

Administrator's Update for 12/18/2008

By Roger Baltz

This year's Iguana Capture Program on Charlotte County's portion of Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island was very successful. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services has captured 4,083 Black Spiny-tailed iguanas. Wildlife Services is a specialized branch of the USDA with expertise in exotic specie removal; their research labs are providing technical and laboratory assistance in this removal process. The goal is to eventually eliminate this species from the island or lower the population to manageable levels. This program will continue through 2009.

Commissioner Loftus and I attended a meeting with officials from the City of North Port and the Water Authority. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss whether it may be possible for Charlotte County to allow some temporary additional uses of our existing water transmission lines if needed by the City of North Port. The details are still under discussion and once a proposal is provided to us, our Commissioners will consider action.

Charlotte County received a return premium check of \$513,927.00 for renewing our Property & Casualty insurance with the Florida League of Cities for FY 2008/09. The League of Cities is returning premiums to its policyholders due to better than expected claim results from previous years, impacting the 2008/09 policy premiums.

The Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center hosted its first private function on Dec. 5 for the owners and managers of Wendy's Restaurants located from Ellenton to Naples. Over 250 people attended the Holiday Event with food & beverages provided by the Boston Culinary Group. It was a well received and successful event. That event was followed by the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, which hosted "Holiday Magic Concert". The sellout show was attended by over 1,000 people who enjoyed holiday classics.

Our County will be planting 111 trees in County parks with funding contributed by Florida Power & Light (FPL). FPL provided mitigation in return for tree clearing to construct a power substation. This is an outstanding example of inter-agency cooperation and these trees will give pleasure to our park visitors for many years to come.

The County Commissioners are looking into the viability of green construction concepts. Green standards refer to the way a building may be sited on the property, the way it is constructed, the materials used, and endorses environmental stewardship. At a recent meeting the County Commissioners listened to presentations from two experts in the field of green building construction and discussed ways to encourage local contractors and developers to follow green standards. Additional information will be brought forward in the coming months as the Commissioners explore possible incentives for those who adhere to green building standards.

The County has just completed significant drainage improvements in the North Shore Drive region within Charlotte Harbor. This work should help alleviate significant flooding problems that occurred in this area over the summer. The 2008 Greater Port Charlotte annual paving program has also been completed. In total, 39.7 miles of local roadways have been resurfaced.

Our Utilities Department received notice from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) that the Burnt Store Reverse Osmosis Water Treatment Facility has been selected to receive a prestigious 2008 Plant Operations Excellence Award. This honor is given in recognition of outstanding treatment plant operation, maintenance and compliance.

On the December 10th, Commissioner Loftus, Commissioner Starr, and myself attended a luncheon and presentation at our Environmental campus. UF/IFAS Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr. Jimmy G. Cheek, Dr. Larry Arrington, Dean and Director for Extension and Dr. Millie Ferrer, Associate Dean and Assistant Director for Extension discussed programs and operations with County Partners from around Southwest Florida. This was the second annual meeting for Gulf coast area governments and UF/IFAS Administration and gave participants the opportunity to expand on their relationship that has existed in most counties for approximately 90 years. This joint meeting included; Collier, Lee, Hardee, DeSoto, and Charlotte Counties.