

The primary concern is the systematic loss of wetland protections, which is intricately connected to various sub-issues.

Wetlands serve as natural filtration systems for contaminants and play a crucial role in maintaining biodiversity and mitigating flooding. Recent reduction of wetland protections in favor of development have heightened risks to water quality and increased flood vulnerabilities.

Concern is twofold; there is the immediate risk of flooding and long-term environmental degradation, which can affect property values, insurance rates, and public health.

Strategic Action: Reinforce wetland buffer zones through updated county ordinances and prioritize sustainable development practices.

Sub issue 1: Contamination from Outdated Toxin Regulations: Despite the EPA's recent updates, a 20-year lag in reviewing and regulating new toxins has left us exposed to a range of unmonitored contaminants.

Strategic Action: Advocate for the state-wide adoption of the latest EPA guidelines and increase funding for water quality testing.

Sub-issue 2: Phosphate Mining Residue

Phosphate mining has left significant environmental scars in areas like Piney Point and the Myakka region, leading to ongoing contamination issues.

Strategic Action: Develop a comprehensive plan for continuous monitoring and remediation of affected areas. Secure federal and state funding for cleanup projects.

Sub-issue 3: Cyber tampering.

The digital infrastructure controlling water utilities, including ICS and OT systems, is under-protected against cyber threats, posing severe risk.

Strategic Action: Implement advanced cybersecurity measures, conduct security assessments, and establish a rapid response team specializing in digital threats to water infrastructure. Provide ongoing training for all personnel involved in the operational management of water systems.

Addressing Water Management issues requires a multi-faceted approach that considers ecological preservation, technological upgrades, and proactive community engagement.

By focusing on strengthening wetland protections, addressing the challenges of contamination, phosphate residue, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities, We can safeguard water resources for current and future generations.