

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee County announces three meetings to inform the public about flood-mitigation efforts

Fort Myers, FL, Jan. 9, 2019 – Lee County is planning three public meetings to inform stakeholders and residents about the yearlong effort the county has started for Phase 3 of its post-Hurricane Irma flood-mitigation efforts.

The informational meetings will be formatted as a drop-in 4 to 6 p.m. on three consecutive Thursdays at various county locations. They are:

- Jan. 24 at Wa-Ke Hatchee Recreation Center, 16760 Bass Road, Fort Myers, FL 33908
- Jan. 31 at the Bonita Springs Library, 26876 Pine Ave., Bonita Springs, FL 34135
- Feb. 7 at Veterans Park Recreation Center, 55 Homestead Road South, Lehigh Acres, FL 33936

County staff and engineering firms will be on hand to provide information about the study and the process. Staff will also introduce the public to the county's updated flood-mitigation project website so residents can follow the process and obtain updates. The website address is www.leegov.com/flooding. Also, more public meetings will be planned in 2019 before the study's conclusion.

This study and process – called Phase 3 – is being handled by local engineering firms and Lee County Natural Resources. The Lee Board of County Commissioners approved a contract for the firms, who were selected via a procurement process, to do a yearlong assessment with recommendations for the Board in late 2019 looking at potential long-term flood-mitigation projects.

Completion of Phase 3 of the county's flood-mitigation effort is necessary before any long-term and large-scale infrastructure improvements can happen. Next steps could include an array of actions such as grant applications, land acquisition (if necessary), permitting, design, bid and construction. Projects would be subject to Board approval and could include stakeholders such as municipalities and special districts.

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 jlguardia@leegov.com. Accommodation will be provided at no cost to the requestor. Requests should be made at least five business days in advance.

BACKGROUND: 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 also 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.

Some of the other Board and county staff efforts from the past year include:

- Sending regular e-blast communications on flood-mitigation efforts, which will now be replaced by the soon-to-be launched website;
- Creating a request-for-action process in which individual flooding situations were tracked;
- Continuing to clean, assess and maintain flow ways, ditches and canals;

- Attending community and neighborhood meetings to garner feedback;
- Approving 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 district take over management and maintenance of 10 natural flow ways and waterbodies;
- Obtaining a U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant for sediment and debris removal in areas such as Ten Mile Canal;
- Working with the East Mullock Drainage District to remove debris from ditches from the San Carlos Park area; and,
- Dedicating a Lee Department of Transportation operations crew for clearing drain impediments in The Villas.