

# Greater Pensacola Chamber

## 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

### ECUA

#### **1. How would you rate the water quality in Escambia County?**

Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor

I am speaking for the residents of District 3. The water quality for many of those residents is very poor. ECUA has ignored the 11 unlined toxic landfills located in District 3 communities of Wedgewood, Rolling Hills and Olive Heights where hydrogen sulfide and silica dust is leaching cancer causing toxics into the surface and ground water. Many of the residents in those communities use wells to supply their drinking water. From an April 11, 2019 article in the Pensacola News Journal it stated elevated levels of arsenic, boron, ammonia, iron and "total dissolved solids" have been detected in the ground-water monitoring wells near the Rolling Hills Construction & Demolition Facility, according to the DEP. At the time of permit revocation, water quality monitoring at the facility found the surface water samples did not meet the water quality standards for iron, copper, lead, zinc and mercury. As far back as July 2013, Rolling Hills Construction & Demolition Facility was ordered to create a remedial action plan to address and treat the water impacts. In January 2019, the DEP confirmed the remedial system is not operational.

In the Rolling Hill's community no efforts has been taken to improve their stormwater drainage. Several days after a hard rain they have up to a foot of standing water. Marcus Bayou was once a place where residents of Wedgewood, Olive Heights, and Rolling Hills in Pensacola, Florida would fish, swim, and hunt. Marcus Bayou (on Rolling Hill Road) now suffer from both toxic contamination and recurring flooding, due to a lack of proper stormwater drainage and the prevalence of borrow pits and construction and demolition landfills. The health, safety, and quality of life Wedgewood, Olive Heights, and Rolling Hills residents—all predominantly African American communities—are increasingly threatened, as storm surges and flood events worsen and landfills continue to leach toxins into local waterways.

## **2. What can be done to improve the water quality in Escambia County?**

Again speaking for the residents of District 3 local officials must work with residents to address these threats and improve the environmental health of local communities. The county has spent millions in Local Option Sales Taxes on drainage and dirt road projects, including a major initiative with the ECUA to install stormwater ponds, paved roads and other improvements in majority communities. There is a need for ECUA to install those same stormwater ponds, paved roads and other improvements in the Wedgewood, Rolling Hills and Olive Height communities.

There are a number of stormwater infrastructure improvements that local officials in Pensacola could make to improve stormwater drainage and stormwater quality. “Green” stormwater infrastructure solutions such as bioswales and constructed wetlands can decrease both stormwater runoff volume and runoff rates, allowing smaller volumes of water to pass through existing traditional drainage systems and mitigating the risk of systems becoming overwhelmed. Moreover, green infrastructure naturally filters pollutants out of stormwater, contributing to improved water quality in downstream waterways that support recreation, consumption, and habitat

- Partner with community-based organizations located in District 3 to map local flooding problem areas and identify infrastructure improvement needs. Residents have on-the-ground knowledge of localized flooding patterns that are not captured by official floodplain maps and should be leveraged by public decision-makers.
- Identify infrastructure improvement projects on public and private land. Vacant land in District 3 could be acquired and repurposed into green stormwater infrastructure such as a bioretention pond; and vegetative buffers could be built surrounding existing landfills to mitigate toxic runoff.
- Remediate land surrounding the 11 toxic landfills. Proposed landfill mitigation using Vetiver as a buffer between landfills and residential property. Vetiver is a plant that is used as a natural landfill soil and groundwater contamination method. It also can be harvested for use in essential oil fragrances. Vetiver grass has been shown to control channel bank erosion, lower frequency of drain maintenance, trap sediments in runoff water and reduce acidic loading by exposing less acid sulfate soil in the drain wall to oxidization and leaching.

### **3. What is your vision for recycling?**

Climate change and sustainability should be the driving force for recycling, trash and garbage collection. I believe that recycling key component should be sustainability that help with climate change. Twenty-five states have adopted climate action plans that incorporate waste reduction as a strategy to reduce GHGs<sup>3</sup>. Suggestions are listed here:

- Set waste diversion targets. Reducing materials use and waste generation reduces emissions associated with energy-intensive extraction of materials, transportation, and methane emissions from landfills.
- Set purchasing targets that favor products made of materials that minimize life cycle energy and environmental impacts.
- Measure and track emissions. Tools are available to track, for example, recycling benefits versus land filling.
- Support best practices at the landfill. For example, a cover can be used for methane capture, or at least methane collection and burning, to reduce GHG emissions.
- Set targets for the recycling of construction and demolition debris and reuse of salvaged building materials.
- Compost food and landscaping waste.
- Set targets for electronics recycling. Choose manufacturers that are making significant strides in climate change reduction performance and that support the collection of electronics when they are no longer being used.

### **ECUA Recycle's Environmental Justice Program**

ECUA Recycle's Environmental Justice Program benefits all citizens while supporting a healthy environment and economy. The purpose of the program is to ensure environmental justice concepts, values, and objectives are thoroughly implemented within ECUA Recycle programmatic activities. It is therefore important for us to learn about communities and to share information about ECUA Recycle resources such as permits, and programs like solid waste cleanup, electronic waste recycling, the beverage container recycling program, and others. ECUA Recycle would be committed to including individuals, communities, and regulated businesses in the decision-making process.

### **What is Environmental Justice?**

For our purposes, "environmental justice" means the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes regarding the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

## **Why is Environmental Justice Important?**

ECUA Recycle should recognize the varied cultural strengths in Escambia County, and we should acknowledge the different environmental health, and economic needs within the county, including disadvantaged communities. We understand barriers, such as complex government processes may hinder full participation in important environmental programs. We also recognize that many Escambia County residents live in the midst of multiple sources of pollution, and some people and communities are more vulnerable to the effects of pollution than others.

## **ECUA Recycle's Environmental Justice Objectives**

### **Overall Improvements**

- Increase protection of public health and safety, and the environment, within disadvantaged communities.
- Expand our awareness of, and services to, Escambia County Residents varied cultures.
- Ensure our vision for solid waste recycling infrastructure includes minimizing negative impacts to disadvantaged communities.
- Increase community knowledge and capacity through environment-based education.
- Highlight each person's responsibility to preserve the earth's natural and cultural resources and to protect equal access, rights, and enjoyment for future generations.

### **Participation in Decisions**

- Provide accessible information about our roles, responsibilities, and rules.
- Advance opportunities for community members to participate in the decision-making process, prior to the actual point when decisions are being made, so they have a say in decisions that affect their well-being. This includes working with local enforcement agencies, planning departments, cities, and counties for information sharing about local-level decisions

### **Resources**

- Promote wide participation in ECUA Recycle programs by providing clear information, for businesses and consumers, about reducing waste and increasing reuse, recycling, and composting.
- Ensure Environmental Justice interests are prioritized in Recycle when economic opportunities are available.
- Continue research that promotes healthier lives and communities.