

IMPORTANT: A CALL FOR ACTION!



To COTI Members and Friends,

The City of Sanibel has again asked citizens to help in contacting representatives of local, state and federal governments to take appropriate actions to deal with the current water quality crisis affecting our area.

Those of you on the City's email system may have already received several messages asking for help. To reinforce these requests, we are reprinting the City's messages below.

We encourage all citizens to join us in contacting the listed agencies and leaders to ask for swift actions to deal with these important concerns.

We need your help. Thanks.

Mike Miller
COTI President

Here is the Mayor's message:

On behalf of the Sanibel City Council, I want to update you on the status of our water quality issues in the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.

*Freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee and stormwater runoff from the Caloosahatchee watershed are resulting in extensive blue-green algae blooms that are currently impacting more than 60 miles of the 75-mile Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. The blue-green algae, also referred to as cyanobacteria, have been identified as *Microcystis aeruginosa*, a known toxin-producing species. These blooms have resulted in beach closures*

along the Caloosahatchee and have prompted the Florida Department of Health to post warnings to avoid contact with the algae.

The ongoing water quality problems associated with Lake Okeechobee releases and runoff from the Caloosahatchee watershed must be addressed immediately! This is critical for the health and safety of our coastal communities, to protect the ecology of our river and estuary, and to preserve our quality of life and local economy.

We need your help in getting the federal, state, and local governments to take swift action to address this important issue. Please consider writing to your elected leaders and agency representatives to let them know how these water quality issues are impacting your quality of life.

Below are contacts for various elected leaders and agencies, along with specific requests and talking points.

Thank you for doing your part to help improve our water quality.

Sincerely,

Mayor Kevin Ruane

Message Points and Contacts for Lee County Board of County Commissioners / Lee County Tourism Development Council

Key Message 1: If the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or the State of Florida do not restore funding for the Healthy Beaches Program, Lee County should restore program funding to ensure that all beaches previously sampled under the program continue to be sampled weekly.

- Cuts to the Healthy Beaches Program will reduce bacteria sampling in Lee County from 15 sites to 9 sites and sampling frequency from weekly to bi-weekly.
- The changes to the program will result in less information available to the public about the health and safety of Lee County beaches and will impact tourism.
- The annual costs to maintain the current level of sampling are estimated at approximately \$34,000 (approximately \$63.00 per sample).

Contact:

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Chairman

Email: dist2@leegov.com

P.O. Box 398

Fort Myers, FL 33902-0398

Message Points and Contacts for the State of Florida

Key Message 1: Under the auspices of Governor Scott's State of Emergency declaration for Lee and Martin counties, the South Florida Water Management District should utilize operational flexibility to the full extent possible to move additional water south, and if necessary, overcome operational constraints that do not directly impact human health and safety.

- On July 9th, Governor Scott issued a State of Emergency for Lee and Martin counties as a result of the blue-green algae blooms that are impacting the coastal communities. Emergency situations call for emergency action and all options should be on the table to move water to the south.
- Extensive algae blooms throughout the Caloosahatchee River and estuary, extending more than 60 miles from the Moore Have Lock to the Fort Myers Yacht Basin, pose significant health and safety concerns for residents in Lee, Glades and Hendry Counties.
- Every aspect of the water management system needs to be evaluated to maximize freshwater flows to the south of Lake Okeechobee.

Contacts:

Governor Rick Scott

Email: rick.scott@eog.myflorida.com

Office of Governor Rick Scott

The Capitol

400 S. Monroe St.

Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Ernie Marks, Executive Director

Email: emarks@sfwmd.gov

Jaime Weisinger, Local Governing Board Rep.

Email: jweisinger@sfwmd.gov

Federico Fernandez, Governing Board Chair

Email: fefernan@sfwmd.gov

Rick Barber, Local Governing Board Rep.

Email: fbarber@sfwmd.gov

Key Message 2: Florida needs to restore funding for the Healthy Beaches Program that was recently eliminated by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget cuts.

- Cuts to the Healthy Beaches Program will reduce bacteria sampling in Lee County from 15 sites to 9 sites and sampling frequency from weekly to bi-weekly.
- The changes to the program will result in less information available to the public about the health and safety of Lee County's beaches and will impact tourism.
- The annual costs to maintain the current level of sampling are estimated at approximately \$34,000 (approximately \$63.00 per sample).

Contacts:

Governor Rick Scott

Email: rick.scott@eog.myflorida.com

Office of Governor Rick Scott

The Capitol

400 S. Monroe St.

Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
Noah Valenstein, Secretary FDEP
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard M.S. 49
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Drew Bartlett, Deputy Secretary Ecosystems Restoration
Email: drew.bartlett@dep.state.fl.us

Message Points and Contacts for the Federal Government

Key Message 1: Maintain flows to the Caloosahatchee at or below 3,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) measured at the W.P. Franklin Lock (S-79) for the remainder of the wet season.

- Extensive blue-green algae blooms are currently impacting more than 60 miles of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.
- These blooms are impacting the health and safety of our waters, our quality of life, and tourism-based economy.
- Additional freshwater flow and nutrients could exacerbate the existing blooms.

Key Message 2: Accelerate critical Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects, including the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir, C-43 Reservoir, and the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project.

- These projects are critical to reduce the damaging regulatory releases from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.
- These projects should be accelerated and fully funded as soon as possible.
- The Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir will provide critical storage needed south of the Lake and must be fast-tracked and funded immediately.
- The C-43 Reservoir Project will provide much-needed storage within the Caloosahatchee watershed and should be fully funded and constructed as soon as possible.
- The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project will provide important storage and treatment north of Lake Okeechobee, helping to slow the flow of water into the Lake that is ultimately discharged to the coastal estuaries.

Key Message 3: The U.S. Army Corps should utilize maximum operational flexibility to move additional water south, and if necessary, overcome operational constraints that do not directly impact human health and safety.

- On July 9th, Governor Scott issued a State of Emergency for Lee and Martin counties as a result of the blue-green algae blooms that are impacting the coastal communities. Emergency situations call for emergency action and all options should be on the table to move water to the south.
- Extensive algae blooms throughout the Caloosahatchee River and estuary, extending more than 60 miles from the Moore Have Lock to the Fort Myers Yacht Basin, pose significant health and safety concerns for residents in Lee, Glades and Hendry Counties.
- Every aspect of the water management system needs to be evaluated to maximize freshwater flows to the south of Lake Okeechobee.

Key Message 4: Restore funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA) for Florida's Healthy Beaches Program.

- Cuts to the Healthy Beaches Program will reduce bacteria sampling in Lee County from 15 sites to 9 sites and sampling frequency from weekly to bi-weekly.
- The changes to the program will result in less information available to the public about the health and safety of Lee County's beaches.
- The annual costs to maintain the current level of sampling are estimated at \$34,000 (approximately \$63.00 per sample).

Contacts:

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Senator Bill Nelson
United States Senate
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Email form: <https://www.billnelson.senate.gov/contact-bill>

Senator Marco Rubio
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Email form: <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact>

Congressman Rooney, 19th Congressional District
Washington, DC Office
120 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Email form: <https://francisrooney.house.gov/contact/>

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, 25th Congressional District
Washington, DC Office
440 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Email form: <https://mariodiazbalart.house.gov/contact-mario>

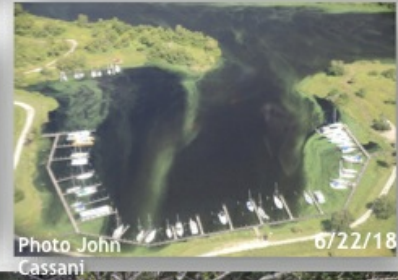
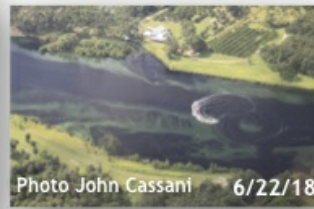
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Colonel Jason Kirk, District Commander and District Engineer

Email: Jason.a.kirk@usace.army.mil

Lt. Col. Jennifer Reynolds, Deputy District Commander for South Florida

Email: Jennifer.A.Reynolds@usace.army.mil



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