

**Administrator's Update for 6/3/15**  
**By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator**

The C.R. 771 (Gasparilla Road) project will widen the road to a four-lane divided roadway from S.R. 776 to the vicinity of Rotonda Boulevard East. Included in the project is the installation of sidewalks and bicycle facilities. This project is funded by a combination of 2009 local option sales tax, road impact fees, gasoline tax and a state grant. Construction began last July and is scheduled to be complete in September 2016.

The contractor is currently installing new deck slabs on the east side of the Butterford Waterway bridge. Work is also in progress on new utility installation from Marathon Boulevard to S.R. 776. A directional bore is being installed under S.R. 776, just east of C.R. 771, to provide for a new water main. Sidewalk construction is also underway from Keystone Boulevard, northward, and road construction will begin soon from San Domingo Boulevard to Marathon Boulevard. Crews are also working on storm drain structures and stormwater retention ponds.

**New playground**

Charlotte County community services department has completed the replacement of the playground at Higgs Park, located at 21400 Higgs Court, Port Charlotte. The new setup is a Landscape Structure, Inc. play structure with play sets for 5 to 12 years of age and 2 to 5 years of age. The new playground includes three slides, five climbers, and rubber poured-in-place surfacing as well as a new swing set. This playground replacement is part of the park systems capital improvement program.

**Fishing Pier reopened**

The fishing pier at Port Charlotte Beach Park, 4500 Harbor Boulevard, Port Charlotte reopened last week. To the north and south of the fishing pier, construction continues on the boardwalks which will remain closed for several more weeks. The project should be complete in late August. Any activities and rentals currently scheduled at the recreation center will be unaffected.

**South County Annex flag lighting**

New LED lights are being installed at the flag pole at the South County Annex, 410 Taylor Street in Punta Gorda. The new lights will illuminate the flag at night and allow it to be flown all year in good weather conditions. In inclement weather, the flag is removed.

**Exotic combat**

Land management staff has been continuing the on-going efforts to combat exotic flora and fauna. In May exotic flora was treated on Amberjack, Oyster Creek, Rotonda, Tippecanoe II and Peace River Preserves. Treated exotics include Brazilian pepper and Lygodium as part of permit compliance, management responsibilities and preservation of our native flora and fauna.

Last week staff treated Caesar weed. This invader is fairly common and the plant is not recognizable by most people the seed is well known to many of us Florida residents. Caesar weed seeds come in the small "burr" that sticks to shoes, pants and nearly everything. They are small, about the size of a pencil eraser end and a little flattened. The leaves of Caesar weed resemble the leaves of the Muscadine grape and the flowers are small and pink. This plant was up graded to a Category I exotic/invasive a few years ago. While it is invasive and spreads readily, it is easy to treat and recognize. Peace River Preserve was the site of the recent exotic control operations as part of an ongoing habitat restoration plan that will continue for the next five to ten years.