



LEE COUNTY
Florida

LEGISLATIVE
AGENDA

2023



2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA INTRODUCTION

This document represents the 2023 Florida Legislative Session Agenda of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners. While these priorities guide the County's advocacy efforts in Tallahassee, they are not exhaustive and new issues may arise or evolve that will require Board attention.

Issues are not ranked in order of priority. Commissioners, staff, and contract lobbyists will pursue all legislative policies approved by the Board and place appropriate priority on the issues according to opportunities that arise during the legislative process. As usual, Lee County Commissioners emphasize maintaining home rule authority and opposing cost shifts or unfunded mandates.

The state legislative session will begin March 7, 2023 and conclude May 5, 2023.

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- SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
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- BACKUP MATERIAL

LEE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



KEVIN RUANE
DISTRICT 1



CECIL L. PENDERGRASS
DISTRICT 2



RAY SANDELLI
DISTRICT 3



BRIAN HAMMAN
DISTRICT 4



MIKE GREENWELL
DISTRICT 5



2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

PRIORITIES

1) Policies for Hurricane Ian Recovery –

- a. **SUPPORT** providing needed fiscal relief to local governments that will experience revenue loss due to the catastrophic damage caused by Hurricane Ian. **SUPPORT** collaborating with local governments to create methodologies for estimating revenue loss that would be eligible for State reimbursement. Revenue replacement ensures that Lee County and other local jurisdictions have the necessary funds to address critical needs during disaster recovery.
- b. **SUPPORT** revisions to the State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP) to remove restrictions that severely limit using those funds during periods of peak emergency demand and effectively prevent combining those funds with the federal HOME program.
- c. **SUPPORT** designating Lee County as a “most-impacted community” and 1) allow temporary relief from specific regulations for state grants (e.g., Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program, Workforce Investment Act, State Transportation Trust Fund, Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund); and 2) provide a competitive advantage in seeking recovery grants where appropriate.
- d. **SUPPORT** the creation of a State process to provide matching funds for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program projects that have been selected for implementation from a county's adopted Local Mitigation Strategies plan. HMGP funding is administered by the Florida Division of Emergency Management and provided on a cost share basis (75% federal / 25% non-federal) to counties included in a major disaster declaration.

2) SUPPORT Appropriations for Lee County Local Support Projects –

a. Design Three Bridges for Southern Access to Fort Myers Beach – \$6 million

Expedite completion of the project development and environmental study (PD&E) for resilient reconstruction of southern access to Fort Myers Beach. This will afford Lee County access to federal funds to replace the Big Hickory, Little Carlos Pass, and New Pass bridges damaged by Hurricane Ian. The repaired bridges will facilitate both the rebuilding of Fort Myers Beach and the return of visitor traffic. (\$2 million County match)

b. Septic Conversion in Billy Creek and Orange River Impaired Water Area – \$5 million

Convert 77 residential septic systems to central sewer in the Billy Creek and Orange River impaired water areas within the Caloosahatchee Basin Management Action Plan in order to reduce the volume of harmful nutrients that leach into natural waterways.

c. Medical Examiner and Natural Resources Laboratory – \$3.5 million

Expand and improve facilities for critical medical examiner and environmental laboratory services provided for Lee, Hendry, and Glades counties. Critical demand was demonstrated during

Hurricane Ian for medical examiner services and for environmental laboratory testing of storm water runoff and of samples from the Gulf of Mexico, Caloosahatchee River, creeks, and other flow ways and canals.

d. Larry Kiker Preserve Water Management Project – \$2 million

Enhance restoration of water flow ways and protected species habitat and improve regional flood control, water quality, and aquifer recharge. This project will provide flood attenuation for South Lee County, Estero and Bonita Springs while serving as the largest passive recreational area in the area. Total estimated cost for the project is \$22 million (\$20 million for construction in future years). Lee County has already invested \$42 million in land acquisition.

e. Regional Wellfield Evaluation – \$2 million

Growth along Alico and Corkscrew roads requires a new regional wellfield evaluation for source water to accommodate population growth and protect existing aquifer withdrawals. This search study would include installation of test wells and the siting of new source wells. Wellfield expansion would provide resiliency and redundancy for the Lee County Utilities system. (\$1 million County match)

f. Bob Janes Empowerment Center Expansion and Hardening – \$10 million

Fund Center for Progress and Excellence’s acquisition of a new building to replace and increase capacity of the damaged Bob Janes Empowerment center on the SalusCare campus at Ortiz Avenue. Due to hurricane damage, all other SalusCare staff and operations have been moved off this campus. The Bob Janes triage operation continues under a tarpred roof in a structure that will be costly to rehabilitate. The proposed new center may also be hardened as an emergency shelter for those who are obtaining services there and for additional persons experiencing homelessness.

g. Ortiz Avenue Utility Relocations – \$2 million

Design, permitting, and construction of new water mains to relocate and replace up to 6,500 linear feet of existing water main along Ortiz Avenue from Martin Luther King Boulevard (SR82) to Colonial Boulevard (SR884). This project expands the collection and water transmission systems to accommodate road widening by FDOT and Lee DOT construction projects within or along the same right of way. This project complements similar work on the Ortiz link from Ortiz link from SR82 to Lockett Road. (\$1.5 million County match)

- 3) OPPOSE** legislatively mandated annexation of Lee County’s unincorporated areas into municipal boundaries. The Board of County Commissioners supports annexation procedures that require popular sanction by residents or property owners within an area proposed for annexation before the annexation can take effect.

2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Lee County Board of 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 – **REJECT** the sweeping of any Sadowski Housing Trust Funds. **SUPPORT** continued funding of state and local affordable housing programs, specifically including:

- **SUPPORT** the \$30 million supplemental allocation of Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds recommended by the Department of Economic Opportunity for issues related to Hurricane Ian recovery.
- **SUPPORT** legislative efforts to revise the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP) to be more compatible with federal housing programs, particularly the HOME program. HOME and SHIP together are emerging as a key revenue stream to provide post-Hurricane Ian emergency housing needs;
- **SUPPORT** the immediate allocation of additional SHIP funding to Lee County for rehabilitation of affordable housing stock that was damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Ian; and
- **SUPPORT** the appropriation of Hurricane Housing Recovery Program (HHRP) from funds outside of the Sadowski Housing Trust Funds.

Bacteria TMDLs - **SUPPORT** a thorough and methodical approach to bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development for individual waterbodies based on adequate data regarding source identification, as opposed to the general consolidated statewide approach currently drafted by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Bacteria TMDLs are more complex than TMDL development for nutrients. According to the Florida Stormwater Association: “There is a much lower correlation between bacterial best management practices (BMPs) and actual FIB [Fecal Indicator Bacteria] reductions; it is much more difficult and expensive to determine the actual source of FIB; and, it is much more difficult to accurately allocate pollutant reduction responsibilities among various stakeholders.”

Basin Boundaries – **SUPPORT** updating boundaries of water basin districts where appropriate, including:

- Determine hydrological boundaries of water basins
- Ensure that taxpayers are contributing to the sub-district that best serves them and that water management districts are providing equitable service to all basins
- Implement the study commissioned by the legislature to scientifically determine the boundaries of Big Cypress Basin

Beach Nourishment – **SUPPORT** full funding of the program for annual ranking of beach projects for state cost-sharing and continued use of the current ranking criteria.

Biosolids – **SUPPORT** exploratory state programs for funding new state-of-the-art wastewater technologies while maintaining ability to use properly treated biosolids as a fertilizer supplement or soil amendment, subject to regulatory requirements that have been established to protect public health and

the environment. Lee County has invested more than \$15 million to create Class AA infrastructure-- the state's highest quality specifications—to better manage human wastewater.

Bob Janes Empowerment Center –

- **SUPPORT** continued funding for the Criminal Justice, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Local Matching Grant Program. Services provided by the Bob Janes Empowerment Center have a proven track record of enhancing public safety and reducing criminal justice expenditures;
- **SUPPORT** a request for \$500,000 to bridge the operating gap caused by delayed Criminal Justice Mental Health and Substance Abuse (CJMHSAs) funding for 2022; and
- **SUPPORT** continuing allocations from the CJMHSAs to support operations.

Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Protection – **SUPPORT** continued, dedicated state funding for:

- The C-43 Reservoir Construction Project, which is critical to the health of the Caloosahatchee Estuary and continued funding by the State is imperative until construction is completed;
- Completion of the water quality component of the C-43 Reservoir Project;
- Implementation of the “Boma” water quality pilot project on property purchased jointly by Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District; and
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) budgeting for the South Florida Water Management District to continue progress with Lake Hicpochee Phase II.

Community Action Team – **SUPPORT** funding to maintain a team in Lee County that provides comprehensive community-based services to children aged 11 to 21 with mental illness and behavioral health conditions. Community Action Teams provide a lower cost alternative to state run foster care, juvenile detention, and residential treatment programs.

Contractor Licensing – **SUPPORT** clarification of 2022 changes that have impacted local permitting regulations, particularly regarding allowable redundancy of state and local licenses and sign permit requirements. **SUPPORT** pre-empting a local license only where a state license is also required. **OPPOSE** pre-empting local sign ordinances and requiring a state license where a local license is sufficient, as in the case of dock permits.

EMS Balance Billing – **OPPOSE** limitations on the ability of county EMS providers to seek reimbursement for out-of-network transports. **SUPPORT** requirements for private insurers to pay local governments for the actual cost of emergency service delivery based on audits of expenditures by the Agency for Health Care Administration.

EMS Regulation – **SUPPORT** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS transport through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) process.

Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment – **SUPPORT** allocating funds for county land conservation and management programs to acquire environmentally sensitive property for water quality improvement projects or storage. Lee County's Conservation 20/20 Program has spent nearly \$400 million to acquire, restore and preserve property.

Florida Sports Foundation – **SUPPORT** full funding of this Division of Enterprise Florida, Inc., funding stream, which matches Lee County investment in hosting events.

Harmful Algal Blooms – **SUPPORT** state initiatives that address the proliferation of harmful algal blooms such as blue-green algae and red tide.

Hurricane Ian Economic Recovery Measures – **SUPPORT**:

- Repairs to the Seminole-Gulf Railway, which sustained \$28 million in damages. The railway is a vital, cost-effective, and high-volume conduit for bringing construction materials into Southwest Florida.
- Appropriation of \$100 million to the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program and allow flexibility in Lee County and other most-impacted communities to extend the bridge repayment period from one to two years and raise the \$50,000 limit for employers who meet specific performance criteria (including the number of jobs maintained and the amount of locally sourced materials purchased or manufactured).

Library Programs

- Library Cooperative Grant – **SUPPORT** robust funding. Lee County, which is part of the Southwest Florida Library Network cooperative, benefits from staff training programs, courier services, and interlibrary loan privileges that allow patrons to borrow materials from other library systems at no cost.
- State Aid to Libraries Grant – **SUPPORT** continued funding. Since FY 12/13, Lee County has received more than \$6.5 million, and the estimated award for FY 22/23 is \$568,965.
- Public Library Construction Grants – **SUPPORT** refunding this program, which has not been funded for several years. The Florida Library Association is asking for \$9 million to re-open this funding stream.
- Smart Horizons Career Online High School Funding – **SUPPORT** a recurring appropriation of \$750,000 to this program that allows adult students to complete a private, accredited high school diploma and career certificate through participating public library systems in order to prepare them for success in the workforce.

Regional Planning Councils – **SUPPORT** legislation to allow counties to opt out of mandatory membership.

Resiliency/ Flood Mitigation – **SUPPORT** state and federal resiliency efforts to identify and address vulnerabilities to public infrastructure and public safety through continued funding of planning and capital improvements.

Septic-to-Sewer Conversion – **SUPPORT** continued funding for grant programs through Florida Department of Environmental Protection to cut down on the volume of harmful nutrients that leach into waterways throughout the State.

State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) – **SUPPORT** increased funding, greater flexibility, and predictable funding for transit projects for STTF and the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TDTF) grant funds. This would include legislation that:

- Provides for an increase of funds to TDTF and STTF;
- Allows flexibility for TDTF grant funds for each county to carry forward to the next year; and
- Adds consideration and accommodation in formula calculations for areas impacted by natural disasters.

VISIT FLORIDA – **SUPPORT** continued funding for Visit Florida, which is committed to supporting the areas of the state that were most severely impacted by Hurricane Ian. A comprehensive recovery package for these areas will be developed in coordination with their local tourism leadership and will be ready for implementation when they are ready to welcome visitors.



Adjust SHIP Funding Restrictions to Align SHIP with HOME

Background

Chapter 420.9075, Florida Statutes, prescribes set-aside requirements for spending the State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP) including:

- A minimum of 30% must help persons earning 30% of the adjusted minimum income (AMI)
- 60% must go to persons earning from 30% to 60% of AMI
- At least 65% of annual SHIP distributions and funds recaptured must be used for home ownership (versus rental assistance)
- 75% or more of annual SHIP distributions and funds recaptured must be devoted either to new construction or rehabilitation services
- A maximum of 10% may be spent on administrative costs

Due to these restrictions, it is difficult to use SHIP in combination with the federal HOME program (which does not have the same constraints).

Proposal

SUPPORT revisions to the State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP) to remove restrictions that severely limit using those funds during periods of peak, emergency demand and effectively prohibit combining those funds with the federal HOME program.

Benefits

Allows SHIP funding to be used to address community-wide housing needs without concern for meeting set-aside requirements. Provides greater flexibility to create capital stacks that can help create viable large-scale affordable housing projects.

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Big Hickory, Little Carlos Pass, and New Pass Bridges

Lee County will prepare the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study for the Hickory Bridges on Estero Boulevard (Little Carlos Pass Bridge, New Pass Bridge and Big Hickory Pass Bridge) to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Background

The three Hickory Bridges provide connections between the barrier islands from Black Island to the City of Bonita Springs. All of the bridges were built in 1965 and have a 50-year design life.

The three bridges had good health ratings in the range of 78.79 to 99.81 prior to Hurricane Ian on September 28, 2022. Post storm assessments found that the approach roadways to each experienced heavy erosion.

All of the bridges experienced slope protection damage. New Pass and Big Hickory bridges also sustained scour at a number of the bents. The areas of erosion, slope protection, and scour have received temporary repairs.

Proposal

Prepare a PD&E study for the replacement of all three bridges due to their age, functional obsolescence, and damage from the storm. Design and plan preparation would be taken to the 30% level to determine the social, economic, and environmental effects of feasible build alternatives for the bridge and approach improvements.

Benefits

The bridge connections between the barrier islands provide the day-to-day transportation network for residents and employers in Fort Myers Beach and Bonita Springs and multiple developments in between. The bridges and connecting roadways are also an important hurricane evacuation route. The age and geometry of the bridges pose a potential hazard should another strong storm impact this area. In addition to the safety aspects of planning for the bridge replacements, new modern structures could provide a



continuous and safe environment for the increasing numbers of recreational bicyclists and pedestrians that use this route.

Funding

- **Requested from the state: \$6 million**
- **Lee County contribution: \$2 million**
- **Total project cost: \$8 million**

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Septic Conversion for Billy Creek and Orange River Impaired Water Area

Background

Emerging legislation has become more focused on statewide watershed management and the protection and restoration of Florida's water quality. In response, Lee County's departments of Utilities and Natural Resources cooperated to produce the Countywide Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP). It supports water quality improvements and enhances environmental protection by evaluating the number of on-site septic systems, projecting future population demands, and providing a list of capital improvement projects to support responsible septic conversion. Based on the report's preliminary findings, Billy Creek and Orange River are a priority area where a septic conversion project will provide immediate reduction in nitrogen loading to nearby impaired water bodies.

Proposal

SUPPORT a \$5 million appropriation to convert 77 residential septic systems to central sewer in the Billy Creek and Orange River impaired water areas within the Caloosahatchee Basin Management Action Plan. This will reduce the volume of harmful nutrients that leach into natural waterways.

Benefits

- Reduce nitrogen loading to impaired water, and
- Improve protection and restoration of the water quality within the county's Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP).

Funding

- **Requested from the state: \$5 million**
- **Total project cost: \$5 million**

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Medical Examiner Facility and Natural Resources Laboratory



Background

The Lee County Medical Examiner serves a three county area (including Hendry and Glades counties). The Lee County Department of Natural Resources Environmental Laboratory also serves multiple jurisdictions. The facility shared by these two agencies was first occupied in 2003, when Lee County's residents numbered approximately thirty-five percent less than today's population. Subsequent demand for Medical Examiner services has climbed both on a routine basis as well as during emergencies like Hurricane Ian.

Likewise, the need for Natural Resources laboratory services continues to escalate as water quality issues increase in magnitude. Critical demand was demonstrated during Hurricane Ian that included testing of drinking water, storm water runoff, and samples from the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, Gulf of Mexico, creeks and other significant waterbodies.

Proposal

SUPPORT a \$2.5 million appropriation for FY23 to expedite expansion and improvement of facilities for Lee, Hendry, and Glades county Medical Examiner services; and **SUPPORT** a \$1 million appropriation to improve the environmental laboratory services, which serves the County and its biggest municipalities. The funding will be used to design a new facility that can accommodate service demand for years to come. Construction is targeted to begin in FY24/25.

Benefits

The Lee County Natural Resources Laboratory provides:

- Boil Water Notice and other sampling and testing for Lee County Utilities, the cities of Fort Myers and Cape Coral, Pine Island Water, and citizens of Lee, Hendry, and Collier counties.
- Permit-required testing for Lee County Utilities wastewater treatment and drinking water plants.
- Permit-required testing of monitoring wells for City of Fort Myers wastewater treatment plant.
- Monthly surface water monitoring for all Lee County waterbodies and reporting to FDEP's water information network.
- Drinking and surface water testing as requested by citizens and businesses of Lee, Hendry, and Collier counties.

Funding

- **Requested from the state: \$3.5 million for design costs**
- **Lee County contribution: \$100,000 for feasibility study + future construction costs**
- **Total project cost: Estimated at \$39 million**

Contact

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Background

Lee County purchased the 3,921-acre Larry Kiker Preserve in 2017 as part of the Conservation 20/20 program. The preserve provides significant benefits for water resources and critical habitat for a variety of endangered and threatened wildlife species. The location and size of this parcel serves a unique opportunity for regional flood protection, improved water quality, recharge of underlying aquifers, and serves as a mitigation area for Lee County construction projects, while concurrently providing the largest passive recreational area within a single preserve in Lee County.

In response to significant regional flood events, this project was conceptualized under the Southern Lee

Flood mitigation Plan, which benefits the City of Bonita Springs and Village of Estero as well as unincorporated Lee County.

Proposal

SUPPORT a \$2 million appropriation to design and permit the Larry Kiker Preserve Water Management Project. This proposed project connects existing borrow pit lakes to the conveyance structures under I-75 with a collector canal and installs a perimeter berm to provide temporary water storage during extreme rainfall events. Connecting the existing lakes will allow the conveyances under I-75 to be maximized. As an additional benefit, the timing and location of the releases will be controlled to mitigate downstream flooding. This system will utilize remotely operated weir gates to maintain flow and water levels within desirable ranges.

This project was identified in the Southern Lee Flood Mitigation Plan. The \$22 million project includes \$2 million for design and permitting and \$20 million for construction. Lee County has already invested \$42 million in land acquisition.

Benefits

Benefits include restoration of water flow ways and protected species habitat, improvement of regional flood control, improvement of water quality, and enhancement of aquifer recharge.

- Provides flood mitigation for downstream watershed with temporary storage of stormwater during a major rainfall event
- Provides opportunity to restore natural hydroperiod for wetland and upland ecosystems
- Provides enhanced recharge of underlying aquifers
- Portion of land may provide opportunity to mitigate impacts for much needed County infrastructure construction
- Provides ability to synergize water features with envisioned recreational activities

Funding

- **Requested from the state (current): \$2 million**
- **Future request for construction: \$10 million**
- **Lee County contribution: \$42 million for land acquisition + \$10 million for construction**
- **Total project cost: \$64 million**

Contact

For details or additional discussion, please contact:

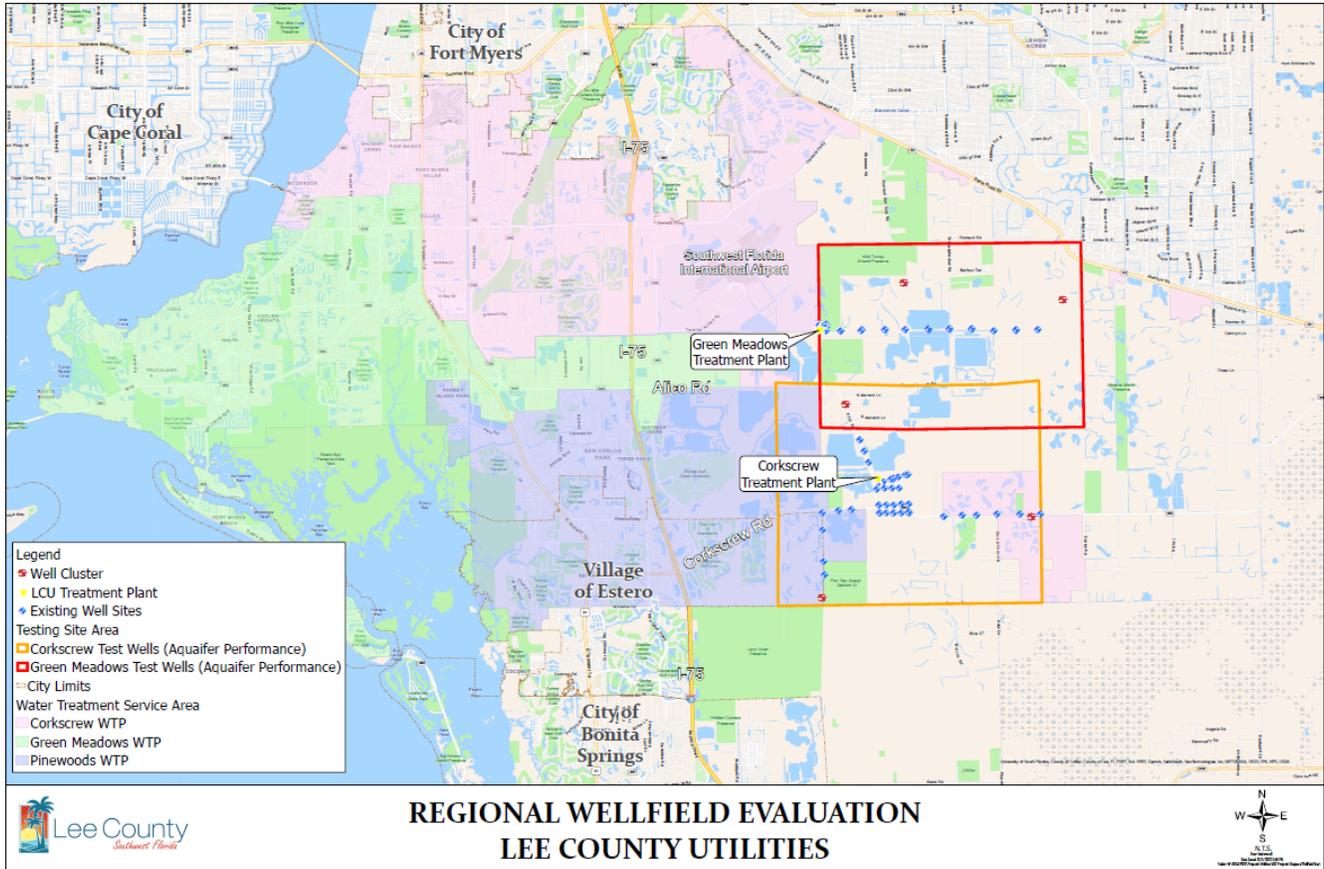
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Regional Wellfield Evaluation for Water Supply



See larger map on page 19.

Background

The projected population growth in the south and southeast service areas of Lee County Utilities has been estimated to add an additional PEAK demand of 6.1 million gallons per day (mgd) potable water by 2040. The primary Water Treatment Plants (WTP) that provide water to these service areas are the Green Meadows WTP and the Corkscrew WTP. The raw water capacity produced by each plant’s wellfield need reliability and redundancy enhancements.

Proposal

SUPPORT an appropriation of \$2 million for a new regional wellfield evaluation for source water to accommodate population growth and protection of existing aquifer withdrawals. This study would include installation of test wells and the siting of new source wells within these high-growth areas. Wellfield expansion would provide resiliency and redundancy for the Lee County Utilities system. Lee County will match the state’s investment with \$1 million. Lee County is prepared to begin this evaluation immediately and implementation would follow quickly.

Benefits

The benefit of the test and monitoring wells is to provide hydrogeologic data to aid in the future expansion of the Green Meadows and Corkscrew water supply groundwater wellfields. The data collected along with modeling information will be used to determine locations for future expansion well sites for increased capacity and redundancy for groundwater supply protection. The modeling will also be used to provide accurate information to South Florida Water Management District for renewal of the Consumptive Use permit that is due in 2031.

Funding

- **Requested from the state: \$2 million**
- **Lee County contribution: \$1 million**

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Bob Janes Empowerment Center

Background

The Bob Janes Empowerment Center, formerly known as the Bob Janes Triage Center, provides diversion from incarceration and/or unnecessary use of emergency departments for individuals with behavioral health issues. During Fiscal Year 20-21, 817 individuals were served at the Empowerment Center. The Center also provides housing and services for persons who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.

The Center for Progress and Excellence, a nationally accredited, nonprofit organization, assumed responsibility for operating The Bob Janes Empowerment Center from the local Salvation Army in February of 2022. The Center for Progress and Excellence has greater capacity to provide behavioral health services.

Hurricane Ian extensively damaged the center. The nonprofit entity that owns the facility does not have the resources to restore this building in conformance with current building codes.

Proposal

Appropriate \$10 million for The Center for Progress and Excellence to acquire a new building and increase capacity of the Bob Janes Empowerment Center to meet service demands. The proposed new center may also be hardened as an emergency shelter for those who are obtaining services there and for additional persons experiencing homelessness.

Funding

- **Requested from the state: \$10 million**

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Ortiz Avenue Utility Relocation from SR82 to SR884

Background

The water and wastewater infrastructure installed in this corridor is expected to conflict with the joint Florida Department of Transportation and Lee County DOT road widening and improvements of Ortiz Avenue. This vital widening project is approved by the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization to relieve I-75 traffic from SR 884 (Colonial Boulevard) to the Lockett Road interchange with I-75. This project will encourage an economic connector and assist with hurricane evacuation.

Proposal

SUPPORT relocation and replacement of approximately 6,500 linear feet of existing water main along Ortiz Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (SR82) to Colonial Boulevard (SR884). [See map on page 21.](#)

Benefits

- Accommodate road widening by FDOT and Lee DOT construction projects within or along the same right of way;
- Minimize cost and impacts to residents by utilizing one contractor for both the roadway and utilities infrastructure construction;
- Replace aging infrastructure nearing the end of its useful life;
- Stimulate economic activity along the revitalized north-south Ortiz Avenue connector from Colonial Boulevard to the I-75 interchange at Lockett Road; and
- Assist with hurricane evacuation.

Funding

- **Requested from the state: \$2 million**
- **Lee County contribution: \$1.5 million**
- **Total project cost: \$3.5 million**

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