



GREATER ESTERO COMMUNITY REPORT

Third Quarter – 2020

This report is the third in this year's series of Community Reports. It is our goal to provide you with a timely and comprehensive summary of key issues affecting our community and details on advocacy initiatives undertaken to sustain and enhance the quality of life for all residents in the greater Estero area.

In our Survey completed at the end of 2019, residents expressed considerable interest in learning more about the development of the **bike and pedestrian paths** planned for Estero and the surrounding communities. As a result, we have prepared the latest update for you about these plans.

Another critical topic is the importance of our **water supply and its quality**. The report, included in this document, explains the threat to our water supply from the planned developments along Corkscrew Road. It brings you the most up to date information about what the ECCL has been doing and what you can do to ensure we safeguard our water supply for the future.

Please feel free to forward your copy of the report to friends and neighbors who share your interest in ECCL advocacy initiatives. Those wishing to receive subsequent copies directly can register with us at our ECCL website: <https://esterotoday.com>.



SPOTLIGHT:

Exciting Times Ahead for Walkers and Bikers in our Community

The ECCL is delighted to report that the Village of Estero's first Bicycle and Pedestrian "Master Plan" was recently adopted by the Village Council. In essence, it consists of 73.5 miles of new and improved bikeways, walkways, trails, and other related biking and walking projects along 17 different corridors, although the timeframe and overall costs are still to be finalized.

As is the practice in the development of all of the Village's Master Plans, extensive public involvement, including residents, various stakeholders, community-wide polling, and a steering committee, was fundamental to the process.

A Vision of the Future

The vision of the plan is that walking or riding a bike in the Village of Estero should be a comfortable, convenient, and safe transportation choice for people of all ages and abilities. The overarching goal is to serve all ages and all skill levels, from our youngest to oldest residents, to increase safety and comfort on our Village's roads and sidewalks.

The plan also includes suggestions for improvements to nine intersections, as well as programs and policies that will guide decisions and investments in the Village.



In addition to new and improved facilities, projects include traffic safety and operational improvements at major intersections. All of the proposed facilities will together provide access between neighborhoods and destinations. It will address gaps in the system and enhance the safety and use of the existing and developing bicycle and pedestrian network. We will see these improvements in the current Estero Parkway project, already under development.



Established Goals

Based on gathered data and input, the goals for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan include:

1. Increase the safety for all users of the transportation network – people, walking, biking, accessing transit, and driving vehicles.
2. Reduce the number of crashes involving people walking and biking by half within ten years.
3. Increase the active transportation infrastructure—double the number of miles of safe walking and biking facilities in the Village within ten years.
4. Increase the active transportation options for commuters. Double the share of commuters who choose to walk, bike, and use transit by 100% within ten years.
5. Complete the Florida SUN Trail link within the Village by 2030. The Sun Trail link currently encompasses 21 walking or biking trails covering 225 miles.
6. Create at least one new educational campaign geared towards improving safety in the Village of Estero within five years of adopting the plan.
7. Create at least one new encouragement program to increase the number of people using the active transportation network in the Village of Estero within five years of adopting this plan.



Discussions continue with the owners Seminole Railway Line that could lead to the development of the “SUN Trail” that would run along the railway line for 10 miles between Estero Parkway and Bonita Beach Road. However, at this time, other options are also being explored.

In the Works

In summary, the Village Council voted to accept the 2020-2021 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) on Wednesday, July 22, 2020, with the understanding that any reduction in revenue due to the impact of COVID-19 would likely result in the delay of projects. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements Projects included in the 2020-2021 CIP are:

1. Coconut Road Crosswalk
2. Williams Road Bike-Ped Improvements (East of Via Coconut)
3. Intersection Safety Improvement Study
4. Sandy Lane Bike-Ped Improvements
5. Broadway E Shared Use Path (Us 41-Sandy)

The Executive Management Team of the ECCL unanimously supports the Bicycle and Pedestrian Masterplan.

By Judy Freedman & Allan Bowditch.

ALERT:

If You are Not Concerned About Our Clean Water Supply – You Should Be!

If you have looked at the ECCL's website recently (www.esterotoday.com), you will have seen that the population growth in our area (but not part of Estero Village) is set to almost double (6,138 to 10,850) over the next five years along Corkscrew Road east of Ben Hill Griffin.



Rapid Development

The most significant increases are likely to be in the following communities to be developed:

Year	2020	2025
Veranda	0	to 2,400
The Place	602	to 1,325
Wild Blue	59	to 1,000
Corkscrew Crossing	0	to 590
Corkscrew Shores	590	to 648

Lee County has had the fastest population growth in Southwest Florida over the last ten years. Most of our drinking water comes from underground porous materials called aquifers, which are replenished by rain. These are roughly 800 feet below the surface and account for almost 50 percent of the water supply for Lee, Collier, and portions of Glades, Hendry, and Charlotte

counties. Also, water comes from the “surficial” system, 200 feet below the land surface, and to a lesser extent, the intermediate aquifer system, some 300 to 400 feet down.

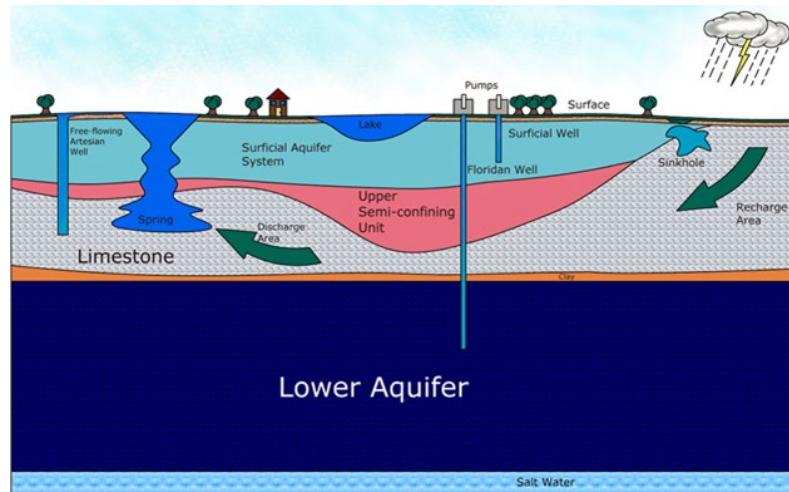
Reclaiming and treating wastewater for use in commercial and residential irrigation takes the pressure off the aquifers, as do watering restrictions county and municipal governments may impose.

The DR/GR – Our Protection at Risk

However, a large area of southeast Lee County is part of what is known as the **Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area: density-restricted land used to help recharge aquifers**. But these density restrictions aren't absolute.

Lee County commissioners in recent years have supported zoning options that allow construction in the DR/GR if the builder makes improvements to water flow and habitats for threatened wildlife. There are several residential developments (mentioned earlier) in various stages along Corkscrew Road, which encroach upon the protected area.

Studies done by several independent agencies, including FGCU, show that development in the DR/GR could cause it to lose its ability to collect rainwater safely. Moreover, it can cause leaching down to the principal aquifers that store our water and thereby permanently harm our water supply. Finally, it could likely harm our wildlife habitat, of which the DR/GR is a principal part.



Surface waters and wetlands play a role in replenishing aquifer systems, and wetlands provide natural filtration of pollutants. Sadly, increasing development in urban and rural areas, drainage and filling of wetlands, mining, oil drilling activities, and lax or unenforced regulations threaten our clean water sources. Also, stormwater runoff from urban and agricultural sources, over-allocation of consumptive use permits to industry activities, and a host of other pressures considerably

threaten Southwest Florida's water resources.

How We Are Working to Protect our Water Quality

As Florida continues to grow, these issues must not go unaddressed if the region is to have a sustainable supply of clean water for both our human population and the unique habitats, wildlife, and recreational opportunities that are currently enjoyed by residents and visitors.

So, what can you do?

- The ECCL actively provides ongoing support for the Conservancy of South West Florida to try to reduce the level of development along Corkscrew Road by continuously encouraging Lee County Commissioners to consider the impact on the DR/GR.
- We recently voiced concerns about another development within the DR/GR involving the application of commercial property (a shopping plaza) in the DR/GR on Corkscrew Rd at Alico Rd. This development will also adversely impact the DR/GR.
- And, you can make your views known by emailing the Lee County Commissioners and actively encourage them to stop any development of the DR/GR, including development restrictions. The Commissioners and their contact info are:

John Manning	239-533-2224	Dist1@leegov.com
Cecil Pendergrass	239-533-2227	Dist2@leegov.com
Ray Sandelli	239-533-2223	Dist3@leegov.com
Brian Hamman	239-533-2226	Dist4@leegov.com
Frank Mann	239-533-2225	Dist5@leegov.com

But there's good news – Commissioners are considering your views.

The ECCL is encouraged and pleased that the Lee County commissioners recently voted to purchase two land parcels for the Conservation 20/20 Land Acquisition Program. Consisting of about 201 acres located in the Density Reduction/Ground Water Reduction (DR/GR) area, these parcels will add to the approximate 30,000 acres Conservation 20/20 purchased lands. Also, we are encouraging Commissioners to vote in favor of the purchase of two additional land parcels at their meeting on August 25.

Thank you for your continued support on this critical issue.

By Allan Bowditch

Please provide feedback on this report with a very short, 3 question survey.

Survey