

Inner Loop Working Group

Volume 1, Issue 2

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Points of Interest

- Greenwashing and concentrated influence countered by rational skepticism
- Inadequate impact fees bloat development and burden long-standing residents with infrastructure upgrades
- DR/GR, Density Reduction Groundwater Resource Area explained
- Alico-82 extension, our expectations
- Conservation 20/20 lands update, reforms needed
- Public input sought

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Algae, Lee Goes Green?

In the Scooby Doo 50 year Anniversary Reboot Episode 1: *Revenge of the Swamp-Monster*, the villain was shockingly revealed to be the unmasked caddy. Of no surprise was the villain's intent, to buy Florida land cheap and develop expensive condos.

If this plot seems all to familiar, including the caddy's misguided ambitions, then reader, you must be "clued" into the actions of our Lee County government leadership.

BEWARE leaders, there is real swamp-monster lurking in the superheated shallow waters, more dangerous than the callous ambitions and the greedy moral failings reassuringly unveiled by Scooby, Shaggy and the Gang. This monster is fed by the nutrients of long-

standing residents and new residents alike. As it "creeps" into our waterways, this swamp-monster demands a new approach to county governance.

Today, the citizenship of Lee County is an increasingly informed environmentally literate populace. Residents are in support of and actively engaged in citizen science initiatives. An educated and engaged community recognizes the assault of reckless development excesses that impair and threaten our quality of life.

Environmental social justice concerns have emerged to question the concentrated power responsible for "bloomed" development. Ill-considered infrastructure is inequitably appropriated to

benefit future residents at the expense of long-standing, vested community members. Claims by developers touting environmental-enhancements ring hollow as human impacts, including fees, are minimized in pursuit of profit.



Scooby and Shaggy are terrorized by the Swamp-Monster in Episode 1 of the 50th Anniversary Reboot, *Revenge of the Swamp-Monster*.

Won't you be my neighbor?

As residents migrate to Southwest Florida they join a flock of 618,754. An increasing population exerts pressures on natural systems. This is undeniable by a rational person and easily comprehensible by all. Many new community members are mature, economically secure and well educated. Entering retirement, they are relocating to paradise.

As new neighbors they con-

nect to a vibrant community with proximity to FGCU's educational, cultural and recreational amenities and venues. As community members they access the university, shopping and arena via the Inner Loop corridor, a 17 mile loop formed by Alico, Corkscrew and Ben Hill Griffin Roads in Estero.

New community members and long-standing community members share common

ground, interests and concerns. Balanced, smart growth preserves the quality of life for all southwest Floridians. Only equitable, balanced growth will protect our interlinked watersheds, coastal health and provide a framework for the courteous integration of new and long-standing communities.

"I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you."

-Mr. Rogers

Greenwashing 101: Making a Misleading Claim about Environmental Benefits



Greenwashing: also called "green sheen", is a form of spin in which *Green Public Relations* or *Green Marketing* is deceptively used to promote the perception an organization's products, aims or policies are environmentally friendly.

- Wikipedia

Our Lee County government officials lack the will to protect the electorate from the greedy moral failings and misguided ambitions of concentrated power. Further, local leaders and power brokers assume the electorate is so naïve and unknowledgeable they are blind to the "green sheen" of self-promotion.

Does the BoCC (*Board of County Commissioners*) think the public is so insensible they can not perceive the distinction between environmental stewardship and careening profit-driven development? In good conscience, how can they advance a narrative so simplistic it could be unraveled in a classic children's cartoon mystery?

Yet, a series of dubious Comprehensive Plan Amendments have shepherded in explosive growth to the DRGR (*Density*

Reduction Groundwater Resource) delineation in southeast Lee County. Now, commercial developments are "nipping" at the heels of the approved colossal residential developments. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, the charade requires only rational thought and skepticism to remedy. It is no mystery who profits.

Questioning the motives and practices of developers and businesses who openly flout concentrated power and flagrantly prosper with clear economic gain is called oversight. Our impaired waterways demand a political will to provide rational, skeptical oversight of development directly impacting our historic flow-ways and groundwater resources in the interest of the private citizen.

The onus is on the electorate to hold our officials accountable and pull the "wool" away from their eyes. The onus is on the electorate to inform ourselves with science. The onus is on the electorate to be as tenacious as Velma, Fred and Daphne and insist on equitable, ethical development in our community by unmasking profiteering on the part of individual actors.

Unchallenged greenwashing has consequences. At risk is contaminating sentiment about environmental stewardship with pessimism and cynicism by eroding public trust. Who, other than concentrated power profiteers, benefit more from negative public perceptions about environmental stewardship than those who are responsible for the corruption?

Perilous Roadways, Seeing Red in Lee



Only advocates, first responders and those in the health care system have been waving red flags. Otherwise, it's been road-building and development business-as-usual.

-Dan Moser
BikeWalkLee steering committee member and traffic safety consultant

Collateral damage piles up from poor governance on our local roadways. Minimal impact fees have yielded maximum traffic headaches for many residents living in both long-standing and new communities. Tragically for far too many, failure to concurrently develop adequate, safe infrastructure has fueled a "spike" in community fatalities. Those who have lost their lives have disproportionately been pedestrians and cyclists, including children at bus stops.

First responders are increasingly alarmed and expressing growing frustration as they grapple with population pressures coupled with infrastructure inadequacies. Road related carnage in Lee County has earned it a dubious national reputation. Residents and tourists alike struggle to navigate poorly designed, dangerous and in some cases, over-capacity roads. Inevitable delays in response times adds insult to injury for those requiring life-saving emergency services.

Failing to develop concurrent, well-designed infrastructure degrades the quality of life for southwest Florida families. Many families are in effect "trapped" in their neighborhoods as safe access to recreation opportunities are either non-existent or grossly limited when compared to other like-sized communities nationally. Cycling to work or school, even in neighborhoods with close proximity, is treacherous if possible at all. Robust development of infrastructure promoting healthy life-styles for southwest Florida families is suppressed by minimal impact fees to the detriment of the broader community.

Alico-82 Extension, Our Expectations

At long last some relief from oppressive traffic congestion is on the horizon. As the realities of an Alico-82 extension materialize, the Inner Loop Group insists the corridor-roadway be developed in a manner consistent with community character and best practices. The road must include green infrastructure, engineering practices that treat stormwater run-off at its source.

Green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and other elements and practices to restore some of the natural processes required to manage stormwater run-off and create healthier waterways. (EPA, *Green Infrastructure*). At the local scale, green infrastructure is a assemblage of natural areas and engineering practices that simultaneously provide habitat, flood protection, cleaner air, and cleaner water. Stormwater management systems mimic nature, soak up, filter and store water at the origin source.

Bioswales are planted or xeriscaped swales that provide treatment and retention of storm-water. Bioswales along the Inner Loop corridor are necessary to mitigate non-point source pollutants from high volume vehicular traffic, as well as the trash, bacteria, heavy metals, and other pollutants that will further impair our Estero River Watershed. As linear features, they are particularly well suited to being placed along roadways.

The Inner Loop Group expects corridor development to include a separate shared-use path. A shared-use or mixed-use path is a form of infrastructure that supports multiple recreation and transportation opportunities, such as walking, bicycling, skating and people in wheelchairs. A shared-use path typically has a geo-engineered surface and is physically separated from motor vehicle traffic with an open space, such as a bioswale.

Corridor development investment should allow for future greenway development through or along Wild Turkey Strand, 1400 acres of Conservation 20/20 land currently only accessible to the public from off 82 though also fronting Alico Road.

The 2019 Lee Plan identifies private recreation as the primary use within the Inner Loop. The Metropolitan Planning Organization and Lee Plan County Walkways and Bikeways Maps 2019 indicate shared-use paths along the corridor. In accordance with and pursuant to the Florida Greenways and Trails Act (Ch. 260, Florida Statutes), we expect county governance to demonstrate leadership to “coordinate, establish, expand and promote non-motorized trails that make up the Florida Greenways and Trails System” accessible from this corridor.



Bioswales are planted swales that provide treatment and retention of storm-water. (EPA *Green Infrastructure*).

“84% of Lee voters approved the Conservation 20/20 referendum in 2016.”

“100% of voters deserve to know what is happening to the parks land in their neighborhoods.”

-Inner Loop

“Playing Loose” with Public Lands



Lee County Parks and Recreation has been “playing loose” with our county lands. The Inner Loop Group continues to closely monitor Conservation 20/20 Committee and Sub-Committee meetings for the will to internally reform. Needed are safe-guards against undue influence undermining public trust in the Conservation 20/20 Lands Program. Land swaps are unimaginable as a nomination protocol precludes the expenditure of tax dollars for the

purchase of evaluated, ecologically significant lands. Any land use change anomaly proposed must necessitate public notice, careful scrutiny and objective oversight. Transparency in the administering of our “common ground” public lands located in neighborhoods throughout this county, means disclosing any aberrant consideration of land use changes, management of the lands, temporary use during states of emergency and subsequent restoration protocol, time-line and efficacy.

Conservation lands are critical green infrastructure and the foundation of a communities ability to manage stormwater run-off and mitigate human impact. Water quality and flooding impacts can be addressed by protecting open spaces and sensitive natural areas within and adjacent to urban areas while providing recreational opportunities for residents. Natural areas that should be a focus of this effort include wetlands.

Land conservation is an essential tool for communities to use for reducing nutrient loads in stormwater runoff and sewer overflows. The Inner Loop Group demands Conservation 20/20 Lands, especially lands previously identified as Priority Level 1 tracts, recently purchased by Lee County be held in perpetuity to protect the interests of private citizens and public health.

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We are on the web!
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BoCC

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Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR)

- ◆ 83, 000 acres
- ◆ designated in 1990 to protect aquifers
- ◆ Buffer between urban lands and preserve areas
- ◆ complied with state to reduce population capacity in this area
- ◆ combination of wetlands, conservation and agriculture

LEE PLAN DR/GR DEFINITION POLICY 1.4.5:

The Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/ GR) areas include upland areas that provide substantial recharge to aquifers most suitable for future well-field development. These areas also are the most favorable locations for physical withdrawal of water from those aquifers. Only minimal public facilities exist or are programmed. Land uses in these areas must be compatible with maintaining surface and groundwater levels at their historic levels. Permitted land uses include agriculture, natural resource extraction and related facilities, conservation uses, publicly-owned gun range facilities, private recreation facilities, and residential uses at a maximum density of one dwelling unit per ten acres (1 du/10 acres). Individual residential parcels may contain up to two acres of Wetlands without losing the right to have a dwelling unit, provided that no alterations are made to those wetland areas.

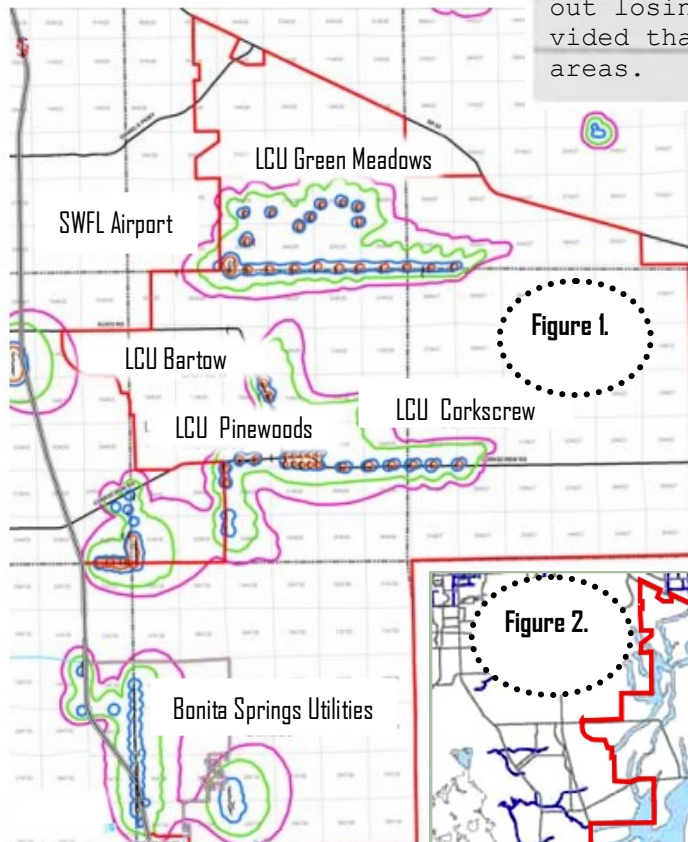


Figure 1. DR/GR Public Supply Water Wells and Protection Zones

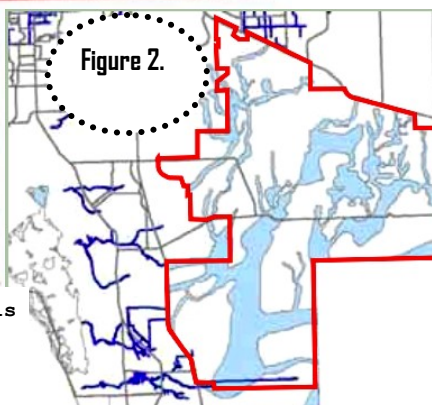


Figure 2. DR/GR Historical Flow-Ways

The significant role of the DR/GR in water resource functions has been documented by the numerous studies conducted over the last three decades.

Three major hydrological systems traverse the area, including the headwaters of the Estero River, the Flint Pen Strand, and the Corkscrew Swamp.

The DR/GR is one of the most important ecological areas within southwest Florida due to water resource functions, flow-ways, and key habitat areas.

-Dover, Kohl & Partners