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*Managing fish and wildlife
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MyFWC.com

July 1, 2016

Claire Jubb, Director
Charlotte County Community Development
18400 Murdock Circle
Port Charlotte, FL 33948
Claire.Jubb@charlottefl.com

Re: Large Scale Plan Amendment (PA-16-02-01-LS), Charlotte County 16-2ESR

Dear Ms. Jubb:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff has reviewed the above-referenced comprehensive plan amendment and provides the following comments and recommendations for your consideration in accordance with Chapter 163.3184, Florida Statutes. While we have no objection to the amendment, we offer the following information as technical assistance when planning for any additional development that may occur on the subject property.

Proposed Amendment

The proposed comprehensive plan amendment would modify the Future Transportation Map Series Map #7: Bicycle and Pedestrian Ways to add the Babcock Trail Alignment. The proposed trail alignment begins just east of I-75 in the Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area (WMA), runs east 12.6 miles following the unpaved Tuckers Grade Road through the WMA to connect to State Road 31. The alignment then connects to a proposed, multi-use trail winding through Babcock Ranch to the south, then connects to the Pine Island Trail Corridor (SR 31) again heading south to terminate at Bayshore Road. The addition of the trail alignment would also be added to the Long Range Transportation Plan making it eligible for state and federal funding for improvements. The dominant land covers along the trail include mesic flatwoods, hydric pine, dry prairie, wet prairie freshwater marsh, forested wetlands, and lakes.

Potentially Affected Resources

To provide species and habitat information to Charlotte County staff for future planning, FWC staff conducted a geographic information system (GIS) analysis of the project area. Based on this analysis, the project area is located near, within, or adjacent to:

- One or more wood stork (*Mycteria americana*, Federally Threatened [FT]) nesting colony core foraging areas (CFA). The CFA constitutes an 18.6-mile radius around the nesting colony.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Consultation Area for the following federally listed species:

- Red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*, Federally Endangered [FE])
- Audubon's crested caracara (*Polyborus plancus audubonii*, FT)
- Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*, FT)
- Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*, FE)
- Florida grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*, FE)
- Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*, FE- Primary Dispersal/Expansion Area)

- Potential habitat for state- and federally listed species:
 - Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*, FT)
 - Gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*, State Threatened [ST])
 - Florida pine snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*, State Species of Special Concern [SSC])
 - Sherman's fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger avicennia*, ST)
 - Sherman's short-tailed shrew (*Blarina carolinensis shermani*, SSC)
 - Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*, ST)
 - Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*, SSC)
 - Little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*, SSC)

- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nest:
 - CH033 approximately 1,000 feet south of the eastern portion of the project site which was last active in 2013

- Wading bird rookeries:
 - 619116 located approximately 2,400 feet south of the west central portion of the project; last known active in 1980
 - 619116 located approximately 2,300 feet south of the east central portion of the project; last known active in 1980

- Habitat for the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) – South Central Bear Management Unit

- Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area (WMA) managed by the FWC

Comments and Recommendations

Future Coordination

Based on the location of the alignment and the habitat and species information above, FWC staff will be available to provide technical assistance to county staff and others if improvements within the alignment are planned. Specifically, FWC staff can provide information and guidance during the planning stages for prescribed fire, hunting access, human-wildlife interactions (bears and panthers), listed species, and wildlife surveys. The Florida Wildlife Conservation Guide (FWCG) can also provide helpful information for County staff during future planning for the corridor (<http://myfwc.com/conservation/value/fwcg/>). Finally, due to the presence of federally listed species within the area, we also recommend County staff coordinate with the

USFWS South Florida Environmental Service Office at (772) 562-3909 for information regarding potential impacts to these species.

The comments provided above are intended to assist the County in fulfilling the requirements of Objective 2.3: Protect Listed Flora and Fauna of the Charlotte County's Comprehensive Plan Natural Resources Element. We look forward to working with Charlotte County as the proposed project moves forward. FWC staff remains available to provide technical assistance to the County on measures to avoid and minimize potential impacts to fish and wildlife species and their habitats. If you need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Jane Chabre either by phone at (850) 410-5367 or at FWCConservationPlanningServices@MyFWC.com. If you have specific technical questions regarding the content of this letter, please contact Mark Schulz at (863) 648-3820 or by email at mark.schulz@MyFWC.com.

Sincerely,



Jennifer D. Goff
Land Use Planning Program Administrator
Office of Conservation Planning Services

jdg/mas
ENV 2-3-3
Charlotte County 16-2ESR_31070_070116

cc: Ray Eubanks, DEO, DCPexternalagencycomments@DEO.myflorida.com