

Executive Office
APR 29 2010



*The Golden Gate Estates Area
Civic Association, Inc.*

P.O. Box 990596, Naples, FL 34116-6002
www.estates-civic.org

22 April 2010

Ms. Carol Wehle
Executive Director
South FL Water Management District
PO Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680
Email: cwehle@sfwmd.gov

RE: Surface Water Management Issues in Golden Gate Estates, Naples, Collier County, Florida

Ms. Whele,

This letter is from the Golden Gate Estates Area Civic Association (GGEACA) concerning ongoing and escalating concerns about the lack of surface water management planning and coordination in regards to the health, safety and welfare of the subdivision of single family homes called Golden Gate Estates (ESTATES) in Naples, Collier County, Florida.

It has become horrifically clear to the GGEACA that there is NO COORDINATION between the agencies of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Collier County Government in regards to surface water management for the ESTATES.

The ESTATES has no permits issued from the USACOE, SFWMD or Collier County Government. Each time new regulations are adopted the ESTATES are grandfathered into the each new legal regime. However, the owner of each individual parcel of 5 acres or less bears the financial burden with DEP to meet all new regulations each time a house is constructed.

Simply stated *the lack of communication and coordination* between the SFWMD from West Palm Beach, and the Lower West Coast Service Center with the residents of the ESTATES and other agencies is causing irreversible damage to the ESTATES and the Functional Watershed it resides in.

At the state of Florida level, DEP is assigned the responsibility of environmental resource permitting for single family homes in the ESTATES. DEP can only work with individual 5 acre or less parcel. DEP cannot address the entire subdivision's surface water management needs. DEP cannot do this without REGIONAL help from the SFWMD.

Also at the state of Florida level, the SFWMD is assigned the responsibility of environmental resource permitting for all other projects except single family homes at a regional scale. The SFWMD is basically assigned REGIONAL surface water management permitting authority for all other new projects. Ricardo Valera of the SFWMD's Lower West Coast Service Center has stated that the ESTATES is not the SFWMD's problem and there is nothing they can do.

However, the Lower West Coast Service Center continues to permit projects inside the Functional Watershed and require mitigation outside of its boundaries. The SFWMD's preferred option is the utilization of mitigation banks which are usually removed from the Estates watershed and provides no useful benefit to our residents.

Because of the lack of coordination between the County, State, and Federal permitting agencies the safety and well being of our residents has been compromised. Worse yet the cumulative effect of the issuance of numerous permits has been ignored by all of the agencies. The permits for Mirasol, Big Cypress, and the Picayune CERP have not taken into account their effect on the base flood elevation in the Estates.

Collier County is planning for a build out population in excess of 600,000 in the area east of CR 951, most of that in the Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA); none of the permitting agencies have acknowledged the existence of this elephant in the room.

Specific to Collier County and a responsibility of the SFWMD is the Big Cypress Basin. Tax money is collected by the SFWMD specifically to be earmarked for operations in Collier County. The Big Cypress Basin operations beginning in 1977 have managed the 2 main canals that have drained the Estates area for flood protection since its creation in the 1960's: the Golden Gate Main and the Faka-Union Canal. It is clear that the Lower West Service Center in pursuing its permitting functions is not communicating with the Big Cypress Basin about surface water management issues in the ESTATES. It is very clear the Picayune Restoration will block one of the major drainage canals servicing the ESTATES, while the Lower West Coast Service Center continues increase the amount of impervious surface in the ESTATES.

In summary, the Estates subdivision and all of its single family homeowners that thought they had found a safe and secure place to live - now are finding out through the lack of coordination by the SFWMD with other agencies we have no flood protection. To add to this horrible realization, it has been announced by Collier County Government that all residents east of CR951 will likely be subject to new FEMA flood insurance requirements and will incur a mandatory \$500-\$2000 per year flood insurance premium. This is the final result of the SFWMD inability to effectively coordinate surface water management needs with the residents of the ESTATES.

The Golden Gate Estates Area Civic Association requests that the SFWMD schedule a meeting with the residents of the ESTATES in August 2010 to address these issues.

We look forward to your presentation.

Best regards



Peter Gaddy
President GGEACA.