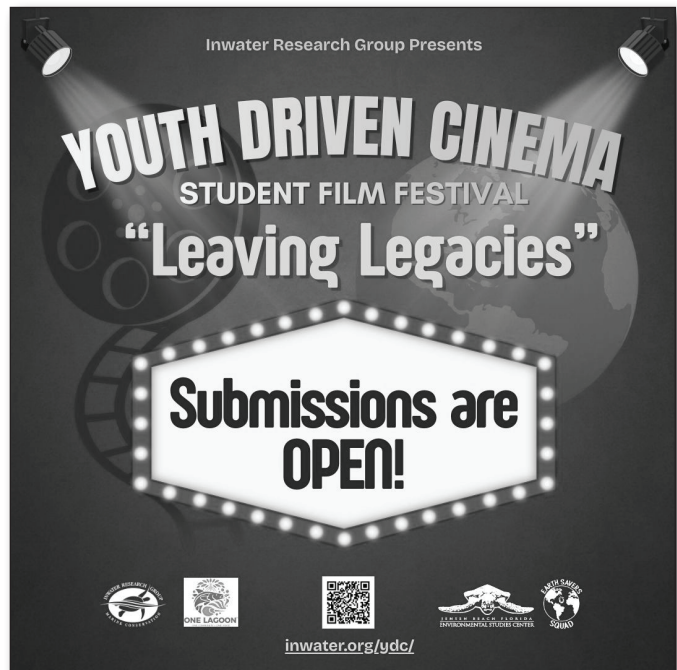
Meet Gus!

We welcome our new sea turtle Gus! Mrs. Healey's class from Sea Wind Elementary chose the name. "My kindergarten students chose the name Gus because we are learning to read and Gus was a short CVC word (name) that my students could blend and read," says Mrs. Healey. "They were super excited to come up with the name and write all about the new baby sea turtle!!" Gus comes to us all the way from FAU. We are excited to watch you grow, Gus!



CALLING ALL STUDENTS!

Youth Driven Cinema (YDC) is back! Students in Martin & St. Lucie Counties are invited to create short conservation-themed films, share their voice, and compete for cash prizes and recognition. Top five films in each category will be selected by judges and featured at The Lyric Theatre in Stuart, FL on April 22, 2026. Submit your film by March 25, 2026 to be part of this inspiring event that blends art, science, and community impact. For more information, please visit: <https://www.inwater.org/education/ydc/>



Save the Date!

Grandparents Day at the Center

March 28, 2026
9 am - noon
Free admission - donations welcome!

Camp Registration

Camp registration will open on the ESC website at 8:00 AM on March 11, 2026. Please note that the camp registration process has changed, so be sure to visit the ESC website for the most up-to-date information:
<https://www.martinschools.org/o/esc/>

Wish List

The Environmental Studies Center needs your support! The Center has a current need for:

- Batteries- various sizes
- Paper Towels
- Kleenex
- Quart size plastic ziploc bags
- Dawn Dish Soap

If you are interested in supporting any of the above opportunities, please contact us at info@escmc.org or by calling 772-219-1887 x121. Or stop by the Center - we'd love to see you!

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WINTER 2026

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Animals in the Wild

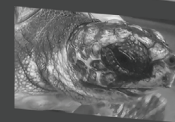


Lindsey Potter snapped a photo of this little guy on her daily walk.

Have a wildlife photo of your own? Submit your shots to info@escmc.org for a chance to be featured!



Environmental Studies Center Grandparents' and VIP Day



Join us for a day of fun and exploration at the gem of Martin County, the Environmental Studies Center!



Event Highlights Include:

- Gus the Sea Turtle!
- Joey the Alligator
- Everglades Foundation
- RiverKidz
- Florida Oceanographic Society
- Student Entrepreneur Fair



March 28, 2026
9:00 am-12:00 Pm



2900 NE INDIAN RIVER DRIVE, JENSEN BEACH, FLORIDA 34957

GO GREEN! JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST! FIND US ON FACEBOOK!

<http://www.facebook.com/escmc>