Time to get funding and clean Billy's Creek

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Billy's Creek, the notable body of water which extends east of Interstate 75, empties into the Caloosahatchee, extending almost five miles past 1,000 Lee County homes, is a mess as a story by Amy Bennett Williams pointed out last week. It's full of trash, fecal bacteria and rotting algae. It's largely been ignored as far as funding to clean up the historic creek.

History reveals this once valued water treasure is declining rapidly with tests by Fort Myers and Lee County, as far back as 2001, revealing unsafe bacteria readings. Those unsafe readings have continued, off the charts, for the past 16 years, but the creek has never been declared impaired, nor has any government agency taken official responsibility for restoring it, according to Williams' story.

John Cassani, of the nonprofit Calusa Waterkeeper, says he would not let his granddaughter go near it.

So where is the action by county officials to get this creek cleaned up? There could be funding help coming from the state. Rep. Heather Fitzenhagen, R-Fort Myers, has filed a request for $775,000 in funding to clean up the creek. Sen. Lizbeth Benacquisto, R-Fort Myers, also has filed a $775,000 request in the Senate budget. The money isn't enough, but it is a good start for a restoration project that also would include dredging and cleaning the creek to reduce flooding. Lee County must also put money into the creek.

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