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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tampa Bay Watch Announces Michelle Yepez as New Development Director

Florida Nonprofit Hires Seasoned Mission-based Director to Lead Philanthropic Growth at Tampa Bay Watch and the Discovery Center

TERRA VERDE, FLA. (November 15, 2021) - [Tampa Bay Watch](#), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster a healthy Tampa Bay watershed through community-driven restoration projects, education programs, and outreach initiatives, announced today the appointment of Michelle Yepez as its new Director of Development.

In her role as development director, Yepez will oversee the organization's corporate and community philanthropy and further deliver growth through fundraising, donor relations, partnership development and other collaborative initiatives.

"It is a true honor to continually collaborate with the vast network of innovators throughout Tampa Bay, who share the same mission as Tampa Bay Watch to protect the watershed, inspire our youth, and offer local communities a platform to take personal responsibility for our greatest shared asset at this pivotal moment in history," says Yepez.

Michelle returns to Tampa Bay Watch from Lighthouse of Pinellas, where she implemented, coordinated and managed the organization's stewardship efforts. She is a native of Tampa Bay and a graduate of Miami Dade College and University of South Florida.

Michelle attributes her passion for sustainability to a sun-soaked childhood exploring old Florida's unique ecosystems. Her drive to preserve the region's natural resources for today's enjoyment and tomorrow's safekeeping led her to become a frequent volunteer for Tampa Bay Watch's community restoration projects. She formally joined the organization in 2014 as the membership and special events coordinator, where she supervised the growth of individual giving programs and annual fundraising events.

"We are thrilled to welcome Michelle back to Tampa Bay Watch," says Dwayne Virgint, CEO of Tampa Bay Watch. "Not only does she possess the skills and experience necessary to ensure continued growth and smooth operation of our efforts, but she also brings a passion for the work and a need to care for the community."

In her spare time, Michelle enjoys woodworking, camping, studying floral design, and being a Taekwondo mom to three kids.

ABOUT TAMPA BAY WATCH

Tampa Bay Watch is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to fostering a healthy Tampa Bay watershed through community-driven restoration projects, education programs, and outreach initiatives. Incorporated in 1993, Tampa Bay Watch conducts habitat restoration and educational activities throughout the year, relying heavily on the efforts of community volunteers. These programs seek to build citizen awareness, concern and participation in improving the health and sustainability of Tampa Bay. Tampa Bay Watch opened the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center at the new St. Pete Pier in July 2020. The Discovery Center features a public Exhibit Gallery showcasing the economic and ecological value of the Tampa Bay estuary to residents and visitors, a 45' eco-vessel which conducts daily on-water educational activities and both an outdoor "wet" classroom and an indoor classroom offering a variety of environmental outreach programs to visitors and Tampa Bay area students. *For more information, visit www.tampabaywatch.org, or call 727-867-8166.*

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