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Lee Commissioners approve measures to allow monitoring of water resources and assessment of flood conditions

Fort Myers, FL, Sept. 2, 2025 – The Lee Board of County Commissioners voted Tuesday to approve two measures related to collecting critical data for water resources modeling and assessment of flood conditions.

Commissioners approved an annual joint-funding agreement to continue cooperative work with U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The agreement includes water resources data collection at 12 sites on various rivers and streams throughout Lee County. The county has contracted with USGS since 1973. The new annual term will begin Oct. 1. The total cost is \$303,510; the USGS cooperative share is \$99,080 and Lee County's cost share is \$204,430.

A \$65,000 grant amendment from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is in process to assist with Lee County's match.

The program with USGS includes reading of continuous stage recorders and groundwater levels in several Lee County watersheds, including Briarcliff Ditch, Gator Slough, Imperial River, Orange River, Spring Creek, North Branch Estero River, South Branch Estero River, Six Mile Cypress Creek, Popash Creek, Telegraph Creek, Ten Mile Canal and Whiskey Creek.

The data obtained is necessary:

- for the proper calibration of computer models developed as part of the Lee County Surface Water Management Master Plan,
- to provide real-time hydrological information to assist in flood/storm response,
- to document pollutant load reductions in fulfillment of our Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements.

The additional data and accurate surface water models aid in the design and review of development by helping to determine the impact they may have on surface water flow over a large area.

In a separate vote, Lee County Commissioners approved an amendment to a FDEP grant for water flow monitoring equipment located on Telegraph and Popash creeks. The amendment increases the reimbursement of operating and maintenance costs to \$424,600.

The equipment at each site monitors the amount of water flowing into the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. The data is used to calculate the pollutant load flowing into the river, which currently has a state-adopted Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for total nitrogen and helps measure progress toward achieving the load reduction goals for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. The data also provide real-time reporting on potential flooding in response to storm events.

To learn more about the different types of flooding experienced in the community, go to leegov.com/flooding.

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