



## Estero Development Report

Volume 10, Number 10, Issued May 2011  
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
**For More Information about Estero**  
 ...see [www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org)

### June Opportunities for Citizen Participation That will Protect Estero's Quality of Life

Date	Time	Event	Location
Wednesday, June 8 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)	Estero Community Park
Friday, June 10 <sup>th</sup>	10 a.m.	Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) meeting with a Presentation by Pete Winton on the Lee County 2012 Budget	Estero Community Park
Tuesday, June 14 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Friday, June 17 <sup>th</sup>	9:00 a.m.	Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting	Regional Planning Commission Building, 1926 Victoria Avenue in downtown Ft. Myers
Monday, June 20 <sup>th</sup>	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECPP)	Estero Community Park

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**Estero Community Website (www.esterofl.org)**

**The community groups sponsoring the site are:**

- Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP)
- Estero Community Association (ECA)
- Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)
- Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

**Coastal Village Off-Campus Student Housing Development Expanding**

Corlico LLC, the developers of the Coastal Village student housing development on the east side of Three Oaks Parkway just north of Estero Parkway will be breaking ground for construction of 14 more three story student residences on the 20 acre parcel they own south of the existing development.

This phase of the development will contain 164 housing units with each unit occupied by four students for a total of 656 students. The existing buildings in Coastal Village contain 200 units housing 800 students. Thus upon completion, in time for FGCU's 2012 fall semester, Coastal Village will house 1,456 FGCU students.

The developer understands that LeeTran will soon be providing a bus stop adjacent to Coastal Village that will facilitate students traveling back and forth to the FGCU campus by public transit.

**Corkscrew Road Mining Controversies**

At present the residents of Estero are threatened by the possibility of five new aggregate mines along Corkscrew Road. The following table summarizes some basic information about the mines and the impact they would have on the surrounding roads.

**Pending Mine Application Statistics**

Mine Name	Size in Acres	Acres to be Mined	Maximum Depth	Duration in Years	One way Daily Truck Trips
RCH	1,365	770	110	20	1,200
Troyer Brothers	1,803	797	110	35	2,548
Lost Grove	1,383	741	145	20	1,366
FFD	5,200	2,334	100	45	2,548
Old Corkscrew	4,200	2,158	200	40	3,486
<b>Total</b>	13,951	6,800	--	--	11,148

Revised 6/15/2011

**The Status of Each Mine**

*Resource Conservation Holdings (RCH)* is the farthest along in the approval process. The RCH mine application was unanimously denied by Lee Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in

early 2010 and the owners have now sued Lee County for compensation for the County's denial of their alleged mining "rights". The County responded to this suit by filing a motion to dismiss the case.

On May 17<sup>th</sup> the Circuit Court Judge assigned to the case held a hearing on these motions and told the parties that she would need some time before proceeding with the case.

*Troyer Brothers* is in second place in terms of the review process. A Lee County Hearing Examiner closed nine days of hearings on the case on January 26, 2011. He has now spent four months reviewing the record of the case but has not yet finalized his Report. If the Hearing Examiner completes his report in a timely manner the Board of County Commissioners will hear the case, probably in August or September. About 80 Lee County residents testified in opposition to this mine during the Hearing Examiner hearings. We anticipate that those residents that are in Florida when the BOCC takes up the matter will testify once again.

*Lost Grove* is a Corkscrew Road mine located just over the Collier County boundary line so it is being reviewed under Collier County procedures that are considerably different from those used by Lee County. Lost Grove is immediately east of a residential community in Lee County and in the Lee County Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area that is far along in the process of designating the Alico corridor as its Future Limerock Mining area. It is also immediately north of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) property that has been acquired by various public bodies in order to conserve it and its water resources.

On May 6<sup>th</sup> Lee County Board Chairman Frank Mann sent a letter to Fred Coyle, Chairman of the Collier County Board, stating that:

"Lee County is concerned that the proposed mine will result in negative impacts on...

- Nearby Lee county residents,
- The CREW property
- Groundwater and surface waters, and
- Lee County roadways due to the large volume of truck traffic (estimated at a maximum of 1,366 two-way trips every day) for over 20 years, which would conflict with the rural residents in this area and created safety concerns."

The letter goes on the offer Collier County assistance to be provided by Lee County's staff in resolving the issues raised in an attached memorandum and indicates that Lee County staff will attend any public hearings and be available to provide comments on the record.

*Florida Farms Development (FFD)*, also known as the 6-L Farms property, has a pending mine application under review by Lee County staff. It is expected to be complete (sufficient) soon. Once it is complete County staff will write their report and the application will be scheduled for a Hearing by a Lee County Hearing Examiner. No date has been set for the Hearing Examiner's hearing in this case.

*Old Corkscrew Plantation* has filed a mining application with Lee County and is in the process of supplying the county with all the documentation necessary for it to be considered "sufficient". No date has been set for the Hearing Examiner's hearing in this case.

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## **Citizen Input for the Forthcoming Airplane Noise Study**

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The ECCL is pleased to report that the Airport Authority's Executive Director Robert Ball has confirmed the directive of the Board of Commissioners that the airport authority's consultant, ESA Airports, hired to conduct the \$781,515 FAR Part 150 Noise Study, will include in its scope of work a proposal developed by the South Lee County Airplane Noise Committee. That proposal would remove low altitude flights over southern Lee County and Ft. Myers Beach residential neighborhoods without creating adverse effects on other communities. Validation of the proposal by ESA should greatly enhance our ability to advocate its adoption by the FAA.

As part of its information gathering for the study, ESA will consider public comments regarding the actual flight tracks of aircraft arriving into RSW since the tracks which were instituted by the FAA in late 2008.

***Lee County residents who have been disturbed by overflights since the FAA unilaterally changed the routes in 2008 should communicate your opinion at this time so that they will be considered by the consultants in the noise study via the RSW comment line 239-590-4466 or e-mail at [noisecomment@flylcpa.com](mailto:noisecomment@flylcpa.com).***

Comments can address particularly low or noisy airplanes, rapid succession of disturbing overflights, or more general comments regarding objectionable flight patterns and paths. The latter is especially appropriate for seasonal residents who have returned to their northern homes.

### **BCHC Extended Hours Will Be Continued Through the Summer**

On January 17<sup>th</sup> the Bonita Community Health Center (BCHC) began to increase their hours by three hours per day, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., on all weekdays. The South Lee County Hospital Committee has long been seeking better access to emergency care...adding three hours per day to the schedule of the walk-in clinic begins to address this need while the Committee continues to work on obtaining a 24/7 Free-standing Emergency Department and eventually a hospital.

During the "2011 season" the South Lee County Hospital Committee conducted a substantial direct contact marketing program to promote the use of these extended hours so that they might be continued after the season and further improvements would be made in the future. That effort and the extended hours at the walk-in-clinic/urgent care center increased clinic patient volumes by 32% during the "season. During this period the Center treated an average of 12 additional patients just during the extended hours.

***The outstanding spring results have allowed BCHC management to continue the extended hours throughout the summer months.***

Patient visits to the walk-in-clinic/urgent care center during May were well above the number of visits experienced in May 2010. The number of patients treated during the extended hours averaged 6 per day.

### **Special Summer Plans for Year Round Residents**

During the months of June and July complimentary Balance and Foot Screenings will be provided by members of the BCHC rehabilitation team, Dr. Robert O'Leary and Dr. Jamie Weaver. This important screening can be used to develop a plan to reduce fall related injuries. Appointments are required and may be made by calling 949-6112.

Also during the summer Dr. Jamie Weaver will be conducting a Foot and Ankle lecture series. The first lecture will be held on June 22nd from noon to 1 p.m. and will focus on Foot and Ankle Arthritis. Lunch will be served. Call 676-2663 to make a reservation.

In addition Dr. Meir Daller will be providing complimentary prostate screenings on July 27th. Call 277-5770 to reserve a time. Blood work from the Lee Lab will be provided that same day before the screening.

Bonita Community Health Center welcomes James Frizzell, M.D. a gastroenterologist who is joining Digestive Health Physicians. He will begin taking appointments in June. Call 947-2244 for more information.

### **Earlier Progress During 2011**

On April 14<sup>th</sup> Suzanne Bradach, the General Manager of the BCHC, made a presentation to the South Lee County Hospital Committee on the recently completed analysis of the present viability of a 24/7 Freestanding Emergency Department in the community and the changes that the Bonita Community Health Center has made in order to provide expanded health care services in both the Bonita and Estero communities.

Mrs. Bradach' power point presentation can be viewed by clicking on the following link <http://esterofl.org/EsteroLife/healthcare/BCHC2.pdf> , In addition to the report on the Committee's activities you will find the information on the BCHC's services to be quite interesting.

In early March members of the South Lee County Hospital Committee met with the BCHC public relations team to discuss how the various communities could assist the Center in it's short term and long term marketing efforts. One of the initiatives discussed and/or underway is a quarterly community newsletter called "Health Beat" that can be distributed in each community by email. This newsletter is an excellent way for the residents of each community to become aware of BCHC scheduled health screenings and activities, physician announcements, health articles and important BCHC news.

Several new marketing initiatives were discussed and will be introduced at the beginning of the next season. These include a speaker's bureau, a Welcome Back and Reconnect program for returning winter residents, and web links from community websites to BCHC. In addition, BCHC is partnering with the Commons Club at the Brooks to assist in their "Living a Healthy Life" project.

As you are aware, BCHC is a non-profit facility and its revenue is invested back into the Center to improve its medical care and technology. Recent new investments have included:

- a high field MRI, a 16 slice CT scan,
- upgraded bone density equipment;
- high definition endoscopy equipment in the Surgery Center,
- improved ultrasound equipment

- three additional treatment rooms in the urgent care center.
- a new waiting room for radiology patients.

In addition, thanks to the work of the Freestanding Emergency Department Steering Committee, the Center's urgent care center hours were expanded this year.

Our joint marketing efforts are needed increase awareness throughout the Estero and Bonita communities of the services provided at BCHC, the extended hours of the urgent care clinic and the physicians that practice at the Center.

The facility improvements demonstrate the commitment of the BCHC Board to the goal of ensuring that the residents of Estero and Bonita Springs have easy access to an up-to-date health care facility with a broad array of services.

Read more about these changes by clicking on the following link

<http://esterofl.org/EsterofLife/healthcare/Revised%20hours%20flyer%201-5-11.pdf> .

We encourage all residents of Estero and Bonita Springs to take advantage of the new and extended healthcare services now being offered by the Bonita Community Health Center in Coconut Point.

*Further expansion of healthcare services in Estero and Bonita are not likely to be implemented until this facility is more fully utilized. Your support of the Bonita Community Health Center will demonstrate to the BCH Board that the community supports the Committee's efforts to improve access to emergency health care and eventually a hospital.*

### **ECCL Creates Parks, Open Space and Water Access Committee**

The Estero Council of Community Leaders has created a Parks, Open Space and Water Access Committee to develop ideas for community plan changes that will fulfill the suggestions of the public that participated in the Community Planning Workshop conducted by the ECCL and the ECPP in November 2010. John Yarborough, long time Director of Lee County's Parks and Recreation department, has agreed to chair the committee.

At the November 2010 Community Planning Workshop the participants strongly supported expanded public access to the Estero River and Estero Bay and parkways connecting many of our major destinations.

The following quotes from the summary of the Workshop provide a sense of the kinds of changes that the community is seeking:

"More public access to river and bay, create parks near major waterways.

"Biggest area of concern for Sense of Place was the waterways. Every table mentioned Estero's waterways but were concerned that either no access or no community areas on them.

"Also emphasized was the connecting of parks, local town centers, libraries, or 'nodes' with bike and pedestrian pathways. This integrated well with the idea of a connected and/or linear park plan.

#### “Linear Park Plan

- RR bed conversion to bike path/trail.
- Rails to trails
- Connection of parks for bicycling and walking. Especially around Estero High School and the Estero Community Center
- Creation of linear park
- Should publicize county’s plan for Linear Parks (website URL etc)
- Create paths within powerline Right Of Way to connect Parks

“Have area centers connected by linear pathways that connect the various nodes together.

- More public access to river and bay, create parks near major waterways.
- Need a Riverwalk
- Have water ferry to beaches throughout Estuary.
- Boat access from Estuary to Bonita Beach area
- Paved sidewalk area along river with stores.
- Bike/Ped path along waterways.
- Canoe access
- Everything should lead to water.
- Coordinate with Koreshan for public access.
- Enhance the river while retrofitting older development.

“Consider acquisition of Bamboo Island and potential linkages for public use.”

### **Several Estero Economic Development Committee Members Join Lee County’s Catalyst Club**

On May 26<sup>th</sup> Lee County’s Economic Development department, also known as the Fort Myers Regional Partnership, conducted its first organizational meeting of the “Catalyst Club”. Several members of the Estero Economic Development Committee attended the meeting and agreed to become charter members of the Catalyst Club.

Catalyst Club members will expand the County’s cadre of advocates to help tell the Lee County story, to identify potential new businesses and to help open doors to key decision-makers. Catalyst Club members have expressed a willingness to proactively assist the County in prospecting for new business leads.

The County has three objectives for the members of the Catalyst Club:

- To create a database of 1,000 decision-makers nationwide who are connected to southwest Florida and could be potential targets for Lee County jobs.
- To help organize local events or make introductions to influencers to further disseminate our message.
- To become educated advocates who will confidently tell our story wherever you go.

The County knows that Estero has many potential Catalyst Club members and retired business decision-makers with significant relationships with active business owners who could help bring the new businesses that Lee County needs to diversify its economy.

The Estero Economic Development Committee recognizes the value to the community of working with the County to develop an effective Catalyst Club. If you are interested in joining the Economic Development Committee, the Catalyst Club or know about a possible new business opportunity for our area please call Don Eslick at 273-9493 or email him at [doneslick@comcast.net](mailto:doneslick@comcast.net).

For more information about the Catalyst Club see the presentation that we saw on May 26<sup>th</sup> at <http://esterofl.org/eccl/committees/economic-development.htm> ,

### **ECCL Transportation Committee Progress Report**

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> the Transportation Committee met to review each of the items on its agenda and to plan how to address the top priority projects. The next steps for the committee are:

- Determine the current status of any plans by the relevant agencies to remedy the road deficiency,
- Contact the communities affected by each traffic problem and have them recruit someone to join the committee to work on it,
- Schedule meetings with the appropriate transportation officials to discuss the problems and their alternative solutions.

The Committee is still in formation. If you would like to serve please call Nick Batos at 948-3741.

#### **Earlier Activities**

A first meeting of the ECCL Transportation Committee, chaired by Chairman Nick Batos, was held on Wednesday April 19, 2011.

Darla Letourneau from Bike/walk/lee and Doctor Margaret Banyan from Gulf Coast University gave a full presentation on the Bike/Walk/Lee organization and what they have accomplished in Lee County over the last few years. They explained how, through building coalitions with many groups, they are working towards the goal of having Lee County become a “complete street community”. The presentation included how they are getting the County and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to incorporate provisions for walkers, bikers and transit into the transportation planning process.

After the Bike/Walk/Lee presentation the committee was provided with the following list of Estero’s current road improvement needs. The projects on this list were suggested by Estero residents who participated in the Community Planning Workshop conducted by the ECPP in November, 2010 and from residents who attended “Estero Village with a Vision/2011” presentations in their communities earlier this year.

Bike/Pedestrian/Transit  
Use Railroad Right of Way for Transit and Bike Paths



Remedy Bike/Ped deficiencies including rail  
Widen sidewalks for bikes  
Sidewalk on US 41 between and Williams and Corkscrew is below grade

#### Estero Gateway Signage

US 41 north and south entrances  
Three Oaks Parkway north and south entrances  
Ben Hill Griffin north entrance  
Corkscrew I-75 entrance

#### Roadway Landscape Deficiencies

US 41 median just north of Coconut Road  
Corkscrew and Ben Hill Griffin  
Corkscrew/Three Oaks Lift Station...add slats

#### Intersection Improvements

US 41 and Williams...western approach  
Post office exit for patrons going south  
Broadway and US 41...both approaches  
Corkscrew and Three Oaks...guard rails  
Estero and Three Oaks...add eastbound turn lane  
Marsh Landing intersection

#### Other Projects

US 41 speed limit  
Corkscrew Road curve east of Wildcat Run  
Insufficient parking at the Post Office  
Sunken road over culvert on Coconut Road just east of Spring Creek Road  
Repainting of traffic signal arms

The Committee reviewed the items on the list and was asked to review them further before the next committee meetings and to come prepared to make any suggestions for:

- Additional items
- Removal of items, or
- Clarification of items

### **Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Campus Master Plan 2010-2020 Update**

On May 20<sup>th</sup> the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) heard a very brief presentation by FGCU about the update to the Campus Master Plan due to an extended discussion of other agenda items and the need for FGCU Vice President Joe Shepard to return to the campus for another meeting. FGCU indicated that it had made no changes in the plan as a result of the April 15<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing.

The public was allowed to testify and reiterated their concerns about the FGCU Campus Master Plan not being coordinated and integrated with the County's transportation planning. However the FGCU representatives had left by that time so there was no opportunity for these concerns to be discussed with the University.

## Background

The future of Estero will be greatly impacted by the University and its growth. The residents of Estero understand this quite well. The top priority of those who participated in the Community Planning Workshop in November was improving the community's relations with FGCU.

Since November the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) has worked with Steve McIntosh, until recently the Chairman of the FGCU Foundation, to develop a better working relationship with the University. Through his efforts FGCU President Bradshaw has appointed retiring Dean of the FGCU Business School Dick Pegnetter to serve as liaison to the ECCL for a period of six months.

Every five years FGCU updates its Campus Master Plan. This presents another opportunity for the Estero community to learn about the past growth of this rapidly growing 12,500 student institution and its plans for managing its future growth. On April 15<sup>th</sup> the University conducted its first Public Hearing of this amendment cycle and the following three Estero community leaders testified at the Hearing:

- John Goodrich, the Pelican Sound member of the ECCL and a member of the Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP),
- Nick Batos, Chairman of the Brooks Concerned Citizens and Vice Chair of ECCL, and
- Don Eslick, Chairman of the ECCL.

The updated Campus Master Plan includes the following findings:

- The projected student enrollment in ten years (2020-21) is 23,718, about double the present enrollment,
- The projected faculty and staff in ten years (2020-21) is 1,465, up about 37% from today's total,
- If the Campus Master Plan is followed the main campus will be fully built out in ten years,
- FGCU would like to maintain the capacity to house 20 to 25% of student enrollment on campus. Thus the number of students housed on campus in 2020-21 is projected to be 5,692, up 2,054 units from the present 3,638 housing units,
- Thus about 18,000 students will be commuting to the FGCU campus in the 2020-21 school year,
- During 2010 FGCU purchased the College Club Apartments, located on Ben Hill Griffin Boulevard just south of the Gulfcoast Shopping Center,
- Earlier this year FGCU purchased 25 acres of land just south of the College Club Apartments for future student housing development,
- Estero's only student housing facility, called Coastal Village, is located on the east side of Three Oaks Parkway north of Estero Parkway and contains 200 apartments housing 800 FGCU students.

The testimony presented at the Hearing contained the following suggestions for improving the Campus Master Plan:

- Expand the scope of the plan to address the impact of about 18,000 students plus the faculty and staff traveling by automobile to the campus several times per week,

- Evaluate the possibility of the private sector providing near campus student housing with shuttle bus transportation rather than continuing to use the very limited campus land to build more student housing apartments,
- Reevaluate the on-campus parking policy to encourage the use of public transit services and other non-automobile transportation,
- Develop information on student, faculty and staff transportation patterns to be used to develop plans that would discourage the use of single occupancy vehicles.

The Campus Master Plan will next involve the Lee County Board prior to its approval by the FGCU Board in September.

### **County Board Moves Edison Farms Purchase Along**

A coalition of national, state and local environmental and civic groups have united in their support of the public acquisition and preservation of the 4,000-acre Edison Farms site just east of I-75 south of Stoneybrook along Corkscrew Road.

The Estero Council of Community Leaders, the Brooks Concerned Citizens, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Collier County Audubon Society, Audubon of Southwest Florida, CREW Land & Water Trust, Florida Wildlife Federation and The Trust for Public Land have formed a coalition in support of this effort.

Because of the size of this property funding will likely be needed from a number of sources, local, state and national. The coalition is currently investigating these possibilities.

### **May Progress**

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> the BOCC voted to direct county staff to obtain appraisals on all 24 properties under consideration, including Edison Farms, and begin simultaneous negotiations with the owners of each of the properties. The County uses this procedure in order to maximize the price competition among the sellers in order to get the best bang for the limited supply of Conservation 20/20 dollars. The willingness of the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) to serve as interim buyer of the Edison Farms property was helpful in persuading some of the Commissioners that Edison Farms should be included in the group since the TPL funding mechanism will allow many of the other projects to be acquired soon even if Edison Farms is purchased.

On May 20<sup>th</sup> the County and the public learned that Edison Farms has been sued by its primary lender for failure to make timely payments on its debt. Several Commissioners expressed concern about this revelation. The following day the TPL informed the County that this would not deter them from participating in the purchase. TPL further indicated that they had considerable experience with such purchases since the current recession started in 2008. In addition they indicated that these situations were often beneficial to prospective purchasers such as the County and TPL.

### **Earlier Efforts**

On April 11<sup>th</sup> the Board of County Commissioners met as the Management and Planning Committee and discussed the 24 properties that had been found qualified by the Conservation 20/20 Committee including Edison Farms, the highest ranked project. After discussing the projects and availability of Conservation 20/20 funding the Board directed staff to post the

projects for consideration by the Board at their May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. As we go to press County staff has recommended approval of an agenda item that directs staff to move forward to negotiate for the acquisition of 24 properties approved by the Conservation 20/20 Committee concurrently, recognizing some of the property acquisitions will need to be structured over due to limited funding. The public is invited to attend this meeting and may testify on this matter. The coalition plans to testify at this meeting in support of the staff recommendation.

The Trust for Public Lands (TPL), a national not for profit land conservation organization, has met with county staff and several of the Commissioners to express their interest in playing the role of interim buying of the Edison Farms property. Under the option proposed by the TPL they would be a cash buyer of the land thus obtaining the land at the lowest possible price. TPL would then enter into a lease purchase agreement with the County whereby the County would purchase the land from TPS and pay it off over a period of years. In addition TPL has offered to share some of the due diligence costs with the County thus lowering the county's cost of the property.

If your community has not passed a resolution of support of the acquisition of Edison Farms there is still time to do so. Thus far over twenty Estero residential communities have passed resolutions of support. These resolutions will be used to convince the Lee County Board and other funding sources to approve the acquisition of this important environmental property.

### **Background**

On March 1<sup>st</sup> a sub-committee of the Lee County Conservation 2020 Committee *voted to recommend all eighteen ranked properties including Edison Farms* to the full committee for acquisition consideration. Of the entire group of 18 properties Edison Farms has received the highest environmental ranking.

On March 10<sup>th</sup> at an official meeting of the entire Lee County 2020 Committee the full committee also agreed to recommend all of the 18 properties, including Edison Farms, to the Lee County Board of Commissioners for eventual acquisition consideration. Several supporters of the Edison Farms acquisition spoke on behalf of Edison Farms at the 2020 Committee meeting.

On January 19<sup>th</sup> the Edison Farms Public Acquisition Coalition met to review progress and plan for the next steps in the acquisition process. The following summarizes the status of each element now underway:

Conservation 20/20 Update – All of the site visits have been completed as of January 12, 2011. These site visits complete the secondary review process; therefore, the CLASAC Advisory Committee can now rank the properties and send their recommendation to the BOCC. There is a Criteria and Ranking Subcommittee meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, where the staff is expected to provide a proposed ranking. Hopefully, the subcommittee recommendation will then go to the full CLASAC at their meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

Phil Flood of the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) Ft. Myers office agreed to write a letter to the CLASAC committee in support of the public acquisition of Edison Farms. Our local member of the SFWMD Board, Charles Dauray, concurs in this support but the District's Executive Director Carol Wehle has not yet approved the letter.

SFWMD Funding—for the foreseeable future the SFWMD is not going to fund any projects other than for water quality and water storage in the Everglades.

Lee Port Authority Funding – When the Southwest Florida Regional Airport adds a parallel runway in a few years it will need to update its mitigation plan. It has hired a consultant whose study will exploring the mitigation options for the runway will be completed shortly. Once this report becomes available the Committee plans on meeting with the staff of the Port Authority to explore the possibilities of some of this mitigation, and the funds to pay for it, being designated for the Edison Farms property.

Florida Forever Funding – Due to the State precarious financial condition Florida Forever funds are not likely to be available for some time.

In addition The Conservancy of Southwest Florida initiated a petition necessary for the project to be considered for funding from the Federal government’s “Great Outdoors Initiative” program. Please add your name to this petition by selecting The Conservancy link on the right side of the same internet page... [http://www.esterofl.org/Issues/edison\\_farms.htm](http://www.esterofl.org/Issues/edison_farms.htm).

On August 12<sup>th</sup> The Coalition testified in support of the project before Lee County's Conservation 20/20 Conservation Lands Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee (CLASAC) who subsequently voted unanimously to nominate Edison Farms for acquisition. CLASAC is a 15-member citizen's advisory committee appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. This committee, along with a sub-committee, recommends to the commissioners which properties should be purchased. Only properties with a “willing seller” may qualify for the Conservation 20/20 program. If the commissioners agree, the Division of County Lands then will initiate the negotiation process.

Earlier this year the state’s “Florida Forever” land acquisition program ranked the property and contiguous Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) area as #3 statewide in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives Projects category. Representatives of Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Land & Water Trust and the Calusa Land Trust announced they will be contributing \$100,000 and \$10,000 respectively towards the purchase of this land. Pledged donations from community and other organizations will help Edison Farms chances for approval by the Committee and the Board of Commissioners. We would urge all Estero community organizations to consider pledging some funds, no matter how small, for the acquisition.

Conservation 20/20 funds were committed in 2009 for the acquisition of a select group of properties using phased acquisition over the next several years. All Conservation 20/20 nominations received since January 1, 2009 have only undergone a preliminary evaluation to be retained and held for future consideration when funds became available again or to be rejected. As a result of the preliminary evaluations, CLASAC has retained a total of 28 nominations, including Edison Farms. About \$20 million per year is raised for the Conservation 20/20 program by a special property tax levy approved by the voters of Lee County in 1996.

**Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
Property & Casualty Insurance Task Force**

**Florida's New Property Insurance Reform Law 2011 Senate Bill 408**

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In May of 2011, the Florida legislature and Governor Scott created a new law that reforms property insurance rules and regulations in an effort to stimulate the growth of private insurance markets for property coverage. Florida has experienced significant insurance market contraction in the past ten years as the state was struck by multiple, major hurricanes producing large catastrophe losses for insurers. Insurance companies providing homeowners and condominium insurance policies were particularly hard hit.

Many insurance companies decided to either cease writing property insurance in the state entirely or significantly curtail the amount of property insurance that they provide in Florida. Both State Farm and Allstate, the largest writers of homeowners and condominium insurance in Florida, have reduced their homeowners and condominium owners insurance policies by approximately one million policies each.

As a result of this private market contraction, the state supported insurer of last resort, Citizens Property and Casualty Insurance Company (Citizens), grew rapidly and became the largest writer of property insurance in Florida. Citizens premium rates are well below what insurance experts (actuaries) believe they should be. Additionally, the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (FHCF), a state supported reinsurance capacity has also grown rapidly.

The abrupt and significant growth of Citizens and FHCF has exposed Florida taxpayers to the potential of multi billion dollar losses if major hurricane events hit the state because Citizens and FCHF have no other business to fall back on and could be bankrupted by a major hurricane event, leaving the state treasury exposed to cover the excess losses.

Governor Scott signed Senate Bill 408 into law on May 18, 2011 which seeks to stimulate the growth of private insurance in the state. The main elements of the law include:

1. It allows insurance companies to raise their rates by up to 15% to cover the cost of reinsurance (backup insurance) that they buy. It is subject to approval by state insurance regulators on a company by company basis.
2. It requires policyholders to file claims for hurricane damage within 3 years of the hurricane. The previous time limit was 5 years.
3. It requires policyholders to file claims for sinkhole damage within 2 years of the sinkhole event. The previous time limit was 5 years.
4. It requires policyholders who file claims to sign a contract for repairs before they can get full payment from their insurance company, unless their property was completely destroyed.

Insurance industry representatives hail the new law claiming that fraudulent claims for hurricane and sinkhole damage have cost companies billions of dollars and resulted in large rate increases. The new reduced claim filing time and the requirement to repair will significantly limit the amount of fraudulent claim activity, they say.

Consumer advocates claim the law is anti consumer and will raise rates by 15% while making it more difficult for policyholders to file claims.

Who is right? Only time will tell us if the law improves the availability and cost of private insurance. It certainly will take two or more years for this to play out. In the meantime, not much will change for the average policyholder. Let's hope that the big winds don't blow over Florida this year or next, but we know that sooner or later they will.

Respectfully submitted:

L. E. "Scotty" Wood, III  
Chairman

### **Estero's April Housing Permits Continue Slow**

During April, fifteen single family homes with a building value of \$2.5 million were permitted in Estero. This number of [Housing units permitted](#) remains below the monthly average last year, and well below the 2000-2007 periods.

April's permits were primarily for lower priced homes in Lennar's Bella Terra development.

The following table compares year-to-date April figures with those of the prior eleven years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Annual Total Housing Units</b>	<b>Building Value of Units</b>	<b>Average Building Value Per Unit</b>	<b>Percentage of Single Family Units</b>
2000	733	\$95,634,278	\$130,470	36%
2001	743	114,361,268	153,918	43
2002	453	79,305,463	175,067	56
2003	694	100,480,796	144,785	34
2004	506	101,842,275	201,269	73
2005	1,061	207,175,802	195,265	43
2006	648	143,344,385	221,210	19
2007	258	66,051,728	256,014	31
2008	47	16,487,000	350,787	87
2009	51	18,838,887	369,390	80
2010	76	14,872,134	195,686	79
2011	51	9,046,766	177,388	84

The County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>.

### **Estero's April Commercial Building Permits Remain Weak**

During April, permits totaling \$603 thousand were issued for Estero [commercial buildings](#). The year-to-date figure below benefited from the \$2.1 M permitted for Cayo de Estero in January, but permit figures for the last three months remain severely depressed. As shown in the following table, Estero's commercial development started to expand rapidly in 2004 and peaked

in 2006 with a total of \$185 million that year. Since then, total commercial investment in Estero has fallen precipitously.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Year-to-Date</b>	<b>Annual Total</b>
2000	\$7,780,586	\$77,250,835
2001	15,427,071	44,116,526
2002	3,712,079	23,135,139
2003	4,935,094	23,234,725
2004	7,699,199	60,859,820
2005	12,676,374	111,037,977
2006	70,651,988	184,709,240
2007	51,145,498	157,614,045
2008	20,431,973	39,261,677
2009	5,881,990	9,752,556
2010	982,742	9,322,546
2011	4,480,682	?

The only major projects permitted so far this year are:

\$2,052,000 for [Cayo de Estero](#), and  
\$ 952,000 for [Meadows of Estero](#).

Reminder: The building values understate the cost of each residence or commercial building because they exclude the value of the underlying land.