

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee County continues beach cleanup of red tide fish kills – update

Fort Myers, FL, Aug. 16, 2018 – Contractors working for Lee County have removed more than 1,400 tons of fish from Lee County beaches and waterways since beginning work on Aug. 2. That total doesn't include fish collected by Lee County Parks & Recreation staff before the contractor began work, fish collected from Boca Grande or fish collected by the City of Sanibel.

Efforts to mitigate water-quality issues throughout Lee County continue under the leadership of the Lee Board of County Commissioners with county staff, contracted vendors and several state entities, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Florida Department of Health (DOH).

The county has a grant agreement in place with DEP for reimbursement of \$1.3 million to assist with red tide cleanup. The state funds are being supplemented by Tourist Development Tax reserves. Lee County plans to allocate funding necessary to cover emergency beach clean-up expenses through this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

Today Lee County is in receipt of two just-purchased Surf Rake (\$60,000 each) machines for beach and shoreline cleanup. Lee County Parks & Recreation staff will begin using the equipment on beaches immediately. They will be used on weekdays and weekends, depending on the need.

Lee County Parks & Recreation staff has been cleaning county owned and operated beaches, parks and boat ramps affected by the red tide fish kill. The county has hired CrowderGulf, a debris-removal contractor, to assist in cleaning the beaches and shorelines, using both on-land and boat operations.

Areas cleaned so far by Lee County and its contractor include

- Boca Grande
- Sanibel Causeway islands
- Fort Myers Beach (including Access 40 north to Crescent Beach, Lynn Hall Park and Bowditch Point Park)
- Bonita Beach
- Captiva Island bayside (South Seas to 'Tween Waters)
- Upper Captiva / Safety Harbor canal
- Pine Island's southern canals in St. James City

The City of Sanibel, which reports having collected 309.6 tons, and the Town of Fort Myers Beach and Captiva Erosion Prevention District continue their clean-up efforts in their areas.

At its Aug. 7 meeting, the Board passed a resolution urges President Trump to recognize a major disaster exists in Lee County because of the high concentration and prolonged presence of harmful red tide in the Gulf of Mexico and harmful blue-green algal blooms in the Caloosahatchee River and surrounding waters.

The next regularly scheduled Lee Board of County Commissioners meeting is 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 21 at the Old Courthouse downtown Fort Myers.

Website: www.leegov.com/waterqualityinfo

Note to media: Photos of the county's newly purchased Surf Rakes are available upon request. A PDF about them is also available. Email tengstrom@leegov.com & bclayton@leegov.com