

ECOWATCH

Environmental damage is economic damage

BY DELORES SAVAS

“Raising awareness on the most pressing environmental issues of our time is more”
Leonardo DiCaprio,
Actor

This year, there are many issues that have been raised concerning the environment that will affect you and the world around you. Read them carefully before rules and regulations take effect that will be in place for a long time.

Several of these projects and new bills that might go into effect throughout the world are now pending. Let us first investigate our own backyard. One report by Tom Bayles, of WGPU-PBS, concludes that Southwest Florida “environmental groups say economic damage from next major algae bloom will total billions.”

The report, which was commissioned by James Evans, CEO of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, found the next big harmful algae bloom will be economically devastating for the region, with financial losses in the tens of millions of dollars, and job losses that will number more than 40,000.

Our region’s ecological well-being hinges on the health of our economy, another member of the report said. Yet, while there’s almost universal agreement that our water fuels our economy, it continues to decline, said Rob Moher, president of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.

While red tide has been documented since the 1700’s, it has now grown into a monster, causing havoc in area waters. It is apparent that lax laws permitting the run-offs from streets and lawns into streams and water ways, and chemicals from farming, factories, sewage treatments and other sources have taken their toll on Florida waters.

Recently, there has been a motion to allow the use of fertilizers to be used year-around, even though it has been proven they are harmful to area waters. There is also a bill to allow road paving material that is toxic to be used on area roads. Once it rains, the toxic substance may run off into area waters, causing algae blooms.

Another problem is that new residents relocating to Florida want to change our landscape, pulling out native plants and replacing them with exotic ones. Plus, the desire to have green grass year around requires the use of chemicals that will find their way into our water ways, increasing red tide and algae blooms.

Heads up on this harmful land use bill, SB738. Holly Schwartz, policy associate for the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation provided a guest



commentary on the bill:

“Over the stronger objection of many Floridians, the Legislature has systematically made the public’s ability to challenge questionable development decisions insurmountably dangerous by requiring the losing party of a legal challenge to pay for the winner’s legal fees,” she wrote.

“Now, during the very first week of the Legislative Session, our legislators want to completely close off the last remaining opportunity to challenge bad development with Senate Bill 738 which would require the payment of \$50,000 of prevailing parities attorney’s fees for failing to succeed in any challenge to Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Water Management District actions.”

Sounds unconstitutional. (What do you think? For more information visit)

Officially, 2023 was the planet’s warmest year by far in a century and a half, according to analysis by scientist from NOAA’s National Center for Environment. This year may be even warmer.

This can cause serious problems for people and the ecosystem. Prolonged exposure to excessive heat can lead to many impacts including damaged crops, injured or killed livestock and increasing risk of wildfires and drought. Prolonged periods of ex-

treme heat can lead to power outages as heavy demands for air conditioning strain the power grid.

The danger to people from heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps or heat rashes would rise along with the accelerated temperatures. Heat can also increase the risk of injuries in workers, causing fogged-up safety glasses and dizziness. Burns may also occur because of accidental contact with hot surfaces or steam, even to our furry friends.

As climate change continues course without any major resolves to change the life style of the planet’s inhabitants and its commercial and industrial powers, the future looks dim.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) has released its annual 2024 annual cancer statistics report, and projections are concerning. The ACS estimates over two million new cancer cases and over 600,000 cancer deaths in the United States in 2024. Of particular concern is the dramatic rise in colorectal cancer among young men and woman, and the persistent racial disparities in cancer risk. Colorectal cancer is strongly related to processed meat intake.

The United States is listed as having the fourth highest number of cancer cases in the world. This will be discussed in future articles.

These are just a few of the problems facing us in 2024. The best way to handle them is to get involved, write, call your Representatives and let them know your concerns. Do something.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world.” Hopefully she was right...

We welcome comments and letters on the state of our environment here in Southwest Florida. Email gpollard@bocabeacon.com

Readers are encouraged to read the whole report that can be found at wusf.org/environment

email: gaiasvigil@gmail.com

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