

Matecumbe Neighbors



Newsletter of the Lower Matecumbe Key Association

February 2013

Mark your Calendar!

Next LMKA Meeting

Thursday, March 7, 7pm—9 pm
Boy Scout SeaBase, MM73.8 Bayside

Program: *All About Sea Turtles*...A presentation by the Turtle Hospital in Marathon.

Learn about this outstanding facility and their mission to rehab injured sea turtles and return them to their natural habitat. In addition they are doing a fabulous job of educating the public, conducting research, and promoting legislation that will make the beaches and water safe and clean for sea turtles.

We will also have an election of the 2013 Board of Directors- still looking for volunteers to fill a vacancy! Please let us know if you are willing to serve.

Sewers are Coming to Our Island

The State of Florida has mandated that Islamorada must complete a sewer project that will treat wastewater from all properties within the village by the end of 2015. Every property in the Village must be connected.

In August 2012, the Islamorada Village Council unanimously approved a \$90.9 million contract for Reynolds Water Islamorada to provide a collection and distribution system for the remaining village wastewater which will be piped to Key Largo. The village negotiated a \$10.5 million agreement with the Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District (KLWTD) to treat village wastewater at their MM100 regional treatment plant which is already up and running.

Construction has started on Middle Plantation Key, with Lower Matecumbe work scheduled to be done last. The work on the main transmission line across the bridges to Lower Matecumbe is scheduled to be done starting April 2014. They anticipate putting the pipes deep under water instead of placing them on the bridges, though they are facing a legal issue at Tavernier Creek as federally protected land is currently off limits to new utilities.

As the design and construction of the project progresses, informational neighborhood meetings will be held in each area of the Village prior to construction in that area. The meetings are intended to educate property owners about the process, and to allow the Wastewater contractor and Village staff to gather input from the public.

Tentatively a Lower Matecumbe resident meeting will be held July 15, 2014. Construction in our neighborhoods is not scheduled to begin until October 2014.

(See page 4 for more Wastewater Information)

Join LMKA or Renew Now

Family Member ship: \$20
Single Membership: \$12

Invest in our island...You can't find a better \$20 investment for your family!

See last page for membership form.

Please provide an email....your best bet for keeping up with news that impacts our island. We promise we will not share your email address with anyone.

Share your newsletter with neighbors and encourage them to join our association and to attend meetings.

Let us know if you'd like prior newsletters emailed to you.

In this issue.....

- January Meeting: If you weren't able to attend, read about what you missed!
- Islamorada Tennis Club- outstanding Lower Matecumbe recreational facility
- 1733 Shipwrecks near Lower Matecumbe
- Who Owns the beach? Who can access it?
- Sewers are coming- what property owners need to know
- Introducing Matecumbe Mermaids!

Email Islamorada Village Council.... They are working for us.

If you have questions, ideas, or complaints you'd like to share with our local elected officials, email Village Clerk, Ariana Lawson, at ariana.lawson@islamorada.fl.us and ask her to distribute the email to council. Or send an email to individual members

Ken.Philipson@islamorada.fl.us

Deb.Gillis@islamorada.fl.us

Ted.Blackburn@islamorada.fl.us

Mike.Forster@islamorada.fl.us

Dave.Purdo@islamorada.fl.us

Links you should check out

- www.islamorada.fl.us - the Village government website, including information about meetings, agendas, minutes, staff, and council
- Www.keysnet.com - for recent stories from the Reporter and Keynoter
- Keysnews.com - Key West Citizen website. Click on the Free Press logo half way down the home page on the left hand side to download the current Islamorada Free Press.
- www.reynoldswaterislamorada.com - This website provides information from Reynolds Water Islamorada - the company providing the Village wastewater collection and transmission system.
- klwtd.com - Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District - the organization that will be treating wastewater piped from Islamorada

Lower Matecumbe Key Association Statement of Purpose

The Lower Matecumbe Key Association, Inc. shall actively work to preserve and enhance the quality of life and environment through participation and democratic process by the residents.

Goals shall include:

- 1. Monitoring activities such as zoning and construction.**
- 2. Communicating with all members to alert them to potential problems or opportunities.**
- 3. Coordinating the efforts of the individual neighborhood associations on common objectives.**
- 4. Providing an open forum for presentation and discussion of issues.**
- 5. Taking appropriate action on behalf of the membership.**

Board of Directors:

President Gordon Hadley: 305-664-0621; gordo0621@aol.com

Vice Pres and Treasurer—Hermine Zavar

Secretary Ann Haber

Board members: Dave Elbaum, Dick Wilson, George Young , Donna Gleason, Krissy Gustinger

Newsletter: Sue Miller, editor

The opinions in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the Board of Directors of LMKA. Articles with opposing points of view are encouraged.

January LMKA Meeting:**Fortunes Made & Lost in the Florida Keys**

a narrated slide presentation by Irving Eyster

What a treat! On January 31st about 40 lucky Lower Matecumbe residents and friends gathered at the Boy Scout Sea Base. One of our local treasures, archeologist and historian Irving Eyster and his family shared a wonderfully informative narrative and slide presentation he developed about our community's history: [Fortunes Made & Lost in the Florida Keys](#).

Our 100+ miles of coral rock keys surrounded by shimmering blue green water may seem to be mostly tourist industry today. Consider the Keys before mosquito control or air conditioning. The earlier Keys have a varied and deeper story worth hearing. Irving Eyster passionately believes that story is worth telling. I will touched on a small part of what he had to say.

The first manufacturing in the Keys was a saltworks in Islamorada, run by the native Floridians from approximately 200 BC to 1250 AD. Salt was very important as a preservative before refrigeration. There are still salt ponds in Key West.

After the Spaniards discovered the Americas, natives became salvors. From 1850 to 1860 there were as many as 500 wrecks of Spanish galleons on the reefs along our shallow coast. The coming of lighthouses made ship travel much safer.

Lignumvitae trees were valued for their very hard wood, and our birds were prized for their feathers which went to decorate ladies hats! Fortunately the feather industry was stopped in the early 1900s as laws were enacted to protect the birds before they were all killed.

The Keys were home to a thriving silk industry, as the weather was perfect for silk worms. We also had a pineapple industry and a cigar industry. The cigar industry led to a cigar box industry and also a lithograph industry to produce the artistic labels for the cigar boxes. There was a sponge industry and even a shark oil industry where the Boy Scout Sea Base is today. A charcoal industry was fueled by wood from buttonwood trees. There was a thriving shrimp industry until the Mariel Boat Lift from Cuba in 1980 proved to be a more lucrative use for the shrimp boats and so they were converted.

With daughter Barbara Edgar, Irving and Jeane Eyster created The Matecumbe Historical Trust Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education and preservation of the Florida Keys history for future generations and visitors to discover. Hopefully his plans to open a museum filled with his collection of Keys artifacts will soon come to pass.

In the meantime, Mr. Eyster gives historical presentations fairly regularly in the area. The Trust has regular guest speakers as well to help bring the history of the Keys to life. For information about the Matecumbe Historical Trust and upcoming lectures about early Florida Keys history, call (305) 664-9504 or visit FloridaKeysHistorian.com.

Irving Eyster is correct when he states "The past belongs to the future, but only the present can preserve it"

By Dennie Zettwoch

Questions, Answers and Discussion

Village Manager, Ed Koconis, attended the January LMKA meeting and answered a wide variety of questions from residents and generated some interesting discussions:

Should turn offs from U.S. 1 on the bay side of the island be paved to improve access to the bike path/access road? Members were clearly opposed to more paving.

Sewer schedule for Lower Matecumbe was discussed as well as the importance of attending meetings and learning about the impact of the sewer work to individual property owners. (more about sewers on page 4)

Public boat ramp on the fill between Upper and Lower Matecumbe. Florida Department of Transportation is proceeding without much local support. Concerns about traffic congestion and parking persist.

Winn Dixie and Publix: No progress to report. Winn Dixie has ownership issues related to access for delivery trucks; Publix has issues with U.S 1 entry and exit plans and resulting traffic configuration on U.S. One. (Winn Dixie missed a deadline and has lost their previously approved allocation for commercial space)

Sea Oats Beach Zoning change request of private property at the south end of Sea Oats Beach from conservation to single family was of concern to many members. (see public access to beaches in this newsletter)

Lack of code enforcement along Captains Cove has angered many residents on the island. The presence of roosters, trash, inappropriate use or location of boats and vehicles were subject of agitation.

Sewers.. What Property Owners Can Expect

The connection process: Once the pipes through your neighborhood are installed and the Village system is available for connection, the property owner must connect their home's wastewater discharge to the central sewer system. While they do not plan to start construction on the Lower Matecumbe collection system for another 18-20 months, it is important to know what will be required, especially for absentee owners. Limited time will be allowed once notice is given therefore it will be important to have a plan in advance. Contractors that can do the work include licensed plumbing contractors, building contractors, and utility contractors. Contractors must be licensed with the State of Florida and registered with Islamorada.

There are several steps that property owners themselves must undertake:

1. Evaluate the best route to the central system. Maps with the location of the lateral pipes for connection will be available well in advance of construction. Make sure you review that location so it can be modified if necessary.
2. Get written quotes from a contractor, making certain the contractor is licensed and registered with the Village.
3. Obtain a building permit from the Village for the connection work (contractor may do this).
4. Begin trenching and pipe laying from house to street—several inspections required before final connection.
5. Within 90 days of connection existing septic systems must be decommissioned, with permits from Florida Department of Health. Alternatives would be to remove septic or convert it to a cistern, both being more expensive alternatives.
6. Once the connection is complete and all inspections done, restoration of your landscaping can be done.

The cost for this connection process is estimated to cost \$3000 to \$5000 for typical homes, more in many cases. The property owner is allowed to do their own trenching and piping to the connection point, but a permit will still be required along with an inspection. A licensed contractor will still be necessary to do the actual connection and to decommission the septic.

The Costs: Total cost of the wastewater project for the remaining service area (RSA) can only be projected at this juncture though there are some known numbers from contracts and some projections from the Village financial utility consultant:

Collection and transmission system construction:	\$90,900,000 (not to exceed contract- August 2012)
Capacity Allocation Charge for Treating at Key Largo:	\$10,176,000 (agreement with Key Largo May 2012)
Upgrades needed for Village at the Key Largo facility:	\$978,000 (agreement with Key Largo May 2012)
Land to be purchased for pumping stations, etc.	\$1,000,000 (projected by consultant)
Owners Representative	\$4,080,900 (projected by consultant)
Construction Management	\$5,424,980 (projected by consultant)
Administration (Village employees time and costs)	\$1,440,000 (projected by consultant)
Subtotal	\$113,504,280
Contingency	\$1,000,000 (suggested by consultant)
Total Estimated Project Cost	\$114,999,880

Where does the money come from:

Wastewater Assessment passed in 2011:	\$20,000,000
Wastewater Assessment anticipated for later in 2013	\$20,000,000
\$20 million Mayfield Grant approved by state of Florida	\$18,500,000· net after costs associated with bonding
Total funding anticipated to date:	\$58,500,000
Still needed by December 2015:	\$56,499,880

GRANTS NEEDED!

Single family home owners were assessed \$3196 in 2011 and can expect another \$3196 this year to cover costs already contracted. \$3192 in 2011, \$3192 in 2013, \$631 in 2008 and \$42 in 2007· total assessment through 2013 will be \$7065 plus the \$3000 to \$5000 or more that it will cost property owners to run lines from the home to the street to connect. Clearly, it is critical for the Village to obtain additional funding over the next few years, particularly in the form of grants that do not have to be repaid to cover the remaining \$56.5 million cost to complete the project. Without grants, It could require *approximately \$9000 per single family home (or \$750/yr for 25 years) in additional costs to property owners to fund the \$56.5 million balance* needed to complete the wastewater project.

Monthly Wastewater Rates—in addition to the \$115 million in capital costs

Once connected to the wastewater system, property owners will be billed monthly along with their water bills from the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority. The wastewater fee for operating and maintaining the system is estimated at \$88/month for a single family home using 4000 gal of water per month.

The Village's wastewater rate consultant, Tony Hairston of Raftelis Financial Consultants, prepared a preliminary financial forecast for the wastewater project. The report includes funding vs. costs projection tables. Tony will be attending the Village Council meeting on February 28, 2013 to provide the Village Council funding, cost and rate information to facilitate their decision making regarding the second assessment for the RSA.

Tennis Any One?



In 2009 the tennis club at MM76.8 was for sale and was set to be the location of a regional wastewater treatment plant for all of Islamorada, with sewage piped across miles of bridges and fill to get it to this sensitive location. Residents and tennis players united to fight to keep the tennis courts and succeeded. Along came U.S. Professional Tennis Association pro, Gary Clermont, who bought the property so that tennis could continue to thrive on our island. Gary also runs the tennis programs at Founders Park, Cheeca and the Moorings.

Clermont has been teaching tennis since 1984. In addition to his teaching skills, Clermont is a top notch tennis player,



having been ranked #1 in Florida in the over 45 category and in the top 5 nationally. He has two other outstanding instructors, Greg Pearson and Susie Jannach, on staff. The Islamorada tennis facilities provide a wonderful opportunity to learn or improve your game with what is widely considered one of the finest teaching staffs in the entire country.

The tennis club is an amazing facility to have on our island. Tucked away in a beautiful hardwood hammock, Clermont has continually improved the courts, the facilities and the grounds, making it a special gathering place for the tennis players who live in the area as well as visitors to Islamorada who can arrange short term memberships. The club has the only clay courts from Ocean Reef to Duck Key. Experienced tennis players absolutely swear by the softer clay courts which reduce risk of injury, are easier on the body than other types of courts, and have a cooler surface temperature... a real plus in South Florida.



Since Clermont bought the tennis club, he has developed a great tennis program with clinics, round robins, tennis leagues, private and group lessons, and a six week summer tennis camp at Founders Park for youngsters.

It doesn't take much of a conversation with Clermont to learn how dedicated he is to his sport. As he declares, "There isn't a better sport than tennis. Unlike so many sports kids play, tennis is a sport for life. And a great way to meet people no matter where life takes you."

Gary Clermont can be reached at the Islamorada Tennis Club at MM76.8, bay side or at 305-664-5341.

Crocodiles on Lower Matecumbe

Since the early to mid-1990s, North American Crocodiles have been regular visitors and residents on our island. The numbers have been increasing significantly each year. Experts have assured us that crocodiles, unlike alligators, are not aggressive. We are told there are no verified attacks on humans in Florida. It may just be a matter of time until that changes.



We will be having a program at a LMKA meeting in the near future about crocodiles. The photo above was taken recently on Sea Oats Beach at MM74.5 as this tagged crocodile was seen sun bathing on this popular Lower Matecumbe Beach. Whether timid or not, stay clear and **NEVER FEED A CROCODILE**. Fishermen throwing fish carcasses into canals are believed to have created a huge problem. We sure don't want the first verified Florida attack by a crocodile to occur on our island.

The 1733 Spanish Treasure Galleon Shipwrecks Near Lower Matecumbe



Centuries ago, the Spanish discovered vast amounts of natural resources in the New World. Each year, two separate fleets left Spain loaded with European goods that were needed in the Spanish-American colonies. Once they reached the Caribbean, the fleets separated and took separate routes to deliver their European goods and take on cargo to go back to Spain—silver, gold, gems, spices, porcelain, pearls. Once loading was completed, both fleets sailed for Havana, Cuba to rendezvous for the journey back to Spain with their very valuable cargo.

Each year Spanish shipments became prey for pirates intent on stealing their share. To counter this threat, Spain developed a formal convoy system as early as 1537 to protect its merchant vessels from predators. At least two armed escorts, accompanied the heavily laden ships across the Atlantic. Merchants had to pay a fleet tax to the Spanish government for this protection and just like taxes of today, the fleet tax tended to increase each year, going from 2% in the 16th century to 12% by the 17th century—perhaps a reflection on how difficult and dangerous it was to protect the valuable cargo.

The fleets faced many dangers on their way back to Spain—shallow reefs and shifting sandbars, treacherous currents, pirates, and unexpected storms. Perhaps the greatest fear was hurricanes.

Over the years of the fleet system, which lasted until nearly 1800, Spain managed to transport enormous amounts of goods and materials between Europe and the New World. Some ships inevitably were wrecked along the way and the Spanish developed effective salvage capabilities to recover the valuable cargos.

On Friday, the thirteenth of July 1733, the New Spain Fleet left Havana harbor on its return voyage to Spain. The fleet consisted of three armed ships, sixteen merchant ships, and two smaller ships carrying supplies. The following day, after the vessels sighted the Florida Keys, the wind shifted abruptly from the east and increased in velocity as a hurricane approached. By nightfall most of the ships had been driven westward and scattered, sunk, or swamped in shallow water along eighty miles of the Florida Keys.

Survivors gathered throughout the islands of the Keys and built shelters from debris that had washed ashore. Rescue vessels loaded with supplies, food, divers, and salvage equipment sailed for the scene of the disaster. Soldiers were on board to protect the shore camps and the recovered cargo.

Vessels that could not be refloated and towed back to Havana were burned to the waterline, enabling divers to descend into the cargo holds. It also concealed the wrecks from pirates. The salvage work continued for years though not all of the treasured cargo was recovered. In the 1960s, most of the wrecks associated with the 1733 fleet were located by modern divers.

Several of the shipwrecks from 1733 are just off the shores of Lower Matecumbe:

- **San Pedro** (24° 51.802'N 80° 40.780'W) is one of the most frequently visited of the 1733 wreck sites due to its designation as an Underwater Archaeological Preserve and a Florida State Park. San Pedro's ballast mound is located in a sand pocket surrounded by grass in 18 feet of water. The wreck site is ringed with six mooring buoys that encourage visitation and protect the site from anchor damage.
- **El Terri** (24° 50.761'N 80° 42.850'W) is located off Sea Oats Beach in 15 feet of water, in a sandy depression surrounded by sea grass. Today, the wreck site of El Terri consists of a relatively intact mound of cemented ballast stones covering the lower hull of the ship.
- **San Francisco** (24° 49.185'N 80° 45.425'W) is one of the most beautiful of the 1733 sites, due to the location in shallow water (to the ocean side of Craig Key near the Channel 5 bridge) and the undisturbed ballast mound and the tropical ecosystem that surrounds it. It is in just 9 feet of water on a sandy bottom, making it easy for novice snorkelers to explore.

The 1733 sites represent some of the oldest artificial reefs in North America, supporting complex ecosystems of marine life that have thrived over the centuries. The real treasure of the 1733 fleet is the opportunity to visit the living remains of ships. The wrecks of the 1733 fleet and other shipwrecks located within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary are protected by federal law, just as natural resources are protected, so that future generations may visit, learn from, and enjoy these unique examples of our maritime history.

Who Owns the Beach?

Property owners on Lower Matecumbe have long been protective of Sea Oats Beach, the long very narrow stretch of white sandy beach from about MM74.5 to 75 on the ocean opposite Port Antigua. Much of Sea Oats Beach is owned by the Village. A home owner at the south end of the beach has requested a zoning change from conservation to residential zoning. The request generated some concern and some questions about beach ownership, beach access and the protection of turtle nesting beaches.

Public beach access is especially important in a state such as Florida that has approximately 1,200 miles of general coastline, and more than 2,200 miles of tidal shoreline. An estimated eighty-percent of Florida's population lives near the coast. In addition, more than forty million people visit Florida annually. Our beaches remain one of the most popular attractions.

The Florida State Constitution states that the title to lands under navigable waters, within the boundaries of the state, *which have not been alienated*, is held by the state, in trust for all the people. This includes the portion of the beach below mean high tide, typically the *wet* part of the beach. In the Keys there are some beaches below high tide (referred to here as *bay bottom*) that are *alienated*... owned by private property owners, not the state. But generally, speaking, the wet part of the beach is state owned public property even when it is in front of private property (dry beach). Private property owners cannot deny access to the portion of the beach below mean high tide.

Florida Statute 161.053(1)(a) states that the beaches and the adjacent dunes represent one of the most valuable natural resources of Florida and . . . it is in the public interest to preserve and protect them from imprudent construction which can jeopardize the stability of the beach-dune system, accelerate erosion, provide inadequate protection to upland structures, endanger adjacent properties, or interfere with public beach access.

Lower Matecumbe Mermaids..

by Ann Haber



Lower Matecumbe Mermaids

great success!

Currently the Lower Matecumbe Mermaids are involved in fundraising for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life Event.

- On March 28, from 6 pm to 9 pm they will be hosting a Mermaids Caribbean Beach Party at Robbie's Marina on the back beach. There will be wonderful food, entertainment, door prizes, cocktails and great friends. Donations accepted for tickets. Come enjoy the fun!
- There will also be a huge garage sale held in the Safari Lounge parking lot, at Caloosa Cove, MM73.6 ocean side, on April 13th, 7 am to 2 pm. Any and all sale items or cash donations are greatly appreciated.

The Lower Matecumbe Mermaids invite you to participate in these events. And they welcome new Mermaids! Any questions feel free to call 305-522-0280, 305-404-3916 or email aoaklee@aol.com.

By now you may have heard of Lower Matecumbe Mermaids... a group of women of all ages (along with one honorary merman), an organization that truly makes charity fun. The Mermaids have get-togethers, parties a few times a year, including swim parties, Holidays parties, and now several upcoming events to support Relay for Life. All of the functions are to benefit charity - donating time raising monies where any and ALL donations are greatly appreciated with every cent going to the named charity. The biggest fund raiser thus far has been Hospice and Visiting Nurses of the FI Keys.

In addition, the Mermaids schedule beach clean ups to remove the trash along Sea Oats Beach. Once a year they partner with the Ocean Conservancy, helping to keep our Oceans clean and sea life alive. Last fall the Mermaids were invited by Ocean Conservancy and Land Shark beer to run a large clean up of the beaches in Key West a

President's Corner

By Gordon Hadley

Wastewater is coming to Lower Matecumbe Key ! That's right, the state mandated wastewater project is on it's way to our island paradise. We have talked about it, complained about it and dreaded it-but it's coming.

We have heard and read about some of the problems and catastrophes that Plantation Key has lived through and now it's our turn. The construction mess, the street interruptions, the landscaping upheavals, and the cost of connection - all will start here, the second half of next year.

I think we all can agree it is going to be a nightmare. But Lower Matecumbe Key Association members will have a distinct advantage that our Plantation friends did not have. The Village of Islamorada has agreed to work with LMKA to help keep our membership informed and aware.

As best as our volunteer staff can-they will utilize the email newsletter format to provide the membership with information on when and where construction will start, names and phone numbers of the appropriate the people to call to alleviate your specific problems and any other information that will make this project less horrendous.

The email edition of 'Matecumbe Neighbors' will only be sent to current members. So if you are a member, make sure you have paid your 2013 dues (\$12 for singles/ \$20 for families) and we have your email address. If you are currently not a member, perhaps you should consider becoming one, an application is provided to the right. We will all get through this, together.

Membership Application/Renewal

First Name(s): _____

Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Local Address: _____

Phone (local): _____

Other phone: _____

Email: _____

Provide your email please!

Get your newsletter faster and save LMKA printing/postage costs! We only use the email address to send newsletters, information and reminders about Lower Matecumbe.

Make check payable to

LMKA P. O. Box 911, Islamorada, FL 33036

Family \$20; Single \$12

Enclose a note if you will serve on the Board, volunteer with projects or newsletter or if you have ideas for making our community better.



**Lower Matecumbe Key Assoc
P. O. Box 911
Islamorada, FL 33036**

**News From
Islamorada!!!**