

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Lee County to complete blue-green algae pilot program with contracted vendor
*Staff will continue monitoring algal blooms; demonstration projects to continue***

Fort Myers, FL, Sept. 27, 2018 – Lee County is announcing that after Friday it will conclude its blue-green algae collection and will bring to an end its pilot project with contracted vendor AECOM. State and local staff will continue monitoring the Caloosahatchee River and its canals for harmful algal blooms.

County staff and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) also will continue to explore other types of cleanup technology. A demonstration project at no cost to the county by a company called Solitude Lake Management, which uses nano-bubble technology, is anticipated to begin next week.

The total amount of slurry AECOM collected to date is 402,500 gallons from 23 sites, with another 15,000 gallons anticipated to be collected Friday. Since early August, DEP has provided \$2,010,000 in funding to Lee County to support efforts to battle blue-green algae. Although the collection of algae will conclude Friday, AECOM will process what it has collected.

The pilot program was designed to offer temporary relief to some North Fort Myers and Cape Coral businesses and homeowners along heavily impacted canals, primarily those with large, thick mats of algae and odor.

Staff members regularly conduct aerial and on-land surveys; the last two aerial surveys show the matted algal blooms in canals are dissipating. Given the cost to collect and process algae, it is only feasible to clean up the most affected canals, which has been accomplished at this time.

Factors for the decrease in blue-green algae can include shorter daylight hours, cooler water temperatures, higher salinity levels in canals and reduction in nutrients.

Although the pilot program is ending, if conditions change and worsen, county staff will collaborate with DEP to determine options.

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BACKGROUND:

The county on Aug. 2 announced it would mobilize AECOM, one of the nation's largest construction and engineering firms with expertise in environmental cleanup, under a state contract for emergency cleanup deployments. The DEP approved the plan to allow the work to begin. AECOM removed slurry – a mixture of algae and water – and transported it for processing by DEP standards to a separate work site at the North Lee County Reverse Osmosis Plant.