

NEWS RELEASE

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Fort Pierce Derelict Vessel Removal Underway

The City of Fort Pierce, in collaboration with St. Lucie County, recently received a grant totaling \$46,780 (\$17,000 from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Florida Boating Improvement Program and \$20,000 match from St. Lucie County) to remove four (4) derelict vessels located within the city limits and across St. Lucie County. Most of the targeted vessels have been in our waters since the 2004 Hurricanes.

Prior to removing the vessels, FWC's 'due diligence' included comprehensive efforts toward identifying the owner of each vessel, mailing certified letters to the last known title-holders and requesting they either remove the dilapidated vessels from the public waters within 30 days or provide proof of the legal transfer of ownership. According to the FWC, derelict vessels in St. Lucie County jeopardize the safety of boaters and potentially leaking pollutants and scattering debris which contaminates our waters, creates a menace for fish and wildlife and seriously damages delicate sea grasses and mangrove forests.

Significant technical expertise and specialized consultation are required to assess, remove and dispose of these vessels. The City completed a bid process then selected Tetra Tech, EC to complete the permitting and act as the environmental consultants for the project. Absolute Marine Towing and Salvage was selected as the contracting firm to remove the vessels. The Okeechobee Landfill is allowing the City to dispose of the vessels at no charge (free).

The professional, licensed derelict vessel removal contractor and environmental consultants ensured extensive planning for this project and provided expert oversight during all facets of the project's implementation, which helped ensure minimal negative impact. The consulting firm also provided a qualified biologist to monitor each vessel's removal process which consisted of manatee and other marine life observation, submerged resource impact monitoring and water quality monitoring.

This project will make a significant positive impact on the environment by removing the threat of environmental contamination and the danger to marine life and aquatic habitat that the vessels presented. Five (5) vessels were originally targeted for removal. One had been removed by its owner at the time of the grant award. The City will use left-over award funds to remove additional derelict vessels, as they are approved for removal by FWC.

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