

Save Our Seabirds, INC

Wings of Hope: Pelican Initiative

Save Our Seabirds' mission is to rescue and rehabilitate sick and injured wild birds, with the goal of releasing them back into their natural habitat. Save Our Seabirds receives upwards of 5,000 calls a year about birds in distress. The ***Wings of Hope: Pelican Initiative*** would rebuild a hurricane-damaged 20' x 50' pelican flight pen enclosure and add a second identically-sized structure with stronger materials and reinforced construction to expand capacity and increase storm resilience.

The total initiative budget is \$162,850 with the additional funds committed. Our grant would fund 66% of the \$162,850 for the construction of the two flight pens.

Repairing and upgrading the current flight pen to make it more storm-resistant and building a second storm-resistant structure would double the capacity for local brown pelicans and migratory white pelicans from 20 to 40 at one time, and from 150 to 300 per year. Save Our Seabirds treats hundreds of brown pelicans annually, with more than two dozen rescued daily from bridges and fishing piers. Currently, it must turn away injured pelicans due to a lack of space.

Historically, brown pelicans have faced severe population declines due to habitat destruction, hunting, pollution, effects of pesticides and destruction of coastal wetlands. Because of this, they are considered a "Species of Special Concern" in Florida. They remain vulnerable to threats such as oil spills, fishing gear entanglement, and climate change. Save Our Seabirds is committed to medically treat and rehabilitate these brown pelicans, as well as the white pelicans during migration, to improve the local bird mortality rate. This initiative would expand its ability to do so. Pelicans arriving at Save Our Seabirds are treated in its avian hospital until stable and then are moved outdoors into the enclosure to regain strength until ready for release. The average stay is 75 days, making the enclosures essential to the rehabilitation.

To sustain this initiative, once the pelican flight pen enclosures are constructed, their maintenance expenses would be included in the operating budget. Save Our Seabirds has a facility-wide capital maintenance budget, which would cover these enclosures.

Rescuing and rehabilitating brown pelicans preserves our natural heritage and ensures the sustainability of our ecosystems for future generations by promoting biodiversity and the health of our coastal environments.