

A resolution to Ban on Smoking on Marco's Beaches – by Councilor Victor Rios

Cigarette butts are the most collected toxic item littering our beaches in Marco Island. For the past year, the Beach and Coastal Resources Advisory Committee has collected and counted their monthly collection of cigarette butts as a form of data collection and they continue to collect cigarette butts during monthly clean-ups

Cigarette butts have been a constant problem for Marco's beaches for a long time. They are small and easily concealed underneath the sand; easily mistaken by wildlife for food and their filters are slow to degrade. The filters contain toxins such as tar, nicotine, ammonia and formaldehyde.

Naples: For many years, Mayor Bill Barnett of Naples has been working on an outdoor smoking ban in parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and at Naples beaches.

In November, 2016, the Naples City Council unanimously passed a resolution supporting a ban on Smoking. But Florida law prohibits the ban to outdoor smoking without support from the State Legislature. Cities and counties are powerless to ban smoking. The Naples resolution was a symbolic ban.

In January 2019, Senator Joe Gruters of Sarasota has a "goal to get butts off of beaches." He has filed a bill (SB 218) for consideration that would make it illegal for people to smoke on Florida's public beaches. Under his proposal, law enforcement officers will be able to issue citations to people who smoke on public beaches and penalties would be fines up to \$25 or 10 hours of community service. The Naples City Attorney has sent a letter of support to Senator Gruters on behalf of Mayor Barnett.

Coastal experts, like Dr. Beach has been rating the country's top beaches for 25 years. In 2017, Dr. Beach has started awarding an extra bonus for smoke-free beaches. Dr. Beach stated that there is a nationwide movement to prohibit smoking especially on public lands and beaches and it should be a community priority.

This is a symbolic gesture from Marco Island to ban smoking tobacco on our beaches.

There is already an initiative from the County to "Please Keep our Beach Tobacco Free." County Parks and Recreational have installed "Please Do not Smoke" signs at Tigertail Beach and South Beach. It is not an ordinance but a friendly reminder to beach goers not to smoke.

Per Senator Joe Gruter's suggestion that we should send our letter of support for his bill to our Local Senator, Senator Kathleen Passidomo and to Representative Rommel. Hopefully we will show Marco's symbolic support to Senator Gruters' Bill - SB-218 by passing a motion.