

## **PROPOSAL FOR A “COMMUNITY DEFENSE FUND”**

The quality of life of all the communities of south Lee County and Estero is repeatedly threatened by forces outside our control. For example:

- A year ago who would have thought we would have to live with nearly one hundred low flying aircraft over our heads every day.
- For the last several years we have not been able to rely on the responsible agencies to protect the quality of the water in our rivers and streams that continues to degrade Estero Bay and its recreational value.
- Until the economic slowdown greedy land speculators have pushed hard to permit many new rock mines on the east side of our community with no concern about the safety of south Lee County drivers coping with big increases in truck traffic on top of the ever expanding commercial traffic our new shopping centers are producing.

In addition from time to time zoning and land use decisions; road and traffic threats cannot be defeated unless sufficient resources are available in a timely manner.

It has become increasingly apparent that protecting ourselves and our community against these threats will require some readily available financial resources. The purpose of this proposal is for all of the communities in the Estero area to contribute in a fair and equitable way into a fund that will provide the resources necessary to overcome the threats that challenge the quality of life in of all our communities.

### **Our Immediate Need**

Over the years the residents of east Corkscrew Road have successfully defeated approval of new mines along Corkscrew Road. In the process they have raised and spent about \$200,000 to preserve their quality of life. As a result of their efforts those of us who live further west have been spared several thousand trucks per day traveling west on Corkscrew Road and north or south on I-75, Three Oaks Parkway and US 41. This threat may not look like much today but don't underestimate its impact a couple of years from now when the economy is back to normal.

Unfortunately we are now threatened by another Corkscrew Mine application, the RCH Mine.

The RCH Mine request is to rezone 1,365 acres on Corkscrew Road to mine limestone to a depth of 110 feet with blasting for decades to come. In addition the applicants are seeking a General Mining Permit that will allow it to operate a concrete batch plant and an asphalt batch plant on the site with their associated trucks as well

The site is located on Corkscrew Road east of Flint Pen Strand and is immediately adjacent to the SWF International Airport Mitigation Park, the SFWMD Corkscrew mitigation bank, and an established rural residential cluster on Burgundy Farms Road. The recent Dover Kohl DR/GR planning study identified the project site as environmentally sensitive and categorized it as Priority 1 and Priority 2 Restoration area. The site is outside of the Primary and Secondary Preferred Mining Area as identified by the Dover Kohl and the DR/GR Steering Committee.

If this latest attempt to industrialize Corkscrew Road is approved, the decision would:

- establish a new development pattern and set a precedent for the seven other rock mine applications pending on Corkscrew Road
- according to the staff report the mine will increase the number of dump trucks heading west each day on Corkscrew Road from 500 to 1,500 (2007 data). These are all round trips so 1,500 per day will return by the same route.
- result in permanent adverse impacts to hydrology, surface water flow, and natural systems function of wetland and aquatic resources of regional importance
- adversely impact endangered and threatened species including the Florida Panther and Woodstork

The impact of new Corkscrew Road mines on the quality of life in Estero will be enormous....not only the traffic, dust and noise but also the impact on our water supply, flooding, wildlife and bird habitat and the water quality in Estero Bay.

During June the Hearing Examiner presided over the first five days of Hearings on the RCH mine application. An additional six days have been scheduled for this Hearing: August 19, August 20, August 21, August 26 (if needed), August 27 (if needed) and August 28 (if needed). The Hearing on the Estero Group mine application that we defeated last year set a new Lee County record of 14 days. Our attorney on this case, Tom Hart, who represented the community with the prior two Corkscrew Road mines that have already been defeated, estimates that the total cost for this case will be about \$36,000. If all the communities affected by this mine and its trucks makes a small contribution this will be very affordable. Thanks for your consideration and help.

### **Some Assurances**

1. No "Community Defense Funds" shall be used to support or oppose any candidate for public office.
  2. "Community Defense Funds" shall only be used to pay the expenses of professionals (attorneys, planners, architects and engineers, consultants, scientists and other expert witnesses etc.) need to implement the strategy. The ECCL and its members will continue to support each of these efforts without remuneration on a voluntary basis.
- An annual report will be submitted to each participating community, at the end of each project, detailing:
    - The amount of funds collected from each of the participating communities,
    - A detailed accounting of how the money has been spent.