

Charlotte Harbor Super Boat Grand Prix—a Team Effort
Administrator's Update for 1/8/14
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Super Boat International (SBI) has sanctioned a race to be held in Charlotte County April 11 to 13, 2014. SBI has a long history of producing races that create multi-million dollar economic impacts in host communities, such as the annual national championship event in Clearwater, Florida. An independent research firm estimated the overall economic impact of Clearwater's 2013 Super Boat race at more than \$17 million.

Clearwater is entering their sixth year of hosting a Super Boat event—this would be a first-time event for Charlotte County. This is an exceptional opportunity that can open opportunities for other events that spark the economy. It also comes with some challenges in regard to organization and implementation.

Although SBI handles all aspects of the race related to what happens on the water (such as wildlife protection, permitting and security), the local organizing entity Charlotte Harbor Super Boat Grand Prix (CHSBGP, a not-for-profit corporation) is responsible for all land-based activities. The local organizers have studied and attended other SBI events and have met with many event coordinators. Now they are applying what they have learned to a Charlotte County venue, which is both similar to and distinctly different from the venues of other races.

An event of this scale requires the engagement of multiple county and municipal agencies. Unlike smaller events which may involve one event planner, these major, multi-venue events necessitate coordination with law enforcement, local, state and federal agencies, waste management, emergency services and more. The success of the 2014 Charlotte Harbor Super Boat Grand Prix is contingent on the ability of the organizers and our community agencies to work together.

For both the organizers and the community, this is an event of unprecedented magnitude and complexity. It is also the event's inaugural year. No matter how well we plan and work together, problems will arise which were not foreseen. Such is the nature of a new event. Communication between the organizers and agencies has been efficient and straightforward, which will help solve issues as they arise during the event.

For the community the event will mean temporary changes. For example, there will be heavy traffic during the event. Fortunately, a majority of those attending are accustomed to this and will anticipate it, and our community will have ample time to plan ahead for it.

Our ability to work together will not only ensure the success of the 2014 Charlotte Harbor Super Boat Grand Prix, it will put us in a much better position to host other large events in the future. Organizers of major events, such as sports for example, want to know a community has experienced success in hosting multi-venue or very large events. They are often reluctant to book an event in a community that has not had experience with multi-agency cross-coordination. Previous success in hosting major events puts Charlotte County on the radar of other, major event organizers.

There may be other bumps in the road to success. However, the first time for anything is the steepest learning process. As we make it through this first year, the road will smooth out and the payoff for our Charlotte County community, both at the end of the event and in the future, is exceptional.