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County invites residents to Lemon Bay Watershed workshop March 21

Sarasota County invites residents living within the Lemon Bay watershed to an interactive workshop to discuss solutions for protecting and improving the quality of the area's creeks and bays. The meeting will be held 9:30-11:30 a.m., Saturday, March 21, at the Englewood Sports Complex, 1300 River Road, Englewood.

At the workshop, county staff will lead a discussion with residents about ways they can continue to work together to maintain and improve sea life habitat and water quality in this particular watershed. The project is a cooperative effort of Sarasota County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Presenters at the workshop will discuss the land and water bodies that comprise the Sarasota County portion of the Lemon Bay watershed that drains into northern Lemon Bay, which consists of Alligator Creek, Woodmere Creek, Forked Creek, Gottfried Creek, Ainger Creek and Manasota Key.

Project manager Michael Jones says urban development has brought major change to the watershed over the past 50 years. "Natural areas were converted to residential, commercial, agricultural and public use," said Jones. "Area residents, builders and developers certainly didn't set out to threaten sea life or water quality. Nonetheless, more people and development have placed greater stress on all our natural systems, including the Lemon Bay watershed."

Jones says that without the benefit of natural filtration, rainfall streams directly into the bay, carrying with it pollutants from stormwater runoff. The good news is that there are opportunities to protect natural systems throughout the watershed through stormwater and landscaping guidelines.

"Low-impact design manages rainfall by capturing it on-site," said Jones. "This approach closely mimics nature by helping to control downstream flooding, reducing water pollution and the imbalance of fresh and salt water in the estuaries. The county's landscape and fertilizer management ordinances prescribe appropriate plant materials, as well as fertilizer type and application schedules."

For more information about the workshop, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000.