Item 10.f.
News Articles

Comprehensive Study in Progress to Examine Florida's Water Reuse

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By: Tyler Allender - Email

PANAMA CITY-- Bay County has one of the most innovative water treatment systems in the state.

But officials are in the midst of evaluating that system.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) held a workshop at Gulf Coast State College on Monday afternoon. It's the beginning of an evaluation process involving the use of reclaimed water and storm water sewage.

Tyndall Air Force Base is home to the advanced waste water treatment.

It goes through a six-step filtration process before it comes out of the tap at your home.

Earlier this year, lawmakers passed Senate Bill 536 requiring water officials to check on the efforts and submit a report regarding the reclaimed water projects, which is spearheaded by the FDEP.

So far, three meetings have taken place to gather public input, which is already above the state mandate of two.

"It requires the department to coordinate with the stakeholders in the state to do a study and report on how we can expand the beneficial use of three types of water: reclaimed water, excess surface water and storm water," Tom Beck, the Director of the Office of Water Policy at the FDEP, said.

Nearly 1,000 surveys have been collected from individual water users, local government and public utilities.

Respondents were concerned with how the water affects public water supply and agriculture.

If you would like to learn more about the Senate Bill and its requirement, visit: dep.state.fl.us/water/reuse/study.htm.

It describes the study requirements, provides more information about the surveys and shares the latest findings.

http://www.wjhg.com/home/headlines/Comprehensive-Study-in-Progress-to-Examine--280590742.html?device=tablet&c=y&device=phone&c=y

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State plan will affect water bodies in Marion County

By Fred Hiers
Staff writer
Published: Friday, October 17, 2014 at 5:09 p.m.

In hopes of reducing pollution loads into the Orange Creek Basin and the aquifer, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is investing nearly $400,000 to decrease the flow of unwanted nutrients into the basin's water bodies.

Although the project is mostly in Alachua County, Marion County also will benefit because much of the area's aquifer is shared by the two counties.

The Orange Creek Basin is primarily made up of Orange Lake, Newnans Lake, Lochloosa Lake and Paynes Prairie.

The $390,000 state project centers on Tumblin Creek in Gainesville, much of which flows into Bivens Arm, a 200-acre shallow lake in Southwest Gainesville that makes up part of Paynes Prairie.

The problem is that the polluted runoff from developed areas in Gainesville empties into Tumblin Creek, which in turn empties into Bivens Arm, said Stepan Broadus, a Gainesville utility engineer overseeing the project. FDEP already has designated Bivens Arm an impaired water body, and that unwanted phosphorus and nitrogen eventually works its way into the lake, making matters worse.

And some of that polluted water makes its way into the Floridan aquifer, Broadus said.

The largest lake on the basin list is Orange Lake, which sometimes swells to more than 15,000 acres and is also suffering from high nutrient levels and an overabundance of vegetation inhibiting boating and fishing.

"And there is going to be a connection between Orange Lake and Paynes Prairie through that aquifer," Broadus said.

The plan is to build a 100-foot-long and 40-foot-wide concrete channel that will slow Tumblin Creek's flow. The reduction in flow will allow the creek's sediments to sink and be collected and removed later.

Water that flows off land and into water bodies such as Tumblin Creek and Orange Lake is called stormwater runoff. The polluted water typically contains urban fertilizers, pesticides, oil and grease. Pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus cause unwanted algae, change water chemistry and rob the water of vital oxygen.

Broadus predicts that the channel will catch about 129 tons of sediment annually. That much sediment contains about 80 pounds each of nitrogen and phosphorus that would otherwise make it into the Orange Creek Basin and/or aquifer, Broadus said. About 125 homes on ¼-acre lots generate about the same amount of the two pollutants.

"The No. 1 threat to Florida's water is excess nutrients," noted Tom Frick, director of the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration in a press release.

"The energy and passion of the stakeholders in this basin who are stepping up to address nutrient loading, in addition to the city of Gainesville, deserve the department's support. We applaud their commitment," he said.

Construction of the channel is scheduled to begin during the spring of 2015.

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State's $390K Orange Creek Basin project will benefit Marion

By Fred Hiers
Staff writer
Published: Saturday, October 18, 2014 at 9:12 p.m.
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