CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA) 2018 Collier County Review

Nicole Johnson, Director of Environmental Policy
Main Points:

1) Why it’s important to all of us

2) What we’ve learned over 16 years of the program’s life

3) Our recommendations for moving forward together
The RLSA was intended to:

- Protect agricultural lands
- Direct incompatible uses away from listed species and their habitat
- Allow for development, while avoiding sprawl

But, what did this mean?
A Matter of Record: RLSA would not increase population in eastern Collier

“It is believed that the adoption and implementation of the Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay will not result in an increase to the total number of allowable dwelling units or population in the Eastern Lands area, but rather result in a re-allocation of the density and population allowed under the pre-Final Order conditions from a land-consuming checkerboard pattern into compact, mixed-use development.”

Collier County Board of County Commission Adoption Hearing Executive Summary. Oct. 22, 2002.

Max. participation = 16,800 acres of new towns, villages & hamlets with no ranchettes

Page 40 of “Report and Recommendations of the Collier County Rural Lands Assessment Area Oversight Committee for the Immokalee Area Study” Prepared by WilsonMiller, May 2002
In 2008, we learned the RLSA had the capacity for 230% more towns, villages and hamlets than promised.

Max. participation = 43,300 acres of new towns, villages and hamlets + 43,700 acres of ranchettes = approx. 87,000 acres of development!

Memo from WilsonMiller to Collier County RE Estimates of Stewardship Credits under the current and revised RLSA Program and recommendation for Credit calibration. 9-18-2008.
Conservancy Recommendation:
Assess the RLSA based on the original intent

What This Means

What we were told:
16,800 acres of compact development

Reality:
87,000 acres of towns and ranchette sprawl

When the RSLA was adopted in 2002, the public was told less than 10% of the 182,000 acres would be intensified and over 90% would remain in Agriculture and Conservation.

During the county’s 2007 review, it was determined that the RLSA could actually result in much more development and much less Agriculture.
We Learned: The RLSA is a complex TDR-type program.

Traditional TDR program

Currency is the right to build dwelling units

RLSA

Currency is Stewardship Credits
(8 credits = 1 acre of development)
We Learned: More credits in the system than expected

Why?

Credits were added for restoration without recalibration

Can this be “fixed”? RECALIBRATE!!

Conservancy Recommendation: Recalibrate based on the original intent

Number of Stewardship Credits

Source: Wilson Miller
We Learned: This is sprawl

“The large 93,000 acre area eligible for designation of receiving areas, which also allows the conversion of land uses to the underlying low-density uses, is the exact opposite of a plan to direct growth to the most suitable areas.” Dept. of Community Affairs “Rural Land Stewardship Area Program 2007 Annual Report to the Legislature”

Conservancy Recommendation:
Revisit the areas where intensification is incentivized, based on updated best available science, economics and original intent of RLSA.
We Learned: RLSA is no longer based on best available science

RLSA map has not been updated with new best available science for the endangered Florida panther since 2000

Conservancy Recommendation: Update areas where development is incentivized based on best available science for the endangered Florida panther
We Learned: There will be costs to taxpayers

Road cost could equal $2.1 Billion
(Based on 2010 Collier County data applied to WilsonMiller road map)

How much of this will be borne by taxpayers vs developers and residents of new towns?

What have we learned from Ave Maria and Oil Well Road?

Conservancy Recommendation: Evaluate the RLSA based on the infrastructure cost to taxpayers
The RLSA process is designed for public participation.

What happens in the RLSA will impact everyone in Collier County.

Conservancy Recommendation: Collier County designed this review process for public participation – get involved!
Conservancy Recommendations

1. **Reassess** the RLSA based on the original intent

2. **Recalibrate** the credits to offset the existing imbalances

3. **Revise** the RLSA Overlay based on current best available science

4. **Recalculate** the potential infrastructure costs to taxpayers

5. **Remember** participation among all stakeholders is key – we’re all in this together!
Protecting Southwest Florida’s unique natural environment and quality of life...now and forever.

1495 Smith Preserve Way
Naples, FL 34102

www.conservancy.org
(239) 262-0304
facebook.com/ConservancySWF
twitter.com/ConservancySWFL

ADDRESS