



Big Cypress/Southwest Florida Regional Conservation Committee
660 Tamiami Trail, North Suite 32A
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TO: Audubon of Florida Board

FROM: Christine Andrews, Co-chair, Big Cypress/SW Fla RCC

RE: SW Fla/Big Cypress RCC Conservation Activities Report for Jan – March, 2007

DATE: March 21, 2007

For this first required conservation activity report to the Audubon of Florida Board for our regional conservation committee efforts, we are adopting an enumerated form for brevity's sake. Please let either of the co-chairs, Chris Andrews or Alan Keller, or AoF staff Brad Cornell know if you have questions or necessary follow up. Societies include: Audubon Southwest Florida (ASWF), Collier County Audubon Society (CCAS), Hendry-Glades Audubon (HGAS), Peace River Audubon (PRAS), and Sanibel-Captiva Audubon (SCAS).

1. **Climate Change:** In March, AoF's energy policy letter to the PSC was distributed to both local policymakers and amongst our chapters. Pete Quasius utilized in meetings and hearings in Glades County, where FPL proposes a 1960 MW coal power plant.
2. **Heartland Corridor:** March 16 - four of the five societies signed a joint letter with other local conservation groups included to Gov. Crist reinforcing the regional perspective and support for the statewide letter from TNC, AoF, 1000 Friends, FWF, and Defenders of Wildlife. The regional letter called for rescission of the Future Corridors Action Plan of FDOT and asked the Gov to assign DCA to leading regional planning efforts in these corridors.
3. **Mirasol/Cocohatchee Slough Permit Challenges:** In January and February, several chapters sent letters to the Army Corps, EPA and USFWS asking for the Mirasol permit to be denied.
4. **Agripartners/CREW protection:** Feb 8, four of the five societies signed a significant joint letter, along with many environmental and civic allies, written by Jan Goldman-Carter, attorney for NWF. The letter to EPA, the Corps and USFWS calls for a 404 permit on a four mile long, five foot deep drainage canal just approved by the SFWMD for vital CREW wetlands in Southeast Lee County.
5. **Mirasol/Cocohatchee Slough Permit Challenges:** March – Collier Audubon and AoF staff attended and assisted the Conservancy of SW Fla in their ERP hearing challenging the Terafina state permit. Jason Lauritsen testified as an expert witness on wood storks and wetlands. The judge's recommended order is likely by summer, with a final order from the District after that. Terafina is directly west of Mirasol and would destroy almost 300 ac of wetlands.
6. **Hendry County Comp Plan:** Collier Audubon and AoF staff, with allies, have been meeting with Hendry planning staff, consultants and landowner reps regarding several amendments to increase density west and east of LaBelle. Along with allies, CCAS has sent letters to DCA objecting to the amendments and advocating they be considered as part of Hendry's 2008 EAR, which we believe will occur. In addition, we have

endeavored to bring The Nature Conservancy into a mapping and resource assessment role for Hendry, meeting with their GIS mapper and field staff (Mary Bryant and Tom Monroe). Finally, along with allies, we are meeting directly with landowners and consultants over Rural Land Stewardship options.

7. **Glades RLSA:** Collier Audubon staff (Pete Quasius) has spent considerable time with BCC, county staff, and community members including HGAS discussing both RLS and the FPL power plant issues. CCAS and AoF have opposed coal plants, but not alternatives in this location. We have also supported the use of RLS in general, but have asked for input opportunities for agency and other experts.
8. **Lake O/Everglades:** Feb - AoF and CCAS staff plus ASWF commented on need for additional storage and treatment for estuary, Lake and entire system at Aronberg Everglades Oversight Comm hearing.
9. **Lake O/Paul Gray Commendation:** All five societies wrote and signed a commendation letter to Paul Gray, AoF scientist, on his receipt of the Friends of the Everglades Defender of the Everglades award.
10. **Climate Change:** CCAS and ASWF have involved themselves in support and preparations for Step It Up rallies in their respective counties on April 14, as well as follow-up advocacy for the US Mayors' Agreement signage and implementation. Considerable assistance in this has been obtained from Barry Heimlich of Broward Audubon.
11. **Babcock Ranch:** Pete Quasius and Paul Holmes are sitting on advisory committees for various aspects of planning and management in and around Babcock. Eric Draper sits on these as well, stemming from the Sierra settlement.
12. **Birding Outreach:** PRAS and Paul Holmes have developed a professional-quality birding program DVD tailored for use by region. ASWF commissioned a version for Lee County, and Paul is making this available to other societies and regions.
13. **Membership:** CCAS, SCAS and ASWF have been coordinating under the leadership of Chris Andrews, Maria and Pete Quasius and Lori Beall on membership database software as well as membership policies. Nothing final is available yet, but promising progress is being made on several fronts.