

**Lee County Board Of County Commissioners
Agenda Item Summary**

Blue Sheet No. 20050892

1. ACTION REQUESTED/PURPOSE:

Authorize the establishment of two FTE Park Ranger positions and start up costs to patrol the Conservation 20/20 Preserves. Approve budget transfer from Capital Improvement-Environmentally Sensitive Land Management Reserves in the amount of \$50,000 for the remainder of FY 04-05; the Capital Improvement-Environmentally Sensitive Land Management Fund will fund both positions and start up costs. CA

2. WHAT ACTION ACCOMPLISHES:

Establishes two FTE Park Ranger positions and associated start up costs for the Conservation 20/20 program under Parks and Recreation.

3. MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION: Establish two FTE Park Ranger positions and associated start up costs to patrol Conservation 20/20 preserves.

4. Departmental Category:

C11A

5. Meeting Date

08-02-2005

6. Agenda:

- Consent
- Administrative
- Appeals
- Public
- Walk-On

7. Requirement/Purpose: (specify)

- Statute
- Ordinance
- Admin. Code
- Other

8. Request Initiated:

Commissioner
Department Parks & Recreation
Division
By: John Yarbrough, Director

John Yarbrough by com

9. Background:

The Conservation Lands Program was approved by referendum in November 1996. The BOCC appointed the 15-member Conservation Lands Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee (CLASAC). The County has acquired approximately 11,428 acres of environmentally sensitive lands and currently is negotiating on over 905 acres. On June 6, 2005 the Management Sub-Committee of CLASAC, at their regular meeting, voted to add two (2) new Park Ranger positions to assist with the increased theft, vandalism, illegal public use, dumping and other illegal activities occurring on Conservation 20/20 acquisitions. On June 9, 2005, at their regular meeting, CLASAC approved the two (2) new positions. Back up documentation of the increased problems at the Preserves, benefits of having Park Rangers dedicated to the 20/20 Preserves, and overall impact to the management fund are attached to this bluesheet.

Funding will be made available in account #KH5722030105.501210 and KH5722030105.506430

10. Review for Scheduling:

Department Director	Purchasing or Contracts	Human Resources	Other	County Attorney	Budget Services				County Manager/P.W. Director
					Analyst	Risk	Grants	Mgr.	
<i>JY</i>				<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
<i>06-14-05</i>				<i>6/15/05</i>	<i>6/15/05</i>	<i>6/15/05</i>	<i>6/15/05</i>	<i>6/15/05</i>	<i>6-16-05</i>

11. Commission Action:

- Approved
- Deferred *TO THE 08-02-05 BOCC MEETING.*
- Denied
- Other

RECEIVED BY COUNTY ADMIN: <i>[Signature]</i>
<i>6-15-05</i>
<i>11-15</i>
COUNTY ADMIN FORWARDED TO: <i>[Signature]</i>
<i>[Signature]</i>

Rec. by CoAtt:
Date: <i>6/15/05</i>
Time: <i>8:30</i>
Forwarded: Co. Mgr. <i>6/15/05 9:00 am</i>

Patricia Geren - Blue Sheet # 20050892

From: John Yarbrough
To: Geren, Patricia
Date: 6/23/05 12:52 PM
Subject: Blue Sheet # 20050892 --- *CIE*
CC: Clark, Roger; Hammond, William; Mitar, Cindy; Riley, Lynda; Schwartz, Holly; Wewerka, Laura; Winton, Pete

Kathy, I would like to request that the above referenced blue sheet be "pulled" and continued to the August 2nd BOCC meeting. The Conservation 2020 Committee would like to get further clarification on the funding. We do not anticipate any changes.....Thanks.....Jy

*on record
06-23-05
[Signature]*

Patricia Geren - Re: Blue Sheet # 20050892

From: John Yarbrough
To: Geren, Patricia
Date: 6/23/05 1:06 PM
Subject: Re: Blue Sheet # 20050892

Thanks for your help.....Jy

>>> Patricia Geren 06/23/05 12:54PM >>>

JY,

I will put the request for deferral on the recap sheet for the 06-28-05 BOCC meeting.

Kathy

Patricia K. (Kathy) Geren
Administrative Specialist
Public Resources
gerenpk@leegov.com
Phone: 239-335-2215
FAX: 239- 335-2449

>>> John Yarbrough 06/23/05 12:52PM >>>

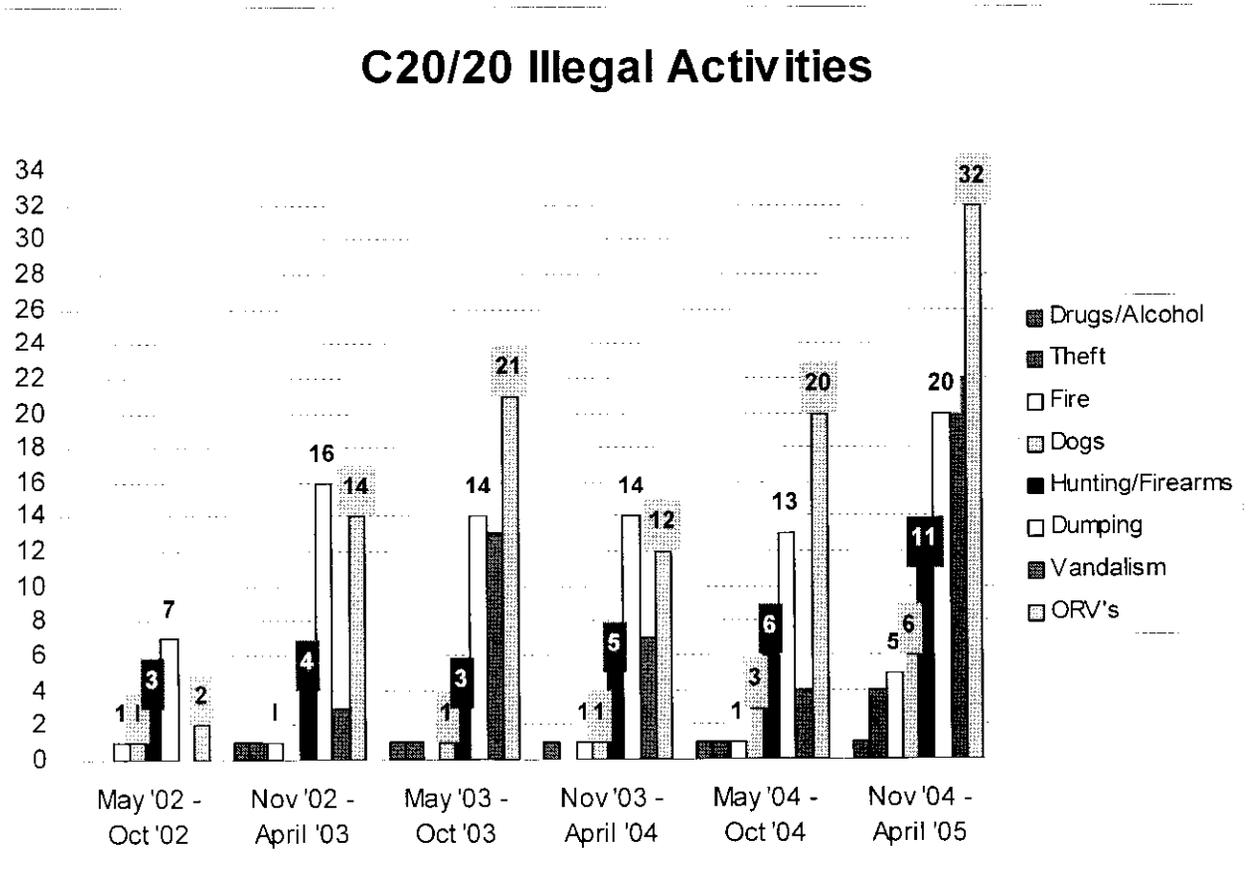
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Over the past few months, C20/20 staff has seen a dramatic increase in law enforcement problems on the preserves, especially with hunting, ORV's, vandalism and dumping. We are concerned that unless something is done soon, this trend will continue.

This increase in problems is probably due to a number of factors, including

1. The rapid development in the area, pushing people out of places where they formerly drove ORV's and hunted.
2. The low likelihood of being caught. Except for Bunche Beach, no citations have been issued at any Preserves and very few warnings.
3. Publicity of the preserves through our brochure and website let people know where these lands are located.
4. Increase in our staff and the restoration projects that we conduct, which gets us out to see problems more frequently.

The following chart illustrates the escalation of problems on our Preserves:



For the previous 6 months, there have been 101 assorted illegal activities recorded by C20/20 staff and volunteers. Staff time on working with the most major problems totaled 78 hours. The economic loss for these problems is difficult to quantify, as there are certain items, like the destruction of vegetation from ORV's and the disturbance to

wildlife that cannot have a specific dollar amount. The total costs for repairing fence breaks, replacement of gates, fencing and locks, removal of large items with heavy equipment, the tree theft incident, replacement of signs, and the Brontosaurus vandalism is \$68,000, and this figure does not begin to quantify the ecological damage of ORV's, fires, poaching, etc.

We strongly feel that preventative patrolling/enforcement will pay for itself in both financial losses as well as employee time.

We have researched three different options: having a Parks & Rec. ranger specifically dedicated to C20/20 Preserves, having a Sheriff Deputy specifically dedicated to our Preserves (such as Deputy Foley with Solid Waste) and contracting the work out to FWC (like they do at CREW).

We have talked to land managers, supervisors and law enforcement officers and have made the following discoveries:

Sheriff Deputy: The contract with Deputy Foley costs the Solid Waste Department \$100,000 per year (this covers both salary and materials). This deputy's job is to conduct follow up work and write tickets once a person has been caught breaking the law. Their work assignments are designated through the Sheriff's department and not solid waste. The deputy does not conduct surveillance. This option seems to be quite expensive and it does not appear that the Deputy would do many of the things that we would like.

Deputy Foley thought would be more beneficial is to hire off-duty officers, which cost \$27 per hour. We have tried this in the past without result. Deputy Foley felt a benefit to having numerous deputies is that they will typically know the neighborhood troublemakers. I spoke with Kyra who schedules the deputies and she said that although she could pretty much guarantee weekend daytime coverage, they rarely have deputies available at night or holidays. When we tried to hire deputies in the past, we discovered that patrolling our site was at the bottom of their list, and sometimes, even though we provided a truck each weekend, they did not go out at all. The deputies did not seem very eager to really get onto the properties and patrol.

FWC officer: These are off duty FWC officers that help patrol CREW and are paid overtime. They have a contract where they receive a certain number hours per year (900 for CREW). The Land Management staff submits a schedule of where they want the officers to concentrate their patrols. Another pro is that this officer is able to enforce state statutes, as well as local ones. They also have equipment like helicopters, ATV's, etc., that the Sheriff's Department does not have. The negative is that the FWC officers and department have other priorities. Their directive is for boating, manatee protection and hunting. Often officers are not available when CREW wants them. Determining a fee schedule is complicated because it depends on what level the officer is, plus what equipment is being used at the time. Jim Goodwin said that it worked out to an average of \$52 per hour. He did point out that FWC is already obligated to patrol CREW already and this just supplements those patrols.

Exclusive C20/20 Ranger: This seems like the best option as for both value of costs and for efficiency of both law enforcement and staff time. The following list shows the benefits of having a ranger devoted to the C20/20 Preserves:

1. They would be able to concentrate on an individual Preserve for several days (or perhaps several sequential weekends) if we were having a lot of problems (Prairie Pines, Yellow Fever Creek, Bunche Beach and Yucca Pens would all be good examples). Unlike now where a ranger is only able to spend a portion of their day at one preserve and then would need to move onto another Parks facility (typically ones that have lots more people).
2. One person would be able to learn all the trails, hiding spots, problem areas, approximate boundaries, etc than having every ranger just increase their patrols. Prairie Pines is another great example (40 miles of roads/trails from the ranching operations).
3. More efficient use of Land Stewardship staff time. Currently, almost every time we report a problem to the rangers we then need to take them to the Preserve and show them the location of the problem.
4. They would be a familiar face that the neighbors could get to know and trust. Currently most of the neighbors that we talk to are very reluctant to give official statements, which would lead to enforcement of the Ordinances.
5. They would be a person that could attend our C20/20 staff meetings to allow us to strategize and keep each other posted on what's going on. They could also potentially attend occasional MSC/CLASAC meetings to keep everyone updated.
6. They would be more familiar with the neighbors and the neighborhood. They would know whom they have spoken to before. This is another good Prairie Pines example where we are having problems with people bringing their off leash dogs in with their horses.
7. They could help us with knowing where boundary signs are needed so that they could be replaced in a timelier manner.
8. They would be an easy contact person for our staff, neighbors and volunteers like our Bird Patrol folks.
9. They could spend a lot of time in a Preserve where we know there are lots of problems, waiting to catch someone (or perhaps come up with innovative ways to use cameras/video to catch someone). One of the lessons we were taught in the Risk Management training in March was that the County is open to lawsuits from areas that are not enforced. ATV's are extremely dangerous & on a site inspection last week we have discovered that people have constructed at least 2 ramps/jumps at Yucca Pens Preserve. From my understanding, we will be held accountable for any injuries they incur.

Additional duties that a Ranger could perform (as opposed to a LCSO deputy or FWC officer):

1. They would have the time to patrol boundaries more frequently and do quick repairs on fencing and replace boundary signs.
2. They could help us set up community meetings. Cindy suggested we do this and I thought it was an outstanding idea.
3. They could help with educational/outreach to community members who may not be familiar with the C20/20 program.
4. They could help with the design of our Preserve Facilities as they have the knowledge of public utilization of facilities and typical problem areas.

When I first approached Barbara and JY with this idea, they agreed that we are in need of ranger coverage, but felt that we should look at having two rangers, instead of one. The benefits of two rangers are:

1. Rangers work 4, 10-hour days. With 2 rangers, we would have coverage for the entire week.
2. If we only had one ranger, when they were on vacation or sick, there would be no coverage. Two rangers would minimize the times with no coverage.
3. On the day that both rangers are working they might be able to combine forces on an area that is having more problems, or they could be at two parts of the county at the same time.

Couple of other things to keep in mind:

- Our need for Rangers is going to increase as we open the public use facilities at Prairie Pines and Caloosahatchee Creeks in the next year or so.
- Just because we will have “exclusive” rangers, Cindy Carter, as well as the other rangers, will still continue to help with our Preserves.