

Cash expected to flow to Loxahatchee

By Kit Bradshaw
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New programs geared toward restoring the Loxahatchee River are flowing smoothly, water managers said during a Loxahatchee River Watershed Planning Committee meeting last week.

The recent inclusion of the Loxahatchee River in the South Florida Water Management District's "First Tier" of projects opens the door to funding from the district's ad valorem taxes and the seven much-discussed projects of the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative have gained support from state lawmakers. One of the first steps in obtaining funding was recently completed by SFWMD, which prioritized local waterways in order of importance and the

need for research and improvement.

Recently, SFWMD's Board of Governors approved three projects aimed at the river in their fiscal 2002 budget. These include \$70,000 for the "valued ecosystem components selection and analysis," which will help the district's scientists pinpoint the flora and fauna that are being stressed because of salt-water encroachment.

Another \$90,000 is budgeted for monitoring the water flow into the river from key tributaries, such as Cypress Creek and Kitching Creek. And finally, an additional \$60,000 is being added for an on-going study of the Cypress Creek area. The prioritization of the river is a huge step forward for the Loxahatchee Preservation Initiative, said Jupiter Utilities Director David Brown.

"Last year, when we went for state funding for the seven projects that are part of the Loxahatchee River's initiative. We didn't get the funding because there was an error, and the state didn't know that we were actually on SFWMD's list of priorities — they got the wrong list," Brown said. "Now, we are working more closely together, so that we can go to the Legislature and ask for the \$4.125 million we need. Brown said he expects another \$4.1 million in matching funds from the town, Palm Beach County, Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District, even the Boy Scouts of America for a Jonathan Dickinson State Park project.

All seven projects on the list relate to water quality, Brown said, with Jones Creek heading the list. This

project will include removing two to three feet of muck in the Jones Creek canal, which poses a threat to the river, and then improving the stormwater management from Pennock Industrial Park.

"A lot of water run-off comes barreling out of Pennock Industrial Park into Jones Creek and the river, without being naturally treated," Brown says.

In Jupiter Farms, the project there would have the canals in that area feed into control structures. This would allow the water in the canals to slow down, pond up and rest while the solids and pollutants settle out of the water, and then allow the fresh water to go into the river. Brown says it would be a natural way to treat the water so it is cleaner when it arrives at the river.