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Principal's office starting Monday Sept 8

Charlotte Harbor Reef Association and Water LIFE Magazine

funding. The grant will supplement the Managed Septic System Program currently being implemented by the Charlotte County Health Department. The program requires a 5-year permit obtained from the CCHD for each septic system utilizing a septic tank and mandates that each tank be pumped out and inspected during the same time frame. Preliminary data has indicated that a significant number of septic tanks are failing due to structural defects and age. Tank repair or replacement should assist in reducing impact of septic discharge on the waterways.

Per the grant, principal investigator Brettany Cook of the CCHD is currently investigating various canals that may be receiving septic discharge and migrating into Charlotte Harbor's watershed, and eventually into the Gulf. By sampling and analyzing the waters of manmade canals throughout Charlotte County for multiple parameters associated with septic system discharge, such as (Fecal Coliforms, Enterococcus bacteria, as well as Caffeine, and the Human Polyomavirus), specific canal systems may indicate an impact by septic system discharge.

Currently, sampling is on-going with results very preliminary and non conclusive. However, there appears to be an increased concentration of parameters tested to date (although not statistical) in the area designated as Spring Lake. Areas like

Spring Lake, which are older and more established, might also show higher numbers of failing septic systems, then in more recently developed areas. Further testing and analysis will be performed to determine if there is a definable link between septic tank discharges and migration to canals in the area.

I am often able to speak to residents along the waterways of Charlotte County. Some who have lived in the area over 30 years, have noticed a decline in the water quality of the canals where they live. One gentleman told me he never had to leave the canals to catch fish 30 years ago, but now has to go many miles and not catch as many.

In future months we will look at other environmental issues affecting Charlotte Harbor including a more in depth study of septic and aerobic treatment units and their operation, as well as the Managed Septic System.

The results of the Gulf of Mexico project will be discussed after the project is finished and the samples evaluated. Many thanks to Scott Schermerhorn, Facilities Supervisor, CCHD, for the information on the Gulf of Mexico Project.

Capt. Frank Ciurca is an Environmental Specialist with Charlotte County Health Dept, a part time fishing guide and Outdoor Writer. He can be reached at: capfrank@comcast.net

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