

Rural Land Stewardship

An Incentive Approach to Rural Land Conservation

Public Land Acquisition & Management Partnership

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Presented by: Alan D. Reynolds, AICP

Photography is courtesy of: Alto "Bud" Adams Jr. and Carlton Ward, Jr.





What if Florida had a program that could:



Permanently protect hundreds of thousands of acres of Florida's natural ecosystems; and

Create incentives for land owners to manage land using best management practices; and

Reward land owners for being good stewards of their land; and.....



What if Florida had a program that could:

Help to maintain the viability of Florida's agricultural economy;
and

Enhance the economic value of rural land and promote economic growth; and

Help farming and ranching families deal with generational changes; and.....





What if Florida had a program that could:

Reduce the footprint of development on the landscape; and

Require sustainable community design as an alternative to rural sprawl; and

Protect private property rights while enjoying the support of regulatory agencies; and.....





What if such a program :

Was proven to work; and

Accomplished all of these goals with out requiring significant public funding?





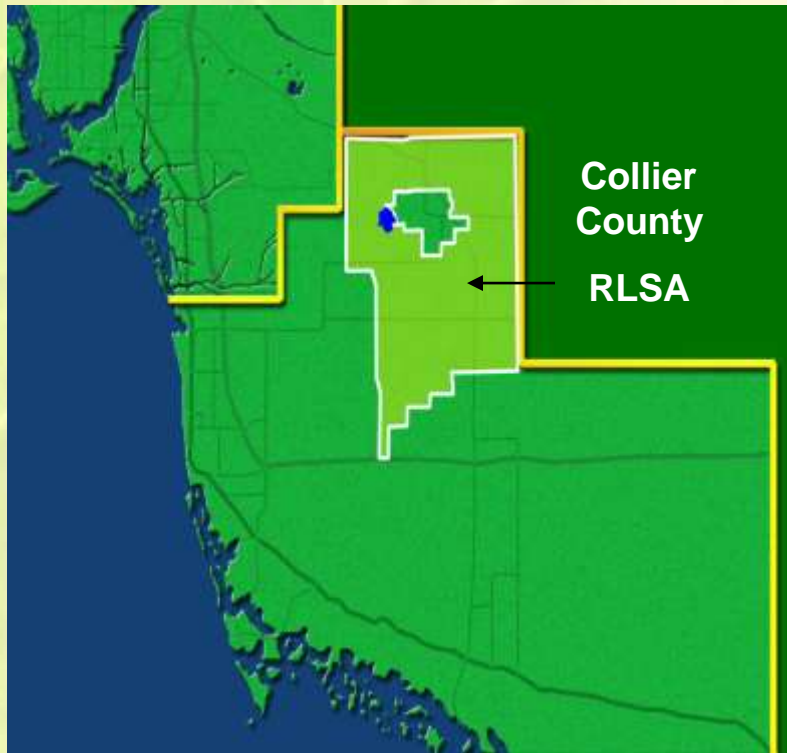
Rural Land Stewardship

Rural Land Stewardship is an incentive-based program to preserve natural resources, retain agriculture, and promote quality growth and economic diversification in rural areas.





RLS History



- 2000
 - Under Governor's Order, the *Immokalee Area Study* begins - a collaborative planning process to create a new long range plan for 300 sq. miles.
- 2001 - 2003
 - Citizen Committee and property owners prepare Florida's first RLS Overlay
 - RLS Legislation adopted (163.3177d).
 - Collier RLS Plan receives final BCC and DCA approval.
 - Implementation begins

RLS History



- 2004
 - Collier approves first RLS town - Ave Maria
 - 17,000 SSA acres preserved
- 2005 - 2006
 - Ave Maria is built, Big Cypress announced
 - Potential programs in several Florida Counties begin process.
- 2007
 - DCA initiates rule making - pending programs in Highlands, Glades, and Hendry County are put on hold.



Key provisions of Florida's Stewardship Law - Intent

“It is the intent of the Legislature that rural land stewardship areas 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 of rural economic activity;
- maintenance of the viability of Florida's agricultural economy;
- and protection of the character of rural areas of Florida.”



Key Provisions of Florida's Stewardship Law

- **Fulfills a need for innovative and flexible conservation planning and development strategies.**
- **Applies only outside of urban growth boundaries and considers a long-term vision – 25-years or greater.**
- **Established by a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and LDRs.**
- **State agencies (DCA, DEP, DACS, WMDs RPCs) provide assistance (GIS, aerial photogrammetry, etc.) to local governments and stakeholder groups.**
- **Stewardship Credits are the “currency”-- created by removing development rights in Stewardship Sending Areas with natural resource & agricultural values.**
- **Credits must be acquired by builders of new sustainable communities in Stewardship Receiving Areas. No increase in density or intensity without use of credits.**



Key provisions of Florida's Stewardship Law – DCA Role

The department shall encourage participation by local governments of different sizes and rural characteristics in establishing and implementing rural land stewardship areas...

DCA role as a resource agency to facilitate establishment of rural land stewardship areas in smaller rural counties that do not have the staff or planning budgets to create a rural land stewardship area.



Key provisions of Florida's Stewardship Law -Credits

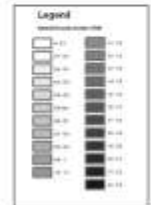
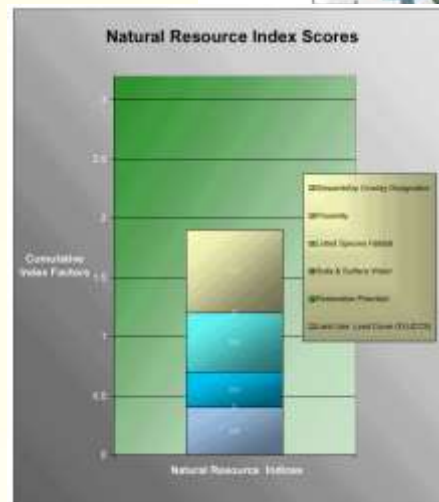
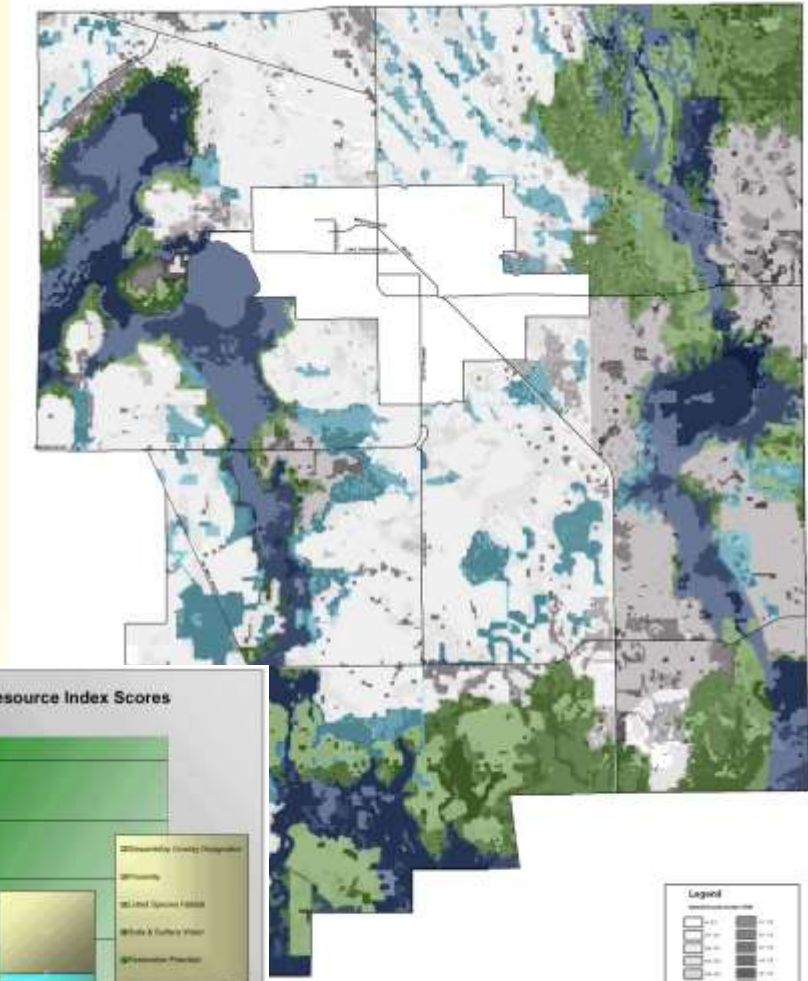
“... credits may be assigned at different ratios of credits per acre according to the natural resource or other beneficial use characteristics of the land and according to the land use remaining following the transfer of credits, with the highest number of credits per acre assigned to the most environmentally valuable land or.... open space and agricultural land... “

“Use or conveyance of ... Credits must be recorded in the public records ... as a covenant or restrictive easement running with the land in favor of the county and either the DEP, DACS, WMD, or recognized statewide land trust.”



Natural Resource Index System

- Detailed data is integrated into a regional GIS model and attributes are indexed to create the basis for Credits.
- The most important and diverse ecologic features receive the highest scores.
- Creates a digital natural resource blueprint to guide growth and conservation.





Stewardship Sending Areas

- Sending Areas protect natural land and water resources, wildlife habitat, and compatible agricultural uses.
- Credit incentives also promote restoration of flow ways and wildlife corridors.
- Land remains in private ownership - protected and managed without cost to the public through stewardship easement agreements.
- Regional scale conservation and linkages are established.





Stewardship Receiving Areas

Areas with low natural resource value may become New Towns and Villages - must be compact, mixed-use, pedestrian friendly and include educational, civic, cultural, recreational and employment opportunities for residents.





Collier County RLS First 5 Years (2003-2007)

9 SSAs Approved: 24,124 acres

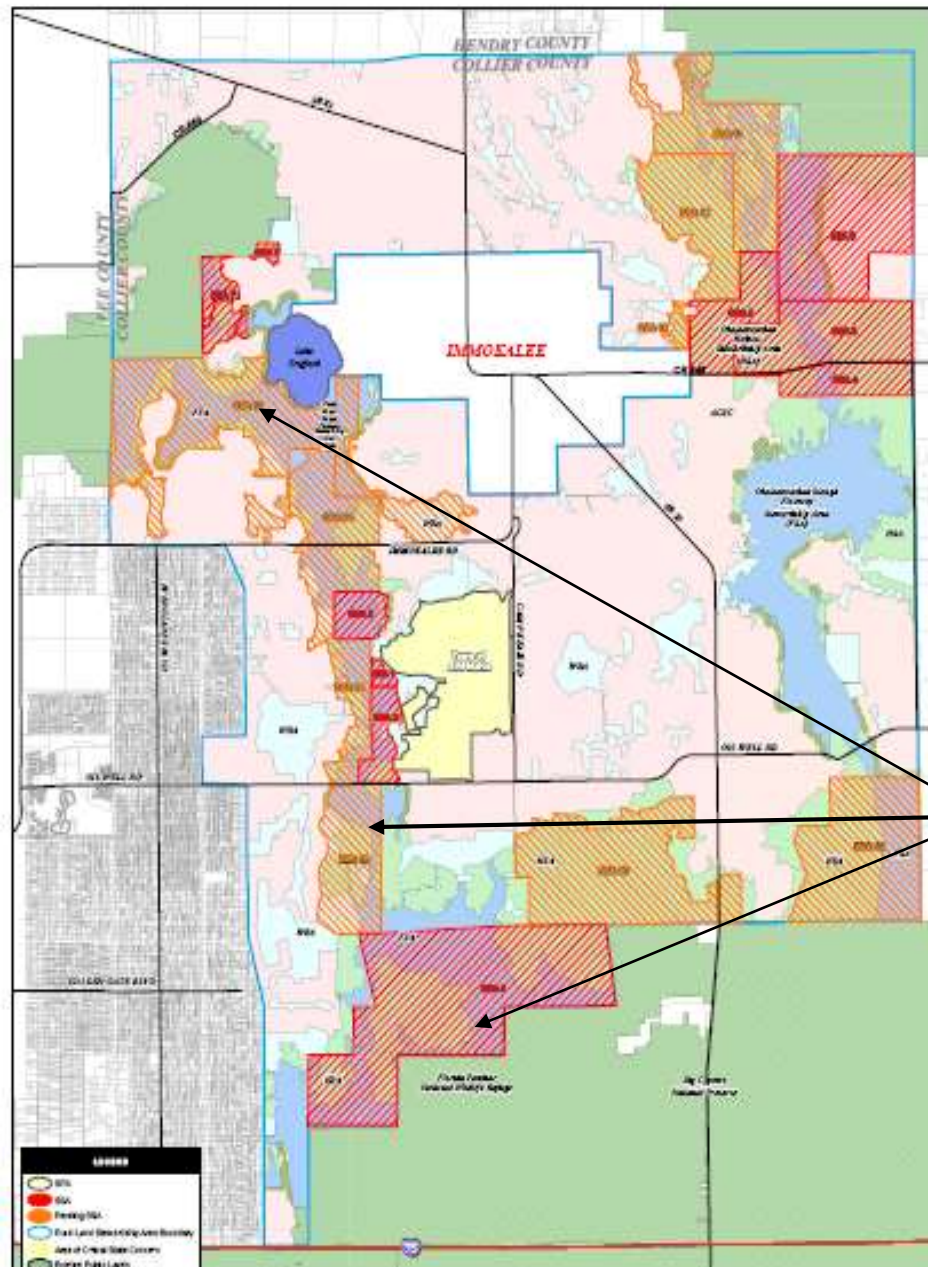
7 SSAs in Process: 31,926 acres

Total : 56,050 Acres

25 Year Goal: 89,300 Acres

Public \$\$ expended: \$0

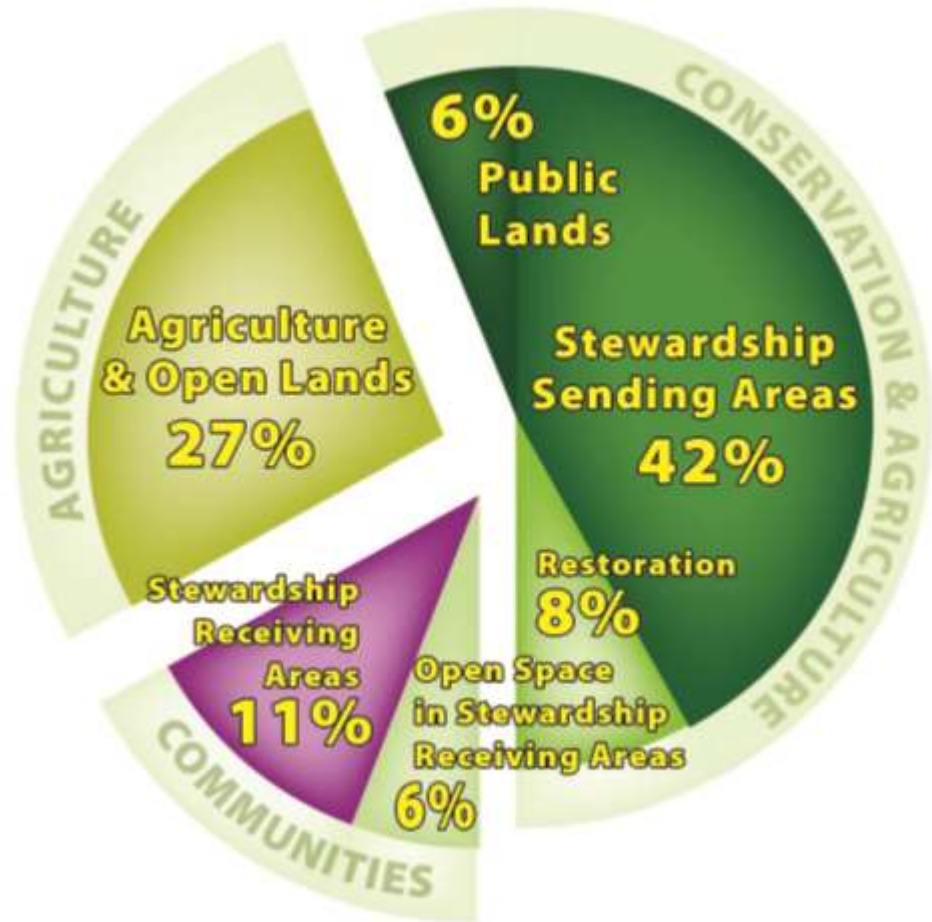
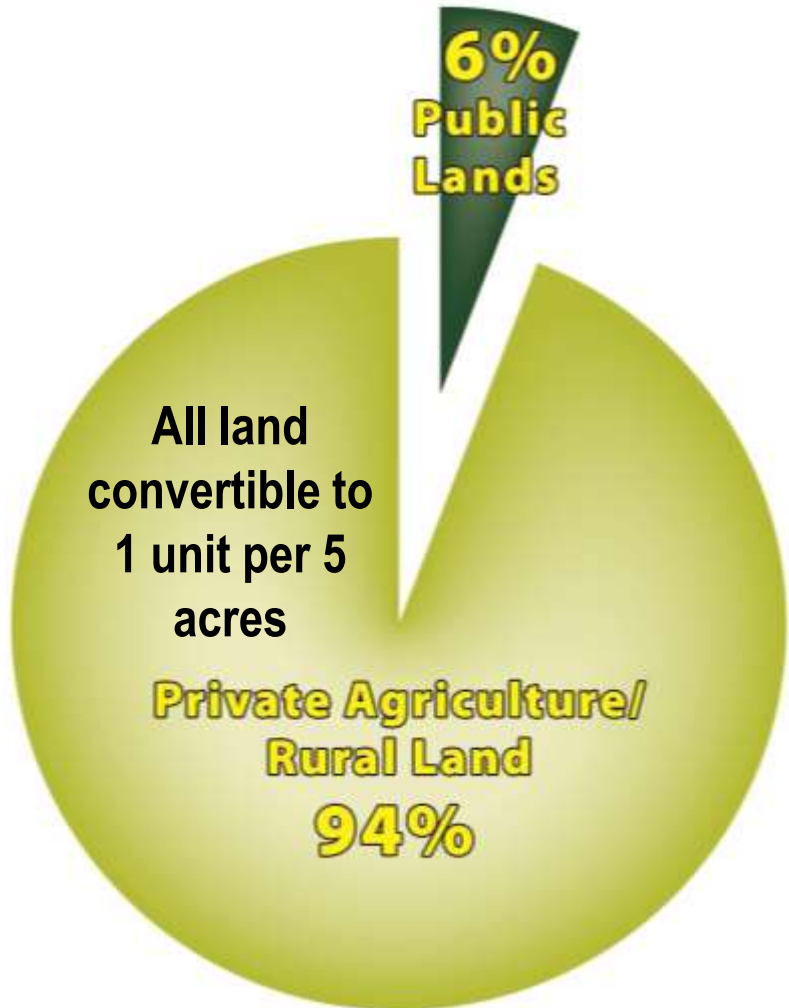
**Camp Keais Strand protected,
linking Corkscrew Swamp
Sanctuary, Florida Panther NWR
and Big Cypress ACSC**





Baseline Conditions

Rural Land Stewardship





Stewardship Protects Natural Resources



- Native wetland and upland habitat is permanently protected and managed
- Stewardship can work in concert with acquisition programs to bridge the gap in land values and available \$\$.
- Endangered species become an economic asset rather than a liability to property owners.
- Land owners are incentivised to protect and restore the natural landscape.



Stewardship Benefits Agriculture



- Economic incentives to retain agriculture and eliminate uses that displace agriculture.
- Agriculture is a management tool to maintain habitat and control exotic species.
- Landowners derive value from unused development rights while retaining the value of existing uses.
- Generational transfer of land is enabled.



In a RLS Area, good things happen by design:

- **Conservation and open space remain the predominant land use.**
- **Public conservation lands augmented by privately owned and managed stewardship areas.**
- **Agriculture continues into the future.**
- **The footprint of development on the landscape is significantly reduced.**
- **The conversion of land to sprawl is minimized.**
- **The impacts of population growth are significantly reduced.**
- **Opportunities for economic growth and diversification are increased.**
- **There are no losers, only winners.**



RLS is supported by uncommon allies:

- Environmental Advocates
- Community Developers
- Land Conservation Organizations
- Ranchers and Farmers
- State and Federal Agencies
- Local Governments
- Growth management watchdogs
- Planning Organizations
- Landowners
- Economic development organizations





Can RLS help protect the next million acres ?

36 M total acres in Florida

9 M acres in conservation

4 M acres urbanized

5 M acres mining or altered

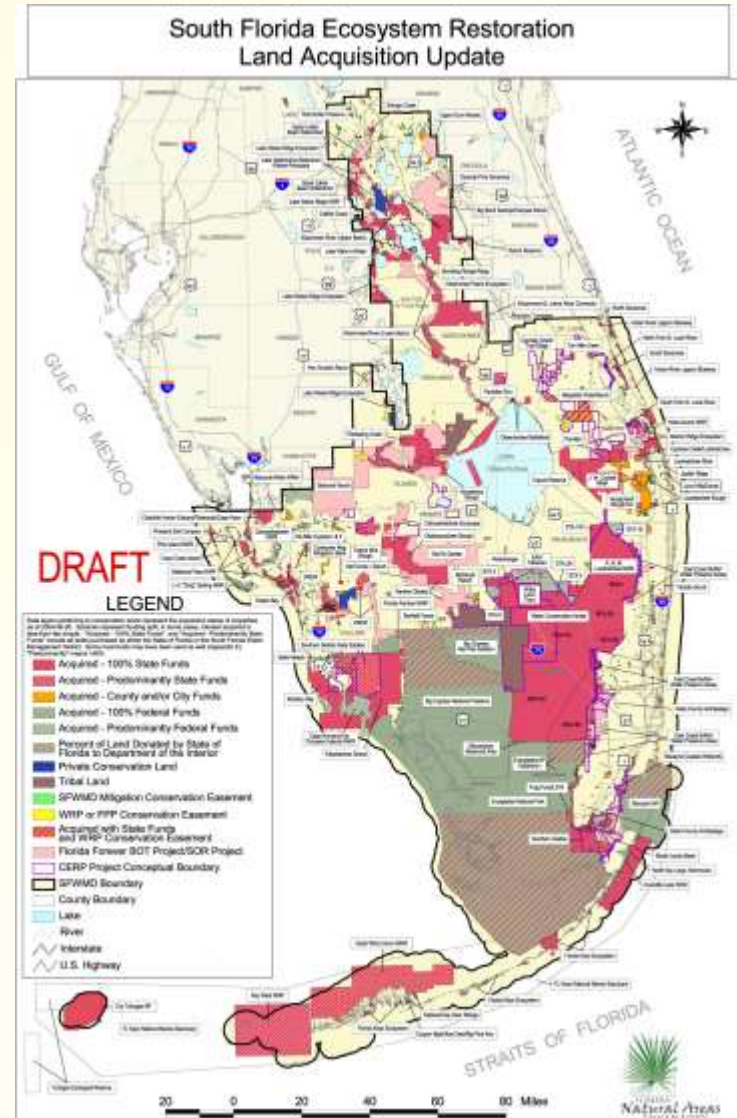
18 M acres private –rural/ agriculture

2 M acres on state acquisition list

< 1 M acres of available public funds

>1 M acres – no strategy & no funds

Source: Florida Trend , August 2004 Issue





Florida 20/20

What if...

**20% of Florida's
Rural/Agricultural Land
was placed into Rural
Land Stewardship
Areas**

&

**20% of Florida's
Growth over the next 2
decades occurred
within new
Stewardship
Communities?**





Florida 20/20

2.9 million acres designated as Rural Land Stewardship Areas with

1.4 million acres of natural resources protected and

1.2 million acres of agriculture retained

No Public cost for preservation





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