

WORKSHOP ITEM SUMMARY SHEET
VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING
October 20, 2021

Agenda Item:

Cooperative Agreement – South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Lee County, Bonita Springs & Estero

Description:

The Village of Estero, City of Bonita Springs and southern portions of Lee County are currently located within the SFWMD Okeechobee Basin. However, stormwater from these areas does not flow to the Okeechobee Basin (Lake Okeechobee & Caloosahatchee River). Stormwater flows to the Estero Bay. As a result, tax dollars collected from this area are being spent on projects that improve Lake Okeechobee and Caloosahatchee River and not Estero Bay.

There has been some discussion about moving Estero, Bonita Springs and southern portions of Lee County to the Big Cypress Basin which would better reflect actual drainage patterns and allow tax dollars to be spent in the drainage basin where they are generated.

The attached letter and Cooperative Agreement from Lee County outlines a potential alternative to formally changing the basin boundary lines. The proposed agreement would move control, operation, and maintenance authority of several waterbodies from Estero, Bonita Springs, and Lee County to SFWMD. As currently proposed, the waterbodies within Estero that would be transferred to SFWMD are the natural sections of the Estero River, natural sections of Halfway Creek, Railroad ditch from Estero River to Estero Parkway, and Railroad ditch from Estero River to Williams Road.

In general, maintenance activities by the District would include the following:

- A. Water Level Control Structure Maintenance;
- B. Aquatic Plant Control;
- C. Maintenance Shoal Removal;
- D. Removal of Flow Obstructions; and
- E. Canal Bank Maintenance if operation of the system is impaired.

The Village of Estero currently has several projects that could be impacted by this agreement. They include the following:

1. Estero River Sediment Removal

2. Estero River North Branch Bypass Ditch Improvements
3. Bamboo Island Dry Creek Bed Sediment removal
4. Seminole Gulf Railway Ditch Maintenance
5. Annual River Maintenance

Financial Impact:

If the agreement is executed, it would reduce The Village's operational and maintenance costs associated with the Estero River, Halfway Creek and the Seminole Gulf Railway ditches.

It could also reduce capital expenses related to river maintenance such as sediment removal.

Attachments:

1. Cooperative Agreement between SFWMD, Lee County, Bonita Springs and Estero