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# Naples Daily News

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Harmful algal blooms in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caloosahatchee River rocked Southwest Florida in 2018. ANDREW WEST/THE NEWS-PRESS

## Efforts taken to stop algae blooms

### Fertilizer ordinances hope to curb pollution

Karl Schneider and Patrick Riley  
Fort Myers News-Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Rainy season is underway in Southwest Florida and with it comes an effort from local governments to curb excess nutrients in the area's waters.

Lee and Collier counties, as well as the cities that lay within, have implemented fertilizer ordinances in hopes of curbing harmful algal blooms and reducing the nutrient pollution in storm water runoff.

The need to reduce nutrients was highlighted in 2018 when Southwest Florida was hit by blue-green algae and red tide at the same time, devastating wildlife and the local economy. Then governor Rick Scott, now a U.S. senator, declared states of emergency for multiple counties over the outbreaks.

The algae are natural but are fed by nutrients from farms, yards and wastewater from leaky pipes or septic tanks.

On Sanibel, red tide blooms and red drift algae prompted the city to issue its own fertilizer ordinance.

"Poor water quality not only im-

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## Abuse shelter opens up new Immokalee facility



Shelly and Ralph Stayer at the ribbon cutting on May 26. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

### Building intended to save even more lives

Andrew Atkins  
Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

As of June 1, The Shelter for Abused Women and Children's new Shelly Stayer Shelter in Immokalee is open and available to the community.

The Shelly Stayer Shelter's 22,500 square feet and 60 beds doubles the bed space the shelter offers in Collier County to 120 beds. Of the 60 beds at the Shelly Stayer Shelter, 52 are allocated for victims of domestic violence and eight are for long-term care and rehabilitation of human trafficking victims. All of the Shelter's services are provided at no cost to those it serves.

"I feel strongly that this shelter in Immokalee will save lives," said Shelter CEO Linda Oberhaus. "We know

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The new Shelly Stayer Shelter of The Shelter for Abused Women and Children celebrated a ribbon cutting May 26.

The Shelly Stayer Shelter's 22,500 square feet and 60 beds doubles the bed space the shelter offers in Collier County to 120 beds.

## Bar owners eager to reopen, but some will not

### The ones that open will have new rules to follow

David Dorsey  
Fort Myers News-Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Andrew Gray and his Rack 'Em Billiards in Cape Coral have been at a standstill since March 16, when the coronavirus pandemic prompted Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to close all bars with an executive order.

That order has ended. Over the past 80 days, Gray and other bars owners in Lee and Collier County have watched as their food-serving, restaurant counterparts sprung back to action May 4 at 25% capacity and then May 15 at 50% capacity.

Friday, June 5, marks the first day in which bars can open at 50% capacity, and Gray has been clamoring with excitement. He considered the 24-year-old bar at 1011 SE 47th Terrace to be his "baby."

"It's my child," Gray said during a

phone interview earlier this week while in a Lee County line to pick up some free personal protection equipment for himself and his staff.

At the time, DeSantis was a day away from announcing bars could reopen, and Gray's frustrations with being unable to open were mounting.

"I'm going to fight," he said. "I'll lose every, last penny before I lose the bar. Give me 15% occupancy, just so I can pay my bills and keep the staff employed."

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Andrew Gray owns Rack 'Em Billiards in Cape Coral, which has been closed since March 16. ANDREA MELENDEZ/THE NEWS-PRESS

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# Wetlands

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tection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and fall under the Clean Water Act, which went into effect in 1972 during the Nixon administration.

Some states, including Florida, have flirted with the idea of taking over those duties, but that move is being fought by environmental groups as well.

Florida is not involved with any challenges or lawsuits regarding the new rule.

EPA spokeswoman Andrea Woods said the agency is being responsible to the environment and the economy, saying the public should be able to understand the Clean Water Act and the rules and regulations that apply to it.

"It clearly delineates where federal Clean Water Act requirements apply and allows state and local authorities the flexibility to determine how best to manage water resources within their borders," Woods said. "Under the Trump Administration, EPA is providing clarity, predictability, and consistency so that regulators and the public can understand where the Clean Water Act applies and where it does not. Such straightforward regulations will continue to protect the nation's navigable waters, help sustain economic growth, and provide greater regulatory certainty."

Calusa Waterkeeper John Cassani is not involved in the case but said he feels like the Clean Water Act should fall under the federal government as it's based on federal law, and that transferring the oversight to state and local governments could be bad for Florida's environment and long-term economy.

"It's a narrative in disguise that means less regulations and less protections," Cassani said. "We're in a state where water quality has declined terribly over the last 10 years or so. Impairments have become rampant, and now the feds are saying the states should take care of that."

Cassani said rolling back these types of regulations is just one way the cost of corporate business is put on the backs of taxpayers.

"When you reduce regulations you externalize the costs of corporate players and you end up with the public paying the cost to clean up their pollution," he said.

Critics say the administration is trying to redefine what is known as Waters

**EPA spokeswoman Andrea Woods said the agency is being responsible to the environment and the economy, saying the public should be able to understand the Clean Water Act and the rules and regulations that apply to it.**

of the United States, which will enable builders and developers to further impact areas that are currently protected under the Clean Water Act.

The finalized rule was released on Jan. 23. The navigable waters rule will take effect on June 22.

Seventeen states are challenging the rule in a hearing that will take place on June 18 in San Francisco.

"Although the agencies concede the importance of science, they largely ignored the scientific understanding of how streams and wetlands contribute to the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of downstream waters," the brief from the states says. "The agencies suggest that it is difficult to quantify precisely the number of waters that the 2020 Rule would remove from Clean Water Act protection, and they thus need not make any effort to estimate the decline in jurisdiction and, consequently, the resulting loss of water quality and ecosystem services those waters provide."

Still, Hartl and others aren't convinced that these rollbacks will protect the environment, drinking water resources or the public's best interest.

"Under the (current) Clean Water Act water, whether it's a wetland stream or river, you can't pollute it with say a factory or fill a wetland for development unless you apply for a permit and mitigate the damage," Hartl said. "And the rule at its heart defines which bodies of water are or are not covered by the Clean Water Act."

Woods said the rule will make the country prosperous while doing what's necessary to protect the environment.

"EPA is providing clarity, predictability, and consistency so that regulators and the public can understand where the Clean Water Act applies and where it does not," she said. "Such straightforward regulations will continue to protect the nation's navigable waters, help sustain economic growth, and provide greater regulatory certainty."

Connect with this reporter: @ChadGillisNP on Twitter.

# Shelter

Continued from Page 1A

that literally, there are three generations of women living in Immokalee who have always lived in abusive situations because we provide service to, literally, three generations of women in abusive relationships."

Those who come to the Shelter, Oberhaus said, "are really sending a message to their children that abuse is not OK, that relationships can be healthy and whole."

Aside from constructing a physical shelter in the community, the Shelter has provided services for since 1997 with its Immokalee Outreach Office, the Shelly Stayer Shelter bolsters access to the Shelter's protective services: Instead of needing to find transportation for the 45 minute trip to the Naples shelter, that resource is directly in the community.

"We are interrupting the next generation of victims and abusers," Oberhaus said.

Plans for the shelter date back to 2016 and began with a lead gift of \$3 million from Shelly Stayer, a longtime Shelter supporter and co-owner (alongside her husband, Ralph Stayer) of Johnsonville, the Wisconsin-based sausage company.

"Family is very important to me so I was immediately attracted to the work that The Shelter is doing to help individuals and families heal from the devastating effects of domestic violence," Stayer said in a written statement at the time.

"It is personally rewarding to know this shelter will fill a significant need in the Immokalee area as well as provide for the specialized long-term care of victims of human trafficking."

The Shelly Stayer Shelter was planned for 32 beds when announced in 2016, Oberhaus said, but the organization anticipated needs could potentially exceed the planned space early on, so the Shelter reconfigured the domestic violence wings to add bunk beds in family rooms.

COVID-19 delayed the Shelly Stayer Shelter's opening, originally set for April 15, to a virtual grand opening May 26 and a full opening of its services June 1. The delays came after March's comments from Sheriff Kevin Rambosk to Collier County commissioners, in which he highlighted a 30% increase in the number of domestic violence



The new Shelly Stayer Shelter is 22,500 square feet and has 60 total beds. COURTESY OF THE SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

calls in the wake of social distancing, providing a sense of urgency to the Shelter.

"We felt it would not be in the best interest of the organizations or the people we were able to serve by opening up right as the pandemic was hitting its peak," Oberhaus said.

"We outreached to the Immokalee community to let them know that our Naples shelter was open and that we would make whatever arrangements they needed to get these people to safe shelter."

Chief Operating Officer for the Shelter, Julie Franklin, said the separate space for victims of human trafficking is a key element that sets the Shelly Stayer Shelter apart. The long-term rehabilitation space allows the Shelter to provide two specialized services catered to the specific needs of victims.

"It's been the biggest project I've ever worked on, but by far the most rewarding," Franklin said. "The reason why we are here today is because of the community."

Oberhaus noted that, while the organization's name is The Shelter for Abused Women and Children, the organization serves all victims of domestic violence, including male victims.

"If they have the courage to step up and say they need help, we're going to help them," she said.

The Shelter for Abused Women and Children also operates a crisis line at (239) 775-1101.

Andrew Atkins is a Naples Daily News features reporter. Contact him via email at [andrew.atkins@naplesnews.com](mailto:andrew.atkins@naplesnews.com). To support work like Andrew's, please consider subscribing: <https://cm.naplesnews.com> /specialoffer/

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