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Lee County to host public meeting to inform the public about flood-mitigation efforts

Fort Myers, FL, Sept. 25, 2020 – Lee County is planning a public meeting to inform stakeholders and residents about the yearlong effort the county has nearly completed for Phase 3 of its post-Hurricane Irma flood-mitigation efforts.

The informational meeting will be formatted to accommodate Centers for Disease Control guidelines and will be held in half-hour time slots from 3 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13, at Wa-Ke Hatchee Recreation Center, 16760 Bass Road, Fort Myers, FL 33908. Participants are asked to make a reservation by calling or emailing in advance at kwelton@leegov.com or 239-533-2282. People who arrive without a reservation will be admitted as room capacity allows. Please bring a face covering to wear inside the meeting room. The county plans to create a video at the meeting for those who are unable to attend; the meeting will not be broadcast live.

County staff and engineering firms will be on hand to provide information about the study and its findings related to potential flood-mitigation projects, including East Lee County, Southeast Lee, South Fort Myers and Whiskey Creek. Information also will be available about a prior study completed for North Fort Myers.

The Lee Board of County Commissioners will schedule a work session in November to discuss the study. Visit www.leegov.com/bocc or www.leegov.com/flooding for updates as they become available, or follow Lee County Government on Facebook.

This study and process – called Phase 3: Southern Lee County Flood Mitigation Plan – is being developed by local storm water experts under the direction of Lee County Natural Resources. The Lee Board of County Commissioners in 2018 approved a contract for the engineering firms, who were selected via a procurement process, to do a yearlong assessment with recommendations for the Board looking at conceptual long-term flood-mitigation projects.

Prior county efforts included Phase 1, which cleaned up waterways and cleared flow ways post-Hurricane Irma, and Phase 2, which was a more-detailed post storm assessment.

Phase 2 involved the county hiring several engineering firms and using residents' and stakeholders' observations and data from the rain event of August 2017 and the hurricane, which made landfall on Sept. 10, 2017.

Phase 2 resulted in flood assessment project reports for the following areas: Imperial River/ Spring Creek/ Halfway Creek/ Estero River; Ten Mile Canal/ Island Park/ Briarcliff/ Six Mile Cypress/Mullock Creek/Hendry Creek; Orange River/ Hickey Creek/ Bedman Creek/Olga; Bayshore Creek/ Popash Creek/ Stroud Creek; and, Whiskey Creek/ Villas/ Pine Lake.

Before launching the Phase 3 study, the county held three public meetings at which hundreds of residents and business owners were able to ask questions, provide feedback and learn more about the flood history and flood projects in their respective parts of the county. Information obtained at the meetings was incorporated into Phase 3.

While engineers worked on the study, the county continued to clean, assess and maintain flow ways, ditches and canals.

Other efforts also continued, including:

- The Board approved an interlocal agreement with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) that helps the county and district join forces on flood-mitigation efforts. Specifically, the agreement had the SFWMD take over management and maintenance of 13 natural flow ways and waterbodies;
- The county obtained a U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant for sediment and debris removal in two areas within the Ten Mile Canal;
- The county repaired a water control structure at US 41 and Mullock Creek which was damaged during the storm;
- The county worked with the East Mullock Water Control District to remove debris from ditches from the San Carlos Park area;
- The county applied for and was awarded \$7.1 million through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's Rebuild Florida Infrastructure Repair Program for flood resiliency spending; it allows the county to step up the pace of drainage improvements in the Mullock Creek basin.
- Lee County Department of Transportation has performed drainage enhancements along Island Park Road and in The Villas.
- The county applied for a \$10.3 million federal Community Development Block Grant earmarked for post-Hurricane Irma mitigation to build a filter marsh, reservoir and weirs on the GS-10 parcel north of Lehigh Acres. This CDBG-Mitigation proposal, approved by commissioners, is being reviewed by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

More information is available at www.leegov.com/flooding; click on the "Interactive Story Map" on the top left part of the landing page. Questions can be emailed to flood@leegov.com

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Lee County will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in its services, programs, or activities. To request an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a reasonable modification to participate in the upcoming public meetings, contact Joan LaGuardia, 239-533-2314, Florida Relay Service 711, or jlaguardia@leegov.com. Accommodation will be provided at no cost to the requestor. Requests should be made at least five business days in advance.