



## GICIA donates funds to Lee County to purchase beach rake

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### ■ STAFF REPORT

As another red tide bloom lurks off the coast, the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association recognizes the negative impact these blooms have on our community. After looking at the current protocol for dealing with red tide-related fish kills on Boca Grande beaches, the GICIA donated the \$60,000 necessary for Lee County to purchase

a surf/beach rake for Boca Grande.

At the November GICIA board meeting, directors discussed the current bloom and deliberated on ways that, as an island organization, they could potentially assist the County in their current efforts to keep Boca Grande beaches free of mass fish kills. When the GICIA looked at the beach cleanup procedures in place, they learned that in recent weeks Lee County staff had spent time hand-cleaning the beaches of small pockets of dead fish.

In the event of a significant fish kill, Lee County had to juggle the few surf/beach rakes they own among the coastal communities experiencing the red tide impacts. While Charlotte County does not have any public beach accesses located on the island and therefore does not participate in beach cleanups, Lee County manages multiple public beach accesses and therefore does engage in fish kill cleanups. With that information, GICIA Executive Director Misty Nichols approached Lee County Parks and Recreation

Director Jesse Lavender about the possibility of GICIA donating the funds for Lee County to purchase a surf/beach rake that would be designated for Boca Grande use.

Mr. Lavender and his staff worked on the issue from the County's side and even received approval for Lee County to purchase the tractor needed to tow the rake.

The GICIA is very pleased that at the Lee County Board of County Commissioners meeting on Dec. 3, Commissioners voted unanimously to accept the Association's donation for the purchase of a beach/surf rake that will be permanently assigned to Boca Grande.

"The GICIA is excited to be able to play a role in minimizing the red tide impacts to our community," said Nichols. The GICIA appreciates the opportunity to participate in this cooperative effort with Lee County that will provide a great benefit for Boca Grande.



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Marcy Shortuse is the editor of the Boca Beacon, and has been with the paper since 2007. She is also editor of the Boca Beacon's sister publication, Gasparilla Magazine. She has more than 20 years of experience writing and editing local newspapers and is originally from the Chicago area.

## TAGGED WITH

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