

Let me see if I understand.

(Taken from **Charlotte Sun** on 5/8/17)

Is Florida For-Never the new normal?

OUR POSITION: *For three years, the Legislature has ignored voter intent to protect and preserve more land through the Florida Forever program.*

As a recent Sun-Herald editorial explained correctly that seventy five percent (75%) of the Florida voters approved in the 2014 General Election Amendment 1 which instructed the Legislature to fund “the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to acquire, restore, improve and manage conservation lands including wetlands and forests; fish and wildlife habitat; lands protecting water resources and drinking water sources...” The state was to do this by “dedicating 33 percent of net revenues from the existing excise tax on documents (doc stamps) for 20 years”. Do I have it right so far?

So even with doc stamps in the one month mentioned, February 2017, being \$105 million (33% equals almost \$35 million) the state has provided funding over seven (7) years totaling only a pathetic \$40 million towards the Florida Forever projects. Am I still on track?

Now, the Charlotte County County-Wide Florida Scrub-Jay Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) states: “The thirty-year time frame should provide Charlotte County sufficient time for land acquisition, conservation easement development, habitat restoration, habitat management, and possible translocation of scrub-jays.” Is it only me, but does this sound familiar, and oddly similar to the provisions of the Land Acquisition Trust Fund?

If one looks at page 79 of the HCP there are various “other funding sources” listed, but not the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. (We wonder if any grants or other funding sources have even been applied for and received by the County.)

The question must be asked... If the doc stamp revenues (which are supposed to be going into the Acquisition Trust Fund for conservation purposes, but which the State will not spend) can generate enough funds in only two months to sustain the HCP at its \$56 million level requirements, why are certain residents of Charlotte County still being burdened with these cost? To make it worse, we, the Charlotte County residents, have already paid for the doc stamps!

How about the Charlotte Sun and the County Commissioners taking up the fight for Charlotte County residents to make the HCP fair and equitable for all?

Wouldn't it be nice to see our County officials and leadership come out and say (with a push from the Charlotte Sun), “We need to take another look at the HCP and take seriously the input from our constituents this time around.”

Those who wish to comment may do so at PrairieCreekParkPOA@gmail.com.