

of Atlantis, Lantana, Manalapan, Palm Beach, South Palm Beach, and Palm Springs, plus Palm Beach State College.

Lake Worth sued the partners in Palm Beach County Circuit Court in August. The city claims the partners failed to make payments as required, particularly for funding to cover capital costs associated with maintaining the sewer lines, lift stations and the East Central Regional Wastewater Plant where the sewage is treated.

Earlier this year, Lake Worth agreed to handle the dispute through the government conflict resolution process specified in Chapter 164 of Florida Statutes.

audit.

Lake Worth City Manager Susan Stanton said she believes the audit should be limited to the financial aspects of the agreements and amendments made between Lake Worth and each regional sewer partner.

"There are some varying opinions as to what the problem is and the scope of the audit," Stanton said. "Lake Worth is the owner of the system and the seven partners are customers.

"Lake Worth's position has always been that the city has the ultimate responsibility to set the administrative fees per

audit will resolve the dispute.

Tom Cloud, an attorney representing the seven partners, said the audit is in the right direction.

"The goal of this audit is for the Lake Worth to open their books," said. "Under the terms of the original agreement, they were required to do an audit every year which they haven't done."

"They were also supposed to open records which they haven't done. The partners dispute the amount of money

SCCF researchers provide Captiva with roadmap for water improvements

By DAN MILLOTT

For the last two years, Mark Thompson and a team of researchers from the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Federation have been poking around to see if septic tanks on Captiva Island might be the source of bacteria in waters lapping against the white sandy beaches there.

The Captiva Community Panel, an unofficial governing group on the island, began suspecting in 2006 that advisories about bacteria in the water were a hint of a problem that needed a closer look.

Captiva leaders sought help from the Lee County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The bureau, always sensitive to possible problems on county beaches, approved a grant to fund the study.

"We weren't sure if the funding for the study would be for just a year, so our research was intense in that first year," said Thompson, an SCCF research associate.

The study concentrated on locations where seagrass was found. Samples were taken to analyze water quality conditions on the Captiva beaches.

At the start, Thompson said the SCCF drilled wells in undeveloped sites as reference. "We compared those results with readings at locations where development had taken place," he said.

Their initial findings showed little difference in bacteria levels in groundwater between the developed and undeveloped areas.

But the levels of nitrates in groundwater at the developed areas were decidedly higher than at the undeveloped sites.

Homes on the south end of Captiva have septic tanks while north end homes are served by a sewer system that South

Seas Plantation operates.

The study found that septic tank areas had higher levels of nitrogen, but bacteria levels showed little difference between sewer-served and septic-served areas.

The study also looked at seasonal changes. For example, bacteria levels in groundwater were similar during all seasons, but nitrate levels were elevated during the rainy season. Both bacteria and nitrate were highly concentrated after runoff events and higher in the rainy season.

Since nitrogen levels appear to be the biggest problem, researchers zeroed in on action to reduce stormwater runoff.

"In undeveloped areas the runoff water is handled by the natural presence of plants and grasses," Thompson said. "But in developed areas where there are driveways, sidewalks and turf grass, the water flows into the near shore waters of the islands."

Another idea that would help curtail the nitrogen problem involved the installation of advanced nitrogen-removing septic tank systems. Thompson described the newer septic tanks as mini-waste water treatment plants.

Since most of the septic tanks were installed in the 1980s, there might be an increasing number needing replacement.

Another option for Captiva would be connecting to an existing sewer system. Thompson said that option has been considered with a possible link up with the Sanibel system.

There is no time frame or deadline to implement any of the suggestions. In late April, Thompson was preparing the final draft of the two-year study. The ball is now in the court of the Captiva Community Panel for follow-up.

Property purchased by Indian River County contaminated by low levels of dieldrin

By ROY LAUGHLIN

Sometimes history has its environ-

aldrin concentration found in soil was about 3 parts per billion, said Roland DeBloise, Indian River County's environ-

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