

MINUTES OF THE COLLIER COUNTY
COASTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WATER QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Naples, Florida, February 7, 2022

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Collier County Coastal Advisory Committee Water Quality Subcommittee, in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 1 P.M. in REGULAR SESSION at the GMD Horseshoe Square South Conference Room, 2685 Horseshoe Drive S., Unit 103, Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Bob Roth
VICE CHAIRMAN: Bob Raymond
Ray Christman

ALSO PRESENT: Andy Miller, Coastal Zone Management
Danette Kinaszczuk, Pollution Control
Rhonda Watkins, Principal Environmental Specialist
Farron Bevard, Operations Analyst, Coastal Zone Management

Any persons in need of the verbatim record of the meeting may request a copy of the audio recording from the Coastal Management Department.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Roth called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

III. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

IV. Changes and Approval of Agenda

None

V. Public Comments

None

VI. Approval of CAC Minutes

None

VII. Staff Reports

1. Specific Recommendations

Ms. Kinaszczuk reported that recommendations in the handout, *“Specific Steps Collier County Could Take at this Time to Deal with Coastal Algae and Red Tide Problems,”* which was discussed at the subcommittee’s January 2021 meeting, went before the BCC, which agreed steps should be taken.

Recommendations in the handout that the subcommittee chose are:

1. Provide adequate resources for timely removal of dead fish and other dead marine life from beaches, inlets, canals and estuaries.
2. Provide adequate resources to ensure compliance with fertilizer ordinance.
3. Determine cost for installing Advanced Wastewater Treatment to substantially reduce nutrient levels in recycled water used for irrigation.

Ms. Kinaszczuk said staff will determine if any resources are available for recommendations No. 1 and No. 2, but said there are a lot of educational components tied in for No. 3. She noted that there’s a study going on involving wastewater treatment plants switching to AWT, Advance Water Treatment. Everything new will be AWT and others will eventually switch to AWT.

Chairman Roth questioned whether the county would go above and beyond what the state requires. He noted that the county can continue with re-use because the state isn’t mandating it to change. He said the subcommittee’s job is to come up with one to three things to submit to the CAC to bring to the BCC, top recommendations to address coastal water issues.

Ms. Kinaszczuk pointed out that the subcommittee is not supposed to be looking at inland waters.

Mr. Christman agreed that the subcommittee's mandate was clearly coastal but if they had ideas for inland the subcommittee wouldn't be prevented from doing that.

Mr. Raymond noted that they'd already discussed that before.

Chairman Roth said they talked about manatees and education and agreed to have another meeting to nail down records to submit to the BCC as soon as possible. He met with Danette and noted that county staff has a handout outlining the issues. They came up with some ideas to suggest to the county. Danette brought up something they're doing in Sarasota that Collier County possibly can try, growing seagrass. I don't think we have the background knowledge. Volunteers could assemble vertical oyster gardens and other volunteers could deploy them. They involve plexiglass floats affixed under a dock, a small ecological system where fish can hide that gets filled with sea life. It costs about \$500 for the device, which is similar to a bail of hay with slices (\$300 of it is a charitable contribution). He noted that he has one under his dock.

VIII. New Business

1. Vertical Oyster Gardens (VOGs)

Ms. Kinaszczuk played a video that explains Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's Vertical Oyster Gardens: <https://sarasotabay.org/get-involved/vertical-oyster-gardens/>

Key points:

- The VOG (Vertical Oyster Gardens) program was started by Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, a partnership between scientists, volunteers, counties, cities, federal and state agencies.
- Oysters are important for the habitat.
- They filter water while feeding on microscopic algae.
- They filter 50 GPD of water.
- VOGs help build their habitats.
- VOGs are made by stringing oyster shells, provided by restaurants, together.
- They need a balance of fresh and saltwater, not lakes or stormwater ponds.
- Volunteers can collect oyster shells from restaurants, string them together and provide to residents to pick up, or "adopt," for their waterway.
- This allows volunteers to gather and provide data to government and non-profit agencies.

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

- There are oyster beds in Naples Bay, near Crayton Cove
- The Pollution Control Division can't work in saltwater because they'd have to be paid for it.
- From a staffing position, it might be better to work with Rookery Bay, which has volunteers.
- The county could provide residents with the vertical oyster gardens, VOGs.
- The county should take the lead to get credit for bringing the program to Collier County.
- The program is better suited for non-government organizations, NGOs, which have more resources.

- Rookery Bay, Waterkeepers and the Conservancy are among non-profits the county could approach as partners.
- The recommendation could go through the commissioner in that district, Rick LoCastro, with the CAC recommending to the BCC that Collier County pursue the VOG program and assign it to a county department, either Coastal Zone Management, Pollution Control or Tourism.
- The department or County Communications Office could spread the word about the VOG program.
- Sarasota's program began during red tide; Oysters love red tide, so VOGs should be incorporated in back bays.
- The program would bring in foot traffic, increase the customer base and tourism.
- The CAC should meet with representatives from the Sarasota group to discuss logistics.
- The CAC could then call a meeting, possibly in May or June, and invite representatives from the Conservancy, Rookery Bay, other non-profits and the county to discuss what level of interest there is to form a partnership.

Mr. Christman made a motion to recommend that the county take steps to contact the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and to hold a CAC meeting to discuss the Sarasota VOGs program with local non-profits, such as the Conservancy and Rookery Bay. Mr. Raymond seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

IX. Old Business

1. Hiring a Consultant to Determine Suitable Areas for Manatee Seagrass Plantings

Chairman Roth noted that the subcommittee, at its last meeting in January 2021, discussed whether to ask county commissioners if they could appropriate funds to retain a consultant to study areas in the county, including Marco Island and the Ten Thousand Islands, that would be suitable for manatee grass plantings. He noted that other areas of the state are installing woven seagrass cuttings in back bays.

Waterway habitats are starving due to lack of sea grass and he said the county needs an expert to determine whether the water quality is appropriate for such a program, and to determine what areas to focus on to re-establish seagrass.

Mr. Miller said he was at the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association (FSBPA) conference on Friday, where a coastal science consultant, Stuart-based Ocean Sciences Inc., spoke about a mitigation project it conducted related to seagrass restoration. They built huge concrete disks stacked vertically to protect structures from wave action.

He reached out to see if the county could get a copy of the presentation to show the CAC Water Subcommittee. He suggested that consulting group, which is on the county's list of approved vendors, might be able to conduct a study. He noted that the consultant's mitigation project was successful and seagrass growth is evident on Google Earth at Bonner Bridge (now Marc Basnight Bridge).

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

- The subcommittee should recommend engaging a consultant to conduct a study on seagrass replacement.
- The study should focus on mitigation, as well as promoting clean water.
- The manatee population is concentrated in southern Collier County, mostly Marco

Island, Everglades City and the Ten Thousand Islands.

- Manatees also congregate in the Bayview Park area, where boats go out, and the Immokalee canal.
- The subcommittee could recommend to the CAC that county staff put together an RFP for a feasibility study, which could probably be done with a work order, not the bidding process.
- Mr. Miller will ask the consultant for the 20-minute CSA video presentation, which can be viewed by the subcommittee and CAC members, and ask the consultant if he could attend to answer questions before the subcommittee sends it to the CAC.

X. Announcements

None

XI. Committee Member Discussion

1. Communications, Public Relations, Social Media and Ads

Chairman Roth noted that Collier County often doesn't promote its environmental programs and suggested an ad campaign to educate the public about the county's clean water efforts.

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

- The county has a Communications, Government and Public Affairs Division.
- Pollution Control has its own education coordinator, who also could handle this, but there is no budget for a video.
- Sarasota runs a "Be Floridian Campaign" to educate the public on how to improve the environment. Who funds that campaign?
- Speak to the Naples Daily News environmental reporter about a story.
- Facebook ads, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, push alerts and other low-cost avenues should be explored, as well as grassroots campaigns such as knocking on doors for those who don't use social media.
- Ask if the county Communications Division can make a catchy 10-second video with a simple message to kick off the campaign.
- Determine if the TDC budget can provide funding.

XII. Next Meeting Date/Location

Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 1-3 p.m. (tentative)
GMD Horseshoe Square South Conference Room

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by order of the chair at 2:09 p.m.

**Collier County Coastal Advisory Committee
Water Quality Subcommittee**

Chairman, Bob Roth

These minutes were approved by the Subcommittee/Chairman on _____, as presented (choose one) _____, or as amended _____.