



Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers State Legislative Priorities for Water Quality

The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers is a coalition of Southwest Florida chambers of commerce committed to advocating at the local, state and federal levels to improve Southwest Florida's quality of life and to serve as a catalyst for positive change impacting business, environment and tourism.

We are diligently working with our elected leaders to improve water quality and mitigate the devastating impacts on our tourism-based economy from the harmful algal blooms that had a significant economic impact in 2018 and threaten the region's environment, human health, recreational industry, and a cross-section of business interests.

The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers supports the strong commitments to water quality, Everglades restoration, and significant funding levels in Governor DeSantis' Executive Order (19-12) and asks for the support of our state delegation to appropriate funds and take action to combat Florida's water quality crisis.

Establish cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) standards & protocols, including public notification requirements:

- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** the establishment of standards for cyanobacteria toxins in water, air, and beaches (22 other states have already adopted standards).
 - Public health depends on testing for toxins from Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), such as cyanobacteria due to health risks from ingestion, primary contact, and inhalation.
 - Establishing standards for toxins for both drinking water supplies and recreational waters will help protect the public when toxins are present. Implementing robust sampling protocols will assist in documenting bloom locations, duration and correlate to reported public health concerns.
 - The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers supports the Governor's Executive Order (19-12) Paragraph B. "Establish a Blue-Green Algae Task Force, charged with focusing on expediting progress toward reducing the adverse impacts of blue-green algae blooms now and over the next five years..."
- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** the creation of clear agency responsibility and protocols for public notification and posting of beach, boat ramp, and park access points.
 - Assignment of agency roles will help to protect the public from the health hazards of toxins. It will also keep tourists, seasonal residents, permanent residents, and local businesses aware of current conditions.
 - Currently, agency responsibility for public notification is unclear and causes unnecessary confusion for the public.

Focus efforts on stopping pollution at its source:

- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** updating and strengthening stormwater standards for urban landscapes (statewide stormwater rule) and agricultural runoff, particularly for nutrient pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus that feeds HABs.

- The current urban stormwater runoff standards are outdated and need to be revised to reflect the best available information and techniques for holding and treating water onsite. This would involve utilizing multiple strategies to achieve nutrient pollution reductions (i.e., best management practices).
- Current state law requires 80% reduction in pollutants, yet design criteria for stormwater often do not meet that goal. For example, traditional stormwater ponds typically remove only about 40% of nitrogen, and 70% of phosphorus.
- Agricultural runoff also needs higher nutrient reduction targets, with monitoring, and enforcement to ensure that best management practices are achieving effective pollutant reductions.
- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** advanced wastewater treatment to reduce nutrients in reuse/reclaimed irrigation water with monitoring of nutrient concentrations.
 - Utilizing reclaimed water is an excellent water conservation tool. However, nutrients can be very high in reclaimed water and when it's used for irrigation in addition to fertilizer application, it can be a source of nutrient pollution in waterways.
 - A monitoring system can help gauge the level of nutrients in reclaimed water systems and inform reductions in fertilizer applications, in addition to educating the public and local businesses on nutrient sources.
- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** the establishment of statewide septic tank inspection and maintenance requirements.
 - Leaking septic tanks and older septic systems that no longer meet the water table separation allow nutrients to seep into groundwater and nearby surface waters and is a contributing factor to HABs and poor water quality. Regular inspection and maintenance requirements will identify issues and address leaking septic systems before they become a source of pollution.
 - The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers supports the Governor's Executive Order (19-12) Paragraph H. "Direct DEP to establish a septic conversion and remediation grant program with a local government match requirement."

Priority Restoration Projects:

- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** beginning construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir in 2019 with the goal to finish the project within four years.
 - The EAA Reservoir will provide needed water storage, treatment and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee to reduce harmful discharges to the estuaries and send clean water south to the Everglades and Florida Bay.
 - In conjunction with other restoration projects, the EAA Reservoir will provide a \pm 50% reduction in harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee estuary.
 - The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers supports the Governor's Executive Order (19-12) paragraph D. "Instruct the South Florida Water Management District to immediately start the next phase of the Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir Project design and ensure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approves the project according to schedule."
- The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers **supports** the development and implementation of a water quality treatment component for the C-43 Reservoir to coincide with finishing construction of the reservoir.
 - The C-43 Reservoir is a 170,000-acre foot storage project to capture water during the wet season to provide water flow to the river and estuary during dry periods when the estuary is in need of freshwater.
 - The C-43 Reservoir is currently the only reservoir project in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) contemplated without a water quality treatment feature.
 - Test cells on the reservoir site produced algae in 2007 and a water treatment feature will help prevent this from happening when the reservoir is fully operational, allowing the project to provide maximum benefits to the river and estuary.
 - The Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers supports the Governor's executive order (19-12), paragraph F. "Work with the South Florida Water Management District to add stormwater treatment to the C-43 Reservoir to provide additional treatment and improve the quality of water leaving this important storage component."