

## What To Do

Fortunately, the first necessary step is already being implemented. Under the direction of the county's Water Quality Manager, Brandon Moody, the Comprehensive Water Quality Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting System has begun to gather data.

What must happen next, is for Charlotte County to commit to:

1. Establishing the existing estuary nutrient standards as water quality goals for our estuaries.
2. Managing wastewater and stormwater systems so that our waterways meet those standards – most effectively using a proactive, data-driven, science-based decision process .
3. Keeping elected officials and the public up to date about what and where the problems are, what solutions are implemented where, what the results are, and how much the actions cost.
4. Sustain and periodically upgrade budgetary support for the above water quality programs.

## What We Can Each Do

1. **Tell our commissioners to get proactive.** Join Capt. Van Hubbard in letting the commissioners know you want them to commit to establishing water quality goals for our estuaries – based on existing state standards – and then manage wastewater and stormwater systems so those standards are achieved. Tell the commissioners to create a transparent, data-driven, and science-based process and put into action as soon as possible. Let the commissioners know you are looking forward to being kept up to date about what's being done, what the results are and how much it costs. And tell them you expect taxes to be increased to fund these investments in our future.
2. **Support the Peace and Myakka Waterkeepers and other organizations working to protect and restore our estuaries.** PMWK aims to preserve and protect water quality and ecological integrity in the watersheds and estuaries of the Peace and Myakka Rivers of Florida. Get involved with PMWK and/or donate to at <https://www.pmwk.org/>. Other organizations with complimentary missions include: Heal Our Harbor, Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP), Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Lemon Bay Conservancy, Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Charlotte Harbor Estuaries Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Network, and many others.
3. **Focus on solving our highest priority to reduce nutrients,** but learn about other factors contributing to the decline of our estuaries (what's coming down the Caloosahatchee, North Port water problems, climate change, etc. ) and choose actions you can take to contribute to solutions.
4. **Oppose Florida's "Dirty Water" bill.** This bill, in the 2023 legislative session reads this way: "Prohibits counties and municipalities from adopting laws, regulations, rules, or policies relating to water quality or water quantity, pollution control, discharge prevention or removal, or wetlands and preempts such regulation to the state; requires DEP (the Department of Environmental Protection) to notify CFO (the Chief Financial Officer) of certain violations; requires CFO to withhold certain funds; repeals provisions relating to land management review teams." ([Williams, 2023](#)).

Roger Williams, reporting in the Fort Myers Florida Weekly, says the bill proposes to lop the head off the body of a longtime venerable notion in government: Home rule, and the ability of local governments to shape their own growth and water quality within common standards established by the state. If they step out of line, state funding would be cut off to that city or county.

"House Bill 1197 and its companion, Senate Bill 1240: Those bills would prohibit local governments from passing their own rules having to do with water quality, pollution control and wetlands," said Gil Smart, executive director of the Florida nonprofit organization, [VoteWater.org](#).

We urge all Charlotte citizens to take action to oppose this bill, which would limit county government from taking the measures needed to restore and maintain our precious estuary.