

Martin County Projects Update



Rivers Coalition Meeting February 27, 2014 at 11 a.m., City of Stuart Commission Chambers

(Update provided by Deborah Drum, Ecosystem Restoration & Management Division)

- The 2014 Florida Legislative Session will kick off on March 4. Martin County will be advocating for a number of legislative priorities. Some of the legislative priorities the Board will be supporting to advance Martin County's priority of ensuring healthy waterways and ecosystems, essential to our economy and quality of life, include:
 - **Support the recommendations of the Senate Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin totaling \$220 million. In particular, we support the Indian River Lagoon South project referenced in the report, and the recommended \$40 million appropriation for the C-44 project component.** Because Martin County residents have been such strong environmental advocates, we were among the first to fight hard to have our Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan component, the Indian River Lagoon-South Plan (IRL-S Plan), authorized under the 2007 Water Resources Development Act-- which makes our Plan eligible for federal funding right now. We are seeking state and federal funding to complete the C-44 component and acquire the remaining land necessary to complete the remaining components. We greatly appreciate the tremendous support of Select Committee Chairman Senator Joe Negron and the Martin County Legislative Delegation, including Senator Denise Grimsley, Representative Gayle Harrell and Representative MaryLynn Magar.
 - **Support funding for the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon Issues Team.** The purpose of the Team is to develop an action plan that would accelerate progress toward improving water and habitat quality and further more comprehensive local ecosystem restoration goals. Projects include stormwater and septic tank conversions. *The total request for funding for projects in the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon is approximately \$6.5 million.*
- Martin County is asking residents to continue "Speaking Up for the St. Lucie and Indian River Lagoon" during the 2014 State Legislative session and to Congress and is providing sample letters, fact sheets and updates at www.martin.fl.us/hottopics "Speak Up for the St. Lucie" and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SpeakUpfortheStLucie.

- **HB 703:** In addition to issues related to Everglades restoration and water quality, a key priority of the Board of County Commissioners during the state legislative session is their opposition to HB 703, an act relating to Environmental Regulation. There is currently not a Senate companion and it has not been heard in committee. Some of the county's concerns include:
 - HB 703 would require that all comprehensive plan amendments be adopted by a simple majority of the local government. This provision would negate the current plan policy requiring a majority vote of the total membership of the Board of County Commissioners then in office. This provision would also effectively negate the plan policy adopted by the Martin County Commission on August 13, 2013 establishing a requirement for a super-majority of 4 votes for comprehensive plan amendments regarding critical issues.
 - HB 703 places a limitation on county regulatory authority over agricultural lands; including a retroactive provision, applying to regulations adopted prior to 2003. This limitation will affect ordinances adopted by Martin County after July 1, 2003 including to the regulation of wetlands, shoreline protection zones and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and would also preclude any County Commission action to modify, readopt or amend said ordinances, regulations or rules after July 1, 2003.
 - HB 703 would prohibit local governments from rescinding a comprehensive plan amendment that authorizes land uses other than agricultural use if the land continues to be used primarily for bona-fide agricultural purposes and qualifies for an agricultural tax classification under s. 193.461. HB 703 would provide a preemption of local government well construction criteria and standards, as well as other changes.
 - Provisions contained in HB 703 undermine the stated purpose of the Community Planning Act as described in Section 163.3161 Florida Statutes which is to "utilize and strengthen the existing role, processes, and powers of local governments in the establishment and implementation of comprehensive planning programs to guide and manage future development consistent with the proper role of local government."
 - Efforts to subvert local control of land use matters are counterproductive to the principals of home rule enshrined in Article VIII, Section 1(f) and 1(g) of the Florida Constitution (1968), and in Section 125.01, Florida Statutes. The revisions to the Community Planning Act of 2011 were intended to strengthen the local government's ability to address its local issues through its Comprehensive Plan.
 - The purpose of Martin County's comprehensive planning process is to protect natural and manmade resources and maintain, through orderly growth and development, the character, stability and quality of life for present and future Martin County residents. The Martin County Comprehensive Plan has been recognized as a plan that provides strict environmental protection, contains growth within urban service districts, promotes fiscal conservancy and promotes a human scale of development. The Plan provides immeasurable benefit to our community's quality of life, and has been cited as a model for other areas of the state and the country that want to retain quality of life.
 - Martin County's position: HB 703 would undermine home rule, the Community Planning Act and Martin County's ability to retain its unique comprehensive plan and environmental regulations. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners (MCBOCC) OPPOSES HB 703- Relating to Environmental Regulation and calls on the Florida Legislature to protect home rule, to reaffirm its support of community planning and the Martin County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

- Citizens who wish to be engaged on this issue or other issues throughout the legislative session can visit our home page, www.martin.fl.us – click on the “Stay Connected” icon then “Sign up for County news and newsletters” – and select “Legislative Updates.”
- The Rio / St. Lucie Exfiltration and Baffle Box project is under construction, which will provide water quality treatment for a 45 acre basin that currently discharges directly into the St. Lucie River without treatment. One (1) of three proposed Nutrient Separating Baffle Boxes was installed this past week, and you can see a photo of the installation on our Speak Up for the St. Lucie Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SpeakUpfortheStLucie).
- The Ecosystem Restoration and Management Division plans on implementing the dry season sampling of the bacterial DNA analysis in April 2014. We will be analyzing for two human biomarkers, along with horse, cattle, dog and avian biomarkers. The wet season sampling event is scheduled to take place in August 2014.
- Chair Sarah Heard is the Vice Chair of the County Coalition County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and Lake Worth Lagoon. The County Coalition is a multiple County based advisory group involving 9 counties organized primarily for the purpose of providing the general public, the South Florida Water Management District, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Legislature, and various groups and committees with a body which will present a variety of issues dealing with the health and welfare of the lakes, estuaries, and riverine systems consisting of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and Lake Worth Lagoon, and all of the bodies of water connected thereto. The next meeting will be held on **Friday, March 7 at 10 a.m. in Okeechobee at the Judge William L. Hendry Courtroom**, and presentations are anticipated from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the South Florida Water Management District and the participating counties.
- Vice Chair Commissioner Ed Fielding chairs the Indian River Lagoon Counties Collaborative, which is comprised of five counties along the Indian River Lagoon. Their next meeting will also be held on **Friday, March 7, 2014 at 10 a.m. at the Indian River County Commission Chamber in Vero Beach**. Items on the agenda include presentations from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Seagrass Ecosystem Analysts, and the Marine Resource Council.
- The next St. Lucie River BMAP meeting is scheduled for **May 14, 2014**. FDEP is taking an early look at any proposed projects for the next iteration of the BMAP (4 years from now), and they are utilizing the County’s Stormwater and Water Quality Needs Assessment as a guide. The first year annual report and meeting will occur in August 2014, where Martin County will focus on our recent accomplishments such as the Rio / St. Lucie Exfiltration and Baffle Box project, the Bessey Creek Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology project, and our plans for the All American Ditch Water Quality Improvement Project.