

Florida environmental group threatens to sue Cape Coral over water quality

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CAPE CORAL, Fla. -- A Florida environmental group is threatening to sue the city of Cape Coral for permit violations that could be polluting water in the area.

The notice alleges that the city has ignored important requirements of the Clean Water Act, meant to protect the city's water quality.

The problem traces back to 2008, when Cape Coral removed the Ceitus barrier from the north canal spreader, which served as treatment for water pollution. The Clean Water Network of Florida said this was allowed only under the condition that the city take action to make up for the loss of pollution treatment. According the to the group, the city has not met those requirements.

Fox 4 reached out to Linda Young, Director of the Clean Water Network of Florida and the person who sent the notice, to find out what those requirements were. "Specifically, they were suppose to identify all the outfalls that go into those canals, and there are a lot of them," she said. "Then, they were suppose to make a plan, a written plan, that would be approved by the DET, for how they were going to divert the polluted water from those outfalls somewhere else, not into the canal."

Local business owners in Matlacha said the pollution hurts them. "When we're purchasing seafood or buying seafood, they want to trust our decisions as far as being able to say this is a quality product. So any time there's any doubt in the mind, it makes it harder for them to trust us sometimes," said Andy Fisher, owner of the Island Seafood Market. "It should be taken care of. If these things are suppose to be already in place and they're not, it's not fair for us as a business to have to deal with that."

Locals who enjoy the water said that they have seen marine life dying because of pollution. "The government should take a little more responsibility for protecting our wildlife because people come down here for vacation, for living, for stay-cations, and it's just a shame that they're letting something like this destroy something people come down here for," said Janelle Grunsy, a resident of Matlache.

Fox 4 reached out to the City of Cape Coral, who said they just received the notice on Thursday. However, they are unable to comment until they have reviewed the allegations.

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