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Lee County Department of Community Development earns planning award

Fort Myers, FL, July 19, 2016 — The Lee County Environmental Enhancement & Preservation Overlay, prepared by the Lee County Department of Community Development and incorporated into the Lee County comprehensive plan by the Board of County Commissioners, has been selected for an Award of Merit by the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association.

The Environmental Enhancement & Preservation Overlay is an innovative strategy that balances development within the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area of southeast Lee County with the County's goals of ensuring long-term protection and enhancement of natural resources.

Following multiple public hearings, the overlay for properties along a portion of Corkscrew Road was approved in 2015. It provides a predictable way to assign appropriate density increases in a portion of the southeast Lee County DR/GR lands as an incentive for private developments to offset the costs to improve, preserve and restore the regional surface water and groundwater resources and indigenous wildlife habitats on their properties.

To date, two developments have used the overlay by committing to significant land restoration in exchange for increased density. Upon completion of the two developments, 60 percent of the project area will be restored and preserved, including improvements such as reconnecting flow-ways, wetlands restoration and re-establishing wildlife corridors.

The Lee County Department of Community Development will be presented with the award at the APA Florida Chapter Annual Conference in Tampa in September.