

Charlotte County update for 9/16/20

## **Commit to a Sustainable Water Future for All**

By Craig Rudy, Charlotte County Utilities Director

This year, our county faced an enormous public health crisis. Throughout this emergency, water and wastewater systems kept flowing in homes, hospitals, and essential businesses. This crisis demonstrated the critical role water and wastewater systems play in our community, protecting public health, safeguarding the environment, and making a healthy economy possible.

Imagine how much worse the pandemic would have been without access to water and wastewater infrastructure. Without reliable drinking water and sanitation, Charlotte County residents would be unable to stay safe and limit the spread of COVID-19. In communities worldwide with inadequate water and wastewater infrastructure, public health consequences have been terrible.

On Oct. 21, we will celebrate Imagine a Day Without Water. It's a day to pause and notice how water systems impact our lives and communities and commit to ensuring a sustainable water future for generations to come. What would your day be like if you couldn't turn on the tap and get clean drinking water, or if you flushed the toilet and wastewater didn't go anywhere? What would happen to restaurants, hospitals, firefighters, farms, breweries, or the hundreds of industries that depend on water?

Americans take water service for granted every day. Turn on the tap, and clean water flows out. Flush the toilet, and dirty water goes away. Washing our hands is one of the most critical steps to limit the spread of coronavirus. We usually don't stop to think about the impressive and extensive infrastructure and treatment required to make sure the water comes out when you open the tap or safely return water to the environment from your sink.

As our community grows and ages, so does the infrastructure. It must increase to keep up with new demands and as systems age, they must be replaced. The employees of Charlotte County Utilities are dedicated to ensuring your current water needs are met but are also committed to meeting the needs of the future through planning, expansion and replacement. More than \$17 million dollars of infrastructure replacement is scheduled to take place in the next fiscal year, and approximately \$20 million is expected to be expended for new infrastructure projects.

As we look at ways to help our economy recover from the effects of the pandemic, investing in water infrastructure is a winning solution. Investing in water creates cascading economic benefits, strengthening American competitiveness, raising the gross domestic product, creating jobs and increasing wages. Investing in water provides a path to economic recovery. Imagine a Day Without Water is an opportunity for everyone to get educated about our local water systems and raise awareness with our elected leaders. We need leadership at every level to work together to ensure a reliable water future for generations to come. Investing in water is investing in a future where no American will have to imagine a day without water.

We invite you to follow Charlotte County Utilities on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/ccutilities](https://www.facebook.com/ccutilities), and share your personal experiences with water, your relationship with water and your personal water story.

*Craig Rudy is the Charlotte County utilities director. Readers may reach him at [Craig.Rudy@CharlotteCountyFL.gov](mailto:Craig.Rudy@CharlotteCountyFL.gov).*