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**PRESS CONTACT**

Liz Donley  
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council  
239-338-2550 Ext. 234  
ldonley@swfrpc.org

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE INVESTS TO HELP GROW RENEWABLE  
ENERGY JOBS - LEE COUNTY**

**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs) FUNDED PROJECT**

FORT MYERS, FL – (July 20, 2012) – The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council’s (SWFRPC) Economic Development District (EDD) is pleased to publicize that on July 2, 2012, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced a \$551,000 grant to Lee County, Florida. The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council staff worked closely with Lee County to provide technical assistance in preparing a successful application for assistance from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). This grant will support the preliminary design, modeling, and permitting of wastewater and infrastructure improvements to serve the region’s Renewable Energy and Research Diamond. The project is expected to create 1,500 new jobs and attract more than \$10 million in private investment, according to grantee estimates.

“Investing in infrastructure that facilitates business growth and job creation is a top priority for the Obama administration,” said Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Matt Erskine through the statement. “This EDA grant will allow Fort Myers and Lee County to make the critical infrastructure improvements needed to attract new, diversified businesses interests in growing sectors like clean energy, biomedical technology, and advanced manufacturing.”

The EDA grant funds the planning phase for a new wastewater treatment system that will replace existing septic tank systems. This will allow for expansion of the “Renewable Energy and Research Diamond,” a designated high-tech industrial area targeted by Lee County for economic diversification and job creation. The Renewable Energy and Research Diamond is anchored by Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) and the Southwest Florida International Airport, and includes several private-sector industrial, commercial, and research-oriented facilities. FGCU has already committed to the construction of two research and business incubation facilities on the site.

**Economic Development District (EDD)**

In 1992, the SWFRPC was designated an EDD by the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The SWFRPC staffs the Southwest Florida Regional

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, which includes representatives from the region and was established to address the area's economic problems and challenges from a regional perspective. The EDD is comprised of the six counties that make up the SWFRPC (Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota, and all municipalities therein).

**Regional Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

The CEDS provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of economic development organizations, local governments, and private industries for the purpose of creating jobs, fostering a stable and diversified economy, and improving living conditions. Additionally, the CEDS identifies individual programs and projects that will further the economic development goals of the Southwest Florida Region. Programs and projects identified within the CEDS are eligible for financial assistance through the Economic Development Administration.

*Sources: Newspress.com, Eda.gov*

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