

Charlotte County update for 3/3/21

County committed to preserving water quality

By Hector Flores

Water quality has long been a strategic focus area for Charlotte County. The county has embarked on a master plan to convert thousands of aging septic tanks to sewer to prevent pollutants from impairing our rivers, bays and harbor. We have invested in a long-term infrastructure replacement program now underway to upgrade our wastewater pipelines, lift stations and treatment plants. Commissioners last year increased the county's contribution to the Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Program responsible for protecting and restoring water and wildlife habitat in the Charlotte Harbor watershed and beyond

Two years ago, as part of its strategic planning process, the board set a bold goal of improving water quality. Administration created a multidepartment water quality task force to look at all aspects of the topic: drinking water, stormwater, wastewater, surface water and groundwater. The first step was to identify everything we're already doing to monitor, protect and improve water quality. The task force also convened a water quality summit last year that brought together dozens of local and regional stakeholders and subject matter experts to discuss ways to create partnerships, educate the public and tackle the massive task of ensuring this precious resource is protected and enhanced.

Last week, the commission took the next step in our continued efforts to improve water quality by welcoming a new water quality manager who will be developing and coordinating programs related to any and all things water.

The board also revised its water quality bold goal to include the development and implementation of a One Charlotte, One Water integrated water resource management plan by 2023, establish metrics to quantify improvement in water quality and create milestones to demonstrate progress toward the goal.

The One Charlotte, One Water concept is based on the US Water Alliance's "one water" movement to build awareness of the importance of this basic resource. The water we have now is the same water that existed in the time of the dinosaurs. A senior executive from the alliance told summit participants all of us has a water story. It could be growing up fishing or boating with family, learning to swim, growing vegetables in your backyard garden, volunteering for a coastal cleanup program or myriad other ways we live with water.

Whatever your water story, unless we protect this resource, that story could have a much different ending. As our new water quality manager gets his "sea legs" in his new position, you will begin seeing and hearing him repeat the mantra of one water, seeking input and feedback from the community and delivering updates on progress we're making.

I ask you all to reflect on your water story and commit to doing your part to protect the only water we have or ever will.

Vaccine update

As of Wednesday, more than 34,000 people have been vaccinated in Charlotte County, according to the state vaccination database. More than 15,000 have received both doses. To view the latest vaccination update, visit tinyurl.com/FLvaccinations. The tally is updated daily.

Two new vaccine locations were opened on Wednesday to increase the number of people who can receive the vaccine.

Eligible Florida residents who preregistered with the state vaccination website or call center will be contacted to schedule appointments. No walk-ups accepted.

To preregister, visit MyVaccine.FL.gov or call 866-200-9160 (or 833-990-3549 for TTY users).

For more information, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click Vaccine Information.

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