

May 2006 Public Comment: Jeff Torode

Task Force

I am the Vice President of the Greater Ft. Lauderdale Dive Association, Non-Agency Navigator for SEFCRI and President of South Florida Diving Headquarters. More importantly I am a native Florida that is tired of watching one of this nations greatest treasures being destroyed in the name of progress by greedy developers. The lure of sugar sand beaches, blue water and coral reefs will ultimately be it's own demise.

The population explosion from the 1960s to now has left us with:

- \* Right angle canals and stagnate water.
- \* Vegetation removed and replaced by seawalls which offer no habitat or cleansing of our inland waterways.
- \* Outfall pipes that dump millions of gallons of treated sewage on our coral reefs contributing to massive algae blooms that smother the reefs.
- \* A depleted fishery due to over fishing and lack of protection.
- \* Inland waterways and inlets that have become drain fields for agriculture runoff and pollution also contributing to massive algae blooms.
- \* Reefs buried under sand and sediment from beach re-nourishment projects.

Paradise soon will not be paradise!

Being a navigator for SEFCRI I do realize that many of these issues are being addressed. My biggest fear is it will not be time.

Recently I attended a meeting with the Assistant Director of CAMA. Part of the discussion was directed at the reason why DEP staff was directed to remove any photos of permitted projects from a portable display. At the center of the discussion was a photo of the Delray Outfall Pipe which everyone felt should be on the display. We were told that it is permitted and is in compliance, when in fact it was not at that time. In addition we were told that there was no clear evidence yet linking sewer outfalls to reef degradation. Two months later a study is released linking sewer outfalls to reef degradation and is reported in the Sun Sentinel.

SEFCRI needs more flexibility to change with the environmental and political climate. Last month the Lobster Trap Fishery petitioned FFWCC to allow them to begin trapping 4 weeks earlier than normal. Everyone in the FDOU group agreed this would go against Best Management Practices and would be destructive to the lobster fishery long term. It was suggested that FDOU send a collective opinion to FFWCC to aide in their decision. We were told by DEP staff that we could only send individual statements because of the SEFCRI charter.

SEFCRI should be a pure process. It should be allowed to express ideas freely without persecution. The process should not be poisoned by agency stone walling. Each agency seems afraid of stepping on the others turf.

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SEFCRI is the best thing to happen in SE Florida for the Marine Environment and many of us are excited to see some results. Please leave the politics at the door.

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