

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discussion and recommendation for staff position on Water Quality Issues including Red Tide related to Collier County tourism.

OBJECTIVE: Discuss and develop position on water quality and Red Tide issues in Collier County.

CONSIDERATIONS: Red Tide has caused tremendous fish kills this past year, and causes our visitors to wonder about our water quality. Collier County has been fortunate to not have experienced Red Tide to the extent that Sarasota and Lee County have. We have worked with the Red Tide Alliance to begin a S.T.A.R.T. Chapter here in Collier County, but that group is not very active. We designed signs with assistance from the Red Tide Alliance that could be used to educate our visitors on Red Tide. However, those signs have not been utilized due to confusion as to who will put them up and take them down before and after an outbreak.

Agricultural runoff has greatly increased the nutrient levels in Lake Okeechobee, resulting in highly elevated nutrient levels in the Caloosahatchee River. We have recently learned that Lake Okeechobee will be drawn down, resulting in more discharge into the Caloosahatchee and into the Gulf of Mexico. Lee County and St. Lucie County officials have met with our elected officials in the US House and are monitoring the situation.

Water quality and Red Tide can both affect our ability to attract visitors to our area in the future. Staff would like to be in a position to assist Lee County in their efforts to improve water quality and to assist the local S.T.A.R.T. group in funding research to mitigate Red Tide effects on our area.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff requests the TDC discuss the issues of Red Tide and water quality and allocate \$10,000 to assist Lee County and the Red Tide Alliance and S.T.A.R.T. in their efforts to research and combat the negative effects of these problems.

COUNTY ATTORNEY FINDING: N/A

PREPARED BY: Jack Wert