

Good day. My name is Ann Thomas and I have been asked to represent a number of residents of Matlacha in respect to the eco-system damage that is occurring in the estuaries adjacent to our homes.

We live on a peninsular (Shoreview Drive) located in Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve of which parts are situated in "Ding Darling" Federal Wildlife Refuge. Shoreview Drive is in unincorporated Lee County, FL. Adjacent to us is the city of Cape Coral, FL.

In August of 2008 after much controversy from the County and environmental groups, The city of Cape Coral removed a boat lift from a body of water known as the North Spreader. The North Spreader is a seven (7) mile long, approximately fifty (50) yard wide body of water (river) that transports surface water for it's entire seven (7) mile

length. As you know, the Spreader abuts a portion of the city of Cape Coral and regions in Charlotte County North of Cape Coral. This is the source of the surface water. This area also is supported by septic tanks vis a vis a sewer system; and the septic waste is leeching into the surface waters contaminating it with fecal and other toxic waste. The lift was originally installed to keep the fresh (and toxic) surface waters separated from the salt water estuaries of Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve (and by extension the Federal Wildlife Refuge portions). Obviously the removal of the lift has precluded this. As we have been given to understand, the City did not conduct an Environment Impact Study prior to the removal; nor has there been any post removal monitoring of the impact on the estuaries at the South end of the Spreader.

This whole process was litigated, the suit being brought forth by a number of environmental associations. The outcome of the suit was that unless a number of projects that offered a *net ecological benefit* (NEBS) greater than that provided by the lift, the lift would have to be reinstalled.

This process was to include all affected parties, including the environmentalists, the County, the city of Cape Coral, and homeowners. For some reason, the homeowners that were contacted (and included) were those North of the original location of the lift. Those of us on the South side, the recipients of the effluents and sediment were not. I suppose our effects could be classified as a result of *the law of unintended consequences*.

Our first indication of a problem was the explosive growth of silt/sedimentation in the East Bay and Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve after the removal of the lift. This is validated by a set of Lee County Photos taken in the First Quarter of each year 2005 - 2009. This is the package of photos which I handed out. There is an associated narrative. I will not read the entire narrative to you. You May do so at your leisure. However, I will ask that you focus on the explosive growth of silt/sediment in the years 2008 and 2009. 2008 reflects the breach that occurred bypassing the lift; and 2009 reflects the actual removal of the lift.

To repeat, as you can see the growth of the sediment was explosive. As the photos reflect the sand bars in these estuaries have more than tripled in size in very short time

James

~~frame~~. This silt/sedimentation is resulting in a couple of serious problems, the sea grasses in these estuaries are being buried by the silt/sedimentation obliterating the natural marine habitat. The toxic effluent is also contributing to the damage to this vulnerable habitat.

None the less, as I mentioned earlier, we were not invited to participate in the process; and as a result, we were not involved until recently (mid-February of this year) and had to get up to speed quickly.

I am here today to assure you that the only ecologically responsible solution is to re-install the lift and stop the hemorrhaging that is flowing into our estuaries and destroying these pristine marine habitats.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you and for your time and attention.

*Suitable location North of old lift
4 ft high berm or runs a distance of excess
of several football fields
Old one lasted 30 years & ablated a stand of mangroves.*