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**Lower West Coast Watersheds Subcommittee  
Addresses Stormwater Run-off Concerns**

FORT MYERS, FL – (July 8, 2008) – The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC) announced that its Lower West Coast Watersheds Subcommittee is continuing its efforts to address stormwater run-off in urban and suburban areas. This work is an effort to heighten community concern over current water quality in the bays, estuaries, and rivers in our region and in the Gulf of Mexico adjacent to our shores.

Water quality is one of the most important issues that affect everyone, both economically in terms of eco-system health and physically in terms of personal health.

Water quality of the bays, estuaries, rivers, lakes, wetlands, bayous and the Gulf of Mexico is critical to the region's environmental, economic, and recreational prosperity and to the health, safety and welfare of the residents of southwest Florida.

Recent increased frequency and duration of red tide blooms, increased accumulation of red drift algae on local beaches, blue-green algal blooms and other water related problems have heightened community concerns about water quality and cultural eutrophication of surrounding waters.

On February 16, 2007 the SWFRPC identified water quality as one of the most important regional issues. In order to address this issue, the Council instituted the Lower West Coast Watersheds Subcommittee. Mayer Mick Denham of Sanibel volunteered to chair the new subcommittee. A variety of public officials and experts volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

As a first order of business the subcommittee identified five areas of concern that they wished to address. They decided not to include the water quality problems of discharges of Lake Okeechobee coming from outside of southwest Florida, but to address the issues occurring with the southwest Florida watersheds proper. Those issues were fertilizers, wastewater treatment plants, package wastewater treatment plants, onsite wastewater treatment plants (septic tanks) and stormwater from urban and suburban areas. The urban runoff was further subdivided into three categories, which included new urban stormwater runoff, retrofit runoff and large scale drainage conveyance facilities.

To date, the subcommittee has produced four resolutions that have been presented and approved by the regional planning council. These resolutions covered fertilizers, wastewater treatment plants, package wastewater treatment plants, and onsite wastewater treatment plants (including septic tanks). These resolutions have been provided to County and City governments throughout the six-county region so that those jurisdictions may take action to implement the Council's resolutions.

Currently, a majority of local and municipal governments in the region are working on or have already passed ordinances that will affect fertilizer use in their jurisdictions. With respect to wastewater treatment plants and package plants, tougher permitting requirements have been established and Council staff is working on grants so that local water treatment facilities can be improved to limit nitrogen releases into local waterways. Additionally, Council approved additional review requirements for all new Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) to ensure more rigorous water quality reviews in the future.

Finally, Council staff is currently working on stormwater run-off issues with the intent of providing a resolution for the Council's approval by the first of 2009.

For further information, please contact David Crawford at the SWFRPC office, (239) 338-2550, ext 226 or by email at [dcrawford@swfrpc.org](mailto:dcrawford@swfrpc.org) or visit our website at [www.swfrpc.org](http://www.swfrpc.org).