

TO: Venice City Mayor and Venice City Council
FROM: Steve Carr
DATE: June 23, 2023
RE: Unmet Resiliency and Mitigation Needs – Curry Creek

On behalf of the Central Venice Coalition and the Friends of Pinebrook Park, I am contacting you to request the addition of two issues to the list of the City's critical resiliency and mitigation challenges detailed in the communication from Mr. Edward Lavalley, Venice City Manager, to Mr. Robert R. Lewis, Director of Government Relations, Sarasota County Government which is the subject of the June 27, 2023 Venice City Council Meeting Agenda Item #23-6163.

Both issues are related to Curry Creek, the main public waterway which carries stormwater from the Myakka River to the Gulf of Mexico via Roberts Bay through parts of Unincorporated Sarasota County and the City of Venice. Both issues will help allay fears of area home and business owners that stormwater from another hurricane may become obstructed due to blockage within Curry Creek and result in severe flooding and catastrophic damage.

Issue One: The need for Debris Removal, Restoration of eroded Bank and Removal of leaning Trees, all caused by the effects from Hurricane Ian in a section of Curry Creek within Pinebrook Park.

Details: Thanks to the efforts of Kathleen Weeden, City of Venice Engineer, grant funds from the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service have been arranged to address the Debris Removal caused by Hurricane Ian in this section of Curry Creek. (Please note: Approval of this grant by Venice City Council is the subject of the June 27, 2023 Venice City Council Meeting Agenda Item #CON. NO. 159-2023).

However, due to changing conditions since the initial assessment of the debris in the creek, there is now extensive bank erosion of approximately 30 feet in the same area, resulting in many trees leaning over the creek in jeopardy of falling if the bank is not restored to its original state.

Currently, it is unknown if sufficient grant funds from the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service are available to remove all the debris, restore the eroded bank and remove the leaning trees.

If additional funds from other sources are needed, one source is the \$201.5 million HUD grant. HUD grant funds could supplement the Conservation Service funds and result in all issues being resolved in this Curry Creek section within Pinebrook Park.

Issue Two: Development and implementation of a City/County shared Maintenance Plan for the entire length of Curry Creek from the Myakka River to the Gulf of Mexico via Roberts Bay.

Details: The maintenance of Curry Creek has been a longstanding issue with neither the City of Venice nor Sarasota County taking overall responsibility for its maintenance and on-going upkeep. It is understandable that neither municipality has taken total responsibility since the Creek runs through some parts of the City of Venice and some parts of Unincorporated Sarasota County. No one wants full responsibility and the accompanying expense. Both municipalities have, in certain situations, provided assistance cleaning up parts of the Creek or addressing an isolated incident.

It is clear both City and County officials are aware of the need to maintain Curry Creek and up until now, their separate actions have resulted in an acceptable level of attention. However, Hurricane Ian has changed everything. All one has to do is look South of Sarasota County and Venice to see the catastrophic damage caused by flooding stormwater. People are now fearful of what could happen if/when another big storm hits the area.

Curry Creek is a critically important public waterway helping to direct excess stormwater away from residential and business areas to the Gulf of Mexico. Hundreds of homes, several churches, a multitude of businesses and a couple golf courses are all in danger of severe flooding if Curry Creek does not remain wide open and clear of obstructions.

It's time to prepare for future storms and ensure Curry Creek is in the best condition possible to keep as much stormwater away from damaging homes, businesses, and property. To that end, it is reasonable for City and County officials to work together to develop a shared Curry Creek maintenance plan and use HUD grant funds for its implementation.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at 315-679-0177 or via the City of Venice email address scarr@venicefl.gov. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Steve Carr, Central Venice Coalition Steering Committee Member

cc: Edward Lavalley, City Manager

James Clinch, Assistant City Manager

Kathleen Weeden, City Engineer

Rick Simpson, Director of Public Works

Roger Clark, Director of Planning and Zoning