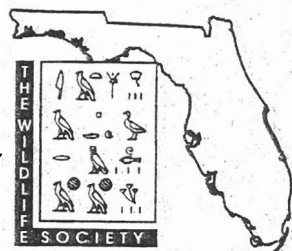


FLORIDA CHAPTER
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



February 10, 2004

Truman Scarborough
400 South Street
Titusville, FL 32780

Dear Commissioner Scarborough:

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society applauds the commitment that the Brevard County Commissioners have shown in integrating resource conservation with land development through the Significant Environmental Areas Ordinance. The Wildlife Society is an international organization of wildlife professionals representing approximately 10,000 members, with the Florida Chapter consisting of 231 biologists, land managers, conservation educators, and wildlife researchers. Among the Chapter's objectives are to develop and promote sound stewardship of Florida's wildlife resources and the environments upon which wildlife and humans depend. We recognize the SEA Ordinance as a proactive measure in achieving these objectives.

The Chapter is concerned that the SEA Ordinance has received criticism from groups interested in short-term profits more than the long-term sustainability of Brevard's natural resources and quality of life for future generations. We hope that the Commissioners remain unwavering in their commitment to preserve the last remaining tracts of scrub habitat.

The distinctive Florida scrub is the most ancient ecosystem in the state and is targeted by developers due to its well-drained sandy soils. This endangered ecosystem is home to forty species of plants, the Florida scrub-jay, Florida mouse, sand skink, and scrub lizard, and at least forty-six species of arthropods, all of which are **found nowhere else**. Scrub oaks are tremendous producers of acorns, enabling the scrub ecosystem the ability to support higher densities of wildlife than most other Florida ecosystems. Deer, turkey, rabbits, songbirds, quail, squirrels, and many other species thrive in scrub. We have seen many species of wildlife, such as scrub-jays and gopher tortoises, become rare largely due to habitat loss, but this does not have to be an "us or them" situation. Many species can thrive with humans as long as we incorporate their needs in developing land for people. The SEA Ordinance will allow both the needs of people and wildlife to be met.

The shrub/scrub communities of the coast also are extremely important stopover sites for migratory birds, making Brevard County a premier birding location in the United States. Nationally, birders spend more money on their avocation than skiers and golfers combined, which is evident from the \$400,000 annually brought to Brevard County from the 5-day Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival. The SEA Ordinance will sustain bird communities in Brevard and provide particularly valuable habitat to wildlife through the connectivity of natural upland and wetland communities – a feature many city and county parks lack. The green spaces provided by way of SEA will have a richer abundance of birds and other wildlife that can be enjoyed by area residents, and will foster an affinity for our natural heritage in upcoming generations.

The SEA Ordinance may be the most important legacy you can leave the people of Florida. Please support it.

Sincerely,

CARRIE SEKERAK
President