

# Caloosahatchee River Public Conference

Wednesday, March 5, 2003

Harborside Convention Center \* Fort Myers, Florida

**Do you want to continue to use clean and abundant water? Do you fish in local waters? Is your business dependent on a healthy environment? Come to this Public Conference to help protect and restore these natural resources.**

The Caloosahatchee River Public Conference is a forum for the public to confront issues affecting the natural resources of the region and the public uses of these resources. The general public is encouraged to take an active role in the management of these important resources by participating in this one-day conference.

Three sessions will be offered to stimulate discussion among the participants on ways to solve problems confronting water quality and flow, fish and wildlife's need for healthy habitats and businesses' need for a healthy environment. The conference focuses on waters in Lee County, specifically the Caloosahatchee River, Pine Island Sound, Matlacha Pass, San Carlos Bay and Estero Bay.

**9:00-11:30 A.M.**

**Water Quality, Flow and Timing: The necessities of clean and abundant water**

**3:00-5:30 P.M.**

**The Health of our Watery Habitats: Making waterways habitable for fish and wildlife**

**6:00-8:30 P.M.**

**A Healthy Environment is Good for Business: Making the connection between a clean and beautiful natural environment and a business' bottom line**

Each session will begin with local experts providing a brief overview to stimulate participants discussion of ways to solve problems. Participants will then join a small group to discuss solutions. Each discussion group will offer preferred conclusions to the entire audience as to how to solve the problems.

All suggestions offered will be compiled in a written report that will be shared with the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program Management Conference for its members who represent cities, counties, agencies, businesses and environmental groups to consider. It will help to develop plans for Comprehensive Everglades

Restoration Plan (CERP), Southwest Florida Feasibility Study, water supply plans, minimum flows and other plans that impact the health and value of the natural environment and the people who live or enjoy southwest Florida.

The Caloosahatchee River Public Conference is an important step in the NEP process of bringing public and private stakeholders together to discuss critical environmental issues facing the river and receiving estuaries of Pine Island Sound, Matlacha Pass, San Carlos Bay and Estero Bay.

**WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:** Please sign-on to the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site (or call 239/995-1777 ext 240) to (1) let us know what issues you think should be considered during the discussion groups at these three sessions on water quality and flow, fish and wildlife's need for healthy habitats and businesses' needs for a healthy environment.

(2) Please register for this *free* conference. (Registration is not required but is recommended.)

(3) Attend the Public Conference on Wednesday, March 5, 2003. *Refreshments will be served.*

Like to volunteer as a **discussion group facilitator**? For more information, visit the Charlotte Harbor NEP web site at [www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org](http://www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org) or call 239/995-1777 ext 240.

In addition to the three sessions of the public conference, two other programs will be offered, the Division of County Lands will present information on the **Conservation 2020 Program** from **11:30 to noon** and the South Florida Water Management District will hold a public meeting on establishing **minimum water flows and levels** for the Caloosahatchee River from **1:00 to 2:30**. See other side for additional details.



The **Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (NEP)** is a *partnership* that protects the Charlotte Harbor estuaries from Venice to Estero Bay by improving the ecological integrity of the watershed. This partnership gives citizens, elected officials, resource managers, and commercial and recreational resource users in the 4,400-square-mile study area a voice to address diverse resource management concerns including fish and wildlife habitat loss, water quality and water flow. The watershed in the study area includes all or parts of Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, Polk, Hardee and DeSoto counties.

This public conference is supported by Charlotte Harbor NEP with funds from the counties of Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, Lee, Manatee, Polk and Sarasota; the cities of Sanibel, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Punta Gorda, Bartow, Venice and Fort Myers Beach; the agencies of Southwest and South Florida Water Management Districts, Peace River/Manasota Region Water Supply Authority, Southwest and Central Florida Regional Planning Councils, Florida Departments of Environmental Protection and Community Affairs, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and others.

**Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program**



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## Public Meeting Notice: MFL

The South Florida Water Management District announces a public meeting to which all interested parties are invited to discuss the update of information concerning recent studies of the Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) Criteria for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary on Wednesday, March 5, 2003 from 1:00 to 2:30 P.M. at the Harborside Convention Center (1375 Monroe St.) in Fort Myers.

Water Management Districts are required by law to conduct research and analysis on important Florida water bodies to determine that level and flow of water below which harm can occur to the natural system over time. The "minimum flows and levels" are then set by the governing boards of the water management districts. Public hearings where interested parties have input into the process are legal requirements of the process. The public hearing for the Caloosahatchee Minimum Flow and Level will be part of the Public Conference.

The meeting agenda and the document Technical Documentation to Support Development of Minimum Flows and Levels for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary - Draft 2003 Status Update Report can be obtained by contacting Kurt Harclerode or Akin Owsina at 800/248-1201 or by visiting the SFWMD website at [www.sfwmd.gov/org/wsd/mfl/calmfl/index.html](http://www.sfwmd.gov/org/wsd/mfl/calmfl/index.html).

## Conservation 2020

In 1996, a referendum was added to the ballot asking Lee County residents if they would be willing to tax themselves up to a 1/2 mil annually for seven years with the sole intent of purchasing conservation lands. The referendum passed with a majority of Lee County citizens voting to approve the Conservation 2020 Referendum.

The overall goal of Conservation 2020 was to carefully utilize taxpayers' money to acquire environmentally sensitive County lands for preservation by the year 2020.

The Ad Valorem Tax has yielded \$63 million dollars so far for the Conservation 2020 program of which 90 percent is spent on land acquisition and 10 percent on land management and restoration. More than 10,000 acres have been acquired.

**What's Next?** Growth in Lee County is going to continue at a record pace. The acquisition of conservation lands is not expected to keep pace with the growth. It will be up to the citizens of Lee County to determine the next moves. In 2004 the voluntary tax to fund Conservation 2020 ends. A survey is currently being conducted to determine if the public thinks the program has been worthwhile and to interest in continuing it. For additional information or to complete the survey, visit the program web site at [www.lee-county.com/countylands/Cons2020/cons2020.htm](http://www.lee-county.com/countylands/Cons2020/cons2020.htm).

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## Caloosahatchee River Basin Festival: March 5-16, 2003

The Caloosahatchee River Public Conference is the kickoff program of the 12-day **Caloosahatchee River Basin Festival**.

The 2003 Caloosahatchee River Basin Festival celebrates the river, its people and the history of Southwest Florida through exhibits, events, music and food designed to educate, entertain and enlighten attendees. The festival is organized by the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium and sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District's Institute for the Western Everglades, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Bonita Bay Group, Gaea Guides, Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association and Heinz Frozen Food.

A few of the *many* events scheduled are listed below. For a complete list, visit the Internet at [www.calusanature.com/](http://www.calusanature.com/) or call Todd Cordisco, Festival Coordinator, at 239/275-3435.

**Thursday, March 6:** Collier County Day

**Friday, March 7:** Charlotte County Day

Admission is free to the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium to residents in Collier and Charlotte counties on their respective days with proof of residency such as a valid Florida driver's license.

**Sunday, March 9:** Free cruises of the Caloosahatchee River to discover its history, tour the scenic oxbows and look for manatees. Explore the history of Ft. Myers and its early pioneers through exhibits, food and music. 239/694-3850.

**Monday, March 10 - Friday, March 14:** Canoe/kayak down the Caloosahatchee River from Lake Okeechobee to Gulf of Mexico. Reservation are required. 239/275-3435.

**Come celebrate a great natural resource —  
the Caloosahatchee River Basin!**

**Field Trips:** Travel with us to various locations around Southwest Florida. Reservations are required by March 7. 239/275-3435

**March 10:** Babcock Wilderness Adventures

**March 11:** Manatee Park

**March 11:** Historical walking tours of downtown Fort Myers

**March 12:** Tour US Sugar fields, mill, refinery and packaging plant

**March 12:** Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park

**March 13:** Caloosahatchee Regional Park

**Friday, March 14:** Smart Growth Workshop on Environmental and Water Recommendations Workshop

Contact Wayne Daltry at 239/335-2840 for details.

**Saturday, March 15 - Sunday, March 16:** Caloosahatchee River Days at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium

Join us for some good old-fashioned fun at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium! Admission includes kids' fishing clinic, many exhibitors, Planetarium shows, miles of trails and native animals. Kids' fishing clinics, sponsored by Bait-N-Wait on Fort Myers Beach, will be March 15 from 10:00 A.M. to noon and 2:00 to 4:00 P.M. and March 16 from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M. Each clinic includes knot tying and bait rigging, casting and fish identification contests and conservation tips. Each clinic is open to the first 80 children from 6 to 12 years of age. Register for the clinics by calling 239/275-3435 before March 10.

The **Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium Natural** includes a History Museum with more than 100 animals, a Planetarium and miles of nature trails. The Center is located at 3450 Ortiz Ave. in Fort Myers. Hours are 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Admission is \$7.00 for adults and \$4.00 for children ages 3-12. For directions or additional information, call 239/275-3435 or visit the Internet at [www.calusanature.com/](http://www.calusanature.com/)

**Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program**



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