

January 2022

Naples Area Board of REALTORS®

# Water Quality Advisory

## REP MELO FILES WATER STUDY BILL

**N**ABOR®'s 72<sup>nd</sup> President, Lauren Melo, who is a current member of the Florida House of Representatives (District 80) filed a new bill (HB 579) that, if approved, would "require the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in consultation with the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida and the Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University, to implement and study certain nutrient removal technologies and mechanical aquatic plant management techniques within the Lake Okeechobee watershed..."

According to Melo, the bill includes a request for \$500,000 to study the effectiveness and impact of an aquatic weed harvesting process designed by AguaCulture Technologies. The patented process essentially harvests algae and emulsifies it. The byproduct has been used as a soil amendment or alternative fertilizer and is effective in improving crop production.

Currently, algae blooms on Lake Okeechobee are managed through chemical spraying. Unfortunately, the dead waste simply collects on the lake's shoreline where it can leech back into the water.

HB 579 is Melo's first water quality bill. "I've supported many water quality initiatives and projects in the past, but this is the first one I've authored," she said. "It's very special to me because it will have a

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As the voice of REALTORS® in the Naples area, NABOR® has and will always advocate for action to reduce or eliminate any man-made or environmental threats to home ownership, property values and the living standards in Florida.

## NEW BILL SUPPORTS TOXIC BLOOM REMOVAL TECH

In an effort to reduce large algae blooms in the future, Governor Ron DeSantis created the Blue-Green Algae Task Force in 2019. As a result of its work, SB 834 or the "**Implementation of Long-term Solutions for Cleaning Florida's Water Bodies Act**," filed by Senator Jason Brodeur is making its rounds in the 2022 Legislative Session.

The proposed act aims to "address the growing threat to the general public from harmful algal blooms, the Department of Environmental Protection shall procure innovative technologies that will physically remove harmful algal blooms, toxins, algae, and nutrients from water bodies in this state; provide resources to reduce harmful algal blooms; provide the best available technology for the long-term cleanup of the harmful algal blooms; and develop a plan for emergency response action. The department shall give preference to innovative technologies that reduce the nitrates and toxins fostering harmful algal blooms, are scalable, and are proven to improve water quality in freshwater bodies."

Algae overgrowth is responsible for killing seagrass in many Florida canals and rivers. This problem has made national headlines recently as 95 percent of the seagrass in Indian River has been lost due to nutrient runoff from septic tank leaks and fertilizer runoff that fuel toxic algae blooms and directly contributed to the starvation and death of thousands of manatee in 2021.

The new act reflects Governor DeSantis' proposed state budget which requests \$35 million to combat algae blooms and increase water quality monitoring, \$15 million for technologies and \$5 million to aid red-tide cleanup efforts by local governments.



On January 5, 2022, *Captains for Clean Water* escorted the Army Corps of Engineers' Brigadier General Jason Kelly (South Atlantic Division Commander) and Colonel James Booth (Jacksonville District Commander) on a 97-mile tour of Florida Bay and the Everglades to provide these leaders with a fresh perspective of this precious resource.



*Melo...continued from page 1*

direct impact on the water quality of not only Lake Okeechobee, but also the waters that are released down into the Caloosahatchee, areas that are within my district. The other advantage is that this process can remove the biomass from the lake, which will increase the lake's capacity for more water, thus potentially reducing the number of future releases."

## BONITA PROJECT GETS BIG MITIGATION GRANT

On January 12, 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis surprised the Bonita Springs City Council with a check for nearly \$17 million that will be used toward the continuation of the Terry Street Stormwater and Multi-Use Pathway Improvement Project. The project, which began last year, incorporates stormwater upgrades, bike path expansions, multi-use paths and landscaping improvement on Terry Street from U.S Tamiami Trail to Bonita Grande Drive. The City completed construction of the first 1.2 miles along West Terry Street in early 2021, and has allocated funds to construct another one-quarter mile portion of the project.

The funds are part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grants in the state of Florida to fund disaster mitigation projects in areas impacted by presidentially declared disasters.

To access the funding, the Department worked with state agencies and community partners to draft a substantial amendment to the existing State Action Plan for CDBG-MIT funding. The result was the development of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's (DEO) Rebuild Florida Mitigation General Infrastructure Program. Rebuild Florida is administered by DEO and allows local governments to develop large-scale infrastructure projects that aid communities in making them more resilient against future disasters.



Governor DeSantis is flanked by happy City of Bonita Springs Council members as he presents a grant check for \$16,833,197.

## WHET YOUR WATER WISDOM

Below are some upcoming events hosted by local water quality monitoring and advocacy agencies.

**COLLIER COUNTY WATERKEEPER**  
February 22, 2022  
"Climate Change: Now or Never"  
at the Norris Center

**CALUSA WATERKEEPER**  
March 2, 2022  
"Drinks, Dialog & a Documentary"  
at Collaboratory

## RESOURCES

[Calusa WaterKeeper](#)

[Clean Water Tips Flyer](#)

[Captains for Clean Water](#)

[Collier County WaterKeeper](#)

[Daily Red Tide Reports](#)

[protectingfloridatogether.gov](http://protectingfloridatogether.gov)