

LEMON BAY WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Community Workshop 2: Minutes

July 2, 2025; 3–5 pm; Remote by Zoom

ATTENDEES (32)

Community Participants:

Abbey Tyrna (Suncoast Waterkeeper)
Arielle Taylor-Manges (Lemon Bay Aquatic Preserves)
Ava Sorabi (Jacobs Engineering)
Bob Dougherty (Meadow Run HOA, Vice President)
Diane Coll (Lemon Bay Conservancy)
Dana Houkal (Lemon Bay Conservancy)
Eileen Chaladoff (President, Meadow Run HOA)
Eva Furner (Lemon Bay Conservancy)
Gary Szpatura (Lemon Bay Conservancy, Lakewatch volunteer)
Ian (Unknown)
James Battaglia (Resident, Alligator Creek)
Jennifer Hecker (Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership)
John Reisinger (Resident, East Village Master Association)
John Ryan (Founder, Sarasota Bay Watch)
Jon Thaxton (VP, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Sarasota County Planning Commission)
Kafi Benz (Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, President)
Kate Rose (Sea Grant)
Mark Walton (Southwest Florida Water Management District)
Mollie Holland (Charlotte County)
Nicole Iadevaia (Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership)
Peyton Faulk (Suncoast Waterkeeper)
Richard Brodbeck (Planning and Infrastructure Committee, Foxwood Condominium Association)
Vanessa Bauzo-Deleon (FDACS, Office of Water Policy)

Sarasota County Staff:

Robert Bresciani (County Project Manager)
Paul Semenec
Chelsea Dinon
Heather Bryen
Noah Taylor

Consultant Team:

Jon Perry (Consultant Project Manager)
Thy Do, PE, CFM
David Shafer, PhD
Jennifer Shafer, PhD

MINUTES

1. David Shafer (Engagement Team) welcomed and thanked community members for attending and Sarasota County staff for their leadership.
2. Shafer introduced Workshop goals and format.
3. Participants introduced themselves.
4. Sarasota County staff introduced themselves and thanked community members for attending.
5. Shafer introduced the Consultant Team and their roles.
6. Shafer introduced key concepts and definitions including the designed 100-year storm, flood level of service, flooding areas of concern (FACs), and the difference between flood level of service deficiencies arising from system maintenance issues versus design issues. The watershed management plan update addresses stormwater system design issues. Sarasota County handles maintenance through a separate program.
7. Thy Do (Flooding Team) presented the FACs in the Lemon Bay watershed, how they were prioritized, and how potential project concepts will be developed to reduce flooding in FACs.
8. The presentation was followed by questions and discussion. Highlights included:
 - *Does the scope of this project include maintenance issues?* No, this project addresses level of service deficiencies arising from system design, not maintenance. Sarasota County handles maintenance through a separate program.
 - *Is it possible to remedy level of service deficiencies using in-house engineers and field personnel, or is it necessary to develop longer-term capital improvement projects?* Yes, in-house solutions are considered. There's no strict dollar cap, but feasibility, project scope, and timing are key factors. Sometimes in-house work is quicker, but it depends on the situation.
 - *What do you mean by adding more storage to the system?* Stormwater storage can be increased in the system by adding new or enlarging existing stormwater ponds and other infrastructure.
 - *Will this watershed management plan update consider County-owned lands only?* This project primarily considers county-owned land. In some cases where flooding is significant, private land acquisition may be considered if it offers opportunities for substantial, regional flood mitigation benefits.
 - Public comment: There's a clear disconnect between flood planning and broader land use discussions, like comprehensive plan amendments. This level of analysis would be valuable during planning and zoning deliberations.

- Public comment: At the state level, if flooding issues are documented, they can be addressed through Water Management District permitting. But if issues remain local, they often aren't flagged at that level.
 - *In areas like Dearborn and south of McCall Road, utility conflicts are a concern. Will these be addressed in the plan?* Yes, this project will consider right-of-way availability, utilities, and coordination. This type of detailed resolution typically happens in later planning stages. Projects must demonstrate a strong benefit-cost ratio to proceed to later planning stages.
 - *Where can I find details on how areas with level of service (LOS) deficiencies were identified?* These details will be available in the final report. We used county building footprints and LiDAR data from the Water Management District to conservatively estimate structure elevations. About 40 structures are currently identified as not meeting LOS criteria.
 - *Is Wellen Park (formerly West Villages) part of the Lemon Bay Watershed?* No, Wellen Park is within the Lower Myakka Watershed.
 - *Could land conservation be considered a water storage strategy?* If suitable conservation land is available, it might be purchased for public projects. However, much of the watershed where LOS deficiencies are identified is already developed, limiting opportunities. Having conservation land acquisition as a recommended alternative in the WMP could provide multiple co-benefits. Extra points are added for conservation lands in the Community Rating System.
9. Shafer previewed that the next Workshop (July 30, 2025; 3–5 PM) would focus on water quality standards, water quality modeling methodology, water quality trends and hotspots, prioritization of hotspots, and how data will be used to develop potential project concepts to improve water quality.
 10. Shafer thanked the community on behalf of Sarasota County and the Consultant Team for attending and contributing to the discussion.
 11. Adjourn.