

## **Bonita East Stakeholders Position on Potential Rezoning of 3,600 Acres of City DRGR Land**

The Executive Committee of the Bonita East Stakeholders representing the Chairpersons or Vice Chairpersons of External Affairs Committees of Hunters Ridge, Worthington, Palmira, San Remo and Village Walk met on Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> and have agreed on the following major points of serious concerns about the potential rezoning of approximately 3,600 acres of the City's Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DRGR) land which is the subject of the May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 Workshop. The BES Executive Committee is not opposed to quality developments and can visualize some beautiful and picturesque developments on some of the DRGR land in the 3,600 acres being studied; however, the potential rezoning of this large tract of DRGR land brings into focus some major issues which must be satisfactorily addressed before any approval of rezoning is brought forward.

The following issues are outlined below for consideration of the planning firm retained by the City of Bonita Springs to study the pros and cons of the potential rezoning of 3,600 acres of DRGR land.

Prior to the City Council voting to rezone either all or part of the 3,600 acres of DRGR or all of the DRGR in Bonita Springs, a separate flood and storm water management flood mitigation study needs to be conducted by a independent flood mitigation and storm water management firm similar to the computerized model developed for SFWMD.

This firm should utilize the results of the SFWMD 2009 Southern Lee County Flood Mitigation Study and the Bonita Springs Storm Water Management Study of 2010, utilizing the latest Southern Lee County GIS topographical data including locating in the computerized model all the recently constructed sound walls and visual screen walls along I-75, and major screen walls like the Worthington wall along Bonita Beach Road which divert storm water from its normal flow path. This study should also assume various development densities ranging from 30% to 60%, assume the most stringent storm water management design criteria which would be considerably more stringent than the City and County storm water management design criteria, and then make computerized model analysis of the effects of a 50 and 100 year deign storm to determine if the development of these 3,600 acres will aggravate storm water flooding of the DRGR and the land and roads immediately surrounding the DRGR such as Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Grande and also communities such as Quail West, Worthington, Palmira, Manna Christian Trailer Park, Cedar Creek, Hawthorne and Citrus Park. This study, according to a firm who has done this type of work, should not cost more than \$10,000 to \$25,000. If development of the 3,600 acres of DRGR land aggravates flooding based on the results of the computerized analysis, then rezoning of this DRGR land should not be pursued. The City has already expended approximately \$400,000 or more in studying development of the DRGR plus approximately \$75,000 in this current study.

Therefore to not run a computerized flooding analysis on the DRGR and the surrounding area potentially affected by development of the DRGR land is not getting results on the most critical aspect of any DRGR development.

**IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THIS STUDY BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF RE-ZONING.**

If re-zoning is done prior to this study and followed by development and flooding is aggravated, the window to fixing the problem has closed and severe property damage would surely occur.

We are enclosing with this position paper copies of the Commentary contained in May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 article in the SW Spotlight on re-zoning the DRGR as background. Also included with this BES Position on Re-zoning 3,600 acres of DRGR land is a copy of a memorandum dated April 13<sup>th</sup> (revised April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013) presented to the City Manager and Deputy Mayor.

## TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

BES is seriously concerned about the following transportation issues which may be further aggravated by development of DRGR lands:

Currently in the event of sheet flow flooding or any other road closing of Bonita Beach Road from Bonita Grande going east, our residents have no access to food supplies, emergency services or basic other services. This could be cured by the Logan Blvd. extension or the indefinitely postponed extension of St. Rd. 951.

Increases in trips, especially in an emergency evacuation, will overload the I-75 on-ramps at Bonita Beach Road.

Infrastructure must be upgraded to accommodate the increase in residential trips.

We visualize 5,000 to 6,000 residential building sites in the DRGR, as well as the previously approved 2,000 to 3,000 building sites as yet to be completed on Bonita Beach Road east of I-75.

If DRGR re-zoning is approved, BES would expect to partner in solving these growth issues.

BES is also very interested in maximizing the percolation of storm water into the aquifer under the DRGR and surrounding lands, as opposed to diverting excess flood waters into the gulf. Just one foot of storm water diverted into the gulf from the 3,600 acres of DRGR land would cause us to lose approx. 1.2 billion gallons of much needed water going into our aquifer. Ground water has become a critically important resource, especially if our city is to continue to expand.

Philosophically BES believes that it will be just a matter of time before land owners of the other thousands of acres of City DRGR land not included in this 3,600 acre rezoning study be granted similar rezoning for their parcels based on equal treatment, what you did for one DRGR land owners is what we all are entitled to. Therefore, BES urges the City if they are inclined to rezone the 3,600 acres currently being studied that the City utilize land planners to master plan the rezoning of the entire City DRGR land.

Finally, it will also be a matter of time before adjoining county DRGR land owners will want to be annexed into the City so as to avoid the stringent Lee County Land Development Code pertaining to developing county DRGR land. Annexation of County DRGR land into the City would likely result in a gradual erosion of the county DRGR.

The Executive Committee of BES thanks City Council and the planning firm for hosting this workshop.

## [Commentary Let's Not Risk Waterlogging Bonita East Communities](#)

[spotlight](#) | April 28, 2013



### **By Fred Forbes**

Spokesperson, Bonita East Stakeholders

City Council has authorized a planning firm to study whether or not 3,600 acres of Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DRGR) land in the City should be rezoned to permit construction of residential, commercial and industrial developments. The firm will review previous studies of the DRGR. The current DRGR zoning regulations limit development to an intensity of use of one home per ten acres.

The main issue with development of the DRGR is to avoid aggravating flooding caused by a major tropical storm, thus causing billions of gallons of storm water to be diverted into the gulf rather than retaining it in the DRGR, where it finally percolates into our aquifer as it does now.

After our 2005 floods caused by Wilma, The South Florida Water Management District authorized a firm to study storm water flooding and mitigation of southern Lee County. That firm developed a computerized model of southern Lee County that included topography, intensity of existing developments and soil types which affect percolation. The model simulates 50 and 100-year tropical storms and applies the results against various flood mitigation concepts. The simulation results were evaluated to see if flooding was reduced and by how much versus cost feasibility. When it came to Bonita Springs the consulting firm indicated they had not found any storm water management concept or flood mitigation concept that yielded a significant reduction in flooding of the greater Bonita Springs area and was cost reasonable. In fact, a concept that would have been cost prohibitive still did little to reduce flooding in our area.

I am urging the City to retain a firm to run a similar analysis of this 3,600 acre DRGR parcel, assuming varying intensities of development, the most stringent addition of water retention ponds and realistic assumptions about flow ways or drainage channels. These computer simulations provide an opportunity to see if development of the DRGR makes sense when it comes to flooding and retaining water into our aquifer. Getting roads and infrastructure upgraded by the developers of this DRGR land is basic land planning, but it must not have the potential to cause flooding and/or loss of billions of gallons of storm water by discharging into the gulf. The cost to get this study done would range from \$10,000-\$20,000.

If the City study concludes that these 3,600 acres of DRGR should be rezoned, before voting to rezone, please get an independent analysis using the computerized model of southern Lee County to validate the recommendations to rezone. We must double-check the effects on flooding and on our treasured aquifer.

*Bonita East Stakeholders is an association of the Hunters Ridge, Palmira, San Remo, Worthington and Village Walk communities in Bonita Springs.*

# MEMORANDUM

To: Carl Schwing, City Manager  
From: Fred Forbes, Spokesperson, Bonita East Stakeholders (BES)  
Date: APRIL 12, 2013 Revised April 15, 2013  
Re: Study Regarding Rezoning of Approximately 3,600 Acres of DRGR

The City Council approved the award of a contract to a Land Planning Firm to review previous studies regarding the potential rezoning of and development of the DRGR, make a new study of the impact of the potential development of approximately 3,600 acres of DRGR land on roads and infrastructure, conduct storm water runoff and management studies assuming varying development intensities and densities, and recommend potential rezoning of this 3,600 acres along with what additional road and infrastructure improvements would be the responsibility of the developers of this 3,600 acres of DRGR land.

As spokesperson for BES representing the interest of Hunters Ridge, Quail West, Worthington, Palmira, San Remo and Village Walk, I would appreciate you informing the firm you have contracted with that the executive committee of BES is a “very interested stakeholder” so they would keep BES current with the results of the study and our concerns made known to the Land Planning Firm throughout the entire process. We would like to hear ideally the quarter point summaries as opposed to the final convulsions only.

As you know, I have said from the beginning of the reopening by the City Council of what to do with the DRGR or any portion of it, that the most important issue is storm water sheet flooding and making sure the water which currently drains and floods into the DRGR and stands for 7-10 days after a major rain storm or a major tropical depression similar to those of 1995 and 2005, is not discharged into the gulf to insure it will eventually percolate down into the underlying aquifer. More importantly the current amount of flooding in and around the DRGR will not be increased by any developments proposed to be built in the DRGR. Preferably any development would reduce the amount of flooding in the DRGR or on the lands surrounding the DRGR. Any increase in flooding in the DRGR, but more importantly more flooding on the surrounding areas would be tragic and unacceptable. Once these two issues are successfully addressed and resolved in a manner which is economically feasible for developers, the other issues are just regular land planning and development issues.

I am very skeptical as to whether the study, as contracted for, will fully address what I have just reiterated as the main core issues about development of DRGR land. I would like to propose

what I feel would be a meaningful, relatively inexpensive study to address my main concerns about development of significant size tracks of land in the DRGR.

SFWMD shortly after the floods from the tropical depression associated with hurricane Wilma hired a storm water management and flooding mitigation firm to study ways to mitigate flooding in southern Lee County In 2005. I heard the final presentation of the SFWMD study in the spring of I believe 2009. I was very impressed as to the way the flood mitigation study was conducted which I will briefly outline for you. A computerized model of southern Lee County was developed which included the topography, density of developments including types of surfaces, flow ways were also included, types of soil (ability to percolate), design tropical depression storms and evaluation of different flood mitigation concepts. The flood mitigation study firm would then determine for a given proposed method or concept for mitigating flooding from a designed tropical depression how successful was the concept and was the mitigation concept cost effective. Major conclusions of this study presented to the public were as follows:

No flood mitigation that was cost effective had any real impact on the greater Bonita Springs area, even some concepts which were cost prohibitive had very little impact on reducing flooding in the Bonita Springs area.

Other areas of southern Lee County were favorably impacted by several of the cost effective flood mitigation concepts.

The principal investigator for the study said several things needed to be incorporated into the computerized model to increase its accuracy. Some of these computer model improvements included using the latest Lee County GIS topographical data and location of all FDOT sound barriers along I-75, as well as privacy screen walls such as the one along Bonita Beach Road at Worthington CC, because these walls divert storm water flow into new areas and away from previous drainage flow ways and channels.

Bonita East Stakeholders in 2009 led a major email campaign directed at getting SFWMD to agree to spend funds further studying flood mitigation for the greater Bonita Springs area and to make physical improvements to flow ways, creeks, culverts, etc. This effort, thanks to Mayor Nelson, became a citywide campaign resulting in SFWMD agreeing to assist Bonita Springs and resulted in funding be earmarked for these efforts. Mayor Nelson wrote BES a very complimentary email thanking us for our help in this matter.

I contacted SFWMD and obtained the name of the firm (A.G.A. Engineering, Inc., 215 W. Verne St., Suite D, Tampa, FL 33606, 813-431-4959, [www.adaeng.net](http://www.adaeng.net)) that conducted the 2009 Flood Mitigation Study. I then talked to the principal investigator, Roger Copp, and told him about the potential development of 3,600 acres +/- of DRGR land and asked if the computerized model could determine if an economical solution or a solution to flooding caused by the development of this acreage could be reasonably and accurately studied. He said YES. He further agreed with me that the study of just the 3600 acres plus a few miles of some of the surrounding DRGR area would not be able to accurately determine if development of the this acreage would aggravate, or not affect or would possibly mitigate storm water flooding from design tropical depression storms. He also agreed with me that successfully designing a flood mitigation system for DRGR land is substantially different than designing storm water management for other non DRGR land in Bonita Springs. I asked him about what his firm would charge to run some analysis assuming a range of density factors from say 40% to 65%, adding in additional onsite storm water retention ponds and improving flow ways, would do to flooding not only in the surrounding DRGR, but in areas like Quail West, Worthington, Hunters Ridge, Manna Christian Park, Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Grande and Terry Street, as well as other areas of interest. He indicated the study would run around \$10,000. Even if it escalated to \$20,000 to get the needed results which either support or dispel the theories of what would happen if the 3,600 acres were developed, the cost would be more than justified.

If the City rezones these 3,600 DRGR acres it is extremely likely two things will immediately happen. First other DRGR property owners will expect the same rezoning of their land parcels. Owners of Lee County DRGR land abutting our city limits will petition to annex into the City expecting similar rezoning of their land and this process will be repeated again and again.

Please do not construe that either I or BES are against development east of I-75 or even in the DRGR. If the development is compatible with the surrounding developments and will not adversely affect the roads and other infrastructure and in this case not aggravate storm water flooding during major tropical depressions or discharge precious storm water into the gulf, bring it on and it will be great. Thank you for seriously considering the issues and suggestions outlined in this Memorandum.

Respectfully,

Fred Forbes, BES Spokesperson