



County investigates Lemon Bay's odor

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A stench coming off Lemon Bay sickened the serving staff at the White Elephant Pub on Thursday and sent customers scurrying from dockside seats.

The smell had dissipated from the open-air restaurant by Friday morning, when Buck Feldman of the Charlotte County Health Department arrived to investigate. Feldman took samples of a small slick in the neighboring Chadwick Cove Resort and Marina and a streak of brown scum floating off the White Elephant dock.

Feldman, an environmental specialist, said the water scum could simply be the natural byproduct of plant decomposition. Decomposing algae and zooplankton can stink like human waste, he said.

"You think it's a duck, but sometimes it's not," Feldman said.

White Elephant owner Pat O'Connor suspects nearby boats are illegally dumping waste water into the bay, and asked the Health Department to investigate what he called a recurring problem.

"My customers, and they're experienced boaters, say it smells like crap," O'Connor said. "Thursday was really bad. I don't want my restaurant impaired by it."

Feldman said his ability to investigate the fouled water's source is limited by his department's lack of a boat.

But he spoke with Chadwick Cove owner Ray Orozco, who had 13 boats berthed in 21 slips, about procedures for pumping waste from boats. Orozco said any pollution is not coming from his business or clients.

"I take care of my bay," Orozco said. "The tide flows in and the tide flows out. You'll find almost anything in this water. It's the nature of the bay."

Even if the water tests positive for human waste, it will hard to trace it to its source, Feldman said.

Feldman said test results will be available in two days. No citations have been issued through his office in the past two years, he said.