

Potential alternative water supply project would reduce discharges to Indian River Lagoon

Jennifer Whiting, a member of the Treasure Coast community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site.

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VERO BEACH — On Sept. 22, a workshop convened by the South Florida Water Management District and the St. Johns Water Management District was held at the USDA Horticultural Research Facility in Fort Pierce to discuss and solicit public input on a potential project in the C-25 basin of northern St. Lucie County, which could provide alternative water supply while reducing discharges to the Indian River Lagoon. Nearly eighty people, including elected officials and government agency staff, landowners, environmental leaders and other interested individuals throughout the Treasure Coast attended the workshop.

The project's 3,000-acre reservoir and 2,000-acre stormwater treatment area would be constructed on land owned by Evans Properties, Inc. in Okeechobee and Indian River Counties, designed to be capable of storing 135,000 acre-feet of water per year that would otherwise be lost to tide.

The reservoir could reduce damaging tidal discharges to the Indian River Lagoon and improve the health of the St. Lucie River and the estuary while providing a significant, new source of water. Discharges from the C-25 canal would potentially be reduced by 55 percent, and 57 million gallons of water a day would be made available for beneficial uses.

"With the limited resources of government, we can't afford not to listen to what the private sector is offering," said Kevin Powers, Governing Board Member of the South Florida Water Management District. "It's encouraging to see the potential for a private landowner to provide community benefits regarding water treatment. Continued dialogue on this is important."

Representatives from Evans Properties presented information on the purpose, design, and benefits of the proposed reservoir. Staff from the SFWMD and SJRWMD presented background information on the St. Lucie and Indian River Counties Water Resources Study (C-25 Reconnect Study) that was completed in November 2009. In addition, there was discussion regarding a potential water quality enhancement project that could be coupled with this project to maximize the benefits and potential credit worthiness of this project.

“We believe that a publicly-regulated utility will be beneficial for financing the infrastructure needed for this project, while providing transparency,” said Ron Edwards, President and CEO of Evans Properties. “As we undergo the process of creating our own water utility, we are excited about the opportunity to play a role in providing public benefits in the form of water services as part of a new way to sustain our agricultural operations.” For more information about Evans Properties go to www.evansprop.com.

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