



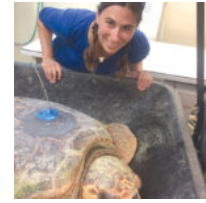
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#AMITOGETHER

AMI cities unite on water quality campaign

 by Ryan Paice |  Be the first to comment





Anna Maria-Wisconsin resident Lynneia Miller, left, fishes with Holmes Beach resident Larry Coover April 13 at the T-end canal at 67th and 68th streets in Holmes Beach.
Islander Photos: Ryan Paice



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**The most important
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priority for local
governments should
be ...**

- ☐ **Working for clean
water.**
- ☐ **Banning single-use
plastics.**
- ☐ **Hardening against
sea level rise.**



Algae and marine debris build up April 12 at the end of a canal near 77th Street in Holmes Beach.

- ☐ Limiting development
- ☐ Reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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82° scattered clouds
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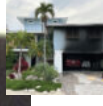
Holmes Beach Mayor Judy Titsworth steps to the podium April 12 to tell the city's Clean Water Committee about the Islander 4 Clean Water campaign.

Anna Maria Island's three cities are leading a combined effort to improve local water quality ahead of Earth Day.

Holmes Beach Mayor Judy Titsworth attended an April 12 city clean water meeting to announce the Islander 4 Clean Water campaign, an effort sponsored by all three island cities to promote awareness of water quality stewardship.



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The campaign includes a 10-point checklist “challenge” consisting of ways people can better protect and improve local water quality.

Some points include:

- Reducing and/or eliminating the use of chemical fertilizers and single-use plastics;
- Conserving fresh water;
- Properly disposing hazardous waste;
- Landscaping with Florida-friendly plants.

The final point asks people to share the campaign online with others by challenging them to complete the checklist and posting videos of themselves taking a plunge in local waters to social media — also tagging the city — to further awareness.

People who complete the checklist challenge can submit their entry by email to deputyclerk@holmesbeachfl.org or at Holmes Beach City Hall, 5801 Marina Drive, to win a promotional item funded by donations to the campaign.

Titsworth said promotional items would include custom T-shirts, rain barrels, compost bins and native plants and they would be distributed after Earth Day, which is Saturday, April 22.

The mayor said an anonymous donor gave \$10,000 to the cause.

Other people can help by sending donations to city hall.

Sponsorship includes four levels of benefits based on the amount donated — plankton, oyster, snook and manatee.

People who donate up to \$250, or plankton, will be thanked on social media.

Oysters — people who donate up to \$1,000 — will be thanked and can have a small logo featured on the campaign’s web page at holmesbeachfl.org.

Snook, who donate up to \$5,000, and manatees, who donate up to \$10,000, will be thanked with space and logos on the web page.

Titsworth, an island native, said clean water is personal to her, since she’s seen local sea life diminish over her lifetime. She said plentiful bay waters once held starfish, scallops and even horseshoe crabs but now are practically barren.

She said she hopes the campaign will inspire people to do what they can to improve local water quality.

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“It’s gotten to the point now where everybody has to do something,” Titsworth said. “Every single person has to do their part.”

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program public outreach manager Megan Barry said many Floridians can relate to Titsworth’s experience and applauded the island cities’ campaign.

“Our water quality faces a lot more challenges than it historically has,” Barry told *The Islander* April 14. “Human activity and development put a lot of stress on our bay. ... We all need to get involved and mitigate some of these activities that are causing stress.”

The SBEP is a cooperative partnership focused on improving the health of Sarasota Bay and promoting water stewardship.

Barry said the Islanders 4 Clean Water campaign might not address larger, systemic issues with water pollution but it is a good start to addressing issues.

“Promoting stewardship locally is going to have a direct local environmental impact. So I think that’s kind of why that local focus really does have a really deep return on investment,” Barry said. “You can see the changes so shortly after doing the right thing.”

While the campaign is the island’s first collaborative clean water initiative, all three island cities have separately approached the issue of water quality in some manner.

In Anna Maria, the city leased a T-end building on its city pier to the Mote Marine Laboratory to establish an educational outreach center.

Anna Maria Mayor Dan Murphy wrote in an April 13 email to *The Islander* that he believes the outreach center will “provide an educational platform for both public awareness of the issues we face with water quality as well as assisting in developing scientific solutions.”

The outreach center is set to open Friday, May 5.

The city of Bradenton Beach seeded tens of thousands of clams in bay waters near the city pier, where the filter feeders help clean the water.

Holmes Beach created a clean water committee in 2021 to act as an advisory board to the city commission, with a focus on coordinating community activity, philanthropy and government action to improve water quality.

“As I see it, all three cities in our island community are taking steps to address the issue facing us regarding water quality,” Murphy wrote. “We believe our island community as a whole is in the forefront on this issue and providing leadership in finding solutions.”

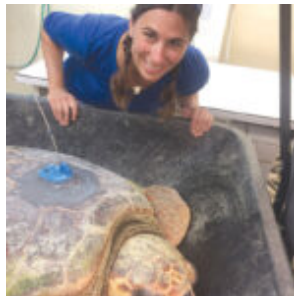
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