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Lee County Mosquito Control Merger News

What: A local advancement of a bill to house and Senate committees to merge Lee County Mosquito Control District and Fort Myers Beach Mosquito Control District

When: If passed in state house and senate committees, the bill would be placed on the ballot at November 3rd, 2026, general election.

Questions:

1. What would the bill mean for Lee County citizens?

- a. Lee County citizens would vote at the general election on November 3rd, 2026, whether to merge the Fort Myers Beach Mosquito Control District (FMBMCD) with Lee County Mosquito Control District (LCMCD). Currently, LCMCD services 97.5% of the county while also providing FMBMCD with many mosquito services due to its limited fleet and equipment size.

2. Can LCMCD effectively absorb the FMBMCD?

- a. Yes. For over 25 years, FMBMCD has relied on LCMCD to provide the following services:
 - i. Adult mosquito surveillance using a truck trap route along a three-mile stretch of Fort Myers Beach with next day sharing of data to help FMBMCD determine whether adulticide treatments are needed.
 - ii. Provides adult and larval mosquito surveillance to the 22,000-acre Estero Bay Preserve State Park belonging to FMBMCD with one full-time employee and a boat.
 - iii. Provides aerial sprays (when and where needed) to any of the 22,000 acres of Estero Bay Preserve State Park in the northern part of FMBMCD's service area.
 - iv. Conducts adulticiding for a small portion of FMBMCD's service area on the mainland – Bunche Beach and also conducts adulticiding via aerial spraying when numbers support such treatment and when requested by FMBMCD.
 - v. Conducts adult mosquito control to the Tidewater neighborhood (of about 200 homes) with spray trucks; this territory belongs to FMBMCD.
 - vi. Provides disease surveillance support to FMBMCD through its sentinel chicken program that includes flocks distributed throughout Lee County, as needed.

3. What will this cost the citizens of Lee County?

- a. For over 97% of the voters outside of the FMBMCD, this does not increase their ad valorem taxes. Fort Myers beach residents would incur an annual increase. For a Fort Myers Beach property appraised at \$500,000.00, the increase would be less than \$60 a year.
- b. Unfortunately, Hurricane Ian destroyed the Fort Myers Beach facility and fleet. The merger will help eliminate the costs of rebuilding or replacing FMBMCD equipment and facilities because LCMCD already has the facilities and equipment to service FMBMCD.

4. How can Lee County voters make an informed decision about how to vote if this ends up on the ballot in the general election of 2026?

- a. Recently, The Balmoral Group was selected by the Office of Program Policy and Government Analysis (OPPAGA) to conduct a review of Independent Mosquito Control districts. The review evaluated the districts' programs, activities and functions. We encourage voters to read the LCMCD and FMBMCD reviews at <https://oppaga.fl.gov/ContractedReviews>.

5. What are the pros of the Mosquito merger bill for the citizens of Lee County and Ft. Myers Beach?

- a. LCMCD has all the equipment needed to assume services without delay.
- b. No new agreement and price determination for aerial treatment of the 22,000-acre Estero Bay Reserve would be necessary. While the charge for spraying Estero Bay has remained constant at \$60,000/year since 2003, operational costs to LCMCD have increased due to increased pilot salaries, aircraft maintenance, aircraft insurance, fuel, and other services since 2003.
- c. LCMCD is not on the beachfront; no catastrophic destruction of headquarter buildings, equipment or flooding has occurred at our inland facility during the last 3 hurricanes to hit Lee County since 2017.
- d. By OPPAGA estimates, at least \$2M is needed to rebuild (on the same site) the FMBMCD facility. LCMCD cannot use the FMBMCD site for operations, this land would be turned over to someone else.
- e. LCMCD will offer jobs to FMBMCD director and his worker if consolidated.
- f. Consolidation of resources into one special taxing district is a reduction in redundancy.
- g. No permission from the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs is needed to loan equipment to FMBMCD when the need arises.

6. What are the disadvantages of the Mosquito merger bill for the citizens of Lee County and Ft. Myers Beach?

- a. FMB residents will incur an increase in Mosquito Control Ad Valorem taxes. The 2025 LCMCD millage is currently 0.2200 and the FMBMCD is 0.1100. With the need to build a new facility and the increased cost of contracted aerial operations (\$80,000/year), FMB residents might see an increase in their millage rate regardless of merger if reconstruction of their building/equipment facility is not at least partially funded by outside sources. Meanwhile, the LCMCD millage rate has decreased over the past 7 years from 0.2800 (FY2018) to 0.2200 today (FY2025). LCMCD expects to continue this trend of decreasing its millage rate for near-future annual Truth in Millage (TRIM) cycles, gradually closing the tax gap difference that exists today.