

# Legislative Session 2018

State of Florida



*Lee County*



# 2018 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## INTRODUCTION

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This document represents the Board's state legislative program for the 2018 Session. While these priorities are intended to guide the County's advocacy efforts in Tallahassee, the list is not exhaustive and issues may arise or evolve that will require Board attention.

The most critical issues are not ranked in order of priority. Commissioners, staff and contract lobbyists will pursue all of the legislative policies approved by the Board and place appropriate priority on the issues given the opportunities that arise during the legislative process. As usual, items of emphasis will include maintaining the County's home rule authority and opposing cost shifts or unfunded mandates.

The state legislative session will begin on January 9, 2018 and is scheduled to conclude on March 9th.

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SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

SUPPORT AND TRACKING ISSUES

BACKUP MATERIALS

### **LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**



**JOHN MANNING – DISTRICT 1**



**CECIL L PENDERGRASS – DISTRICT 2**



**LARRY KIKER – DISTRICT 3**



**BRIAN HAMMAN – DISTRICT 4**



**FRANK MANN – DISTRICT 5**

## 2018 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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### PRIORITIES

- A. **Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Protection – SUPPORT** continued, dedicated State funding to complete construction of the C-43 West Reservoir Construction Project, a vital CERP storage project; AND **SUPPORT** funding to complete the C-43 Water Quality Treatment Testing Facility ("BOMA") pilot project on property purchased jointly by Lee County and the South Florida Water Mgt District.
- B. **Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment – SUPPORT** allocating funds for county land conservation and management programs to acquire environmentally sensitive property. Lee County's 20/20 Program will have spent almost \$350 million to acquire approximately 30,000 acres of environmentally sensitive lands for restoration and preservation by the end of 2017.
- C. **Water Quality Funding Requests** – \$1,380,000 in state funding (Lee County match of \$2,020,000)
  - i. Artesian Well Abandonment Project: Plugging wells in compliance with state law intended to help maintain healthy aquifers. (Details for each project are contained in the attachments)
  - ii. L-3 Canal Rehabilitation: This project helps achieve the goals of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan and the Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan.
  - iii. Lakes Park Littoral Zone: Water quality treatment that helps achieve the goals of the Everglades West Coast Basin Management Action Plan.
  - iv. Wild Turkey Strand Preserve Hydrological Restoration: Water quality improvement; increased natural flow; and habitat enhancement.
- D. **Big Carlos Pass Bridge Replacement Funding Request** – \$3,300,000 in state funding for PD&E and Design (Lee County match of \$3,300,000). This bridge serves a corridor that is jointly designated by the Lee and Collier County MPOs as a regional roadway and provides access to critical parts of Lee County's primary tourism related beaches. (See attached description and map)
- E. **Public Safety Infrastructure Funding Request** – \$10,000,000 in state funding (Lee County match of \$10,000,000). Various communications related infrastructure upgrades are needed to improve day-to-day operations as well as to enhance disaster response and recovery.
- F. **Libraries – SUPPORT** funding the State's Library and Information Services FY2018-19 Public Library Construction Grant Program at \$8.5 million. This funding level is required in order to secure \$500,000 grants for both the NFM and Bonita libraries. Lee County will spend approximately \$27 million to construct these new libraries.

## 2018 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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The Lee County Board of County Commissioners advocates for the preservation of local home rule and opposes any legislation, policies or regulations that would impose unfunded responsibilities upon the County.

### SUPPORT ISSUES

Affordable Housing -- **SUPPORT** retaining the full amount of dedicated documentary tax revenues to fund state and local affordable housing programs. Based on current state revenue estimates, a full SHIP distribution for Lee County would approach \$2.9 million in FY2017-2018.

Medicaid County Cost Cap – **SUPPORT** establishing a cap on growth in the individual county Medicaid costs under s. 409.915, F.S. to address the anticipated cost shifts that result from the transition to a Medicaid enrollee based cost-sharing system. **OPPOSE** efforts to shift more state Medicaid costs to counties.

Regional Planning Councils – **SUPPORT** legislation to allow counties to opt out from mandatory membership in an RPC by majority vote of the county's governing body.

Communications Services Tax – **SUPPORT** revising current law in a manner that is: 1) *revenue neutral*; 2) simplifies administration and collection of the current tax; 3) provides for a broad and equitable tax base; 4) provides for enhanced stability and reliability as an important revenue source for local government; and 5) provides the opportunity for market-based growth.

Florida Retirement System (FRS) – **SUPPORT** a requirement that all legislation potentially increasing FRS contribution rates be analyzed and evaluated to determine the direct fiscal impact of proposed changes to all local and state government in order to be eligible for consideration.

Fertilizer – **SUPPORT** the County's authority to regulate the use and application of fertilizer to protect water quality.

Septic Tanks – **SUPPORT** the County's authority to regulate use and inspection.

Water Well Construction – **SUPPORT** the County's authority to promulgate and enforce construction standards. The County's unique hydrology and geology requires local knowledge of its aquifers and compatible grout materials in order to prevent inter-aquifer intrusion.

Bob Janes Triage Center – **SUPPORT** continued funding for the Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Local Matching Grant Program. The services provided by the Bob Janes Triage Center have a proven track record of enhancing public safety and reducing criminal justice expenditures.

Behavioral Health System – **SUPPORT** increased funding for core mental health and substance abuse services as well as ancillary support and diversion programs.



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## **SUPPORT ISSUES (Continued)**

Smoking Regulation – **SUPPORT** legislation that repeals the state statutory preemption of smoking regulation by allowing local governments to enact local regulations that exceed state standards. In lieu of a total repeal of the preemption, **SUPPORT** legislation granting to local governments additional authority to restrict smoking on certain outdoor property.

Homelessness – **SUPPORT** developing a formulary/entitlement funding allocation process (rather than competitive) that allows for better long-range planning and coordination with strategic plans. **SUPPORT** creation of a public records exemption for individual identifying information entered into the Homeless Management Information System.

Article V Court Funding – **SUPPORT** eliminating the mandates contained in Section 29.008(4)(a), F.S., that require counties to fund certain court expenditures by 1.5 percent over the prior county fiscal year.

Shift of Prison Inmates to Jails – **OPPOSE** any efforts to shift inmates with less than a year on their sentence at the time of sentencing to jails instead of prisons.

Oil & Gas Laws – **SUPPORT** comprehensive review of oil and gas extraction technologies and related regulations resulting in meaningful oil legislation reform.

County Health Departments – **SUPPORT** increasing state general revenue funding for CHDs and maintaining a coordinated system of CHDs that is centrally housed with the Department of Health.

Beach Renourishment – **SUPPORT** revising statutory criteria for ranking cost-share beach projects in order to better account for economic benefits, storm mitigation and the leveraging of federal funds. **SUPPORT** establishing a dedicated funding source of at least \$50 million per year.

Emergency Medical Services – **OPPOSE** limitations on the ability of county EMS providers to seek reimbursement for out-of-network transports. **SUPPORT** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity process.

Transportation Infrastructure Funding – **SUPPORT** creating a formal mechanism for allocating state funding in a way that emphasizes needs attributable to high economic and population growth while also rewarding jurisdictions that provide matching funds.

Big Cypress Basin – **SUPPORT** amending the boundaries to include the area in Lee County that is south of the Caloosahatchee Watershed. This area is within the Everglades West Coast Watershed of the Big Cypress Basin and pays nearly \$4.5 million annually into the Okeechobee Basin fund.

# C-43 Reservoir Project – Critical to Southwest Florida's Economy

**F**or nearly a century, the Caloosahatchee Estuary has been degraded by extremes in flow resulting from an inadequate water control system in the upstream basin. Low flows during critical dry periods adversely affect the estuary, resulting in harmful algal blooms and impacting critical fish and invertebrate spawning patterns. Conversely, high flows depress salinity levels to a point where important estuarine species are killed or flee the area. Both extremes impact the delicate ecosystem balance and economy of Southwest Florida.

beds. As currently planned, the C-43 Reservoir will store up to 170,000 ac-ft of basin storm water and overflow from Lake Okeechobee. The C-43 Reservoir is expected to supply enough water to meet the existing Minimum Flow and Level (300 cfs monthly average at S-79) for the Caloosahatchee River 80% of the time.

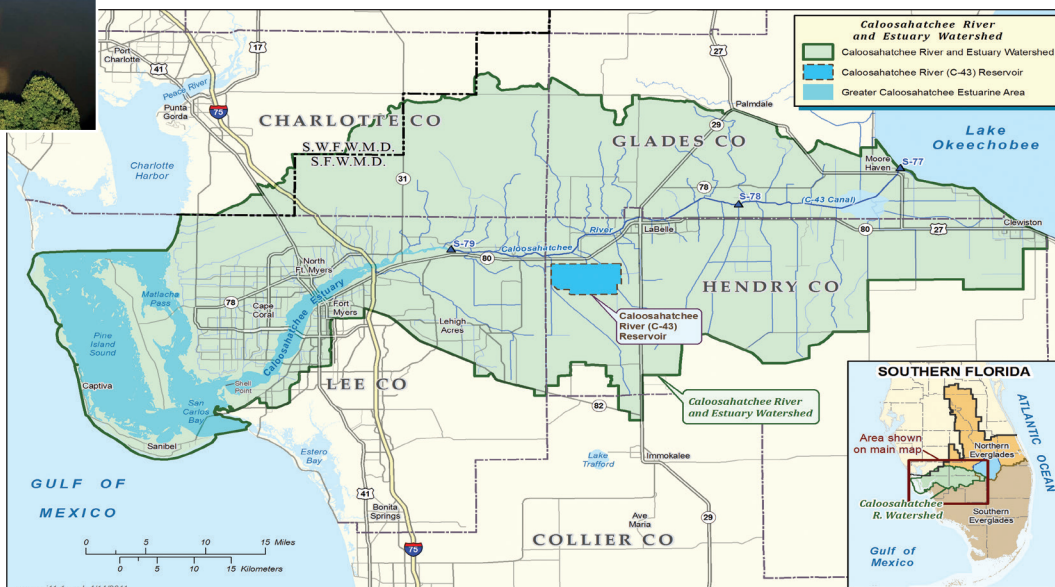
The project, with an estimated cost of \$500 million, was designed with two large cells, a single 1,500 cfs pump station, and a number of gated overflow and discharge structures. Under CERP, the State of Florida and South Florida Water Management District are each responsible for 50% of the total project costs. Historically, the State has generally satisfied their cost share through land acquisition. In this case, however, most of the land was purchased using federal dollars. As a result, the State will be responsible for paying for at least 50% of construction costs.

**What can be done?** The C-43 Reservoir project, a long time component of the greater CERP, was finally authorized in WRDA 2014 and will better manage both wet season and dry season flows to the estuary once completed. However, appropriating the funds to build the project will take years, and sensitive components of the estuary's ecosystem will continue to be impacted.

The primary design criteria included creating sufficient capacity to attenuate excessive storm flows during the wet season while providing adequate storage to augment dry season flows to the estuary to protect ecological resources including sensitive oyster and SAV



**Given the importance of the Caloosahatchee Estuary and River to the region's commercial, recreational, and ecological resources, it is in the State of Florida's best interest to move forward with construction on the first cell of the C-43 Reservoir. The cost of the first cell is \$300 million over 3 years.**





## Vital Southwest Florida Economic Facts:

- More than 75% of Florida's population lives within an estuary watershed and 78% of Florida's GDP is generated within estuary regions.
- Southwest Florida is experiencing the fastest growth in population, employment, and GDP among all U.S. estuary regions. Protecting or enhancing the region's estuaries is essential to support the regional economy.
- Lee County tourism, which depends on a healthy natural ecosystem, employs 1 in 5 workers. This includes the restaurant and hotel industries as well as ecosystem-based industries such as fishing and boating.
- Sources: Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, South Florida Water Management District, and NOAA.

Resource	Hectares	Value per hectare	Total
Seagrasses	18,297	\$7697	\$140,832,009
Mangroves	1213	\$4010	\$4,864,130
Estuarine/Bay	9210	\$9247	\$85,164,502
			<b>\$230,860,641</b> <i>per year</i>



## Completed to Date:

- All necessary project lands have been acquired.
- The design is complete and can be subdivided into distinct components.
- The water reservation rule for the CERP Caloosahatchee (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir has been adopted.



For more information, please contact  
**Kurt Harclerode**, Operations Manager  
Natural Resources Division  
Lee County Government  
[KHarcclerode@leegov.com](mailto:KHarcclerode@leegov.com) | 239-533-8146





# BOMA/C-43 Water Quality Treatment Testing Facility Project Phase I:

## Vital to Southwest Florida's Economy

Unlike the Everglades where phosphorus is the constituent of concern, the Caloosahatchee Estuary is impacted more severely by nitrogen which can result in toxic algal blooms. As a result, the **C-43 Water Quality Treatment Facility**, also known as **BOMA**, is focused on finding treatment technologies and processes that have a greater success at nitrogen removal than traditional Stormwater Treatment Areas.

(particularly nitrogen) within the Caloosahatchee watershed.

Mesocosms, commonly referred to as test cells, are the first phase of a larger project, known as the **C-43 Water Quality Treatment and Testing Facility Project**, which will demonstrate and implement cost effective wetland-based strategies for reducing loadings of total nitrogen and other constituents, including total phosphorus and total suspended solids.

Contingent upon future funding, the test and field-scale cell phases of the project are to be constructed, operated, and sampled in subsequent phases. Each phase of implementation will build upon the information and "lessons learned" of the previous phase with the goal of having the field-scale cells incorporated into a full-sized facility operating on site. It is anticipated that the knowledge gained from the demonstrations will be used to construct a full treatment facility at the site.

The Caloosahatchee Estuary has been degraded by extremes in flow and water quality for nearly a century. Of the critical large scale projects necessary to begin improving downstream ecosystems, the **C-43 Water Quality Treatment Testing Facility** is among the most important. The required land for this project was acquired by Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District more than 7 years ago at a cost of \$37 million for the purpose of providing water quality enhancement

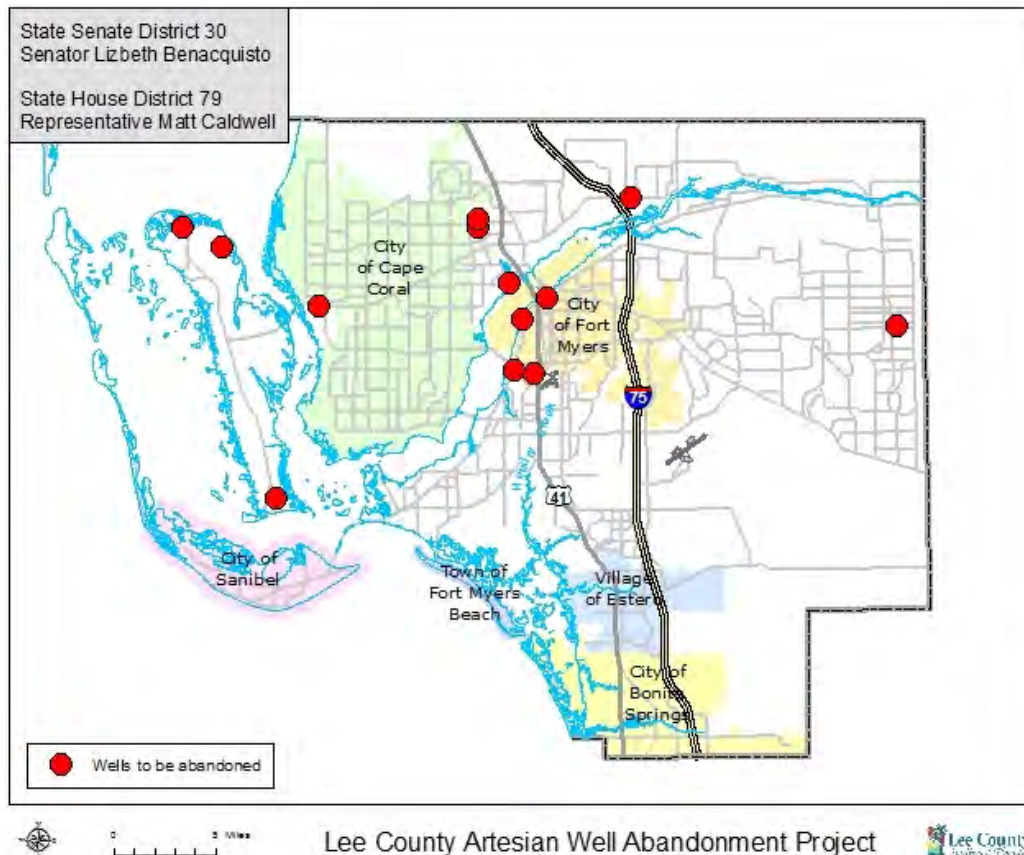


Given the importance of the Caloosahatchee Estuary and River to the region's commercial, recreational, and ecological resources, it is in the State of Florida's best interest to move forward with construction of the full scale project. **The estimated project cost is \$8 million over eighteen months.**





# Lee County Artesian Well Abandonment Project



## Background

Uncontrolled, improperly constructed, deteriorated or abandoned artesian (free-flowing) wells can have an adverse impact on the quantity and quality of water in aquifers (the groundwater source) and other water bodies in Southwest Florida. Groundwater is used for many purposes such as public supply, business, agriculture, and landscaping, and incorrectly constructed free-flowing wells compromise the use of these key resources. Historically, few regulatory controls were placed on well placement and construction and subsequently non-permitted wells, free-flowing artesian wells, abandoned, and damaged wells have been reported. Containing wasteful water flow and maintaining healthy aquifers by avoiding contamination and/or saltwater intrusion are critical to our water resources being able to meet the needs of both Lee County's natural systems and the growing human population. This project is intended to assist well owners in complying with Florida law that requires well owners to control discharges from artesian wells by properly controlling the flow.

## The Project

- The work consists of permanent well abandonment (plugging from bottom to top of the well with cement grout) activities which will be performed by a state licensed water well contractor.



## Lee County Artesian Well Abandonment Project

- Lee County representatives will conduct site visits, inventory the wells, coordinate with the landowners and appropriate agencies to organize participation, and oversee plugging operations.
- The total number of wells to be plugged is undetermined and will be dependent upon the project budget.

### **Benefits**

Properly abandoning free-flowing wells helps prevent adverse impacts to water resources. Deterioration of the well casing occurs as a well ages, which can allow poor quality water to move upward into fresher zones used for drinking water supplies. Old free-flowing wells that were drilled into a deeper portion of the aquifer in certain locations may be susceptible to an increase in salinity. Proper plugging of these wells helps to prevent contamination of water supply. Free-flowing wells can potentially waste many millions of gallons of water per day, cause the water quality in the surface waters and other potable aquifers to decline, act as a conduit for sources of contaminants to enter the aquifer, and often contribute to mosquito problems.

### **Water Quality Improvement Projects FY 2017-18 Funding Request**

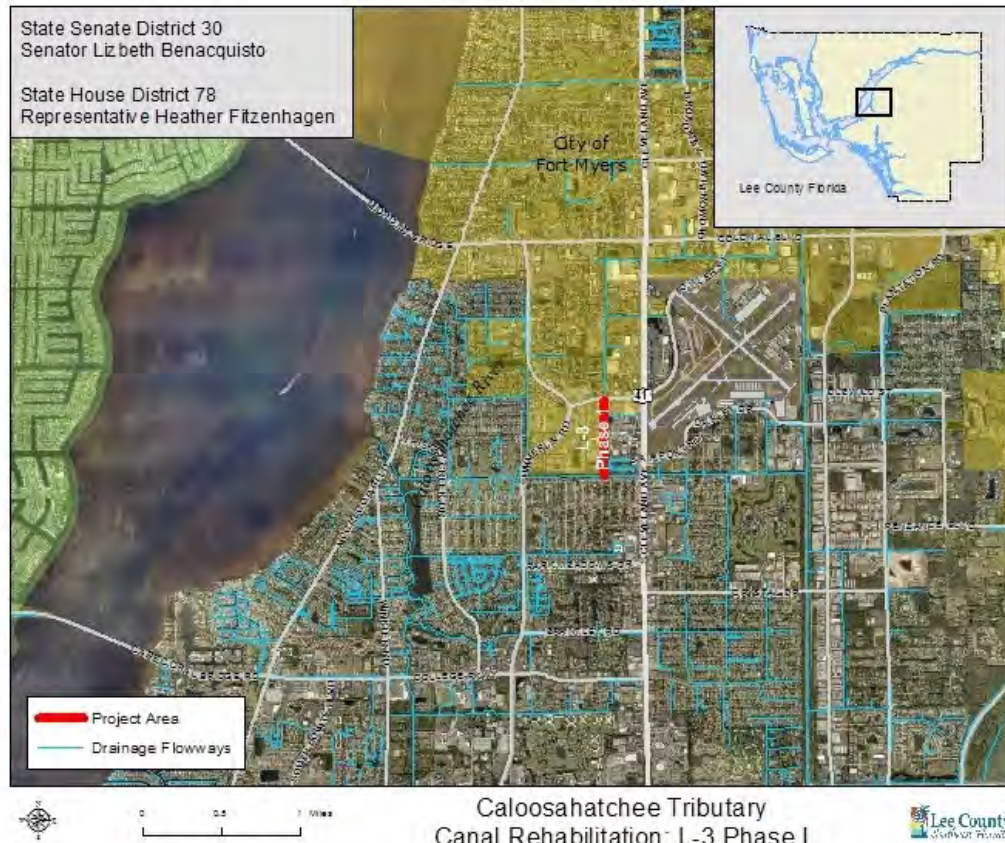
- **Requested dollar amount: \$80,000**
- **Local matching funds pledged, along with a written copy of the vote or other commitment by a local elected body: \$20,000**
- **Total project cost/phase amount: \$100,000**

## **Vital Southwest Florida Facts**

- More than 75% of Florida's population lives within an estuary watershed and 78% of Florida's GDP is generated within estuary regions.
- Southwest Florida is experiencing the fastest growth in population, employment, and GDP among all U.S. estuary regions. Protecting or enhancing the region's estuaries is essential to support the regional economy.
- Lee County tourism, which depends on a healthy natural ecosystem, employs 1 in 5 workers. This includes the restaurant and hotel industries as well as ecosystem-based industries such as fishing and boating.
- Sources: Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, South Florida Water Management District, and NOAA.

*For more information, please contact:*  
Kurt Harclerode, Operations Manager  
Natural Resources Division  
Lee County Government  
[kharcclerode@leegov.com](mailto:kharcclerode@leegov.com), 239-533-8146

# Caloosahatchee Tributary Canal Rehabilitation: L-3



## Background

This project seeks to rehabilitate the L-3 Canal, located in Lee County. The canal was excavated as a relatively deep, uniform channel which is drastically different from the shallow natural flow-way system of the area's prior undisturbed condition. The L-3 Canal was originally constructed in the 1920's as part of the Iona Drainage District to provide drainage for an area south of Fort Myers. The maintenance and operation of the canals are now the responsibility of the Lee County Department of Transportation. The L-3 Canal is located in an area that has been developed into single and multi-family residential as well as light commercial development land uses. It is a major tributary channel to the L Canal and subsequently Whiskey Creek, which is a tributary to the Caloosahatchee River. The canal has become overgrown with nuisance vegetation and lacks water control structures to attenuate flow. Portions of the L-3 Canal watershed lie within Lee County while the canal itself lies within the municipal boundaries of the City of Fort Myers. Lee County and the City of Fort Myers would join as partners to complete this project, which will enhance water quality and conservation without jeopardizing flood control. **The L-3 Canal provides drainage from developed areas into the Caloosahatchee River, which has a TMDL for total nitrogen and is currently subject to a State of Florida Basin Management Action Plan.**

### **The Project**

- Rehabilitate the L-3 Canal for the purpose of water quality improvement
- Canal rehabilitation activities may include:
  - Reshaping and stabilizing bank slopes to reduce potential for sedimentation and erosion;
  - Creation of littoral zones with planted native vegetation;
  - Removal of invasive vegetation;
  - Installation of control structure(s) if necessary to enhance water quality by increasing residence time and thereby allowing nutrient uptake by plants

### **Benefits**

The project will be designed with water quality improvement, increased natural function, and habitat enhancement in mind. The project will increase the residence time of stormwater runoff, which will allow for attenuation, groundwater recharge, and nutrient uptake by plants. The rehabilitation of these canals will also add aesthetic appeal to them with the addition of native plants. **This project helps achieve the goals of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan and the Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan.**

### **Water Quality Improvement Projects FY 2017-18 Funding Request**

- Requested dollar amount: **\$400,000**
- Local matching funds pledged, along with a written copy of the vote or other commitment by a local elected body: **\$100,000**
- Total project cost/phase amount: **\$500,000**

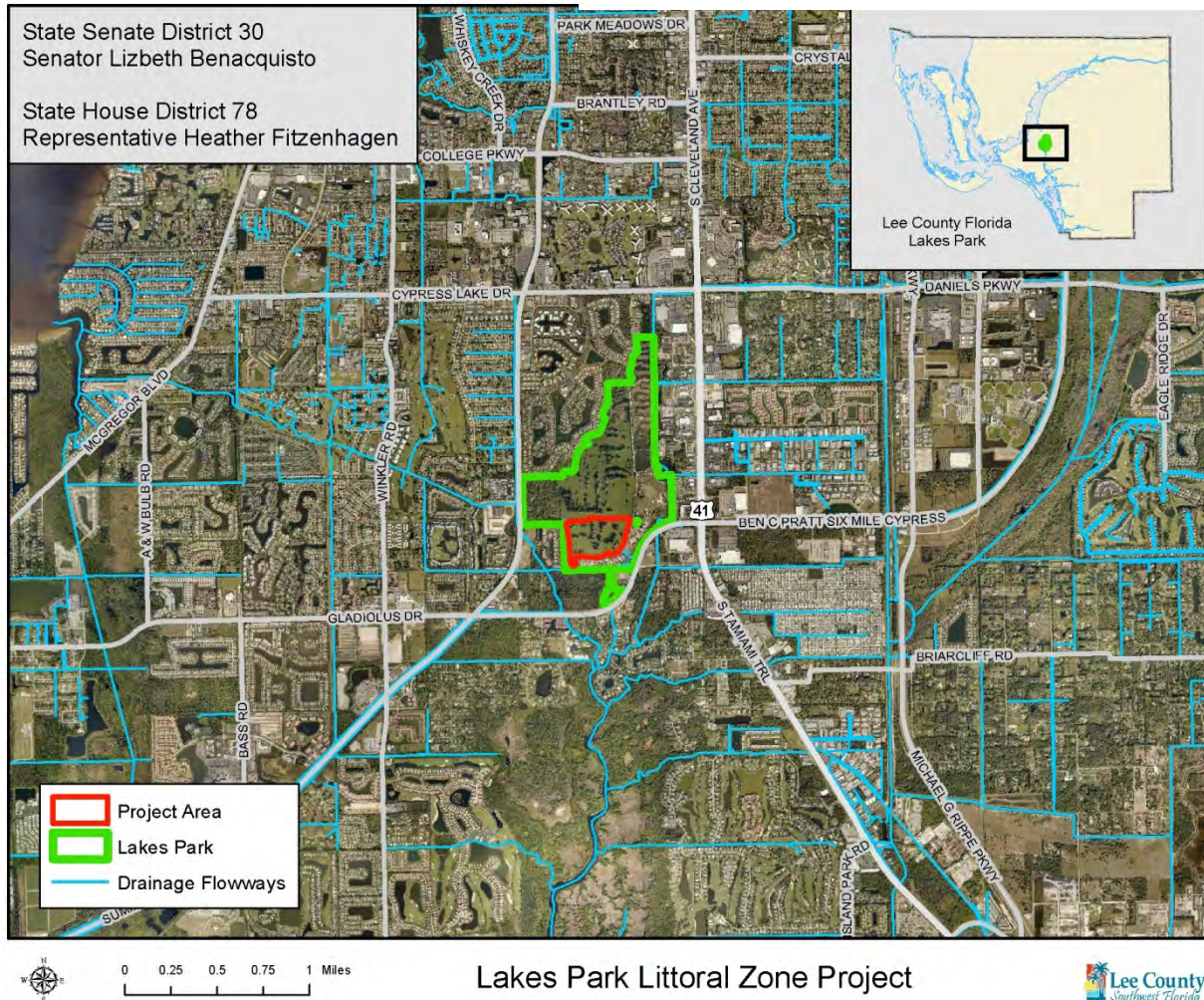
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Natural Resources Division  
Lee County Government  
[kharcclerode@leegov.com](mailto:kharcclerode@leegov.com), 239-533-8146



## Lakes Park Littoral Zone Project



### Background

Lakes Park is an existing 279 acre recreational area, with 158 acres of lakes, located north of Gladiolus Drive, east of Summerlin Road, in Lee County, Florida. Stormwater from surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas flows into the lakes. Prior to the 1950's, the project area was undeveloped wetlands and uplands, and the headwaters of Hendry Creek originated further north of the current park. Lakes Regional Park began as a man-made area where limestone was quarried during the 1960's. The Lakes Regional Park property was purchased by Lee County in 1978.

Lakes Park is located in the headwaters of Hendry Creek, which flows for a few miles before entering the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve. **Hendry Creek has a TMDL for total nitrogen and is currently subject to a State of Florida Basin Management Action Plan.**

### **The Project**

This project will augment ongoing restoration efforts at Lakes Park. Construction of east and west filter marshes, removal of invasive vegetation, and planting of native vegetation has already been completed on portions of the property. The purpose of this project is to achieve water quality improvements for the southern region of the West Lake by modifying existing exotic infested spoil islands to create littoral “benches” by removing the exotics, grading excess spoil material to a depth that is suitable for plant grown, and installing littoral plantings for nutrient uptake. Design is complete and the project is now in the permitting phase. The proposed work will include construction of these littoral “benches”.

### **Benefits**

The proposed project provides passive water quality treatment through use of a filter marsh to reduce nutrients and improve oxygen content along Hendry Creek. One of the main objectives of this project is to reduce total nitrogen discharge into Hendry Creek. **This project helps achieve the goals of the Everglades West Coast Basin Management Action Plan.**

### **Water Quality Improvement Projects FY 2017-18 Funding Request**

- Requested dollar amount: ***\$400,000***
- Local matching funds pledged, along with a written copy of the vote or other commitment by a local elected official: ***\$400,000***
- Total project cost/phase amount: ***\$800,000***

## **Vital Southwest Florida Facts**

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Kurt Harclerode, Operations Manager  
Natural Resources Division  
Lee County Government  
[kharcclerode@leegov.com](mailto:kharcclerode@leegov.com), 239-533-8146



State Senate District 23  
Senator Garrett Richter

State House District 78  
Representative Heather Fitzenhagen

Lee County, Florida

Drainage Flow Ways

Project Area

Wild Turkey Strand Preserve

0 1.5 3 Miles

Wild Turkey Strand Preserve  
Agricultural Field Rehabilitation

CONSERVATION  
2078  
LEE COUNTY  
Parks & Recreation

Man-made alterations and influences have substantially impacted natural drainage and surface water flow patterns in and around the 3,137 acre Wild Turkey Strand Preserve in Lee County. These alterations have drained portions of the preserve and increased potential wet season flooding concerns of local residents to the west of the preserve. This hydrological restoration project reclaims former agricultural lands and enhances natural communities through a series of wetland flow ways, ponds to provide dry season refugia and uplands. The enhancements are being designed to allow for an increased north-to-south surface water flow (the historic main flow) to reduce flow that is currently forced west and redirect through the created and restored ecosystems. The design will be configured to maintain inflows from the adjacent farm to the east of the preserve and allow the water to settle on the land as well as flow south in historic drainage patterns. This project will hold and treat water on approximately 350 acres of former agricultural fields, help water flow south and reduce flood water going west into neighboring residential areas. The property is located on the northern end of the Estero Watershed.

## Wild Turkey Strand Preserve Hydrological Restoration

Specific tasks include shaping the flow way, excavating ponds and re-countouring the agricultural fields to act as a more natural system.

### The Project

- Construct flow way and ponds for the purpose of redirecting water to historic flows, water quality improvement and habitat enhancement
- Activities may include:
  - Reshaping agricultural fields to hold water and create defined flow ways
  - Creation of ponds for dry season refugia;
  - Ditch blocks to reduce off fist flows to the west

### Benefits

The project is being designed with water quality improvement, increased natural flow, and habitat enhancement in mind. The project will increase the residence time of stormwater runoff, which will allow for attenuation, groundwater recharge, and nutrient uptake by plants.

### Water Quality Improvement Projects FY 2017-18 Funding Request

- **Requested dollar amount: \$500,000**
- **Local matching funds pledged, along with a written copy of the vote or other commitment by a local elected body: \$1,500,000**
- **Total project cost/phase amount: \$2,000,000**

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- Sources: Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, South Florida Water Management District, and NOAA.

*For more information, please contact:*

Cathy Olson, Conservation Lands Manager  
Parks and Recreation Department  
Lee County Government  
[COlson@leegov.com](mailto:COlson@leegov.com), 239-533-7455

## 2018 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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### **BIG CARLOS PASS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT**

The Big Carlos Pass Bridge is an almost 1700-foot long, 2-lane bridge linking the southern end of Estero Island (the Town of Fort Myers Beach) to the northern end of Lovers Key (within the City of Bonita Springs). It is a bascule (draw) bridge that was built around 1965-1967, with a horizontal clearance of 25 feet. The most recent State inspection of the bridge, dated January 15, 2014, gave it a Health Index of 91.83 and a Sufficiency Rating of 49.0.

The Big Carlos Pass Bridge is part of a much longer, continuous corridor running along the southern coast of Lee County, encompassing Hickory Boulevard in the City of Bonita Springs, Estero Boulevard in Fort Myers Beach, and San Carlos Boulevard. The Matanzas Pass Bridge and San Carlos Boulevard are currently part of the State Highway System (SR 865). The Hickory Boulevard and Estero Boulevard segments used to be part of the State Highway System but were turned over to Lee County for maintenance in the 1980's. The corridor is recognized as a regional roadway as jointly designated by the Lee and Collier County MPO's and provides access to the primary parts of Lee County's beaches, which are regional and even international draws. The bridge is one of only two accesses to Estero Island and the Town of Fort Myers Beach, and provides a critical linkage between the Town and the City of Bonita Springs. On the Bonita Springs side of the bridge is Black Island, which is home to Lovers Key State Park.

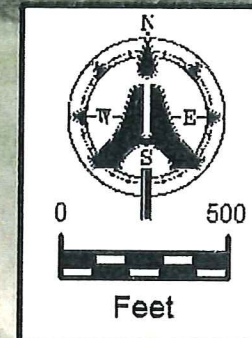
The Big Carlos Pass Bridge Replacement project has been identified in the Lee County MPO long range transportation plan as a State-funded project, and Lee County anticipates pursuing an agreement with FDOT to jointly fund the project to help get it replaced near the 2021 time-frame. Lee County has begun a PD&E Study and is expected to hold the public hearing at the end of 2018. Total estimated costs for the PD&E and design/permitting is \$6.6 million.





Estero Bay Preserve  
State Park

Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve



REDFISH RD

Town of  
Ft. Myers Beach

ESTRELLITA DR

865

ESTERO BLVD

Big  
Carlos  
Pass

Project Limit

Project Limit

Lovers Key  
State Park

LOVERS KEY PARK

Gulf of Mexico

City of  
Bonita Springs



## Lee County – Big Cypress Basin Overview

The South Florida Water Management District is divided into two Basins—the Big Cypress (BCB) and Okeechobee Basins. The basins are both part of the South Florida Water Management District and historically have been responsible for infrastructure improvements, flood control operations and maintenance of infrastructure. They have also funded local storm water improvements and other construction projects.

The Basins are not regulatory in nature and perform no regulatory function. They are simply a segregation of funds to ensure that each watershed within the SFWMD is provided flood control and storm water infrastructure for the ad-valorem funds that are paid to the SFWMD. Chapter 373.0695 F.S. defines the role and responsibilities of Basins.

The Big Cypress Basin was created by statute when Southwest Florida was added to the Central and Southern Flood Control District (C&SF) with the establishment of the South Florida Water Management District on December 31, 1976. Chapter 373.0693 F.S. established the Big Cypress Basin and guides how changes to the boundaries may occur.

The southern area of Lee County, south of the Caloosahatchee Watershed, does not discharge into the watershed or receive water from the watershed. This part of Lee County is not connected to the larger Okeechobee and Everglades system. Because of this, the area receives no direct benefit from the Okeechobee millage that the area pays to the SFWMD. In fact, relieving flooding in southern Lee County is often closely linked to properties and systems in the Big Cypress Basin as was apparent in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.

The area of Lee County that is within the Everglades West Coast Watershed of the Big Cypress Basin pays nearly \$4.5 million annually to the Okeechobee Basin fund. Since Big Cypress Basin taxes are lower than the tax paid in the Okeechobee Basin, extending the BCB line to match the watershed line would generate approximately \$4.1 million annually to be spent locally within the Basin itself. Residents of south Lee County would see a slight decrease in taxes but experience a potentially sizeable increase in flood control and storm water dollars spent locally.

The Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District or the Florida Legislature can amend the Basin boundary to follow watershed lines, as much as possible, in order to better serve the public's interest in flood control. The Big Cypress Basin has in the past funded the Collier County Stormwater Master Plan as well as many infrastructure and water quality improvements. The BCB can do the same for Southern Lee County.

For example, the BCB could fund the regular maintenance of the Imperial River, Estero River and other major storm water conveyances (10-Mile Canal, Kiel Canal, Halfway Creek). Over the long term, BCB could fund the identification and construction of future improvements to the flood control system as well as improvements to water quality flowing into the Estero Bay.