

Recap Charlotte County Water Quality Summit
Blue-Green Algae & Red Tide
January 30, 2019

Bad News: There is not one single cause or one cure. It is very complex and will take years to undo the damage to environment that has been done in the last 75 years. There are no silver bullets

Good News: It appears for the first time that all agencies, whether they are privately funded or government (both State, Federal & County) are beginning to share information and work together. These include the FDEP, FWC, FDOH, FWC and others.

The Summit was hosted by Bill Truex, Charlotte County Commissioner District 3. There were 12 speakers

Policy Panel: State Sen. Ben Albritton and State Rep. Michael Grant:

The Governor and the 2019 Session of Florida Legislature are very focused on these problems:

- a. Understanding the severity of the problem and its financial impact
- b. Understanding the science – what causes the problem/ways to solve it
- c. Having the courage to do something to manage it – even if unpopular decisions have to be made including higher taxes, stricter controls on industry, farming and developers and/or eliminating septic tanks.

Pending Legislation:

- a. Bill has been filed to appropriate 15 million dollars over a five year period to Mote Marine to study Red Tide.
- b. Herbert Hoover Dam on Lake O - working to reinforce same (funded by State & Federal Gov)
- c. Bill has been filed to establish a Blue Star Program for monitoring Waste Water Treatment Plants to lessen the amount of nutrients in gray water.

Science Panel: Dr. Kate Hubbard-FWC; Dr. Cynthia Hell – Mote; Paul Julian – EPA; Phil Flood – SWFWM and Andy Tilton – Johnson Engineering.

- a. Detailed explanation of red tide and its causes – too many nutrients – some of the causes include runoff of phosphate and nitrogen from both mining and fertilizing (of lawns, golf courses, farm lands, etc.). Other sources are septic tank run off and decomposition of dead fish and dying aquatic plants. There are other contributing causes, such as African Dust Storms and run off from the Mississippi river, which cannot be controlled by State Agencies.
- b. Monitoring is done daily and info is being shared by all agencies involved in monitoring both in-shore and off- shore.
- c. New identification techniques are being developed and implemented that decrease identification time and may help with quicker mitigation.
- d. Everglades restoration foci points: the right quality and quantity of water being distributed at the right time and place. Projects are approved to the north of Lake O; on Lake O and Hoover Dam, and the Everglades Restoration Project (with a 2026-2028 projected completion)

Action Panel: Kalina Warren, DEP; Don Rainey, University of S. Fla; Terri Lowery, Dr. Joseph Pepe and Betty Staugler.

- a. Investigating all types of controls including biological control; living controls (oysters) and ozone treatments. Have eliminated the use of clay and copper sulfate because there are too many residual consequences with no improved long term effect.
- b. Programs presently being established: Increasing the amount of storm water storage (reservoirs and purchasing rights to release storm water on private land and pay the owners ; improvements to waste water treatment plants; eliminating some of the barriers to water flow in the everglades; i.e., building bridges on Alligator Gator Alley. Restoring the Kissimmee River
- c. USDA is planting filter strips on agricultural lands near lakes and rivers.
- d. Improving types of septic tanks
- e. Halting temporarily the use of weed killers on the Kissimmee chain of lakes and Lake O to increase the growth of aquatic plants.
- f. Charlotte County has established a 20 year program for improving storm water run-off and eliminating septic tanks.

What can residents can do:

- a. Get involved and volunteer to assist in monitoring programs
- b. Get Communities involved to monitor their storm water ponds and drainage systems
- c. Limit nutrient loading:
 - Eliminate/curtail the use of fertilizers, weed killers, pesticides.
 - Minimize/appropriately use reclaimed water
 - Appropriately disposal of grass clippings
 - Reduce stormwater runoff
- d. Protection: use and protect native plants, regularly clean and inspect septic tanks, use professionals who are trained and apply green best management practices, mulch, protect the waterfront
- e. Stay out of the water when signs/flags indicate red tide is present.

Currently there are no programs monitoring the effect of Red Tide and Blue Green Algae blooms on humans

Very hard to summarize 4 hours on two pages – for detail reports, charts, explanations please reference www.charlottecountyfl.gov/Pages/Water-Quality-Summit-Presentations.aspx.