

9. **OLD BUSINESS**

a. Water Quality Issues

3. Regional Planning Commission Report (Vice Mayor Denham)

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
January 19, 2006

There was a change to the chair of SWFRPC; the new chair is John Thaxton from Sarasota County replacing Rue Berryman of Northport.

The principle interest to Sanibel was under Emerging Issues, two items:

- 1) Lee County Basin Study Board,
 - a) Recommendation for Lee County Commission staff to study the pros and cons of pursuing Legislation and/or a resolution to change the boundaries of the water district creating a separate basin altogether for Lee County, with what appears to be some form of separate taxation. (Personally I did not understand the rationale for this change, no objectives for this change were discussed, other than more local control, I will follow up on this issue)
 - b) The SFWMD operational budget was reviewed, for the record using 2004 as a basis of the total \$28,070,290 taxes to SFWMD, Lee County contributes \$26.8 million or 96%. In FY 2005 it was reported that Lee County tax payers sent at least \$37 million and received only \$7million in direct funding to projects, presumably the rest of the monies were directed to the East Coast, this sparked an absolutely furious outpouring from John Albion, see later comments

- 2) Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Presented Carla Palmer SFWMD (Chip Merriman was also in attendance)
Ms Palmer commenced with necessary SFWMD power point presentation which was the same old stuff, all focused on what wonderful things are going to be done for the lake and the estuary in 2010 and beyond. At question time I was the first speaker, my comments were directed at where are the plans to fix the short term problems in the Caloosahatchee and the estuary, how do we protect tourism, businesses, wildlife, fish, our quality of life, I received no response. I was then completely outgunned by John Albion who was absolutely furious with both the SFWMD and the Corp of Engineers; he sighted the irresponsible management, complete lack of care and attention to the plight of the tourist industry, and the unforgivable direction of Lee County tax dollars to the East Coast communities, he said it was over \$250million over the past ten years with little of this returned to this coast. This tirade went in for 20 minutes. Even Steve Brown could not have showed more outrage and emotion than Commissioner Albion, if the Sanibel Council had been present we would have given him a standing ovation. I thanked him at the end of the meeting for his comments.

Mick Denham