

CITY OF SANIBEL APPROVED TO PILOT-TEST ALGAE REMOVAL WHEN CONDITIONS WARRANT

The Sanibel City Council continued to discuss the pilot Algae Management Program Sept. 18, agreeing to give City staff the ability to proceed with temporary testing on specified sections of island beaches should "an adequate amount" of algae appear. Since Sanibel beaches are currently not experiencing algae problems, it was agreed to leave a decision as to when to test up to City Management upon the advice of staff.

The possible test areas for mechanical removal of algae from beaches are outlined on an attached map.

After extensive discussions with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), FDEP issued a Conditional Permit on Sept. 8 to allow for the pilot program to take place, based on 23 conditions due to the unique nature of the beaches of Sanibel. Six vendors are lined up to perform the temporary testing when the time comes. However, no tests will be done unless and until there is "adequate" algae present to warrant a productive and financially sensible test.

If and when pilot testing occurs, City staff will record the following information:

- Date and time
- Weather conditions
- Name of the vendor
- Names of witnesses
- Method and equipment being tested
- Sand density
- Amount of algae present
- Video of the tested area.

It will also be noted how much noise and odor the tests may cause and whether there is any disturbance to wildlife. After testing, notes will be taken regarding how much time the test took, how much algae was successfully removed, sand density and the amount of sand removed. The tests will be videotaped. The City will also consider any impacts felt by residents, visitors and business owners.

Five public access "staging" areas have been identified by City staff as areas to keep the equipment necessary for the testing program. They are: Blind Pass Public Access, Bowman's Beach Access Point, Tarpon Bay Road Access Point, Lighthouse Beach Access Point and Donax Street Access Point. The Council approved moving forward on the five sites. City staff will further evaluate the sites.

Most of the FDEP's 23 conditions are related to the City of Sanibel's focus on wildlife protection, such as sea turtles and nesting birds. Council members had previously brought up the same concern when discussing the program.