



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**Natural Resources Management Department**

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way  
Building A, Room 219  
Viera, Florida 32940

**Inter-Office Memo**

**TO:** Jim Liesenfelt, Interim County Manager  
**THRU:** Tad Calkins, Assistant County Manager  
**FROM:** Amanda Elmore, Deputy Director, Natural Resources Management Dept. *AE*  
**SUBJ:** Citizen Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendation (CEER) #2025077

CEER #2025077, titled A Campaign to Save the St. Johns River, was received by the County from Terry Mott.

**Citizen Statement:**

Suggestion: For the Commission to inspire the five entities listed below to work together to create and execute a Stormwater Education Program for the residents of the Viera East Community Development District.

**Entities:**

- o Brevard County Natural Resources (BNR):
- o St Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)
- o University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)
- o Viera East Community Development District (VECDD), the taxing authority for Viera East and the sole entity responsible for maintaining the 84 detention ponds in Viera East
- o Viera East Community Association (VECA), the HOA master association for Viera East

**Background Information (an overview; additional details can be provided):**

- o In 2001, my husband and I built our current home in Viera East. Our property abuts a buffer zone and a 4.5 acre detention pond.
- o For about the first 12 years, the VECDD--which is the sole entity responsible for maintaining the 84 detention ponds and littoral shelves in Viera East--allowed vegetation to grow along the littoral shelves of our pond. During that time frame, there was no incline at the edge of the pond. And it was not uncommon for us to have up to 100 birds per day foraging around this 4.5 acre pond.
- o However, shortly thereafter, the VECDD changed its pond maintenance program and killed off all of the vegetation by routine spraying. And that maintenance program has continued through to today for all of the 84 detention ponds in Viera East.

**Issues of Concern:**

- o Over the years, erosion along the edge of the buffer zones has continually increased

to the point where we now have a steep incline.

- o The buffer zone has lost footage, and continues to erode each day. Wave energy for properties situated on the west side of the ponds--such as our property--seem to suffer from more erosion due to summer easterly winds.

- o Most of our 84 detention ponds flow into the St. Johns River. And without vegetation to filter pollutants from our yards, those pollutants are flowing unfiltered into that critically important watershed.

- o With the loss of vegetation along the littoral shelves, the number of birds foraging around our ponds has dramatically reduced over the years.

#### Action Taken:

- o A few years ago, I alerted the VECDD of the erosion problem. The VECDD staff came to my home, measured our property and the buffer zone, and confirmed that the buffer zone was losing footage.

- o Through a series of many meetings with the VECDD and BNR staff, it was determined that the VECDD kills off all the vegetation along the littoral shelves of these 84 detention ponds because residents don't like to see "weeds" in their backyards.

- o The solution to this matter--as determined collectively by BNR and VECDD staff members--was for the BNR to apply to the Florida Department of Environment Protection for a \$50,000 educational grant for the BNR to conduct a stormwater education program for residents of the VECDD.

- o Current status: We're still waiting for the BNR to apply for that grant. And in the meantime, the VECDD is still routinely spraying to kill off all vegetation along our 84 ponds.

#### Citizen Recommendation:

##### Proposed Action Plan:

- o Throughout this process, I've attended several workshops that recommended the best management practices for pond maintenance offered by the entities mentioned above, along with the Marine Resources Council.

- o I believe that if these entities could work together and share resources, an online program could be created that may accomplish the mission of educating the VECDD residents enough to understand the importance of allowing vegetation to be maintained along the littoral shelves of our 84 ponds. If our residents understood that the current maintenance program is polluting the St Johns River and--in the long run--diminishing our property values due to erosion, and ultimately creating a flooding hazard for the community, they would not object to seeing "weeds" in their backyards.

- o Here's one possible program idea:

- oo The BNR or the SJRWMD could organize a Save the St. Johns River Campaign.

- oo The Campaign could focus on 3W's: Water~Wildlife~Waste

- oo The UF/IFAS recently launched a new pond restoration program for Florida Master Naturalists, and this program could be used to help educate VECDD residents.

- UF/IFAS staff also offer several online classes.

- oo Additionally, the SJRWMD also has an online program for pond maintenance

(originally created to educate community association managers, which could easily be tweaked to accommodate this current objective).

oo Both the VECDD and the VECA could organize the HOA leadership within the VECDD and work with the other entities to hold training workshops and use their respective websites to further educate our residents. In sum, all the information we need to inspire the VECDD community to adopt best management practices for pond maintenance is readily available if the entities above agree to work together. And I believe the above-mentioned campaign could energize and inspire the entire community to get involved.

### **Staff Analysis:**

The Board considered very similar CEER recommendations last year (#2024050 and #2024051).

Natural Resources Management recognizes the value of working together and the importance of working with Homeowners Associations (HOAs) to better manage stormwater ponds. HOAs are responsible for the maintenance and operation of over 4,000 stormwater ponds in Brevard County, about ten times as many county-maintained stormwater ponds. Since last year, Brevard County has made significant strides in stormwater education efforts with innovative pilot programs and demonstration plantings added to existing permit-required outreach.

### ***2024-2025 Citizen Science - Pond Pilot Program***

While this CEER request is specific to the St. Johns River, Brevard County has actively been working on a similar request for the Indian River Lagoon that could be used as a template for all stormwater pond management. The Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) Program is currently piloting a citizen science/outreach program that is partnering with four Homeowners Associations (HOAs) to improve stormwater pond management and reduce stormwater inputs to the Indian River Lagoon (IRL). Funding to start this program was added in the 2023 Update to the Save Our Indian River Lagoon Project Plan and remains in the 2025 Update approved in February. A grant proposal was submitted to the IRL Council/Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program to seek additional funding to support a pilot program for this education/outreach campaign and was contracted in October 2024. The Pond Pilot Program is running for one year (October 2024 - October 2025), with the future goal of improving and expanding the program to include additional HOAs and stakeholder groups.

The following four HOAs volunteered and were selected to participate in this Pond Pilot Program:

- Country Walk HOA (Suntree) – North IRL
- Longwood HOA (Melbourne) – North IRL
- Tortoise Island HOA (Satellite Beach) – Banana River Lagoon
- South Lakes HOA (Melbourne) – Central IRL

Multiple visits were made to each of the four HOAs during late summer/early fall 2024 to meet with HOA community contacts and to gather information and evaluate their stormwater ponds. More formal meetings were held at each HOA over the course of the fall/winter 2024-2025 to provide information about the Pond Pilot Program and to generate wider public support and participation.

The citizen science portion of the Pond Pilot Program is focused on training HOA volunteers to collect monthly water samples from their stormwater pond(s). Water samples will be analyzed for total nitrogen, total phosphorus, and chlorophyll a. These data will be used to 1) educate HOAs about the water quality conditions in their pond, and 2) to establish baseline data, detect trends, and quantify changes in nutrient levels. Volunteers from the 4 HOAs were trained and began collecting water samples in December 2024. To date, 18 volunteers have been trained to collect water samples as part of this Pilot Program and three months of water quality data has been collected. One extra month of water samples was collected at Country Walk HOA (November 2024) to get baseline water quality data before the installation of their floating wetland, which occurred in early December 2024.

The education/outreach portion of the Pond Pilot Program is focused on developing a curriculum 1) to help HOAs improve their stormwater pond maintenance, and 2) to help HOAs identify and implement best management practices (BMPs) that will reduce stormwater pollution in their neighborhood and to the IRL. Pre- and post-pilot program surveys will be used to measure learning outcomes and adoption of pollution prevention measures. The pre-pilot survey was deployed via email to each of the four HOAs in February 2025. These data are being analyzed now to help inform preparations for the educational meetings set to begin in late March/early April 2025.

The series of educational meetings with each HOA will provide resources and support HOA efforts to develop/improve their stormwater pond maintenance plan(s) and to identify specific stormwater BMPs that their neighborhood would like to implement. Funding is allocated to assist HOAs interested in installing floating wetlands or planting native aquatic plants in the littoral zone (shallow, near-shore zone) of their pond(s). Plantings will be scheduled for spring 2025.

#### *2024-2025 Pond Demonstration – Native Littoral Plantings in Viera*

Natural Resources Management, in conjunction with the Viera Wetland Rangers Volunteer Group, recently completed the installation of a native littoral buffer zone and educational signage at Clubhouse Drive Park Pond in Viera East. With that location now selected and thriving, the Brevard County Stormwater Program had been collaborating with the Viera East Community Development District (VECDD) on an educational grant submittal for stormwater pond best management practices that are demonstrated at this pond location. Part of the project included targeted educational outreach to HOAs within the VECDD area. Ms. Mott has indicated to NRM staff that she no longer believes the grant submittal is necessary as the material produced would be duplicative of educational material already available through the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Master Naturalist Freshwater Systems Course.

### *Ongoing Stormwater Education Outreach*

Stormwater pollution prevention presentations to adults are conducted as part of the County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit compliance. The Brevard County Stormwater Program conducts presentations for HOAs upon request, and as staffing allows. Many HOA volunteers are already active in County stormwater pollution prevention efforts, placing storm drain markers throughout our community to further education efforts, or through the aforementioned volunteer pond littoral planting at Clubhouse Drive Park and as citizen scientists with the Pilot Pond Program.

### *Proposed 3W's Campaign*

Regarding the 3 W's campaign suggested, the County has implemented programs that address the first W, Water. The Lagoon Loyal program was developed to address the thousands of pounds of excess algae-feeding nutrients that flow to the Indian River Lagoon, polluting both groundwater and stormwater. This program is the cornerstone of the outreach efforts required under the county's NPDES permit.

Regarding the second W of the 3 W's campaign, Wildlife, the Board does not have jurisdiction relevant to wildlife protection. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or United States Fish and Wildlife Service would need to spearhead efforts regarding outreach for fauna. Additionally, as noted in the citizen recommendation, the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) has a Florida Master Naturalist Program that teaches those who teach others about Florida's unique ecosystems and wildlife. UF/IFAS Brevard Extension continues to work with Natural Resources to assist and educate the citizens of Brevard when appropriate.

Regarding the last W, Waste, is partially addressed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Waste Reduction Section. This section is responsible for promoting and monitoring statewide recycling and waste reduction programs as well as the recycling and proper management of household hazardous waste, medications, mercury lamps (fluorescent) and devices (thermostats), batteries, and scrap electronics. Grants and technical assistance are provided to local governments for the implementation of solid waste management programs. As required pursuant to 403.7032 Florida Statutes, and Chapter VIII of Brevard's Comprehensive Plan, Brevard County's Solid Waste Department provides outreach by a Recycling Coordinator and a Recycling Educator who attend community events, civic organization meetings, school functions, and other events as appropriate. The Solid Waste webpage provides a plethora of educational materials including a Recyclopedica, Recycling Kids' Corner, and other links and media.

Although not located in the Viera East community, Florida Recyclers of Brevard (Sarno Road) is a commercial composting facility. At the current Brevard County Solid Waste Management locations, there is neither the space nor the personnel to engage in composting. Lastly, composting results in odors that are not normally compatible

adjacent to residential uses unless high-cost management and maintenance equipment is employed.

**Staff Recommended Action:**

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners reject CEER #2025077, as it does not enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of County government as required by Home Rule Charter as detailed in the staff analysis.

CC: Frank Abbate, County Manager

## Horst, Rachel

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**From:** CEER@brevardfl.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, January 31, 2025 11:29 PM  
**To:** Horst, Rachel  
**Subject:** A new CEER Recommendation has been submitted as ID #2025077

### Recommendation # 2025077

Dear CEER Administrator,

Speak Up Brevard Recommendation ID #2025077 has been submitted. Please login to the CEER Application to start the recommendation evaluation workflow.

#### Contact Information:

##### Group/Organization

<b>Name</b>	Terry Mott
<b>Address</b>	4899 WEXFORD DR, ROCKLEDGE FL 32955
<b>Phone</b>	(321) 223-6951
<b>Email</b>	terrymott93@gmail.com
<b>Alternate Email</b>	terrymott93@gmail.com

#### Recommendation Information:

<b>Recommendation ID</b>	2025077
<b>Recommendation Title</b>	A Campaign to Save the St. Johns River
<b>Areas Affected</b>	An educational program
<b>Department Affected</b>	Natural Resources Management
<b>Current problem</b>	See the attached form.
<b>Recommendation</b>	A program to save tax dollars. See the attached form.
<b>Attachments</b>	Suggestion from Terry Mott.pdf

Please do not reply to this e-mail, as it will go to an unmonitored mailbox.

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Submission from Terry Mott

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