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Lee County Commissioners vote to eliminate mining opportunity in southeast Lee

Fort Myers, FL, Oct. 6, 2020 – The Board of Lee County Commissioners on Tuesday voted to approve a settlement agreement with the agricultural company FFD that would eliminate mining as a possible land use on a 5,200-acre parcel in southeast Lee County.

The agreement now sets in motion a three-hearing process at which citizens can provide public comment – one before the Hearing Examiner and two before county commissioners. Dates are to be determined.

The settlement, which has been the subject of negotiation for more than three years, conveys the company's mining rights to the county in perpetuity. The property is in the county's Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area.

The agreement means a minimum of 65% of the property shall be devoted to open space (3,385 acres), of which 2,916 acres must be placed in a conservation easement at no cost to the county.

The owner would also be responsible for restoring natural flow ways for water through nearby environmental areas such as Flint Pen Strand, a Conservation 20/20 preserve. The property is also near CREW, the Corkscrew Regional System Watershed, which is critical to water flow. The agreement means a completed connection for a flow way would exist between these conservation lands and the development known as The Place, which also has abundant conservation easements and open space.

With the agreement placing 2,916 acres in a conservation easement, that ensures the land will forever be protected from development without the county having to purchase it as it does Conservation 2020 properties, such as the nearby Larry Kiker Preserve.

Additionally, the agreement saves Lee County taxpayers \$60 million in potential liability, had the county gone to court and lost.

The agreement sets forth a Process for Approval of Development for the FFD property, which means homes could be constructed with a density that is consistent with all other BoCC-approved developments in this part of the county, which is referred to as the Environmental Enhancement & Preservation Communities Overlay.

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