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Lee County secures Florida DEP grant to proceed with test project to cleanup blue-green algae

Fort Myers, Fla., Aug. 2, 2018 – Lee County has secured \$700,000 from the Florida Harmful Algal Bloom Management Grant Program through the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the removal, processing and disposal of harmful algae blooms from select test sites in unincorporated Lee County and affected municipalities, most notably Cape Coral.

Over the past week Lee County has been working closely with DEP and county consultants to create an approved work plan for this project. The work plan includes:

- a health and safety plan to address any physical hazards that may be encountered;
- the equipment to be used and the procedures to be implemented during the algae recovery operations and the transfer, temporary storage, processing and final disposal of the recovered algae;
- the sampling required prior to disposal and will present steps for review of the laboratory data and obtaining approval for disposal.

“It is important to remember that this is a test project,” County Manager Roger Desjarlais said. “It will look very different from efforts such as Hurricane Irma debris pick-up.”

The treatment of the collected material is a time-consuming and complex process, which will limit the clean-up locations to those with the greatest concentration of algae.

Lee County has mobilized 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 on Wednesday to allow the work to begin.

The first task is to set up the treatment facility over the next two days so that algae collection can begin as soon as Friday. In simple terms, the recovered material will be processed at the North Lee County Reverse Osmosis Plant. The recovered material will be separated into liquids and solids. The water will then be treated and deposited into the deep injection well and the solids into the landfill.

Algae recovery sites will be determined based on severity of the bloom, the number of residents immediately affected, accessibility of the site and changing environmental conditions. The County will continue to do aerial and field assessments in order to determine collection sites on a daily basis.