



Juno Beach Ecology Group

Council Scorecard: Three Hits and One Miss

Environmental issues were on the agenda at last week's Town Council meeting: street lights and sea turtles, Pelican Lake management, gas-powered leaf blowers, and our town's disaster resiliency. We believe that three of the votes were a Hit, but we call Foul on one of them. Here are the details.

Hit 1: Nixing Gas-powered Leaf Blowers

Council passed an ordinance on first reading to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers starting October 2024 as other towns have done. This decision followed, albeit slowly, our Ecology Group members' proposal of October 2022.

Why this matters: Incredibly, gas-powered leaf blowers cause as much pollution in one hour as a gas vehicle driving 1,000 miles; their excessive noise is also a quality of life issue.

Hit 2: Pelican Lake Management

Everyone agrees that reducing cattails around Pelican Lake is necessary, but it's a more delicate issue than it appears.



Cattails benefit the lake's ecology in at least two ways: first, they filter stormwater runoff, especially at the more vulnerable south end of the

lake; second, they provide essential nesting areas for our migratory and resident birds.

Steve Hallock, Director of Public Works, reported that the removal and trimming of the cattails has been postponed until after our local birds are finished nesting. At that time, Sean Patton, the town's lake biologist, will be on site in waders so he can monitor this work and assure that no birds/nests are harmed.

Algae blooms are also a concern, of course, and Sean will continue to advise the Town on when, how,

and how much they should be removed. He has noted in the past that although these may be unsightly, they are not always detrimental to the lake's ecosystem.

We were pleased that the councilors voted to hire a firm to do this work, and that it favored one with expertise even though it was not the lowest bidder.

Hit 3: How Disaster-Resilient are we?

The Council voted to seek a grant to assess our vulnerability to eco-threats, such as hurricanes, floods, and disease. Such an assessment is an essential first step if we want to be proactive and create a practical sustainability program that could mitigate the impact of such events.

Such a grant would also help us qualify for further funding of the stormwater projects planned for both Universe Boulevard and Celestial Way.

Ball 4-Foul: Sea Turtle Safety

As you probably know, standard outdoor lighting near the coast can so disorient emerging sea turtle hatchlings that they head inland rather than safely out to sea. Loggerhead Marinelife Center reports that such little ones are being turned in regularly.



Confused?

To minimize this risk, nine of our town's street lights have been turned off during the summer hatching season. To our dismay, Town Council voted last week to explore costs and options for turning these lights back on. Of course, they don't wish to harm our iconic sea turtles, but we think they are looking for a solution before they have correctly identified the issue.

We in the Ecology Group agree that safe nighttime lighting is important for us humans, who share the coast with our favorite coastal residents. What, then, is the problem? We see two:

- If the problem is insufficient path or sidewalk lighting, then we should be looking for ways to illuminate such areas with street-level amber-colored lighting that doesn't attract turtles. *Turning the street lamps back on, even if shielded, is jumping too quickly.*
- Further, each of the nine locations may have different levels of hazard to the sea turtles, as some lamps are more exposed than others. This is not a one-size-fits-all matter. *Solutions should be tailored to address the safety issue location-by-location.*

We strongly encourage our Councilors to avoid taking a too simplistic, Lights On / Lights Off, approach.

Two Town Budget Matters

Our new Finance Director, Michael Ventura, and new Town Manager, David Dyess, are working with Matt Pazanski to complete drafting of our Town's 2024 budget.

We were surprised to see that there is still reference in the budget to the failed proposal for the "Events Area" that was to be by the Lake, and that it included the related grant-funding. The Council agreed to return the grant funding for the Event Center. Moving forward, we will want to know more.

Meanwhile, we are especially pleased to see that the budgetary green light is still lit up for Ocean Drive and Celestial Way stormwater projects. These will better filter pollutants from reaching Pelican Lake, and they will also create two littoral shelves in the lake's shallows to improve wading bird habitats, one in the northwest corner of the lake by the gazebo, and the other in the southeast.

Save the Date – All are Welcome

October 11th Native Plant Lecture 3 p.m. Town Hall

November 15th Orchid Lecture 3 p.m. Town Hall

Thank you to Bianca Cooke for the inspiration and her leadership in this effort to place orchids around

Pelican Lake. We are currently accepting donations of orchids.

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Ecology Group Board members, Jim Ferguson, Community Advocate William Kimball, Vice-Mayor Pro Tem Marianne Hosta, Science Advisor Ross Wilcox, President Diana Davis, and Red Dunn

This Newsletter was produced by JBEG President Diana Davis.

OUR MISSION

Recognizing that quality of life is linked to a healthy environment, our mission is to promote environmental best practices that foster a healthy ecosystem and support the conservation, protection, and sustainability of our natural resources.

PS: Want to know more about sea turtle and artificial light issues?

Light-Pollution Problems on Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches

https://f50006a.eos-intl.net/ELIBSQL12_F50006A_Documents/TR-2Rev2.pdf

Coastal Roadway Lighting Manual

https://myfwc.com/media/15867/coastal_roadway_lighting_manual.pdf