

March 2020

A NAPLES-BASED, OCEAN-FRIENDLY CLOTHING LINE

StepChange, a new eco-friendly clothing line has launched in Naples, and it is big news for ocean lovers! The company takes plastic bottles out of the waste stream and converts them into stylish performance shirts and comfortable socks. Plus, a portion of every sale goes toward initiatives that improve water quality in our oceans.

Shoppers choose products from several designs that feature one of these three important water-quality initiatives:

1. **FORCE BLUE:** Provides long-term, mission-based therapy for former special operations combat divers through efforts of conservation, preservation, and restoration.
2. **Ocean Habitats:** Builds and installs mini-reef habitats under docks and in canals. Mini-reefs can filter an average of 30,000 gallons of seawater per day. An article about their reefs ran in our March 2019 newsletter.
3. **Seaside Sustainability:** Promotes the adoption of modern ocean-cleaning technologies and advocates for single-use plastics bans.

“It takes 16 plastic bottles to make one of our performance shirts.”

Kevin Hall, co-founder StepChange

Naples Area Board of REALTORS®

Water Quality Advisory



As the voice of REALTORS® in the Naples area, NABOR® has and will always advocate for action to reduce or eliminate any man-made or environmental threats to home ownership, property values and the living standards in Florida.

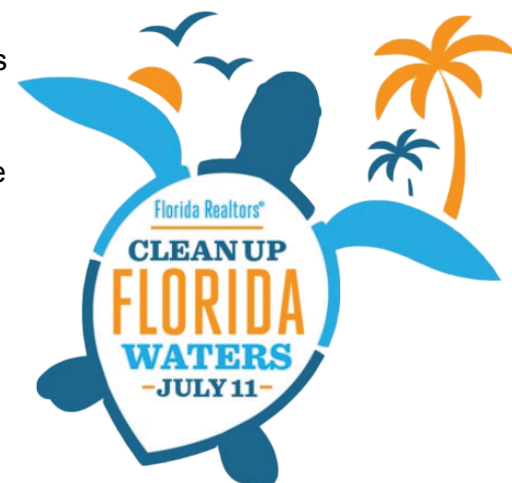
CLEAN WATERWAYS ACT ONE STEP FROM LAW

After numerous amendments and revisions, Senate Bill 712 (aka “The Clean Waterways Act”) was approved by both the Florida Senate and the House and is awaiting the Governor’s signature to become law. The Act is intended to improve many elements of infrastructure that have significant impact on Florida’s water quality like controlling nutrient runoff and keeping sewage disposal facilities accountable. Many water quality advocates say it’s a “good first step.”

Much of the language in the new bill addresses behavior and activities affecting those at the regulatory level, including mandates like new Department of Health (DOH) reports and recommendations, requiring interagency collaborations, transferring departmental project oversight, as well as initiating new studies on bottled water, and drafting new rules for stormwater design and operation.

The bill also requires the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to collect fertilizer application records from certain agricultural producers, perform inspections, and then provide a report to the Governor’s office. What the Governor will do with this new data in the future is unclear.

The bill does not address a plan for agriculture remediation, which is considered to be the source of



high water pollution, but it does set the stage for enforceable new regulations pertaining to sewage output.

Water quality advocates say the bill looks good on paper, but it really depends on the will of those in charge to follow through on these new policies. Oddly, it does not specifically address improvements to protecting, cleaning, or improving actual waterways. The good news is that the bill does put more emphasis on sewage infrastructure, septic tanks, and stormwater runoff.

Highlights from Senate Bill 712:

- Adds regulation of septic tanks as a source of nutrients and transferred oversight from the Department of Health to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).
- Includes contingency plans for power outages to minimize discharges of untreated wastewater for all sewage disposal facilities.
- Adds a provision of financial records from all sanitary sewage disposal facilities so DEP can ensure funds are allocated to infrastructure upgrades, repairs, and maintenance to prevent systems from falling into disrepair.
- Requires documentation of fertilizer use to ensure compliance with Best Management Practices and aid in evaluation of its effectiveness.
- Updates stormwater rules and design criteria to improve performance of stormwater systems statewide that specifically address nutrients.

PROPER TREE PRUNING IMPROVES LOCAL WATER QUALITY

You can do your part to improve the curb appeal of a new listing and reduce stormwater runoff by hiring a licensed contractor with proof of liability insurance for tree pruning maintenance. According to the County Manager's office, native and non-native trees are protected by the Land Development Code Section 4.06.05 J (1), which states vegetation shall only be pruned to promote healthy, uniform, natural growth of the vegetation.

Beyond improving curb appeal and impacting property values, well-maintained trees encourage wildlife habitats, create a cooling effect, and improve air quality and public health. The Environmental Protection Agency also says trees reduce stormwater runoff by intercepting and storing rainwater. Trees are natural filters and divert water into the soil instead of to wastewater treatment plants.

Some might argue that excessive pruning is required by local fire districts so emergency fire and rescue vehicles have access. But, fire and rescue vehicles require no more than a 14-foot clearance. Let's keep the county green and clean! Report unlawful pruning to the Growth Management Department, Code Enforcement Division at 2800 North Horseshoe Drive.



Naples Area Board of REALTORS®

continued Clothing Line

The process starts by melting the plastic bottles, and then it's formed into yarn which is used to make the special fabric. The company offers 21 long-sleeve performance shirts and 14 crew and ankle sock styles.



You can help clean the oceans with a purchase. Shirts start at \$40; socks start at \$10.

www.stepchangeoclothing.com

RESOURCES

[Calusa WaterKeeper](#)

[Captains for Clean Water](#)

[Collier County WaterKeeper](#)

[Collier County Watershed Management Plan](#)

[Daily Red Tide Reports](#)

protectingfloridatogether.gov

stepchangeoclothing.com