



TO: Interested Parties  
FR: Sean Callahan, Executive Director, Corporate Business Operations  
DT: August 14, 2018  
RE: Water Quality Economic Challenges Read-ahead

---

The following items provide an update on Collier County efforts to gauge and minimized economic impact of the ongoing water quality issues and provides information regarding economic assistance programs available from the State and other partners.

### **CVB Actions**

The Collier County Tourism Division, working with partners, has led an aggressive public and media relations outreach campaign since the intensification of the water quality issues in the area. Some of these efforts include:

- Revamp and prominent placement of [beach conditions](#) on Tourism website
  - Access to live beach cams and real-time beach photos
- Special consumer e-newsletter sent August 13
- Daily outreach and media monitoring by national PR agency and CVB staff
  - Regular updates to partners with fact-based information
  - Focus on earned and owned media dissemination
  - Correction of inaccurate info – direction to sources
- Partner advertising and redirection of all digital ads to Tourism website
- Development of response language for partners for inquiries on water issues
- Involvement in creation of marketing plan for efforts following the conclusion of the water quality event (local & regional)
- Distribution of surveys on economic impacts to area businesses

### **Economic Surveying**

The Collier County Tourism Division administered a survey to local businesses and hotels to gauge the economic impact of the region's water quality issues. This survey is still ongoing and will be more widely circulated in the coming days. The following nominal observations have been made thus far:

- More respondents replied that business traffic was down compared to this time last year;
- Majority of respondents reported customers leaving the area or cancelled reservations.
- Most respondents reported receiving heavy volumes of inquiries about water issues;
- With the exception of a few outliers, most respondents replied that impacts on business thus far were minimal or too early to fully quantify.

VISIT FLORIDA will be conducting an upcoming statewide survey on the economic impacts of the water quality issues in the coming weeks.

### **Executive Order 18-221 – Red Tide Statement of Emergency**

On August 13, 2018, Governor Rick Scott made an Executive Order to declare a State of Emergency in Collier County. The following financial programs were made available:

#### ***Department of Economic Opportunity Small Business Bridge Loans***

The Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan is an interest-free loan program currently available to small business owners located in designated disaster areas that experienced physical and/or economic damage as a result of Lake Okeechobee Discharge/Algae Blooms and Red Tide impacting the state.

Small business owners can qualify for up to \$50,000 per eligible business and can apply through their local Small Business Development Center.

Affected Collier County businesses can get assistance and apply for this program at:

FSBDC at Florida Gulf Coast University  
10501 FGCU Blvd South  
Fort Myers, FL, 33965-6502  
(239) 735-3700 or [sbdc@fgcu.edu](mailto:sbdc@fgcu.edu)

Full program information can be found at: <http://www.floridadisasterloan.org>

#### ***VISIT FLORIDA Emergency Grant Program***

VISIT FLORIDA will also create a \$500,000 emergency grant program to assist local tourism development boards in counties affected by the naturally-occurring red tide. Guidance on how to apply is forthcoming.

Funding will be used in conjunction with a marketing campaign to assist Southwest Florida communities that will start following this year's red tide blooms. The Convention and Visitors Bureau will be coordinating with the agency to pursue this funding.

#### ***Mote Marine Laboratory Funding***

More than \$100,000 in additional funding to Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium to increase its response to red tide impacts. This funding will help Mote Marine deploy additional scientists to assist local efforts to save animals affected by the naturally occurring red tide, including manatees, dolphins and sea turtles.

- VISIT FLORIDA will look for additional funding to help supplement data gathering efforts with Mote Marine.