

Eastern Collier Property Owners

# Collier County Rural Land Stewardship Review

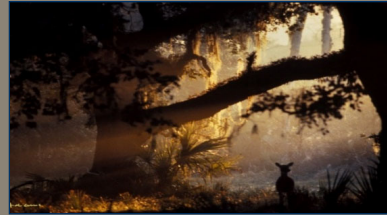
## Rural Land Stewardship

Rural Land Stewardship is a innovative, incentive-based planning program to preserve, maintain and restore natural habitat, protect land for agriculture, and promote sustainable growth and economic diversification in rural areas.



Photograph courtesy Bud Adams

## Stewardship Overview



Collier County unanimously adopted RLS in 2002 in response to Governor's Final Order, and 3 years of research, data collection, analysis and public input.

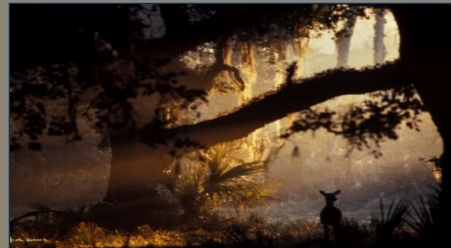
Adoption was broadly supported by the public and environmental NGOs, including Florida Wildlife Federation, Collier Audubon, and The Conservancy.

Scientific data and market-based incentives balance the protection of natural resources, agriculture, and development using an innovative credit system and natural resource index.

RLS has unique Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code requirements codified in LDC 4.08.

## Stewardship Overview

*(continued)*



Participation is voluntary for property owners. Pre-existing property rights are protected.

Private ownership, preservation and management of natural resources is an incentivized alternative to public acquisition.

Additional incentives were adopted to encourage private restoration and early participation.

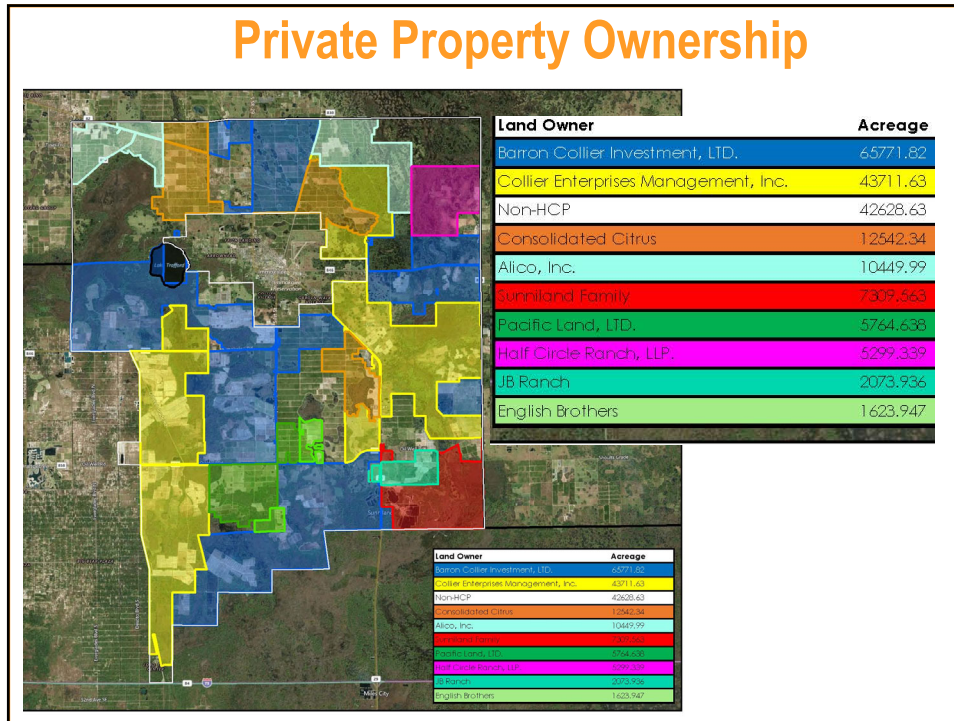
RLS has won multiple awards and is ranked among most successful programs in the US.

### Florida Statute 163.3248

“Rural land stewardship areas may be used to further the following broad principles of rural sustainability: restoration and maintenance of the economic value of rural land; control of urban sprawl; identification and protection of ecosystems, habitats, and natural resources; promotion and diversification of economic activity and employment opportunities within the rural areas; maintenance of the viability of the state’s agricultural economy; and protection of private property rights in rural areas of the state.”

### Florida Statute 163.3248

“It is the intent of the Legislature that the rural land stewardship area located in Collier County, which was established pursuant to the requirements of a final order by the Governor and Cabinet, duly adopted as a growth management plan amendment by Collier County, and found in compliance with this chapter, be recognized as a statutory rural land stewardship area and be afforded the incentives in this section.”



## Goals of Incentive-Based Program

- Historically, property owners had little incentive to protect and enhance lands with natural resources
- Yet the community deemed these lands to hold a higher value
- The incentive structure serves to align property rights and financial incentives of the land owner with the clear desire of the community to preserve and protect the most valuable lands with natural resources

## Goals of Incentive-Based Program

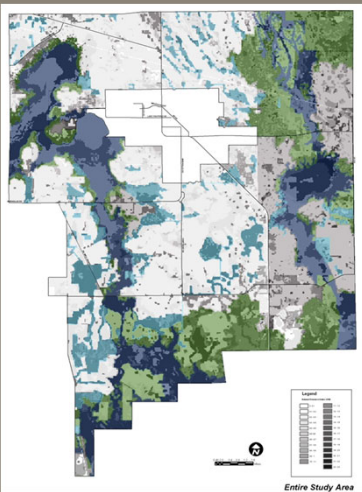
### OPTIONS:

- Public purchase of those lands, with the inherent responsibility for restoring, enhancing and maintaining the property at the expense of taxpayers

### OR

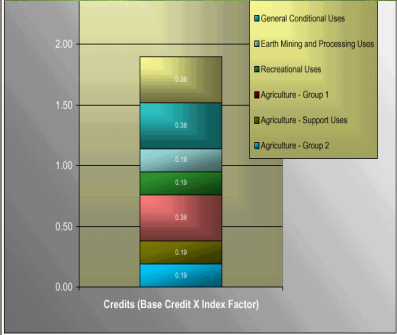
- Use the land's development rights as currency to preserve those resources at no cost to the taxpayers and protect property values

## Adopted Regulatory Framework



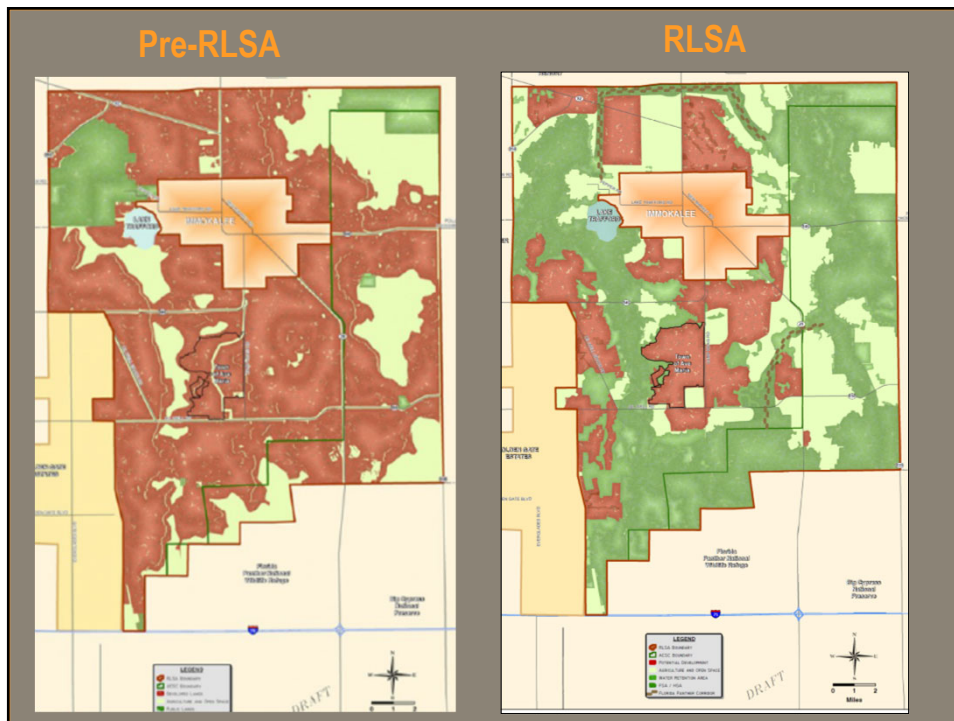
- Stewardship Credits are the “currency,” created from ecological & agricultural values in Stewardship Sending Areas or SSAs.
- Credits calculated with a comprehensive multi-layered GIS database and region-specific natural resource index model.
- The most critical and diverse ecologic features receive the highest scores and values – opposite of land appraisals.
- Credits are acquired by builders of new communities in Stewardship Receiving Areas or SRAs.
- All density increases require Credits.
- Regional-scale conservation and management occurs without requiring public acquisition.

# Sample Credit Calculation



1,000 acres of native rangeland will be conserved and maintained by the owner. The site is within a Habitat Stewardship Area.

- Natural resource score is 1.8.
- Existing development rights are removed yielding 90% of full Base Credit value.
- Credits = Acres x NRI score x % Base Credit Value
- Credits = 1000 ac x 1.8 x 0.9
- Stewardship Credits = 1600
- 1600 Credits exchanged for 200 acres of SRA



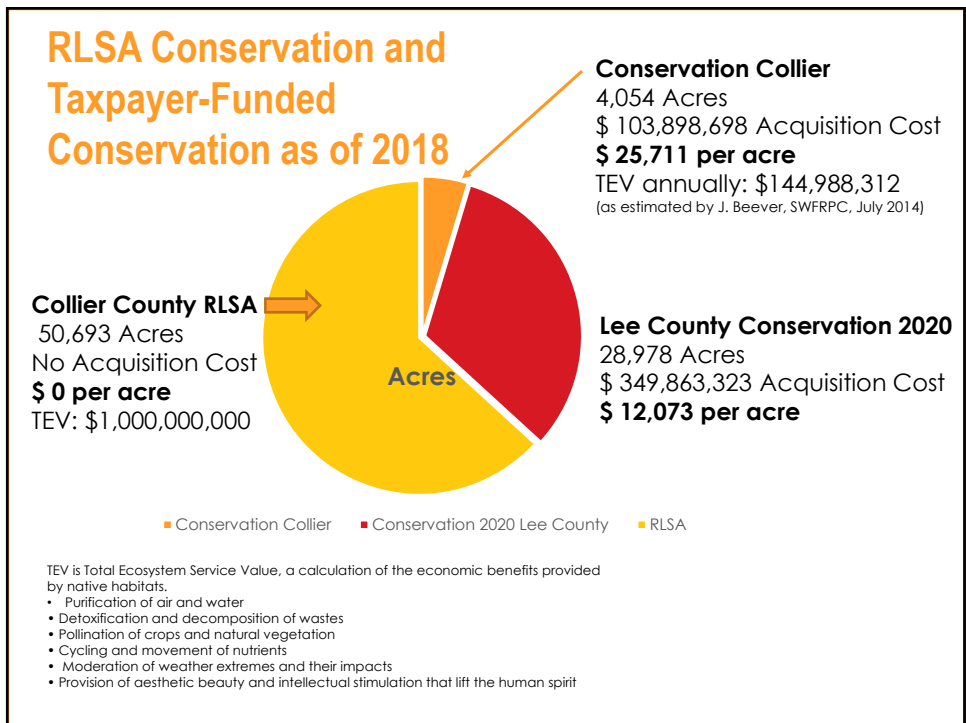
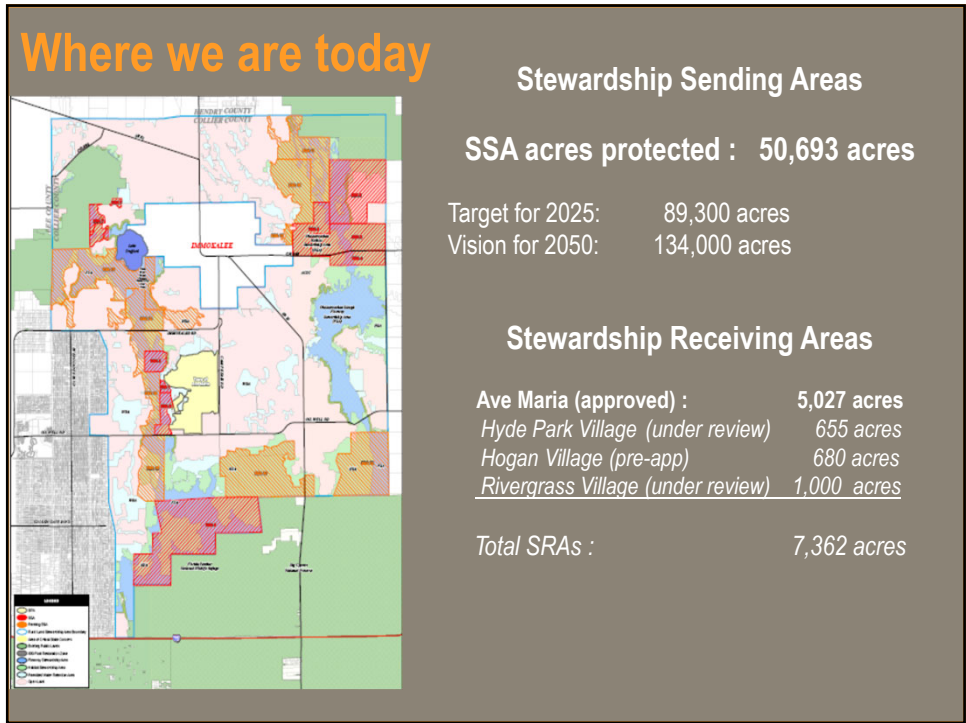
### Since RLS Adoption in 2002:

- Approximately 180,000 acres of privately owned land has been rezoned – land owners have voluntarily limited the baseline rights enjoyed before adoption
- No land has been subdivided into 5-acre rural sprawl
- Total conservation land has grown to 50,000 acres (from 16,000 acres in 2002) that are permanently preserved, protected and managed at no cost to Collier County taxpayers – land that is valued at more than \$500,000,000

### Since RLS Adoption in 2002:

- The award-winning RLSA concentrates population into well-planned new towns and villages with full infrastructure as alternative to sprawl.
- RLSA has leveraged smart-growth principles to protect vast areas of natural resources
- Private property owners have based their long-term decisions on certainty within the program – including from the required 5-year review in 2007-2009.





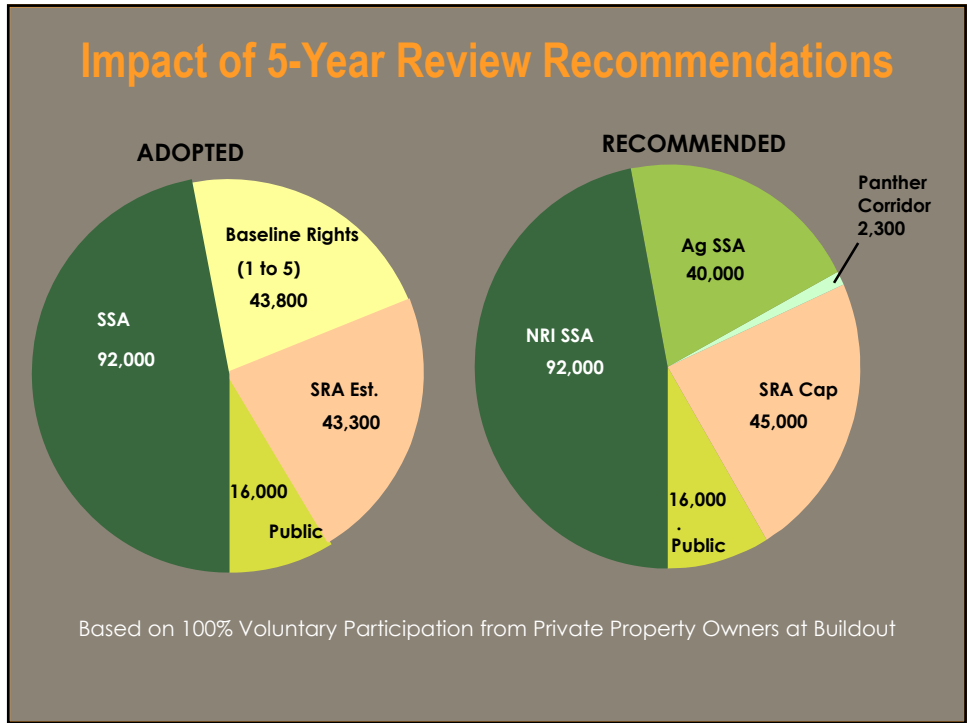


## 5-Year Review

- The required 5-Year Review process took two years to complete, with more than 30 public meetings and hearings
- All stakeholders, including environmental organizations, reached consensus on key improvements
- All stakeholders supported the final recommendations negotiated at the BCC adoption hearing
- Collier County never adopted the BCC-recommended amendments, despite a requirement to do so

## Key 5-Year Review Recommendations

- **Incentives for Agriculture Protection:** Provides Stewardship Credits for permanently retaining land for agriculture
- **Panther Corridors:** Provides new incentives to create, restore and enhance permanent panther corridor connections, at no cost to taxpayers
- **Cap on Credits and SRA Acres:** Provides for a limit on the maximum footprint of SRAs of 45,000 acres
- **Increase Stewardship Credits per SRA acre from 8 to 10:** Ensures the balance essential to the sustainability of the program



### Economic Impact Assessments

- The Collier County Land Development Code requires an Economic Assessment (fiscal neutrality study) to be performed for each Stewardship Receiving Area.
- The Economic Assessment must use County-approved methodologies and is peer reviewed by a County-approved consultant.
- The Smart Growth America Report commissioned by The Conservancy, "The Fiscal Implications of Development Patterns in the Rural Lands Stewardship Area, Collier County, Florida," dated September 2018, follows none of the Collier requirements, contains material errors, and provides sweeping conclusions and findings that cannot be substantiated or even replicated due to a lack of transparency

## Eastern Collier Property Owners

- Today, the Eastern Collier Property Owners remain in support of the adopted plan and the recommended 5-year amendments
- For nearly two decades, ECPO members have acted in reliance upon the approved RLSA program for long-term planning, have made significant changes to and allowed encumbrances of their lands, and made significant financial investments

## Eastern Collier Property Owners

**ECPO does not support additional changes to RLS until the recommended 5-Year Review amendments are adopted and implemented as directed by the BCC in 2009. These amendments were supported by all parties.**

**The RLS Program is dependent on the active and voluntary participation of private property owners, without which there is no Rural Land Stewardship program.**

