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Lake Levels

14.15 feet
Last Year: 11.77 feet

Source: South Florida Water Management District. Depth given in feet above sea level

The Clewiston News

Training program is in the works

By Chris Felker
The Clewiston News

Hendry County Commissioner Michael Swindle has a day job in education that’s made him a key player as the county has pressed forward with neighboring Glades in trying to get more adult job training set up at the Glades County Regional Training Facility (GCRF).

He’s employed by the Hendry school district as its director of workforce development, and one program he’s been working on dovetails nicely with the GCRF effort, which is gathering steam. On Tuesday, the commissioners of Hendry and Glades counties came together for another workshop at the center.

At the May 22 Hendry County Board meeting, Mr. Swindle went into some detail about a cooperative construction technology program he’s been working to establish along with other educational institutions, public agencies and local businesses, which he’d mentioned before. County Board Chairman Mitchell Wills asked him, “The program you were talking about … with the students working along with people in the industry now, how’s that coming along?”

He answered that it’s been progressing very well. “We’re expecting a July 1 start date. I was working along with Mr. (Richard) Yoraschek. He’s going to be one of the champions to help make that happen, and the construction firm that he’s working with,” which is LaBelle Plumbing. Mr. Swindle went on to say the program will provide instruction in building-related trades such as masonry, plumbing, electrical work and carpentry.

“What it’s going to be is almost the apprentice-based type thing, without the apprentice name. We’re just going to kind of steal their curriculum and mojo, and basically assign students that fit to said contractor. They may work with Mr. Yoraschek and learn the plumbing skills, then go out and demonstrate the plumbing skills. So it’s going to be hands-on training,” he continued. He explained that the school district already provides such vocational training.

Royal palms bring a revival to U.S. 27

By Lisa Walker
Special to The Clewiston News

Royal palm trees are marking a time of renaissance in Clewiston as they adorn U.S. 27 through town. This development is a three-year-long endeavor, the U.S. Highway 27 Beautification Project.

Funding for the project was achieved through a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Highway Beautification Grant. In past Clewiston City Commission meetings, city utilities compliance manager and grant writer Lynne Mila explained that the budget was $101,700 for the design and irrigation of 101 royal palm trees. They are being planted in multiple phases, from San Diego Street to Olympia Street along the U.S 27 corridor. Currently, phase one and phase two have reached full installation.

Some citizens have expressed safety concerns about the royal palms’ relationship to traffic, as well as their costs for maintenance. Melanie McGahee, an advocate for the royal palms throughout the project’s development, affirms that the trees are self-shedding, at approximately one frond per month, and are the best palm variety for weathering storms. The FDOT has indicated there is no safety issue with the trees.

Mayor Mali Gardner also notes that the FDOT approved the placement of the royal palms and will give back funding for maintenance costs. The best-serving examples in Clewiston of what the U.S 27 Beautification Project will grow into are the vigorous royal palm trees standing at heights of 50 to 80 feet on Central Avenue and Royal Palm Avenue.

See ROYAL PALMS — Page 4

See TRAINING — Page 4

See page 3 for information about how to contact this newspaper.

theclewistonnews.com
District wants to increase water flow south

By Katrina Elsken
INI Florida

The South Florida Water Management District is using all of the tools in the box to deal with the runoff from May’s record-breaking rainfall.

“Water levels throughout the district — which is made up of 16 counties in South Florida — are very high after record-breaking rainfall in May,” SFWMD spokesman Randy Smith said at a news conference in West Palm Beach on Friday.

Lake Okeechobee has risen to the level that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers instituted discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, he said.

“We know there is not a silver bullet,” he said. “There is not one single solution that will stop releases from Lake Okeechobee, but over the long term the district is making steady progress on ecosystem restoration projects that will reduce the need for these harmful releases in the future.”

“Water managers here at the district are looking for operational refinements to move more water from Lake Okeechobee south in stead of having it go east and west to the estuaries,” he said. “We are working closely with our state and our federal partners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

“We’re looking for any and all flexibility within the regional water management systems,” he said.

“It’s unfortunate the releases are being made so early in the wet season,” said SFWMD Chief Engineer John Mitnik.

“The decision has not been made lightly. This is the third year in a row that Mother Nature has dealt us a bad hand,” he said. “May brought us 300 percent of normal rainfall. It actually set a record for the month of May over the past four weeks.”

He said the district has asked the Department of the Interior for permission to open all of the S-12 water control structures to move more water out of Water Conservation Area 3-A into Everglades National Park.

“We have asked them to raise the operational level of the L-29 Canal near the Tamiami Trail,” he added.

“We have asked for the construction that is currently going on in the south part of the system to be wrapped up.

“All of this is being done so we can send more water south,” he said.

“The Tamiami Trail from Tampa to Miami acts as a dam, bisecting the Everglades from coast to coast. The S-12 water control structures send water under the trail to Everglades National Park. Since the rainy season started, two of the structures, the S-12A and S-12B, have been closed to protect the nesting grounds of the Cape Sable sea swallow, an endangered species. The SFWMD cannot move water through those structures without the consent of the Department of the Interior. Under current policy, the structures must stay closed until July 15.

Opening the S-12A and S-12B structures would double the flow south, according to Mr. Smith. “A and B combined is an additional 800-1,000 cfs. Opening these two triggers other possible structure openings to allow even more flow south,” he explained.

Mr. Mitnik said the district continues to move forward with projects such as the C-43 and C-44 reservoirs and the Lake Hipoochee storage project, as well as the Everglades Agricultural Area reservoir. They also want to develop a well-injection program for Lake Okeechobee.

Deep well injection would send excess water down into the boulder zone, in effect sending it to tide by going straight down instead of east or west. Just as with water sent to tide through the estuaries, this freshwater could not be recovered for later use, but using deep well injection could help save the estuaries from the damage of harmful excess freshwater discharges.

“We’re also coordinating with landowners to hold as much water as they can for as long as they can,” he added.

“We have many efforts to remeedy the unintended consequences of the Central and Southern Flood Control system,” explained Ava Valdez, Everglades Policy Division director.

“We have well-established partnerships with ranchers as well as citrus growers in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed, the St. Lucie Watershed as well as the Caloosahatchee,” she continued. Some projects are passive in that they hold water back from ever reaching the lake or the estuaries.

Others are active, in that they pump water onto their own property and hold it there.

These partnerships create about 54,000 acre-feet of storage, she said. This storage is at about 75 percent capacity as the result of the May rains. The partnerships will be operational throughout the wet season, she said. Terrie Bates, Water Resources Division director, addressed the concerns about reports of algae blooms in the lake and other bodies of water.

She said most of the freshwater runoff in the coastal estuaries came from the local basins, which received heavy rainfall in May, before the lake releases started. About a half-million acres discharges through C-43 watershed on the west coast to the estuaries, she explained.

In April and early May, some lake water was released to the Caloosahatchee River to benefit that system, because there wasn’t enough rainfall to maintain the desired salinity balances. When the rains started in May, those lake releases stopped.

From May 29 to June 4, the estuaries received an average flow of 3,034 cubic feet per second (cfs) from the local basin and an average of 1,901 cfs from the lake, she explained. On the east coast, the story is similar. “There are multiple basins that all drain to the estuary regardless of what comes from Okeechobee,” she said.

“The tremendous amount of discharge from the local basins coming in turned that estuary’s salinity to completely fresh even before the lake releases started.

“Proportionally, the impact of the discharges coming from the lake is comparatively small,” she said. “Blue-green algae blooms are on everyone’s minds,” she continued. The television news stations are showing images of the 2016 algae blooms. “That’s not what we have out there today,” she added.

The Florida Department of Environmental Regulation samples and tests algae blooms, she said. So far two small blooms have shown “very, very low levels of toxins” — less than 1 part per billion. (Levels over 10 parts per billion are considered a health concern, according to the World Health Organization.)

“Even though you may be seeing visible blue-green algae, it’s not always toxic,” she explained. The district is continuing to sample water across Lake Okeechobee, she said.

Hurricane Irma caused numerous problems across the lake in regards to nutrient levels and turbidity, Ms. Mitnik said.

Using satellite images, they monitor the conditions on the Big O.

She said they have clear images of Lake Okeechobee. “We really are not seeing any bloom conditions across the lake in June.”

“We’ve got a long, hot summer to get through,” she warned.

“There is no crystal ball to tell us if there is going to be a bloom or not.”

Concentrations of algae along the shoreline do not mean there is a bloom, she added, because algae is buoyant and the wind will cause it to accumulate along the shore.

Restoration project to restore wetlands north of lake

Special to INI Florida

WEST PALM BEACH — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) on Thursday, June 7, presented the Water Resources Analysis Coalition (WRAC) members with the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project.

“This innovative and game-changing project will use the latest science and technology to address a number of water management and environmental concerns for the entire region now and in the future,” said SFWMD Governing Board member and WRAC facilitator Brandon Tucker. “This TSP will reduce harmful releases to the northern estuaries, benefit lake ecology, protect endangered and threatened species and improve water supply.”

SFWMD and USACE will hold a public meeting for landowners in the project area on Monday, June 18, at 6 p.m. at the Williamson Center of Indian River State College in Okeechobee. 
Motorcycle crash claims life

Special to The Clewiston News

A 32-year-old Cape Coral man died from injuries sustained in a motorcycle crash on State Road 80 in Hendry County on Thursday, June 7.

A Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) news release stated that at 7:45 p.m., a 2006 Honda motorcycle operated by Manuel Rangel, 32, of Cape Coral was traveling east on SR 80. The Honda attempted to negotiate a curve to the left in the roadway. He ran off the road onto the right shoulder. The front right part of the motorcycle struck the guardrail on the south shoulder of SR 80. Mr. Rangel was separated from his motorcycle and thrown into the canal south of the highway. The motorcycle came to a final rest on the south shoulder of SR 80 facing south.

Mr. Rangel was reported to have sustained injuries that were fatal at the scene.

Trooper Justin Sanchez, crime investigator, and Corporal James Harris, homicide investigator, were in charge at the crash scene.

Letter to the Editor

In order for my family and I to portray our passion for this special day, you first need a glimpse at the man who created this fiery passion and joy within us. The man of all the hours, Wilbur Postell! Southern twang, closet full of Western pearl snap button-downs and a true love for all “critters” at the family farm. Hometown butcher and owner of Postell’s Country Meats, Wilbur Postell created a full life in his small sugar town of Clewiston. Always adament on eating supper at the table, as a family, every night. His intentions always had a direction, full of purpose and with a strong belief in the old-fashioned system. Our hometown of Clewiston did not come to his meat market just for the product. They came for his humor and personality because you do not meet someone like Wilbur and forget him.

Wilbur was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2012 but is not defined by his diagnosis. Rather, he’s defined as a husband, father, granddaddy, brother, son, veteran and friend. It is dear to our heart that we never mistake the person he is from the condition that tried to take that away. After he was diagnosed, our family grasped the importance of understanding the disease. Early detectable signs, support groups, first-time caregiving tips, therapy, hospice and preparation for yourself and your loved one during and after diagnosis. Wilbur was given his ultimate healing on June 7, 2016, surrounded by his family.

Today, an estimated 47 million people across the world are living with dementia. This number is set to skyrocket to 75 million by 2030. In the United States alone, more than 15 million caregivers generously dedicate themselves to those with Alzheimer’s and dementia. Being of service is such an important aspect to living a truly fulfilled life; caregiving is a gift. A change is needed in how this generation perceives and accepts the condition.

Last summer was our first time participating in The Longest Day, and what an incredible experience that was. Hosting “Wilbur’s Country Cookout” was life-changing, and because of all of us, we raised a total of $4,232 toward The Alzheimer’s Association! This year, we can catch us on fire green because “Wilbur’s UnFOREgettable Golf Classic” will take place on July 21 in our hometown of Clewiston. All proceeds will benefit The Alzheimer’s Association. We are reaching for the stars in hopes his story touches other lives and families across the country. The devil tried for years to defeat him with daily reminders of what his life was no longer. But our God of restoration revealed what his new life through Him had to offer. That is a story so deserving to be spread!

To help us make this event a success straight from the heart, here is how you can help. If you are local, please support by participating — create a three-person team for the 18-hole tournament. The three-person scramble will be held at the Clewiston Golf Course; registration begins at 8 a.m., with a 9 a.m. shotgun start. You may register for the tournament by emailing your interest to wilbursgolfclassic@gmail.com.

Please include all of the following: team name, team captain, full name of all three participants and handicaps. Sign-up is also available at the Clewiston Golf Course. There will be no same-day sign-up for this tournament; you must register by July 7 to be eligible to play. A $225 team fee includes: three-person scramble, 18-hole golf game, green fees and cart, food, prizes and a goodie bag.

If you are not local or unable to attend, you can make a special donation through the event page at act.alz.org/goto/Wilbur sUnFOREgettablegolf. Sharing this link via email and social media to your friends and family will help spread the word, pushing us closer to our goal of $5,000.

Spreading awareness and finding a cure. If you are interested in becoming more educated on Alzheimer’s, visit www.alz.org. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts! We cherish you for loving him as much as we do and for opening your hearts to making a difference.

This event is dedicated to every family who has experienced or is currently experiencing the sudden, life-altering change that the disease of Alzheimer’s has put on their life story. Wilbur embodied his faith, family and community, and we are honored to use his special story as a platform in spreading awareness and ultimately finding a cure. This day is not just for him, it is for all of you!

We are forever thankful to God for his consistency and unconditional faithfulness. We know wholeheartedly that June 7 wasn’t the end but only the beginning for Wilbur. God used the beginning of his day to bring shakable joy, unexplainable peace, eternal significance, meaning and purpose to life. He brought us to it and surely brought us through this season of our lives, together, as a family.

Love,
The Postells
Hendry County candidates’ filing deadline is Friday

By Chris Felker
The Clewiston News

Anyone who wants to run for a Clewiston City Commission seat, county or special district elective office in Hendry County has until noon Friday to complete the paperwork and submit their filing fee to Elections Supervisor Brenda Hoots’ office.

The main local seats up for election in Hendry are the county property appraiser’s office, which is currently vacant; three on the school board, those representing Districts 3, 4 and 5; and those of the county commissioners representing Districts 2 and 4; and three positions on the Clewiston City Council.

Candidates who have filed so far are: Dena Pittman, a Republican, for property appraiser; school board incumbents Amanda Nelson in District 3, Stephanie Schneider Busin in District 4, and Jon Basquin in District 5; school board challengers Mercedes Perdomo Reese in District 4 and Maureen Cervino Quintero in District 5; incumbent Republicans Darrell Harris in Hendry County Commission District 2 and Michael Swindle in District 4 along with challenger Kenneth C. Diaz in District 2; and incumbent Clewiston City Commissioner Phillip Roland.

The seats of Mayor Mali Gardner and City Commissioner Kristine Petersen are also up in Clewiston, whose election is nonpartisan.

Other local offices up for election are:
• Hendry Hospital Board, District 2, for which Steven A. Nisbet Sr. has filed; and the District 4 seat currently held by Miller Couse; and
• Hendry Soil and Water Conservation District Seat 1 (occupied by Marilyn Sears); Seat 2 (held by James Mabry Mcgarry); Seat 3 (held by Ralph Bruce Hendey); and Seat 5 (occupied by Lisa Cleghorn), in nonpartisan elections.

The primary election occurs Aug. 28, for which the voter registration deadline is July 30; and the general election is Nov. 6, with the voter registration deadline on Oct. 8. As of June 11, 17,510 people were registered to vote in Hendry County; 7,885 Democrats, 6,245 Republicans and 3,380 of other parties or no party affiliation.

ROYAL PALMS
Continued From Page 1

To go beyond the royal palms’ aesthetic beauty, they are an enrichment to Clewiston’s bird sanctuary, serving as a habitat for nesting and a food source with flowers and fruit.

Additionally, the trees are native to Florida, happiest in full sun, are moderately drought-tolerant and grow faster than most palms.

Interestingly, the achievement of this project has also unveiled some historical roots, according to City Manager Al Perry.

A document from a 1975 City Commission meeting revealed a passed motion requested by the Clewiston Green Thumb Garden Club, represented by Claire Vaughn and Linda Hotchkiss. Coinciding directly with the project, the motion directed city staff to see to the planting of 200 royal palm trees along U.S. 27 between the sidewalks and street.

“It’s a mystery as to why the palm trees were never planted back then,” City Manager Perry said, “but it’s become honorable to see it happening now.”

Mayor Gardner added, “With the original stamp of approval from the Garden Club, it’s good to see their vision is finally coming to fruition.”

She and Commissioner Julio Rodriguez also noted at a recent commission meeting that the city’s efforts to beautify its main drag through town seem to have rubbed off on several business owners, who have taken steps to spruce up their properties lining the U.S. 27 corridor.

The project is expected to be complete by the end of this year, with the last of royal palms to be planted in October 2018.

Master lift station modified

Special to The Clewiston News

 Modifications to the City of Clewiston’s master lift station are complete. Two new wet wells and four new submersible pumps were placed in service on May 8.

 The city operates 45 pump stations that discharge to the master lift station, conveying the sewage 1.5 miles through a 12-inch-diameter force main to the wastewater treatment plant.

 The city secured the nearly $1 million in funding for the project through a State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan at zero interest and obtained principal forgiveness in the amount of $373,220.

 Utilities Director Danny Williams said the rehabilitation of the 30 year old master lift station was necessary to accommodate expanded growth and improve system reliability. Mr. Williams said this project is the first step and that, “with additional SRF funding, our next project will address the infiltration into our collection system, while we prepare for the expansion of our treatment plant.”

 Project management was provided by City Engineer Johnson-Previtt & Associates.
Corps seeks public comment on EAA reservoir

Special to the Okeechobee News

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District is accepting public comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the South Florida Water Management District Section 203 Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) and Stormwater Treatment Area study. Comments will be accepted through July 24.

The corps has prepared a draft EIS to evaluate and document potential environmental effects of the SFWMD’s proposed plan in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The draft EIS uses information from SFWMD’s environmental analysis which has been incorporated into the study as an appendix.

“We continue to advance our environmental review of the South Florida Water Management District’s EAA storage reservoir study,” said Col. Jason Kirk, Jacksonville District commander.

The EAA Reservoir will provide storage that creates beneficial flexibility in South Florida water management.

The draft EIS is available online at: www.saj.usace.army.mil/SFWMDEAAReservoir. Comments will be accepted electronically through July 24 and can be sent electronically to: EAAReservoir@usace.army.mil, or mailed to: Stacie Auvenshine, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019.

Environmental Policy

A matrix of the comments received during this time is included within the draft EIS. Furthermore, comments received on this draft EIS will also be incorporated within the matrix upon development of the final EIS.

There are two ongoing concurrent processes as part of the required federal actions on the SFWMD’s Section 203 EAA southern reservoir study.

There is the current environmental review of the SFWMD study by the Jacksonville District, and a simultaneous review by the administration. Section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 authorizes non-federal interests to undertake feasibility studies of proposed water resource development projects for submission directly to the Secretary of the Army.

The SFWMD submitted their study to the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works on March 30, 2018.

Congressional approval of this plan will result in a post-authorization change report to modify features within the Central Everglades Planning Project, which was authorized as a federal project by Congress in 2016.

Additional information on the SFWMD’s EAA storage reservoir study is available on their website at: https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/cerp-project-planning/eaa-reservoir.

Reflections from the Pulpit

I don’t agree, but....!

The Reverend Samuel S. Thomas, Ph. D.+

Saint Martin’s Church, Clewiston

One of the former church leaders for whom I worked with at the beginning of my ministry said, “Everyone knows how to do my job better than I do, and the most amazing part of it is that they’ve all been around here less than five years!”

We all got the point.

I’ve worked with people who have come to a new job full of ideals and mean well, and then begin to see what they think of as “shortcomings” in the ways things are done. I’ve been a newcomer to posts that I’ve held; I like to ask:

“What did the person before me do on this job?”

I’ve listened to lots and lots of criticisms of candidates; some of which I understand, others which seem moot, and some I find irrelevant.

Everyone seems to have a view on how the government should be run. That’s a job that few have held but many are critical.

Church leadership, likewise, often comes with suggestions from people who are well-meaning but not always aware of how things have come to be. I’ve always attempted to take time to explain the rationale behind a project or practice, or refer people to someone that might have a better answer than I can give.

I recall a complaint from someone about a change in church services; she liked the old lambs, but the old ways of doing things. I explained as best could but I also knew some of the persons who helped design the new services and suggested she contact them.

I also told her that I didn’t know all of the reasons for the change; but I knew some of the people involved and knew that they loved and cared for the church.

She wrote them and told me of the “beautiful letter” of reply that she received. We continued with a new service but also with a new respect and understanding.

It was a time of transition; something that comes with each job change, each change in government, each change in churches, each change in families.

My hope is that we ask “What has worked?” and “Can we really offer something better?”

Sometimes “Yes” and sometimes “No” — but let’s find out before we throw away the bathwater!

Criticisms are not new!

One classic is found in the Old Testament and caused me to smile as I read about what went on those many years ago and what happens today.

My namesake, Samuel, is told by the elders of Israel, “You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us like other nations.”

(1 Samuel 8:4)

Samuel had left leadership to his sons who were judges, but they didn’t make the elders happy with their judgments.

Going from tribal governance to kingship was a big step for God’s people, and Samuel was distraught. His prayers brought an answer from God:

“Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say, for they have not rejected you but they have rejected me from being king over them (chapter 4, verse 7).”

Samuel goes to those who were asking for a king and tells them what their wish will mean to their lives: a reign over them, requiring their children to serve his commanders, make his implements of war, redistribute their property, require taxes from them, and limit their freedom.

Nevertheless they told Samuel, “No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations and that our king govern us and go before us and fight our battles (v.20).”

Samuel carried the wish to the Lord, and He said, “Hearken to their voice and make them a king (v.22)”

Saul will become the first king of Israel and not without challenges and dissent along the way.

He is anointed by Samuel and told, “You shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their enemies round about (1 Samuel 10:1).”

A change has brought a new way of doing things; it has not solved all of the past problems, but kingship has brought unity that was needed in the face of the problems of his day that former leadership could not solve.

The nation continues to survive today; other leadership changes have happened over the centuries, and not all of the final goals for God’s kingdom have been reached. Samuel listened, he disagreed but he went ahead and did what God called him to do.

I can think back, too, on some of the people with whom I have disagreed but from whom I have learned things. I hope that I continued to listen, slowly, to others; whether or not I agree with them.

They may have something important to say to me. God works through others, even the most disagreeable and most unpopular in my eyes.

Not my will but “....thy will be done...” and maybe I am being called to share in His will even when I think otherwise!

Seeking leggings and flip-flops

The Rape Crisis Unit at Abuse Counseling & Treatment is seeking donations of new or gently used leggings and new flip-flops of any size to provide women who have been survivors of sexual violence. Their goal is to collect 50 pairs of leggings and 50 pairs of flip-flops in the month of June. Drop-off location is the LaBelle United Way House, 133 N. Bridge St. in LaBelle. Please be sure to say the donation is for the Rape Crisis Center. For information, call 239-433-7559.

Unmet Needs Coalition meetings scheduled in Hendry County

Do you have unmet needs resulting from Hurricane Irma and have exhausted all other resources? Contact the Hendry/Glades Unmet Needs Coalition (HGUNC) to find out what support may be available for you and your family. Contact: Hendry/Glades Unmet Needs Coalition Coordinator Terri Mizaga at 813-892-5021, e-mail at hgunc133@gmail.com or c/o LaBelle United Way House 133 N. Bridge St. LaBelle, FL 33935.

Nonprofits’ representatives and other interested parties who want to help Hendry and Glades County residents with unmet needs are invited to the meetings to be held on Friday, July 6, at 1 p.m. and Friday, July 20, at 5:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 331 West Osceola Ave. in Clewiston.
Leadership program’s Class of 2018 graduates

Graduates of the 2018 Hendry Glades Adult Leadership Program are, from left, Lisa Walker, Emily Hunter, Belinda Smith, Luke Davis, Yara Sanchez, Libby Pigman, Matthew Howard, Kristi Biffar, Jennifer Lesley and Melinda Abreu.

By Lisa Walker
Special to The Clewiston News

The Hendry Glades Adult Leadership Program of 2018 had its graduation ceremony on Wednesday, May 16.

For participants, this program introduces, educates and provides hands-on experiences to various establishments in Hendry and Glades counties that ultimately make us who we are.

The leadership training consists of an eight-month-long course connecting and developing professional participants with the objective of becoming better aware, more knowledgeable and more engaged in their community.

Anyone who is interested in joining the Hendry Glades Adult Leadership Program for 2019 should contact Leslie Leiva at leslieleiva@qualityelectriccontracting.com.

Victoria Gomez thrilled with new car

Clewiston High School senior Victoria Gomez was thrilled to have won a car from Alan Jay Automotive Network. The car was presented to her after the Clewiston High School graduation ceremony on May 18 at the Cane Field. Congratulations, Victoria! Left to right: Liliana Hayes (sister), Victoria Gomez, Gabriela Davila (mother) and, in front, Magdelina Hayes (sister).

Water Utilities Dept. releases its water quality reports

Special to The Sun

The Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department announced the release of its 2017 annual water quality reports for both the eastern and western communities on Friday, June 8.

As evidenced by the reports, which are available online at pbcwater.com by clicking on the “Water Quality” tab at the top of the page, the department incurred no violations during the 2017 calendar year.

The reports feature results from more than 80,000 laboratory tests of the county utilities’ drinking water. The test results are summarized in easy-to-read charts, which explain to residents where their water comes from, how the water is treated and disinfected and whom they can contact for more information.

Printed copies of the reports are also available via mail. Anyone who would like a printed copy may request one by calling 561-493-6068.

The department serves approximately 590,000 residents with drinking water, reclaimed water and wastewater services. To find the most up-to-date information concerning the Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department’s distribution and wastewater collection systems, follow the department on Facebook and Twitter @PBCWUD.
Dike work on track, but funding critical

By Katrina Elsken
INI Florida

“We’re in for a wet year,” Lieutenant Colonel Jennifer A. Reynolds of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told the County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and the Lake Worth Lagoon at its June 1 meeting.

She said that, as high as the lake is now, if it had a large spike of water from a hurricane as happened with Irma, “the lake looks pretty bad.” In the month following Irma’s landfall, the lake rose by 3.5 feet due to heavy runoff from the north. “We are additionally concerned because all WCAs (Water Conservation Areas) are already above schedule,” Lt. Col. Reynolds continued. The WCAs south of the lake are already at capacity from rainfall in that basin even though water is moving south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay at the maximum flow possible with the existing water control structures.

The corps started releasing water east through the C-44 Canal and west into the Caloosahatchee River on June 1 in an attempt to slow the rise of the lake. “We’ve had the wettest May on record,” said Lt. Col. Reynolds. The month of May brought 11.01 inches of rainfall to the South Florida Water Management District, nearly triple the annual average of 4.04 inches, according to the South Florida Water Management District website.

The National Hurricane Center predicts one to four major storms this year. “I think we can anticipate releases will continue for some time,” said Lt. Col. Reynolds. She told the coalition that the work on repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike continue. “It’s going well,” she said.

“Everyone is talking about are we on track to complete in 2022?” she said. “Yes, we are on track, but there is a lot of distance between now and 2022.”

Lt. Col. Reynolds said the president’s budget for fiscal 2018 includes $82 million for the dike repairs, and the State of Florida allocated $50 million. For 2019, the president has requested $96 million, she said. “That still needs an appropriations bill.” Lt. Col. Reynolds said the project will need additional money in 2020, 2021 and 2022 to stay on track for completion in 2022. “When we don’t get the federal funding on time, it affects the schedule to award contracts,” she added. “It’s not over yet,” she continued. “Letters from Senator Nelson and Senator Rubio said that congressional intent was for it to be fully funded,” she explained.

There are projects across the nation competing for that funding, she added.

She said funding for other water projects is uncertain. The president’s budget for fiscal 2019 is putting emphasis on finishing projects that are already under construction, she said. This could mean delays for projects that are still in the design and planning stages.

“We all know the importance of the entire CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan) program,” she said. Every project in CERP is an important part of the overall plan, she added. “The hard part is there is not enough funding to authorize all of the projects across the board. Every time we want to add something, there is that elephant in the room of what we are not going to do,” she continued. She said the addition of the EAA reservoir to the Central Everglades Planning Project will mean there won’t be federal funding for something else.
Federal funding for EAA reservoir could be delayed

By Katrina Elsken
INI Florida

Plans for a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee could face funding delays.

While Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Army (Civil Works) R.D. James found the Everglades Agricultural Area reservoir plan feasible, the review assessment submitted to the Office of Management and Budget also imposed conditions for implementation.

“I have determined that the project identified in the Integrated Feasibility Study and draft Environmental Impact Statement is feasible and fully recognize the importance of this project to the restoration of the Everglades system,” Mr. James wrote to South Florida Water Management District Executive Director Ernie Marks on May 30. “I have simultaneously submitted my review assessment to the Office of Management and Budget for clearance to submit to Congress. My staff will keep you regularly informed of our progress to complete the clearance process and submit your study to Congress,” he stated.


From the geotechnical engineering perspective, a more robust design may be required to address all potential failure modes. The timing and ultimate delivery of project benefits will be dependent on the State of Florida demonstrating compliance with water quality standards set forth in court rulings and agreed to by project stakeholders. The Jacksonville District is currently undertaking the federal responsibilities associated with preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the SFWM’s tentatively recommended plan. Until these issues are addressed, project benefits might not be achieved as described in the 203 study,” the executive summary states.

The report questions whether the “additional flows of water diverted from the northern estuaries are essential to the restoration of the Central Everglades.” In a June 1 letter to Assistant Secretary James, SFWM Governing Board Chairman Federico E. Fernandez and Mr. Marks expressed concerns that “USACE Headquarters staff have laid the foundation for delay and avoidance of federal cost share. Despite congressional willingness to cost-share with the State of Florida, the review assessment reveals evidence that USACE staff seek opportunities to walk away from 18 years of congressional commitment to restore America’s Everglades.”

In response to the question of whether or not diverting lake flow now going to the coastal areas south, the water managers wrote, “Water wasted to tide in the northern estuaries is THE water needed to restore the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water within the Everglades system.

“We remain concerned the process will take too long to provide relief, especially considering the requirement to complete further validation reports. If not guided carefully by leaders such as yourself, the additional third step of a validation report could paralyze progress.

“Florida’s economy depends on vibrant and healthy northern estuaries, restoration of America’s Everglades and a federal commitment to the same. To that end, the State of Florida will continue to seek that Congress direct the federal government to cost share this important restoration project,” they wrote.

The proposed EAA reservoir will hold 240,000 acre-feet of water. An acre-foot is the amount of water it takes to cover 1 acre of land 1 foot deep.

On the same day SFWM officials sent the response letter, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releases to the C-44 Canal at Port Mayaca and the Franklin Lock at Moore Haven to attempt to offset some of the heavy flow entering Lake Okeechobee from northern runoff. Over the past seven days, flow into the lake has ranged from 4,976 to 7,293 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 7,293 cfs. Flow from the lake into the C-44 Canal at Port Mayaca has ranged from 794 cfs to 1,309 cfs. Flow into the Caloosahatchee River at Moore Haven has ranged from 1,526 to 3,996 cfs. In the past week, the lake level has risen from 14.14 feet to 14.22 ft. No water from the lake has been released south. South of the lake, all of the water conservation areas are a foot above regulation schedule or higher. Flow south under the Tamiami Trail has averaged around 1,000 cfs. Two of the S-12 water control structures, which could send more water south, are closed to protect the nesting ground of the endangered Cape Sable sea sparrow.

Some algae blooms have been reported. These are common on the lake during the summer and are natural. Under certain conditions, algae blooms can release toxins.

• On May 9, an algae bloom was reported near the Pahokee marina. Florida Department of Environmental Protection sampled the bloom. No toxins were detected.

• On June 4, a small algae bloom was reported near Port Mayaca. FDEP took samples. No toxins were detected.

• On June 6, algae was reported at Oceanfront Park Beach in Palm Beach.

• On June 6, algae was also reported in the St. Lucie Canal.

• On June 6, algae was reported in the C-24 Canal in St. Lucie County.

Lake featured on national TV show

Special to INI Florida

Lake Okeechobee was the site of the latest episode of BrushPile Fishing, a crappie-based fishing show that is broadcast nationally on the Pursuit Channel. This episode was presented by Lake Okeechobee Regional Economic Alliance of Palm Beach County (LORE) and featured B’n’M Poles Pro Staff Angler Whitey Outlaw alongside BrushPile host Russ Bailey as the two navigated a windy Lake Okeechobee in search of big crappie.

The BrushPile Fishing episode was shown on the Pursuit Channel on Saturday, June 9. All episodes of the show can be found at BrushPile Fishing’s website, www.brushpilefishing.com.

BrushPile Fishing is a crappie-based fishing show that follows host Russ Bailey as he travels from the Midwest to the Deep South in search of America’s greatest crappie lakes. In each episode, Russ is joined by a local guide or pro to get the inside scoop on how to best fish the lake, including pattern, technique and area secrets. Each episode from an educational standpoint, Russ and his guest have plenty of organic opportunity to speak about the products that help them bring in big fish and big numbers.

Whitey Outlaw is a native of St. Matthews, S.C., and is regarded as one of the top crappie fishermen in the country. Having him and Russ in the same boat on Lake Okeechobee not only provided some great entertainment value but also a lot of educational tips and tricks on fishing techniques on this lake.

LORE would like to thank the partners who helped make this episode possible: Belle Glade Chamber of Commerce, Belle Glade Lions Club, BMH Accounting, The Larry Royal Family Businesses and Discover the Palm Beaches.
Contractor Needed

krobertson@gmail.com

Attention: Shirley or KR

Must be experienced to build a portfolio of work.

JUNE 16th at 7:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Public Notice

CITY OF CLEWISTON

POLICE DEPARTMENT BUILDING RENOVATIONS

BID NUMBER: 2018-63

In general, the work includes renovations of an existing one-story concrete block, 5,800 square feet at 300 South Hendry Road, Clewiston, Florida. Bids will be based on a grand total amount for the contract. Bids based on any one part of the work will not be considered. The bidding documents will NOT be mailed or shipped overnight. All bidders must telephone or email twenty-four (24) hours in advance to order .pdf sets.

Bids based on any one part of the work will not be considered. Bidders will be required to provide their own transportation and direct contact information. No bids will be accepted by mail or overnight delivery.

The City of Clewiston reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

Al Perry, City Manager
City of Clewiston, Florida

HENDRY COUNTY RANKING COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Notice is hereby given that a Hendry County Ranking Committee will hold a meeting on June 13, 2018, at 2:00 PM, for review of the scoring for Project 2018-19-1, Elevator Maintenance - Hendry County Courthouses. The meeting will be held at the Hendry County Administration Building, 711 South Third Street, LaBelle, Florida. The meeting is open to the public.

If a person decides to make any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he/she will need to record the proceeding, and they must have prior written notice to attend the meeting. The minutes of the meeting, which include the testimony and evidence upon which the decision is to be based, will be available for public examination on the website of the County of Hendry.

If you have a disability that will require special assistance or accommodation for you to participate in the meeting, contact Hendry County Administration at (863) 454-5200. Hearing Impaired: Florida Relay 7-1-1, or e-mail keitha.love@hendryco.com.

Hendry County is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Need a few more bucks to purchase something dear? Pick up some extra bucks when you sell your used items in the classifieds.

Reading a newspaper helps you understand the world around you.

Find it faster. Sell it sooner in the classifieds.
PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN
the PUBLIC HEARING scheduled for Monday, June 18, 2018, is postponed to Monday, July 2, 2018 at 5:30 p.m., or as soon as practical thereafter, in the City Hall Commission Chambers, 115 West Ventura Avenue, Clewiston, FL 33440. This PUBLIC HEARING is regarding the following:

A request from MINESHKUMAR B. PATEL that certain property at 815 E Sagamore Ave Clewiston, FL 33440 to be reviewed for change of the Official Use District (Zoning) designation. The request is for change of the zoning from Residential Mobile Home Use District (RM-1) to US 27 Commercial Corridor District. The parcels are shown on the map enclosed herein and are more particularly described as follows:

815 E Sagamore Ave Lots W 1/2 OF LOT 5 + ALL LOTS 6 TO 10, Block 385, GPC

Interested parties may appear at the meeting and be heard with regard to the proposed request. If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or public hearing, such person may need to insure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and any evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

City Hall is wheelchair accessible and accessible parking spaces are available. Accommodation requests or interpretive services must be made 48 hours prior to the meeting. Please contact the City Clerk's office at (863) 983-1484, extension 227, or FAX (863) 983-4055 for information or assistance. The City of Clewiston is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Mary K. Combass, Interim City Clerk
City of Clewiston, FL

SUBJECT PROPERTIES
Lots W 1/2 OF LOT 5 + ALL LOTS 6 TO 10, Block 385, GPC

PUBLIC NOTICE
RE: PALM TRAM SYSTEM-WIDE MAJOR SERVICE CHANGES THROUGH THE ROUTE PERFORMANCE MAXIMIZATION PROJECT

Notice is hereby given that a Public Hearing has been scheduled for the purpose of receiving comments regarding Palm Tram System-wide major service changes through the Route Performance Maximization project (RPM). The Public Hearing will be held at the Palm Tram Service (PTS) meeting as follows:

DATE: Thursday, June 28, 2018
TIME: 1:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Palm Beach County Vista Center Complex
First Floor, Room 1W-47/90
2300 N. Jog Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33411

Served by: Route 44

A. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT
The Route Performance Maximization project (RPM) involves system-wide major service changes in schedules and service locations for all fixed-route bus service. The project may involve the addition or removal of routes and bus stops and modifications to existing route alignments. Proposals and concepts are available for public inspection at http://www.palmtram.org and at the Palm Tram office located at 3201 Electronics Way, West Palm Beach, FL 33407 and at Palm Beach County Libraries during regular business hours.

B. RELOCATION
No persons, families or businesses will be displaced by the project.

C. ENVIRONMENT
The project will allow Palm Tram to continue providing public transportation services within Palm Beach County that will continue to reduce exhaust emissions from automobiles and reduce air pollution traffic congestion and conserve energy.

D. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING
The project is in conformance with comprehensive land use and transportation planning in the area.

E. ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED
Reduced fares for the elderly and handicapped will continue to be in effect at all times of operation.

Written comments will be received at Palm Tram, 3201 Electronics Way, and at Palm-Comment@pbctg.org and voice comments will be accepted at (561) 841-0319 until 5 p.m. June 27, 2018.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, national origin, sex, religion, disability or family status. Persons with questions or concerns about nondiscrimination, or who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or who want this information in a language other than English, or who need translation services for the public hearing (free of charge), should contact Claudia Salazar, Title VI Coordinator at: (561) 841-4241, or csalazar@pbctg.org.

Para solicitar información en idiomas distintos al inglés, a requerir de intérpretes en la audiencia pública, o para solicitar asistencia para una persona con discapacidades, por favor contactar a Claudia Salazar en el (561) 841-4241, o csalazar@pbctg.org.

Pou mande enfonsamento sa na von long kai pa angke, osaa sa ou bezeen svaditdikjon pou olayanik pblik la (gratis), ou maa sa ou bezeen svaditdikjon esexay anta lwa sau Ameekan ak Andkap kontaktou Claude Salazar; Kolosalbou SL VI n41 (561) 841- 4241 oubyen csalazar@pbctg.org.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
HENDRY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
Sealed bids, in triplicate, subject to the conditions herein, will be received until June 28, 2018 at 2:00 PM, by the Hendry County Board of County Commissioners, at the Hendry County Commissioners Complex, 125 SW 3rd St., Suite 100, Clewiston, FL 33440. The request for proposals will be opened at 2:00 PM the same day in the City Hall Commission Chambers, 115 West Ventura Avenue, Clewiston, FL 33440 to be reviewed for change of the Official Use District (Zoning) designation. The request is for change of the zoning from Residential Mobile Home Use District (RM-1) to US 27 Commercial Corridor District. The parcels are shown on the map enclosed herein and are more particularly described as follows:

815 E Sagamore Ave Lots W 1/2 OF LOT 5 + ALL LOTS 6 TO 10, Block 385, GPC

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Mary K. Combass, Interim City Clerk
City of Clewiston, FL

SUBJECT PROPERTIES
Lots W 1/2 OF LOT 5 + ALL LOTS 6 TO 10, Block 385, GPC

628230 BGS 06/14/2018

262902 BGS 06/14/2018

June 14, 2018
Serving the communities south of Lake Okeechobee
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PICTURE ALL THE BENEFITS YOU CAN GET WHEN YOU LIVE

simplycomplete (HMO SNP)

A Special Needs Plan (SNP) for full dual eligible individuals who have Medicare and Medicaid.

$0 copay for primary and specialist office visits

simplyadvantage (HMO SNP)

A Special Needs Plan (SNP) for beneficiaries who are on Medicare and Medicaid with Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) status.

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Earvin “Magic” Johnson
Healthcare Advocate

Palm Beach County. Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. is a Medicare-contracted coordinated care plan that has a Medicaid contract with the State of Florida Agency for Health Care Administration to provide benefits or arrange for benefits to be provided to enrollees. Enrollment in Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. depends on contract renewal. This information is not a complete description of benefits. Contact the plan for more information. Limitations, copayments, and restrictions may apply. Benefits, premiums and/or copayments/coinsurance may change on January 1 of each year. You must continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. For full-dual members the Part B premium is covered. This plan is available to anyone who has both Medical Assistance from the State and Medicare. Premiums, copays, coinsurance and deductibles may vary based on the level of Extra Help you receive. Please contact the plan for further details. Medicare evaluates plans based on a 5-star rating system. Star Ratings are calculated each year and may change from one year to the next. The Formulary, pharmacy network, and/or provider network may change at any time. You will receive notice when necessary. From October 1 to February 14, we are open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., EST. Beginning February 15 until September 30, we are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., EST. We do not discriminate, exclude people, or treat them differently on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability in our health programs and activities. ATENCION: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-877-577-0115 / TTY: 711. ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis éd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 1-877-577-0115 / TTY: 711. Paid endorsement.