

Opinion



Myths Versus Reality

GreenReport

By Al Green

We are not digging and testing new wells because we are committed to bringing in reclaimed water.

We not only have dug test wells but we are actually using the product of one to help in the watering of our tennis courts. Unfortunately, although the quality was good, the quantity is so slight that there is very poor pressure and the amount is very limited... So-called shallow wells are not the future. There is plenty of water below 200 feet but it is still too salty to be of practical use.

We do not have good cell phone reception on the Key because we refuse to issue a permit for a tower.

The Town had a consulting firm that actually not only is marketing Longboat Key for antenna placement but has already placed two more at the Privateer and one additional at Islands West. Verizon is already well placed so only Sprint and Cingular are deficient whether in site or in current planning. If you drop a call with any of the phone companies, please call *611 and report. It is these reports that activate the response by the offending cell company. For the record, we have never had an application for a tower from any company.

If we took a strong position, we could get Longboat Key to become a separate county.

The formation of a new county is totally the responsibility of the State Legislature. Since both Manatee and Sarasota legislators are against giving up any control of our tax base, this makes the separation of Longboat Key into a separate county, for all intents and purposes, impossible. We also would have all other counties in the state against us because of the precedent it would set. We are not the only large entity that could operate separately

as a county. Someone who should know once told me we would have an easier time if we were trying to become a separate country.

We have serious potable water overuse and Swiftmud is currently giving us pressure.

A few years ago, Swiftmud set the standard of 110 gallons of water a day as the criteria for correct usage. We use 97 gallons a day so we are below the required standard so we are under no pressure from them. The confusion about our usage arose when it was revealed Manatee County was charging us for all usage over 2.5 million gallons a day. The reason this quantity is the standard for our pricing is because we, Longboat Key, requested we be allowed to lower the daily allowance from 4 million to the current 2.5 million. We did this because under the old contract, we were paying a monthly service charge for water we weren't using since we were being held responsible for the larger amount. At the time, 2.5 million gallons a day was what we were using so it seemed like a good figure. This arrangement in no way is a subjective analysis of what should constitute our consumption.



We maintain the strict standards on all phases of turtle activity because the Town Commission is in the thrall of the residents who are turtle lovers.

The State of Florida and the Federal Government through the Endangered Species Act have very strict rules governing the safety and preservation of the turtle population. They not only have the right to sue us for noncompliance but have done so with staggering costs to the community involved. They don't play around and so we don't either.

We have total freedom to set up our budgets and do not use actual figures or quarterly reports in order to avoid scrutiny.

The State of Florida has certain standards of bookkeeping that are required of all municipalities. We conform to this standard. The question of "actuals" versus budget to budget is really a red herring. We do actuals when we prepare the budget but we show former budget figures in order to make the figures clear. For example, if we had some resignations in the Fire Department and it took six months to fill the positions, the actual figure of the previous year would give an inaccurate picture. In that case we would use the budget to budget. There are some who feel an executive summary each quarter would be of use. This is a reasonable request and will probably be introduced. Since our budget is devoted 85% to personnel costs with the balance for capital improvements, it is really a simple budget to understand.

To be continued!

Lament of the Loggerhead Turtles

Richard L. Hershatter
Contributing Columnist

*Don't cry for us, Mote Mariners,
You tried your best on all the beaches,
So all the menace
From waves of Dennis
Would pass us by and hardly reach us.*

*On Longboat you moved all the nest sites
From south to north, where all the best sites
Would be protected,
With wind deflected;
Alas, the storm delivered last rites.*

(apologies to Evita, 1996)

News item: "Environmentalists have relocated turtle nests to northern Longboat Key to avoid their being buried by beach renourishment sand pumped from the Gulf."

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News item: "Storm surges caused by Hurricane Dennis may have washed away as many as 75% of the nests previously relocated."

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WARNING: Do not read this column.

Do not read this column if you are an environmentalist, because its conclusions cast doubt on the efficacy of your well-intentioned efforts in this field.

Do not read this column if you believe in the theory of Intelligent Design, because the facts explored herein show that any such reasoning is fallacious.

Do not read this column if you follow the Darwin Theory, because we are about to demonstrate that it is untrue and that man descended from neither monkeys, nor turtles.

And above all, if you are a Longboat Key politician, do not read this column, because it demonstrates that all your efforts to date to preserve this island paradise have been for naught.

We didn't start out to make people unhappy. We try to write a friendly column, stepping on the toes of neither humans nor turtles, but facts are facts, and the truth is sometimes unpleasant.

So stop right here, if you want to remain friends, and send an email verifying that you haven't read any further.

We start with an examination of the selfish habit of the female loggerhead turtle. She is a bitch, and we use that

term in all its derogatory definitions.

She has sex somewhere out in the ocean depths, far beyond the sight of man, which is good. If you can imagine two of these ponderous, monstrous reptiles mating, you can see why such activity, if pictured on the internet, would surely bring arrests for indecent pornography.

After satisfying her baser instincts, the female finds herself with a clutch of fertilized eggs. Does that trigger a warm maternal instinct in the cold-blooded, callous creature?

No, her only thought is to get rid of them, and with all due, deliberate (for a turtle) speed, she makes for a far-off beach. Once there, she scoops out a shallow hollow in the sand, dumps her load, covers it over and escapes back into the sea.

Ever wonder why no one has designated a Mother's Day for loggerhead turtles? This is some mother! She abandons her brood before they are even born, not remaining for an instant to nurse them or provide chicken soup if any of the little ones catch cold.

If, in later years, she were to meet up with any of the surviving offspring, she would neither recognize nor acknowledge them as her children. And what is more, she will never know or get to cuddle her grandchildren.

Does this sound like "intelligent design" to you? Anyone?

If you have read this far and disagree, please send an email - not to the turtle, she obviously doesn't give a hoot - but to the editor of this paper.

Now we turn our attention to the hatchlings. The absconding mothers have left hundreds upon hundreds of nests (if you can call a hole in the sand a "nest") all along the beaches extending from Longboat Key down to Venice Beach and beyond. There are thousands of eggs.

Some of the nests are relocated by dedicated environmentalists, to save them from being buried by the ponderous machinery of beach renourishment.

That results in the loss of 10% of the eggs.

For those who decry the detrimental effects on fledgling turtles of building up the beaches, please bear in mind that if beaches were permitted to completely wash away, there would ultimately be no place for the eggs

to be deposited. There would be no eggs, no Islander Condominium, and finally, no island.

That is why we have politicians - to weigh the equities between loggerhead turtles and Longboat Key humans and strike a balance least hurtful to either.

If buried under too much sand, the hatchlings are unable to dig their way out and die. Countless eggs are washed away by hurricane waves and never hatch.

Of those who do make it out of their shells and onto the beach, there are always a number with poor senses of direction, who will follow lights landward and become road kill. (There may be some Darwinian similarity to humans involved. Years ago there was a pilot by the name of Corrigan who filed a flight plan for California and flew east, instead, to Europe. "Wrong Way" Corrigan may have had some loggerhead turtle genes.)

Thousands of hatchlings come out of their shells and scramble for the waters, only to be gobbled up by crabs, birds and other predators before making it to the sea. Of those fortunates who make it, many more are eaten by fish and other aquatic creatures. Very few survive to become adult loggerheads capable of starting the whole cycle over again.

This is obviously not "intelligent design."

Actually, the entire process proves that Darwin was wrong, when he postulated "survival of the fittest."

The turtle story is obviously survival of the "luckiest," and it has nothing to do with who is fitter, or stronger, or swifter, or endowed with an effective maternal instinct. Hear the hatchlings:

*Don't cry for us, Longboat Key;
We're crawlers and swimmers, you see,
And out of each batch
Of eggs, there will hatch
Enough of us to escape to the sea.*

*Mom dropped us and left us alone,
Abandoned, so she could go roam,
But do not weep,
Or lose your sleep,
We'll still make it on our own.*

(more apologies to Evita)

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