



# Septic to Sewer Conversion Task Force

Nadine Slimak  
Vice President, GPICA

# Committee Goal

- Help support improved quality for the public waters surrounding Pine Island by exploring the feasibility of converting Island residences from septic to a central sewer system.
  - Seeking a study of the costs, as well as the benefits and drawbacks
  - Seeking county funding for the study

# Committee Members

- Noel Andress, GPICA Advisor & Volunteer
- Mike Sweeney, GPICA Treasurer
- Claudia Bringe, GPICA Board Member
- Jeffery Waller, GPICA Volunteer
- Sue Dahoud (Oliver), GPICA Volunteer
- Scott Wilkinson, GPICA Volunteer
- Helen Fox, GPICA President
- Nadine Slimak, GPICA VP (Chair)

# Early Fact-Finding

- Usage and capacity at Pine Island Wastewater Treatment Plant in St. James City
- Use and history of package plants on the Island
- Look at existing water-quality indicators (particularly fecal coliform, nutrients, phosphorous)

# Septic

- Lee County estimates that there are 4,500-5,000 septic tanks on the Island today.

# Sewage Treatment

- Plant serves 2,236 customers and is projected to serve 3,323 by 2040
- 808 connections — 90% residential, mostly in Matlacha, Cherry Estates
- Current capacity is 130,000 gal/day but the facility is permitted up to 500,000 gal/day — indicating room for expansion
- “Treated” water is currently disposed of using the deep injection well jointly built and owned with Pine Island Water.
- The deep injection well is permitted to receive 2.91 million gallons per day. Currently, only 19% of the well capacity is being utilized — 5% by Lee County Utilities and 14% by Pine Island Water

# Package Plants

- Package plants are pre-manufactured treatment facilities used to treat wastewater in small communities or on individual properties.
- We have 11
- About 1/3 of these plants have received some kind of warning letter or citation — typically for minor mechanical malfunctions; a few have been cited for small spills.

# Water Quality

- According to the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Partnership, the South Florida Water Management District (and other agencies or organizations), water quality in Pine Island Sound and Matlacha Pass shows excess levels of:
  - Fecal coliform, nutrients, phosphorous and mercury



## Water Quality (cont'd.)

- 2017 Estuaries Report Card produced by The Conservancy of Southwest Florida gave Pine Island Sound (including Matlacha Pass) a D score grade for water quality
  - “Pine Island Sound has degraded water quality with 95% of the watershed impaired for at least one parameter category... Nutrients in the watershed are of increasing concern, as the draft watershed assessment lists indicate that Matlacha Pass is newly impaired for nutrients, likely as a result of stormwater and sewage/septic runoff. The same runoff is also most likely the source of the pathogen category impairments, specifically for fecal coliform.”

# Request to Lee County

- Pine Island receive priority consideration as Lee County undertakes a \$734,000 Countywide Wastewater Management Plan approved by the Lee County Commission in June.
- That Lee County sponsor a septic-to-sewer study for Greater Pine Island.

# Lee County Response

- Pam Keyes, Director of Lee County Utilities, is reviewing our materials
- She accepted our offer to be the main speaker at our December meeting.
- Save the Date: 6:30 p.m. Dec. 7  
(location TBD)