

**Subject:** RE: Amendment 2010 - 02 - E Protection Measures for Oscar Scherer State Park

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment 2010-02-E, and how it can affect Oscar Scherer State Park.

The Park is a major ecotourism destination for visitors from all over the world. The park attracts birders, hikers, kayakers, and campers who come here for the sunshine, a sighting of a scrub jay, and a Real Florida experience not available elsewhere. This creates Oscar Scherer State Park's economic impact on the local community, which has an annual value of over 6.1 million dollars and supports 108 jobs in Sarasota County.

Oscar Scherer State Park is listed as the "Crown Jewel" in Sarasota County's **Habitat Conservation Plan** for protection of the federally listed, threatened Florida Scrub jay and its' habitat. The park is vital to the survival of this umbrella species and the protection of its habitat is just as vital to other species, the park, and our county. Together we must do all we can to manage and protect this last stronghold for jays and the vanishing scrub.

**Chapter 2. of the 2006 Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan states,**  
"...habitat fragmentation and physical obstacles associated with human development and infrastructure represent a threat to wildlife through a number of factors including degradation of habitat quality, habitat loss, reduced biodiversity, genetic isolation, and direct mortality. Many forms of wildlife, including the federally threatened Florida Scrub jay, as well as other avian, amphibian, reptilian, and mammalian species, are often killed by vehicles while foraging along Florida roadways. Other development/infrastructure, such as drainage features, watercourses, and storm water facilities, also represent physical impediments to wildlife movement. The maintenance of a physical connection between ecosystems facilitates the movement of wildlife and reduces the likelihood of wildlife/infrastructure interactions and need for animals to traverse human development features, thereby reducing the risk of direct mortality and increasing their opportunity for long-term species success..."

One of the management objectives of the Park's **Unit Management Plan is to;**  
**Maintain a landscape connection between the park and public lands about 1.5 miles to the east, by**

- a. Keeping this item on the agenda at all relevant, local and state govt. meetings.
- b. Work with adjacent landowners to gain their cooperation in this endeavor
- c. Work with DOT to install wildlife crossings as a part of any new road construction around the park.

County **ENV Policies 4.4.1.and 4.4.2. state** *"ensure the connections between development, infrastructure and habitat connectivity will minimize barriers to wildlife movement and may include artificial corridor components. The protection of natural areas, as well as the preservation of valuable habitat corridors, will serve to provide the essential balance between an environmentally sustainable development and a network of connectivity for wildlife movement..."*

Therefore, it is obvious the purpose and need for wildlife corridors and crossings are documented by both the county and the park. We are asking that you document this with the proper language incorporating said wildlife/landscape corridors and crossings, and include it now in **Comp. Plan Amendment 2010-02-E** language and stipulate it as part of the Critical Area and Natural Resource plans for the EEZ.

Within Oscar Scherer State Park, **Lake Osprey** is one of only two public access, freshwater swimming locales in Sarasota County; it is a destination for families, individuals, and at times the County Sherriff's dive team. **South Creek** is a tidal stream, part of the Little Sarasota Bay Watershed. This Creek is an important winter refuge for fish and other species. The water quality of both Lake Osprey and South Creek is important to the health of our visitors, and the plants and animals that inhabit it.

#### **APPENDIX D, from the COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES**

states the county will...

1. *Protect the functions of natural groundwater recharge areas and natural drainage features by providing for the maintenance of existing, and where feasible, the restoration of the pre-development, water budgets to historical watercourses (as identified by the original United States General Land Office Township Plats from the Mid to Late 1800's).* **WATER Objective 2.2.**

2. *The County shall require that the treatment of stormwater discharge meet standards which will ensure that there will not be adverse impacts on the quality of natural surface waters.*

**WATER Policy 2.2.2.**

The Park's **Unit Management Plan** requires us to pursue opportunities for the restoration of South Creek

- a. Restore historic water flow regimes
- b. Collect baseline data from groundwater wells and staff gauges, and monitor water quality within the South creek corridor.

**Please, include language into this Comp Plan Amendment that,**

1. Insures adequate clean water will be available to the South Creek Basin and the surface water aquifer for the protection of the visitors and inhabitants of the park.
2. Include a "**Notice of Proximity**" for our lands managed for healthy natural resources and that smoked protection measures will be incorporated into growth management regulations in order to protect the aggressive prescribed fire program at this park.
3. Allow for adequate space between the development and the park boundaries, and be so stipulated to protect the park's viewscape and reduce noise, light, and air pollution. A combination of stepped development or height tapering with open space is needed to ensure the compatibility of uses. This amendment must follow the county's Dark Skies Standards, Section 7.5, Sarasota County Zoning Ordinance, Outdoor Lighting...to reduce sky glow, limiting light pollution emanating from the

construction, the operating industry, the communities, and the planned I-75 and three SR 681 intersections.

4. States, *The Park's resources will receive protections based on the approved Unit Management Plan*, including the goals mentioned above and to prevent pets, ornamental plantings, and other noxious exotic/feral species from crossing into the park.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**John J Roche**

**John J Roche, Park Manager**

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