

CHNEP Meeting, May 25, 2023, in-person at the Charlotte Event Center, Punta Gorda

1. Tony Whidden (Glades County) remarked that people seem to be more receptive to the idea of septic-sewer conversions as they experience first-hand the increasing frequencies of Red Tide that is directly attributed to the amount of nutrients entering our waterways attributed to septic tanks along with fertilizer runoffs from lawns.
Noted: North Port's first-ever septic-sewer conversion project is underway!
2. **"One Water: Theory vs. Practice"** presented by Mike Britt (One Water Project Manager, City of Winter Haven), and Brandon Moody, Water Quality Manager, Charlotte County
 - "One Water" is an "innovative approach for local governments to better manage their water resources in a way that can also improve the conditions of environmentally sensitive lands " and ultimately our creeks, rivers, and the Gulf waters. It's a "house-to-harbor" approach. This involves the integration of surface/stormwater management-groundwater management-natural resource management-utilities-parklands-environmental lands.
 - Each component focuses on what can be accomplished for that particular component. *For example:*
Utilities- High density developments (multi-family) has less water usage per person than single-family residences; 30/50 gallons per person per day for multi-family compared to 100/150 gallons per person per day for single-family residence (largely attributed to pool and landscaping).
3. **Equity Strategy**: The purpose is to ensure that the **Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership** is reviewing projects that provide equitable and fair access to available programs and funding for all communities. Those communities identified as disadvantaged (factors include the percentages for: low income, unemployed, limited English Speaking, less than high school education, low life expectancy).

The goal is to build "environmental justice and equity" into the way CHNEP operates. This includes creating multilingual publications, including inland rural counties, being a presence at community events in particular those that are NOT environmentally-based in order to create a wider reach, and providing educational activities for children such as a sustainable fishing clinic, and providing conservation grants to organizations to promote water and wildlife conservation.

The majority of CHNEP's coastline is NOT defined as being disadvantaged, which includes the inland portions that fall within the city limits of North Port.

- **Background: US National Estuary Program** was established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act.
 - In 1995, Governor Lawton Chiles submitted an application for the 4,700 square miles from Venice to Bonita Springs to Winter Haven be designated as an Estuary of National Significance. This became known as **(CHNEP), the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.**
 - In 2019 the area was expanded by 716 square miles to include the upper Caloosahatchee River basin, thus changing the program name to be the **Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP).**
4. **CHNEP Water Monitoring Project – has been occurring for 20 years, with 60 samples per month being collected.**

5. **Myakka Headwaters Project:** To increase the area of restored wetland habitat through exotic invasive plant removal and strategic native plantings in order to restore the natural balance to the area. The Myakka Headwater Preserve forms an important part of Flatford Swamp (2,457 acres preserved by SWFWMD), the River's largest forested wetland. The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast is the site owner manager.
- \$56,000 project (SWFWMD Funded) + staff time**

6. **Partner contributions:**

- **City of North Port contributes \$1,000 per year. Comparisons to adjoining municipalities:**
 - **Punta Gorda: \$5,000**
 - **Venice: \$2,500**
 - **Sarasota County: \$25,000**
 - **Charlotte County: \$25,000**

CHNEP involvements in North Port include the restoration project for WMS Creek and Salt Creek (Myakkahatchee Creek) which included sediment removal, creek bank stabilization, native plantings, and invasive species treatment. Other partners included US Army Corps of Engineers, Sarasota County, FWC, Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Nature Conservancy.

CHNEP Cost: \$64,990 - funded the design and permitting process, and helped with the efforts to secure the funding necessary for the project to move forward.

- I reported on the City of North Port's first-ever septic-sewer project moving forward!
- Our extending the black-out period for fertilizing lawns, to run from April 1 – Sept. 30.

Respectfully submitted,

Vice Mayor Alice White, June 25, 2023