

The Role of the Citizen in upholding public environmental policy

Citizen: **a person who is a member of a city, state or country, and has legal rights**

**Rights:** Rights are freedoms that are protected by law,

Responsibilities: **duties** that citizens should do to ensure the continuance of the city, state, or country.

Public Environmental Policy: **Environmental policy** is the commitment of an organization or government to the laws, regulations, and actions undertaken for the continued living, without deteriorating health, within a city, state, or country.

In SWF Florida, such policy encompasses Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota Counties, individually, collectively and as several component of the State and Nation. Today's focus will be on the Estero Watershed.

Public Agencies: Federal. Congress, House and Senate: Know your representatives' names, and their contact person for environment. Executive Branch: EPA (various offices); Department of Interior, USFWS; DoD, USACOE (Jacksonville). Know FOI and how requests are made.

State: Legislature, House and Senate: Know your representatives' names and chief aide. Executive Branch: FDEP (permitting, public lands); DOEO (Planning bureau); FDOT, District 1 and area office); FFWCC; SFWMD (a regional agency)

County/City: Except for cities with strict district representation, know the entire city council and county commission where you live. Know the Public Works representative overseeing stormwater management of your residence, (environmental groups cross boundaries, but as an individual, typically a basic standing is practical). Know the community development/planning/zoning director.

How to get known to those people: Be a spokesperson for a group, a frequent opinion writer to them, or even go as an individual to public events and speak out as affected person. For elected officials, go to their social/fundraising events as an individual, or (with more impact) a recognized representative of a point of view or of an area.

How to be effective as an individual. Be respectfully outspoken both in describing issues and in soliciting solutions in the actions of getting known. Be a known voter (yes, records are kept of frequency of voting). Contribute to causes or individuals (yes, money does talk; since Citizens United, talk is nonstop).

Litigation: Florida has a SLAPP law, undercut through time, to increase liability of litigation and even public speech. Petitioning government for redress of grievances (which includes litigation) still remains the second best way for getting government to implement the laws that protect those freedoms above.

The best way is to not elect buffoons, larcenists, and various scum to office in the first place. That remains our primary responsibility as citizens.