

**ADOPTED**

**Myakka River Management Coordinating Council  
Twin Lakes Park  
6700 Clark Rd.  
Sarasota, Florida 34241  
August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
9:04 A.M. – 12:05 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

The meeting began at 9:04 A.M. with Jono Miller presiding. This meeting was advertised in the Herald Tribune on Friday, July 25, 2014.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Jono Miller - Sierra Club  
Greg Blanchard - Manatee Co.  
Lou Kovach - Homeowner  
Becky Ayech - ECOSWF  
Elizabeth Wong - City of N. P.  
Corky Pezzati - LWVSC  
Allain Hale - ECOSWF  
Paul Thomas – FWC  
Trisha Neasman-SFWMD  
Betsy Roberts - Manasota 88

Kevin Kemp - FFWCC  
Mike Chouinard - Homeowner  
Jim Beever - SWFRP  
Martin Horwitz - FDOT  
Maya Burke - TBRPC  
Eric Strickland - Myakka Ste. Forest  
Jeff Shrum - City of Venice  
Melynda Brown - DEP/CAMA  
Bill Byle - Charlotte Co.  
Ashley Ellis - Sarasota Co.

**INTERESTED PARTIES**

Chris Oliver - FPS  
Lee Amos - Conservation Foundation  
Diana Donaghy - Myakka River SP  
Walter Rossmann - Venice Area Citizens of  
Responsible Development-VACRD  
Martin Black – Mattamy Homes/Taylor Ranch  
John Henslick – ECo Consultants, Inc.  
John Neal-Neal Development  
Kevin Barton – Wildlife Center of Venice

Jennifer Manis - FPS  
Judy Meents - FPS  
Brie Ondercin-Sarasota Co. Parks  
Mike Sosadeeter-Sarasota County  
Dee Allen - Mosaic  
Julie Byrd - Div. Historical Res.  
Kelly Klepper- Kimley-Horn  
Julie Morris-Wildlands Conservation

**BUSINESS MEETING:**

- **Call to Order and Roll Call was made.**
- **Public Comments:** Becky Ayech wanted to thank CHNEP for sending her all the information about slime from fertilizer and Sarasota County's Neighborhood

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Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST) has done the most awesome job on fertilizer “pay attention public infomercials.”

- **Approval of the Meeting Minutes from March 7, 2014 Council Meeting.** Maya Burke moved adoption of the Minutes. Becky Ayech seconded. The Minutes were adopted.

### **OLD BUSINESS: NONE**

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **Greg Blanchard – Manatee County Update:**

Not much has happened in Manatee County with respect to the River this last period mainly because they have been occupied with getting their laboratory back into operation. All of their monitoring programs are finally in operation at the new site.

They have heard from Florida Department of Environment Protection, FDEP, that due to the quality of their monitoring data they will be able to import all of their records into one identifier when it is migrated to the Federal WQX database. Currently, their monitoring records go back 25 years. They have over 200,000 records, and at one time were the 4<sup>th</sup> largest data providers to Florida STORET in Florida.

Pending resolution of code issues, he invited the Council to meet at their new location at Quattlebaum house.

Jono asked about the response to the Council’s letter on land spreading. Greg replied that Rob prepared a letter but didn’t think it was sent. The Board has no expressed intent or interest in bringing up the issue due to objections by the City of Bradenton since they own 600 acres near Myakka-Wauchula Road and SR 64. Right now there are no active land spreading permits or sites in Manatee County. It’s very unlikely there will be any new land spreading sites in the future.

#### **Elizabeth Wong – City of North Port Update:**

Reporting on the development, the Grand Paradiso project located off River Road has an extensive treatment pond system. Plans do allow discharge into the tributary off the Myakka River.

Island Walk, which is on the south side of US-41, is developing in a rapid manner. They have even more ponds (than Grand Paradiso) to handle stormwater. Gopher tortoises are being relocated into preserve areas on site.

#### **Jeff Shrum – City of Venice Update:**

Neal Communities is building a couple of projects in our area along Laurel and Border Road. The Vica development zoning has been approved for QED 700 units. They are in the preliminary plat stage for a portion of that property. It’s probably about a mile to a mile and a half to the west of the river. The Woods Development, which is on the agenda

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later today, is in the very early stages of review. These are the only projects going on in the River area.

### **Ashley Ellis – Sarasota County Update:**

An overview of an annual report of Myakka River related permits in 2013 was given. There was minimal activity related to permitting activities within the Myakka River Protection Zone which is the 220-foot upland buffer along the River. During this time Sarasota County issued 6 WNCA permits on the river primarily for dock modification and maintenance of retaining walls, boat lifts and the replacement of a community fishing pier. These projects are mostly within the Lazy River Mobile Home Community in North Port.

There were no 50-foot river area buffer variances issued or reviewed and there was only one building permit that was issued in the Myakka River Trails area in Venice for a new home with no impacts on the river.

Jono requested a copy of the annual report of the Sarasota County permits related to the Myakka River be included with meeting documents when posted online.

### **Paul Thomas – Fish and Wildlife Commission Update:**

FWC has an ongoing project monitoring the fisheries in Myakka River. Current budget discussions may impact the project. The Council will be updated if necessary.

Members inquired and brief discussion occurred on various FWC projects, monitoring of imperiled species, published data on these programs as well as the opening of alligator hunting season which started today.

### **Eric Strickland – Florida Forest Service Update:**

The canoe launch project is still in the same position. A new group of volunteers put in a 9 ½ mile long multi-purpose trail. The trail turns along the river at one point which has a beautiful view.

The FFS obtained a grant for exotic removal on the Myakkahatchee tract around North Port targeting about forty acres of Brazilian pepper, cogon grass and melaleuca.

Eric gave an update of some numbers going back about a year:

- Prescribed burning – about 1560 acres (total forest: 8,952 acres)
- Day use – 25,407; Overnight – 4,147
- This January 120 acres were planted with South Florida Slash Pine

The Forest Service is involved in Operation Outdoor Freedom. Fundraisers help to get veterans to come out and enjoy nature, canoe and hunt hogs. They are looking for folks who would like to volunteer with the program.

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Discussion on the amount of shore line along the State Forest and location of pine planted areas relative to other natural communities. Members suggested that Eric bring a map to the next meeting to show where plantings occurred versus preserve areas.

### **Bill Byle – Charlotte County Update:**

Bill noted that many people are moving into the County and Charlotte County had decided not to be part of the Wild and Scenic Program largely due to opposition from the people that live along the river that believed that the program would make it impossible to do anything with docks and seawalls.

Bill asked that the Council be aware there is a lot construction and development near the river south of the designated Wild & Scenic portion. The new homes are mostly with septic tanks. North Port and South Gulf Cove will have a great need for water. These activities could have an impact on the “center of abundance” of the river. Bill suggested that the Council consider a subcommittee to start monitoring all the things going on that could impact the river in this area.

Questions and answers followed.

### **Chris Oliver – Myakka River Biologist Update:**

The monthly wildlife surveys have been conducted. Work days mainly focused on Lygodium took place this summer. The majority of the problems are on the small private lots that are mostly south of Laurel Road.

The MWSR program forwarded nesting information to FWC regarding the Rookery on the lower section of the river. February and March had 90 adults on average which dropped down to 70 adults and with some chicks seen in late May. In July the peak number of chicks was 69.

There was minor activity in permitting. The replacement pier at Harbor Cove was completed in April. The CR-780 bridge replacement permit was issued on March 19<sup>th</sup>. It has not yet begun. The FDOT scour-counter measure permit to support the bridge at US-41 was amended to allow them to use Senator Bob Johnson’s Landing as a staging area. The DEP regulatory office and FPS D4 are continuing efforts to transfer permit authority to the Fort Myers office.

There has been a drop in illegal campsites between Laurel Road and Border Road. There has been an increase in speeding on the river along with complaints regarding the same. During August 9<sup>th</sup> inspection 20 boats were observed between Laurel Road and Border Road in a little over an hour which are abnormally high according to survey records. Three boats were beached on a sandbar, the other 17 in operation were fully on plane creating large wakes in violation of the “river rule” and creating potentially dangerous situations for other recreational users and wildlife. It was reported to FWC law enforcement.

## ADOPTED

In this same area there had been reports of manatees near Venice Myakka River Park (VMRP) in early June. A manatee was seen 2.6 miles upriver from Border Rd which is near Venetian overlook area above VMRP. One small calf was observed Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> between the power line and Upper Myakka Lake (UML) weir. Additional confirmed sightings occurred on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> all in the area just south of the UML.

Becky inquired if residents were generally receptive to exotic removal on their properties. Chris noted there was often a range of responses but generally positive.

Bill asked about Manatee related speed signage along the river. Chris noted that entire MWSR has “slow speed/ minimum wake” except a few “idle speed/ no wake” locations and currently only signage south of US-41 is specifically posted as manatee speed zones.

Jim stated the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing the listing of the manatee from “endangered” to “threatened.” The comment period is open for those who want to contribute.

### **PRESENTATIONS:**

#### **Brie Ondercin – Senator Bob Johnson’s Landing (SBJL) and rowing on the Myakka Wild & Scenic River Update.**

The sport of rowing has become more popular in this region and Sarasota County will be hosting the 2017 World Championships for rowing.

The property is located on the northwest corner of the US-41 Bridge. It is a 7-acre parcel. In November of last year they presented this project to the Board of County Commissioners and were directed by the County Administration and the Commission to look at some rowing opportunities in South County.

The concept plan that was shared with the Commission earlier this year has not changed much. It is still in a Phase I Preliminary Improvements. It includes a grass parking area which is the west side of the property with one access gate off of US-41. It also includes public access to the canal which has a bulkhead which is suitable for recreational, non-motorized vessels such as canoes, kayaks and single and double shells.

Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Association (SANCA) conducted a test at the canal site and on the river in order see how well they could maneuver on the canal with quads and eight-man shells. The rowers were successful with both easily launching as well as navigating the canal out to the river. After the test pilot success it was presented to Sarasota County Parks Advisory and Recreation Council in early July. They made a Motion and Approved to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that this project be a pilot project for training purposes only for teams that come to the area during most of the winter months and early spring to do training on the river south of US-41.

With this proposal SANCA would provide a temporary floating dock at this point and County would provide a small storage space for the teams to be able to store their shells

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during the week or two they are here for training. This would be by reservation only so the training activity would be at a minimum most mornings and it would not be extensive use; just blocks at a time. They would also be using a weightless launch boat.

Staff has worked extensively with various agencies: FWC, DEP, Sarasota County Environmental Protection staff to consider all the options for protection of the river and manatees while at the same time providing recreational and training opportunities.

The next step is for them to present to the Board of County Commissioners later this fall with this proposal for a Pilot Rowing Program. Once they receive their permission and approval they will proceed with making improvements to the property.

Staff are looking at going to the County Commission in October and that will then help them plan out the next phase of improvements. Some of the current on-going work: removed exotics, partnered with DOT for staging area and DOT has reciprocated by providing them with exotic removal on the property.

Lastly, they will be hosting an event in honor of Senator Bob Johnson in recognition of the property and his efforts to designate the river as a Wild & Scenic River. Details are still being worked out and will likely be later this fall.

Brie introduced Mike Sosadeeter who joined their Park Planning team in April of this year. He will more than likely be handling this project in the future.

Becky inquired if there were any maximum number of rowing reservations at SBJL.

Brie indicated that had not been determined, but the program would be by reservation only and they are considering a low number (of reservations) to keep activity on the river low.

Bill Byle asked about park plans related to the use of pavers and grass.

Brie indicated that in initial phase there will be temporary grass parking but there will be other improvements at later phases of park development.

Jono highlighted that it is a pilot program and that it has not been determined how usable the river is going to be noting that the rowing test conducted in July was not adequate to determine feasibility during lower tide periods. The worst thing we could do is to advertise for people to come down to row on the Myakka and find out it is unsuitable.

### **Julie Morris – Wildlands Conservation**

In June the Acquisition Restoration Council voted to accept their Florida Forever project proposal and add it to the existing Myakka Ranchlands project.

## ADOPTED

Wildlands Conservation submitted a proposal called the Myakka Peace Watershed Connector (MPWC) because it connects the Myakka and Peace watersheds. The proposal would preserve property as conservation easements.

The MPWC is comprised of seven adjacent properties approximately 5,500 acres in Desoto and Sarasota Counties with the majority of the proposed sites in the Myakka Watershed although the acquisition extends into the Peace Watershed. This is a natural extension of the Myakka Island. The project is strategically located and would provide protection for both Myakka and Peace Rivers and ultimately the Charlotte Harbor Estuary. It borders the RV Griffin Preserve to the south, the Myakka Island to the west. It's approximately 3 miles away from the Peaceful Horse Ranch, approximately 4,400 acres, purchased by Mosaic a few years ago for protection. To the north of that is the Peace River Refuge Project.

The MPWC strengthens the linkage between the Peace River and the Myakka River. Combined with the Peaceful Horse Ranch, the Peace River Refuge and the existing Florida Forever projects just to the North in southern Hardee County it would form a valuable network of conservation lands in the region.

Wildlands Conservation has been working over the past few years to increase the amount of conservation lands in Desoto County. The acquisition by Mosaic is a fabulous start and can serve as an anchor to connect conservation lands up the Peace River. Ideally, a linkage from Babcock to the south over to the Myakka Island to the west can be established.

The MPWC project has been identified as having a high surface water priority, and approximately 42% has been identified as functional wetlands. This area has been identified by SWFWMD as a less-than-fee acquisition priority because of the large amount of surface water present. The land protected by this project will contribute to the water quality and quantity needs of the region.

The MPWC has been added to the Myakka Ranchland project which is ranked number five on the less-than-fee acquisition list for Florida Forever projects. Ideally sometime in the near future partnerships can be identified in order to get this area under protection.

### **Lee Amos – Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast.**

The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast (CFGF) has a Florida Forever proposal called the Myakka Island Conservation Corridor (MICC). The Acquisition Restoration Council is reviewing the proposal today in Tallahassee.

The MICC project proposes that the state purchase conservation easements on three ranches: The Triangle Ranch (1,067 acres) in Manatee County; Shep's Island Ranch (717 acres) in Sarasota County adjacent to the Myakka River State Park (MRSP); and the Orange Hammock Ranch (5,774 acres) in the City of North Port, near Tropicair Blvd. and Toledo Blade.



## ADOPTED

The two themes of the project: (1) water protection and (2) connecting and buffering conservations lands.

The Triangle Ranch: water protection, 3 miles of the Myakka River passes the property. The connection between the Myakka River and Tatum Sawgrass Marsh occurs on the property. Clay Gully, which is a man-made diversion of the river, originates on this property. This diversion of the river sends water directly to UML bypassing parts of the Tatum Sawgrass Marsh. Both the Tatum Sawgrass and Clay Gully have some hydrologic alterations that could have had some negative effects on the system. A conservation easement would protect all these resources and prevent further degradation but also allow for restoration in the future should that be possible.

Connecting and buffering: This project is adjacent to MRSP, the Crowley Museum and Nature Center, property owned by Myakka Conservancy and it is also adjacent to a NRCS, Wetlands Preserved Program Easement in the Tatum Sawgrass. Putting conservation easements on these other properties that are part of the marsh strengthens restoration of the marsh and ties in with that program.

Shep's Island Ranch: The major water feature on it is Vanderipe Slough, which passes north to south on the property. Between it and the Myakka River is some high ground called Shep's Island. They put a dam on the north end that prevents water from going from the UML through this slough. A conservation easement would protect this slough from further degradation and still allow for restoration if possible in the future. The easement would also protect the scenic values from future development on this site. The property shares over 3 miles of boundary with MRSP. This property was identified in the current management plan to be included as a part of the park's optimum boundary.

Orange Hammock Ranch: It has been called Isles of Athena in the past. Looking at the water resources, it is a very wet property. 75% of it is underwater in the rainy season. Alderman Slough and Orange Hammock Slough are present conveying a lot of water flowing southward towards North Port where it hooks up with their canal system ultimately connecting to Myakkahatchee Creek which goes to the Myakka River. A conservation easement would protect those water resources and help protect water quality of the river and drinking water from Myakkahatchee Creek.

This property would really strengthen the connections on RV Griffin Reserve and the Lewis-Longino Conservation Easement. The property includes Dry Prairie.

The CFGC requests that the Council consider writing a letter of support to attach to their Florida Forever application to send to the state.

Questions and answers followed.

### **Trisha Neasman – SWFWMD**

Minimum Flows for Myakkahatchee Creek haven't been set and are not on the list. The good news is that the withdrawals from North Port are very small.



## ADOPTED

The Most Impacted Area (MIA) stake holder ongoing meeting will be the 18<sup>th</sup> of August. This is the last MIA meeting where they would gather up all the options. Then the options will be presented to the SWFWMD Governing Board.

Becky and Jono inquired about future opportunities for this Council to ask the governing board to reshuffle the ranking so that Myakkahatchee Creek and Warm Mineral Springs minimum flows and levels move up the list (or get on the list).

**BREAK from 10:21 to 10:30 a.m.**

### **Jono Miller – MWSR Management Plan Review (continued): Discussion of Section 4 management objectives and actions.**

Objective 4 is to coordinate with local, regional, state and federal agencies in the use and regulation of land management practices that protects the quality of the Myakka River and its tributaries. The Council shall continue to jointly evaluate the function and composition of the Council as a management and coordination body and implement any necessary modifications.

Jono gave an overview of council membership and asked the group what other entities the members wished to consider for possible nominations for Council Membership.

Becky Ayech suggested Hidden River Homeowner Association and Miakka Community Club.

Betsy suggested the Florida Native Plant Society.

Jono said that in the past the Crowley Museum and Nature Center was discussed and that the Thomas Ranch should be on the list to consider.

Allain suggested the Greater Charlotte Sierra Club could be approached.

Jono inquired if there was any objection to move on and consider any Motions regarding Lee Amos's request related to the Myakka Island Conservation Corridor. There were no objections.

**Becky Ayech made the Motion: that the MRMCC write a letter of support for the Myakka Island Conservation Corridor Proposal that may be attached to the proposal and submitted by Conservation Foundation to the Acquisition and Restoration Council. Betsy Roberts seconded. The Motion was passed with Elizabeth Wong and Trisha Neasman abstaining.**

### **Marty Black – Overview of Thomas Ranch Development.**

Marty gave some background to the recent purchase of the Thomas Ranch. Mattamy, the largest home builder in Canada, acquired the ranch in what was the single largest

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residential land purchase of the US made this year. He noted that the purchase was as a generational investment.

The ranch is about 9,600 acres located for the most part south of US-41 and west of River Road. There is a small piece that actually runs along the river. It's environmentally sensitive and likely not to be developed at all; certainly not in the near future.

Their plans have a generational component. Literally, they are looking at a 40-year hold on the property. It is to be developed in concert with North Port and Sarasota County over the next generation. There is an opportunity to work with the City of North Port and Sarasota County to set a long-range plan in development of the property.

The ranch does not anticipate any earth moving or any development for at least two years. They will focus on bringing back the ranch operations. There is currently a mulching and recycling facility in operation for two clients: the City of North Port and Valley Crest Landscaping. They actually mulch and reuse the material on site. Landscape debris from the City of North Port is used as a land application. Historically, they have had sod farm as well as watermelons, citrus, hay crops and cattle on the property for years.

Their immediate plans are to improve the plant management aspect and clean up the mess that has been left there. Equipment has been abandoned on site and hasn't had diesel in it in four years so they are in the process of getting it removed to prevent hazardous situations. It is a lot of maintenance; putting the fence lines back up from when the widening was done on River Road. There is cattle on the property now.

They anticipate possible discussions in the spring with the City of North Port on modifying the existing development plans.

It was asked if the development will be visible from the river.

Martin responded no, we (the development) are literally on the opposite side of River Road. The properties on River Road probably won't be developed for 10 or 15 years at least. The first area likely to be developed is the area of the property where West Villages Parkway comes into US-41 maybe in about three years.

His phone number is 941-915-3435 and his email address is [marty.black@mattamyhomes.com](mailto:marty.black@mattamyhomes.com).

### **John Henslick, Kelly Klepper, John Neal, Kevin Barten and Walter Rossmann – “The Woods” Development.**

First to speak was John Henslick with ECo Consultants, an environmental consulting firm involved with the project with Kelly Klepper from Kimley-Horn, the planner on the project and John Neal, president of Neal Land Ventures.

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John Henslick: The project runs between Border Road and Laurel Road west of the Myakka River. Kelly stated right now it is zoned for Open Use Estate (OUE). The city comprehensive plan designation that would allow for a city development standard of up to about 5 dwelling units per acre.

This project has begun the review process. It will result in the preservation of all the wetlands on the site as per city, DEP and water management district (WMD) criteria. Twenty-five foot buffers around the wetlands are also the required. They have done endangered and threatened species surveys. Gopher tortoises are present. It is the only species known on site. Prior to the development activities additional listed species surveys will be done to verify that nothing had access to the site in the meantime.

There have been several neighborhood meetings on the project. Some citizens wanted to establish wildlife corridors on the property. John (Henslick) stated that they have communications from the County that identified this tract as not being within what they consider the wildlife corridor for the Myakka River. The habitats that are out there have no streams, no linear systems connecting to offsite areas that would really lend themselves well to the corridor system. The property does have an abundance of pine flatwoods and herbaceous wetlands.

Kelly Klepper stated that the property was approximately 151 acres from three parcels. The proposal is for about 263 dwelling units which is roughly 1.7 dwelling units per acre. This is well under half of what is currently allowed through the City of Venice's Comprehensive Plan. Based on the City of Venice's requirements as they proceed through the approval process they are requesting a Planning Unit Development, PUD. As such they are required to preserve a minimum 50% of open space. The site plans developed at this point are at a little above that. The planned community would not only respect the wetlands it also augments the native habitats out there through open space.

John Neal gave an overview of his involvement in development in Sarasota and Manatee noting that he builds about 1 out of 3 homes in Manatee and Sarasota County. They hire about 450 businesses on their job sites every day and it is a responsibility he takes very seriously. He hopes to find new subcontractors in the Venice area and Sarasota area. He stated that he continues to strongly believe in this subdivision that they will produce in this location; that will meet or exceed the standards of both the requirements of the reviewing agencies. And while his background is more on the economic side, he does understand the environmental concerns and takes them seriously.

Jono inquired about the schedule to develop the Woods.

Kelly Klepper addressed the schedule. They have filed the preliminary application through the City of Venice. It's a preliminary review through the planning commissions and their staff. They have not filed a formal application at this point. When they finalize the strategy, they anticipate submitting in the next 30 to 90 days. At that point the plan goes through the City of Venice's land use review process which includes not only the Planning Commission but also the City Council at that point. If found to be consistent

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with the Comprehensive Plan they will vote and recommend to approve the rezone. Then the project would have what's called a Binding Development Concept Plan or Binding Site Plan with which they have to build in accordance with. Following that, there is a series of permitting processes in regards to construction plans. The fastest something could be constructed could conceivably be between six to nine months. They haven't finalized a formal schedule as far as what steps and where.

Jono asked for an overview of flood water management when the river comes up and leaves its banks.

John Henslick – The river will rise and will cross over Jackson Road. The design of the project must ensure that they continue to receive all the water that they receive presently; that they do not hold any back and flood the adjacent properties. That is handled through the “SWERP” process with WMD. The areas of the lots will be raised above what the ground is presently. The lakes that will be built adjacent to the lots will be designed with structures at the proper elevations to receive and store those surface waters.

Jono asked if they would lower those lakes if there is a tropical depression or some event that could make the Myakka go into flood stage. Will he increase the capacity of the lakes prior to that?

John Henslick- no they are not going to “pump” the lakes out. If they take a cup of dirt and dump it into the flood plain then they take a cup of dirt out of the ground adjacent to it to replace the storage capability. It's a cup for cup model.

John Neal further explained the cup for cup model.

John Henslick stated that the WMD will review the stormwater design plans for the project and when the WMD of the state of Florida is satisfied that this project will not result in any adverse impact with flooding on any adjacent properties; only then will they issue the permits.

Additional discussion of stormwater design, flooding, and water release occurred.

Becky asked about soil type, uses of soils on the project, and impacts to vegetation and animal communities impacted in the process of creating the stormwater ponds.

John Henslick responded that only appropriate soils will be used for the house pads. Other more organic soils will be used in the common areas and for plantings. The animal species they concern themselves with are those they have to concern themselves with through regulations. “These are the listed species – we have to protect them.” If a listed species is nesting there they have to protect that habitat. This property does not have listed species. Some of the other wildlife, such as deer and bobcats, will vacate the site due to the amount of earth work that will occur to meet the required flood plan elevation that is being designed. The majority of the trees and vegetation will be removed. They

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will be replaced under city criteria. Buffers around and the wetlands themselves will be maintained in their existing native habitats.

Protections and rules for Gopher tortoises, Bald eagles and Caracara were discussed.

Walter Rossmann stated there have been several meetings with representatives from Neal but there were still concerns including the level they will have to raise the property. There is a neighborhood adjacent to it that is closer to the river that already gets major flooding. In 1988 Tropical Storm Keith raised the water five feet and caused \$1 million in damage. The river rose six feet in 1992. In 2003 from the storms of April to July there was a record height of 18 feet. Residents are concerned when Neal raises the home sites that it will have a dam effect and neighborhoods that are already getting major amounts of water will be affected even more. The nutrients from these new homes due to fertilizer use is also an issue. Will they be able to keep the nutrients on the property?

Kevin Barton stated that he worked at Pelican Man Bird Sanctuary before founding Wildlife Center of Venice the two biggest wildlife centers in the tri-county area. He's been cleaning up after developments like this his whole career. The center has handled thousands of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife of all species in the tri-county area.

"All the species matter, the biodiversity is really what matters. That's why I'm here." He noted that he purchased 10 acres; one property adjacent to the Carlton Preserve and another next to the Sleeping Turtles. Both are very close to Jackson Road that Neal Development would like to develop and he would like to hold back.

Habitat protection is the biggest issue for wildlife. They are right, the only listed species that has been identified which has a burrow on that property is the Gopher tortoise. The law is not helping our Gopher tortoises. They're all getting relocated and there is not enough places to take them.

Kevin stated he thought it was convenient the county and city decided they didn't need to fulfill their obligation on the corridor. They never bothered to finish their work on that before the proposed development came across their desk.

The need for corridors: The most important thing we can do for our wildlife is make sure their habitats don't get further fragmented and make sure the biodiversity is maintained. It's important that our greater mega fauna and smaller species have access to the greater Myakka River Corridor that's internationally recognized as a corridor. This would obviously be an artery off that larger corridor that he is fighting for and he thinks that most of the people in this room would agree. There is a need for less human population density along the Myakka Wild & Scenic River and bordering park lands.

Kevin stated that he did not believe their explanation of the hydrology addressed any effects of the berm along the edge and suggested that it would have a reverb effect on the river. He asked that Council look into this area.

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Kevin noted that in prior meetings regarding the Vica project Neal Development gave lip service to a corridor. Now they are trying to work their way out. They said there would be no walls on that community. We asked that they continue this program all the way down to the Myakka. They also asked for larger buffers. The Vica project had 30-foot buffers. He's asking for 75. The county required 75 on the five acre lot for the wildlife center. In conclusion, Kevin stated that the property should be considered for preservation because their biologist said it's the most pristine wetlands he's seen in the area.

Jono stated it would be helpful to create a cross-section from the western side of the property to the Myakka River including the neighboring lots and show the bed of the river, the slope across the property and then the slope with the house pads and lakes. Then show how the parcel is affected as the river stage increases and gradually floods more and more.

John Henslick responded that this is exactly what the engineer has to do for the permitting process. He is sure when they get to that point they could provide this cross section to this Council for members to get a better visual of the flooding issues. They are not yet to that point; it is done at the time of construction.

Kelly stated they did do a simplified graphic; a cross-section longitudinal looking from the bank of the river showing the existing conditions and what happens when they elevate certain portions and what they would have to do for the cup per cup analysis to compensate.

John Neal stated he has the data, a graphic, and is happy to share it.

Bill asked about impacts to wetlands bisected by property boundary and impacts from lakes located near wetlands.

John Neal responded that the wetlands on the boundary will not be impacted; adjacent areas will be kept at a natural grade.

A general discussion of the existing rules and requirements related floodplain compensation occurred focusing on the limitations based on standards involved with the various permit authorities.

Jim noted that the Myakka River has become flashier through time due to the human alterations and the compartmentalization of the watershed in which water is held back under surface water management permits and released when water reaches the control elevation. This creates a pattern of annual hydrology which is very different from what the river originally had. He offered to present on this topic at a future date.

Julie Morris commented that this area was ecologically significant and that the developer has a chance to go above and beyond the minimum requirements. Building intensely this close to preserves violates basic ecologic zone principles. Steps could be taken to

**ADOPTED**

mitigate impacts including edge effects, light pollution, and noise. So much effort and money has already been spent protecting the Myakka Island corridor so we need extra attention to this sensitive area.

John Neal's direct telephone number is 328-1053 or his email is [jneal@nealcommunities.com](mailto:jneal@nealcommunities.com). Everyone who sends a letter gets consideration.

**Becky Ayech made a Motion:**

- 1. Letter to the City of Venice requesting lower density in the proposed Neal Communities Development known as the "The Woods."**
- 2. Request a 75-foot buffer along Border Road.**
- 3. Request a 75-foot wildlife buffer corridor be identified from the Myakka River through the proposed properties to be built toward the Jacaranda Extension & the City of Venice (power line easement).**

Bill Byle seconded the Motion.

Discussion of the Motion occurred.

**Becky Amended the Motion in section 3 to read: Request a 75-foot habitat buffer be identified from the Myakka River through the proposed properties to be built toward the Jacaranda Extension & the City of Venice (power line easement).**

Bill Byle seconded that.

Further discussion continued.

**The Motion passed.**

**Members who abstained:** Greg Blanchard, Martin Horowitz, Jeff Shrum, Ashley Ellis, Maya Burke, Jim Beever, Mike Chouinard and Trisha Neasman.

**Future Agenda Items:**

- 1. SWFWMD-watershed plan and Myakka Watershed Initiative**
- 2. Specialist to talk about water use permits and MFLs**
- 3. Flood Plain compensation.**
- 4. Jim Beever – Hydroperiod changes on the Myakka River**
- 5. Continued Section Four of the Management Plan**

**Next Meeting Date: Early November/December.**

**Becky Ayech moved to adjourn. Bill Byle seconded. The meeting was adjourned.**

**The meeting ended at 12:05 p.m.**