

External Affairs Committee June/July 2009
Hunters Ridge Supports Effort to Stop
Flooding in Bonita Springs Area

On April 22nd Mary Copeland, External Affairs Committee and Fred Forbes, Secretary HRCAs Board of Directors, attended a public presentation by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The presentation was a Summary of the Results of a Flooding Study of Southern Lee County, primarily focusing on Estero, Lehigh Acres and the Bonita Springs area. In recent years this area has had two major floods, one in 1995 and one in the late summer of 2008. Hundreds of residents were flooded out of their homes during both floods. In fact, this area of Bonita Springs regularly floods during the summer wet season. During the Q&A portion of the presentation SFWMD admitted that the recommended flooding mitigation option that they are considering for funding and implementation, will not benefit the Bonita Springs area. Bill Lonkart, city councilman defended our area stating that he was tired of Bonita Springs being ignored when it comes to resolving our serious flooding problems.

A letter was prepared by Fred Forbes and emailed to SFWMD pointing out that the flooding analysis study, which gave options for ways to reduce flooding, were run without the benefit of the currently available, more accurate, topographical data for Lee County. Also, no flooding reduction analysis was done to include significant storm run-off being diverted into the Marisol Floodway and/or existing floodways immediately to the south in Collier County, and no analysis was done considering channeling effects of the thousands of feet of sound walls constructed along both sides of I-75 in southern Lee County. It was pointed out that Lee County and the SFWMD have both derived significant tax revenues and impact fee revenues from the development of the Bonita Springs area, and those government entities have an obligation to mitigate the flooding caused by this development. Mr. Forbes urged SFWMD to add additional funding and to extend the schedule of the study to permit re-running flooding computer analysis using the most accurate topographical data, and to include diverting significant storm water runoff into the Marisol floodway and all other available floodways, especially to the south in Collier County. The SFWMD's written response to our letter does not refute or deny the major technical issues we raised, their reply simply says there is no "silver bullet" solution to flooding for our area and this study will be a good starting point in the future for efforts to help Bonita Springs.

Hunters Ridge sent out an email to our residents asking them to send an email supporting our letter. Likewise, the External Affairs Committee contacted our counterparts in San Remo, Palmira and Village Walk. All those gated communities sent similar emails to their residents asking them to email their concerns. We contacted Bill Lonkart, city councilman and Mayor Ben Nelson suggesting they contact other leaders in Bonita Springs, especially in Precinct 80, to get them to also do an email support campaign. Hundreds of emails requesting SFWMD do something about stopping the flooding in the Bonita Springs area were sent to SFWMD and Lee County Commission Chairman, Ray Judah. In response to our email campaign, Mayor Nelson has expressed his written appreciation of this effort by our Hunters Ridge members and Mr. Sentes has also expressed his appreciation for the supportive, yet firm sentiment in our emails. Hunters Ridge has been instrumental in organizing our surrounding gated communities in this effort, representing nearly 4000 registered voters. The External Affairs Committee thanks all of our residents and our employees who sent letters and emails to SFWMD, and the support provided by Sandi Morgan, Board President, Tom Padgett, Vice President and Don Huprich, General Manager.