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### **Statement of Diversity within the Pelican Island Audubon Society**

The Pelican Island Audubon Society is dedicated to bringing people of color and diverse backgrounds into our membership. Our mission: *"To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities, and the land and water on which they depend in Indian River County through education, advocacy, and public awareness."*

The protection of air, land, and water is at the heart of the environmental movement. Protecting our planet on a global level to preserving our quality of life locally are the bookends to the focus of our organization. The Pelican Island Audubon Society is greatly aware of the need to have a diverse group of concerned members, partners and volunteers ready to advocate, educate, and bring public awareness for the protection of our environment.

As Florida continues to diversify, so must the organizations dedicated to preserving the state's natural environment. Too often the environmental movement is seen as a homogenous group of concerned and dedicated citizens- mostly white and older. The future of the movement must reflect the diversity of its citizens for it to succeed, and nothing is as important as protecting the land that we live upon, the waters that we drink, and the air that we breathe. The natural environment is essential to our future and must be a top priority for our county and our state.

The Pelican Island Audubon Society has adopted policies to bring people of color into our organization and programs to bring nature to people of color. Our Audubon Advocates program, an after-school program partnering with four elementary schools in southern Indian River County, brings a diverse group of underserved fifth-grade students to explore, learn and grow with a nature based, outdoor science program. Our motivation for offering this program is the confirmed science behind the effects of nature deficiency among our young people, especially minorities.

For the families of our Audubon Advocates, we offer a free, one-year family membership so that the parents and siblings of our students can participate in our membership programs. In addition,

the Pelican Island Audubon Society is arranging to start offering a monthly birding program at the Gifford Community Center to show Gifford residents that nature can be found anywhere.

For many years, the Pelican Island Audubon Society has worked with our local minority communities to identify quality of life indicators while developing measurable criteria to ensure these areas are not left behind as our county grows. In collaboration with the Indian River County Health Department, our organization has planted fruit trees in the Gifford community, and we have plans to plant more trees and native plants in Gifford and the City of Fellsmere.

For all the efforts that the Board of the Pelican Island Audubon Society makes to bring people of color into our membership, we are aware of our shortcomings. Our membership still lacks the level of diversity reflected in our County and though we have sought diverse board members, our Board is currently sans minorities. As our organization moves forward, we will continue to reach out to the underrepresented communities of Gifford, West Wabasso, Fellsmere, and Oslo area in an effort to bring greater diversity into our membership as well as to engage in programs and advocacy to benefit these diverse and historic communities.

This is our pledge; we are the Pelican Island Audubon Society.

Working together for our environment,

*The Board*

*Our Mission: To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities in Indian River County through advocacy, education, and public awareness.*