



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Natural Resources Management Department

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

TO: Jim Liesenfelt, Interim County Manager

THRU: Tad Calkins, Assistant County Manager

FROM: Amanda Elmore, Deputy Director, Natural Resources Management Dept (NRM)

SUBJ: Citizen Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendation #2025066

CEER #2025066, titled Cost saving on land maintenance, was received by the County from Ms. Lora Losi.

Citizen Statement:

Too much detritus and fresh water with pollutants going into the IRL.

Excessive treatment of county owned ponds and vegetation, and therefore wasting tax payers money.

Lack of maintenance of baffle boxes.

Citizen Recommendation:

To save money:

In the short run—Eliminate the use of herbicide in and around county ponds. This will prevent possible runoff to the IRL and again save money in not having to re vegetate any seagrasses effected.

The county already owns 3 harvesters for aquatic vegetation removal. One is even small enough to remove unwanted and invasive vegetation in small ponds.

Likewise, drop or lower the use of excess pesticides, especially on lawns.

The treatment of potable water supplies to remove these and other pollutants is EXTREMELY costly.

Mowing and tree trimming on county properties could be rescheduled for many fewer repetitions. Longer grass holds water better, slowing or stopping the runoff. Trees with lower limbs and mass are more wind resistant.

Baffleboxes can only be useful when removal of detritus is done efficiently and often.

Staff Analysis:

Physical/mechanical removal of vegetation from stormwater ponds was recognized by the County years ago as an alternative to aquatic herbicides. As identified by Ms. Losi, Natural Resources has purchased, through grant funding, multiple harvesters and added field crews to harvest stormwater ponds. The program has grown considerably from ~180,000 pounds of aquatic weeds harvested in 2019 to more than ~7 million pounds last year. Since the harvesting program's inception in 2019, Natural Resources has removed ~14.5 million pounds of aquatic weeds from water bodies, the equivalent of ~21,000 pounds of nitrogen and ~3,400 pounds of phosphorus.

Public Works maintains 85 ponds. Two are spot treated six times a year to control vegetative growth. These two ponds have no direct connectivity to the Indian River Lagoon and are appropriately measured to dissipate at approximately 500 feet. These two ponds are being evaluated for mechanical harvesting by Natural Resources but due to limited access, the county may have to purchase additional right-of-way or seek easements to get the harvesting equipment to the ponds. Public Works has a strict no spray policy within ½ mile of major water bodies. Regarding mowing and trimming, cycles are evaluated periodically and adjusted as needed.

Mosquito Control employs an integrated mosquito management program which utilizes various habitat management (impounded wetland management), biological control (native fish hatchery/ stocking) and cultural control (public education) techniques to protect public health, but US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved pesticides ultimately are necessary to support the public health mission as well, and invasive aquatic vegetation control is one of those important tools. Local mosquitoes are known to utilize the shelter of aquatic vegetation during their immature (i.e., larval and pupal) life stages; and invasive aquatic plant species have the capacity to provide significant mosquito breeding habitat when given the opportunity to clog waterways and grow out of control. Herbicides are effective at controlling such aquatic vegetation, so completely removing them from the toolbox could negatively impact public health due to potential increases in mosquitoes and associated disease risk. Nevertheless, Mosquito Control has taken steps to reduce all pesticides usage over the years, particularly in areas adjacent to the Lagoon.

Lastly, aquatic vegetation harvesting was added to the Save our Indian River Lagoon Project Plan in 2020 as a project type eligible for funding. Funds are allocated to demonstrate or purchase capital equipment needed to initiate or expand harvesting programs, not to fund seasonal maintenance. Currently, there are 10 vegetation

harvesting projects approved in the SOIRL Plan. Of these, 6 have been completed, 3 are underway, and 1 is being withdrawn by the municipality. Entities (municipalities, other government agencies, homeowner associations, etc.) are encouraged to apply for this funding during the annual application cycle.

Lastly, County-owned baffle box screens are cleaned monthly; sediment is removed twice yearly under vendor contract.

Staff Recommended Action:

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners accept CEER #2025066 with revisions, as herbicide reduction and mechanical harvesting is already implemented as detailed in the staff analysis.

CC: Frank Abbate, County Manager

Horst, Rachel

From: CEER@brevardfl.gov
Sent: Friday, January 31, 2025 10:03 AM
To: Horst, Rachel
Subject: A new CEER Recommendation has been submitted as ID #2025066

Recommendation # 2025066

Dear CEER Administrator,

Speak Up Brevard Recommendation ID #2025066 has been submitted. Please login to the CEER Application to start the recommendation evaluation workflow.

Contact Information:

Group/Organization

Name	lora losi
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Recommendation Information:

Recommendation ID	2025066
Recommendation Title	Cost saving on land maintenance
Areas Affected	Maintenace of county properties
Department Affected	NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Current problem	Too much detritus and fresh water with pollutants going into the IRL. Excessive treatment of county owned ponds and vegetation, and therefore wasting tax payers money. Lack of maintenance of baffle boxes.
Recommendation	To save money: In the short run—Eliminate the use of herbicide in and around county ponds. This will prevent possible runoff to the IRL and again save money in not having to re vegetate any seagrasses effected. The county already owns 3 harvesters for aquatic vegetation removal. One is even small enough to remove unwanted and invasive vegetation in small ponds. Likewise, drop or lower the use of excess pesticides, especially on lawns. The treatment of potable water supplies to remove these and other pollutants is EXTREMELY costly. Mowing and tree trimming on county properties could be rescheduled for many fewer repetitions. Longer grass holds water better, slowing or stopping the runoff. Trees with lower limbs and mass are more wind resistant. Baffleboxes can only useful when removal of detritus is done effeciently and often.

Attachments

No Documents were attached.

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