

Hutchinson Island Preservation Initiative



Newsletter February 2022

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New Threat to Our Comp Plan From BOCC on February 22

HIPI is joining a movement by other concerned citizens to oppose the latest assault to our Comprehensive Plan by Martin County Commissioners in their relentless effort to appease out-of-county developers and large land-holders in western Martin County. This is the second assault in three months to our comp. plan from our elected officials.

This latest proposal essentially does away with the urban services boundary and opens our western farmlands to rampant development. It has the potential to affect 100,000 acres and effectively change our way of life for years to come.

“The proposed “rural lifestyle” designation, scheduled for a Feb. 22 public hearing before the Martin County Commission, would allow land to be used for traditional agricultural purposes, such as growing crops or raising domesticated animals. If county commissioners agree to create the new classification, developers could develop more homes on rural lifestyle land in exchange for setting aside large areas for open space. Here’s where it gets interesting: The county’s definition of open space would include land used for private golf courses, polo fields, or other recreational purposes. In other words, the type of amenities that would help make high-end homes more desirable — and therefore more expensive.

Under existing zoning laws, most agricultural land in the county can have no more than one home per 20 acres. If the rural lifestyle designation is approved, density could increase to one home per five acres. That’s not all. Under the new land use, developers would be allowed to have water and sewer lines extended to their properties, at their own expense, even though those properties are outside the boundaries of the county’s designated urban service areas.

Governments set urban service areas to help manage growth and development, usually offering services such as water and sewer only inside what often are relatively compact boundaries. Now, think for a second about what happens when new roads are built. The property along them tends to get developed at a faster rate because accessible land is more valuable.

A similar trend may occur along the paths created by the water and sewer lines snaking their way to rural lifestyle developments. Once those lines are built, other developers will invariably ask to tie into those water and sewer connections, too. At that point, the urban service boundaries are essentially meaningless.”

Blake Fontenay <https://www.tcpalm.com/story/opinion/2022/02/02/martin-county-rule-could-stretch-definition-rural-land-opinion/9286018002/>

Uncontrolled development will result in higher property taxes for all Martin County, and the need the need for government services more schools and more roads to accommodate the increased traffic. And we will need more government services that will be demanded by this great influx of residents, adding to an already bloated bureaucracy.

Input matters to the commissioners. Flooding their email boxes with your opinions and showing up at the commission meeting on February 22 can defeat this terrible proposal. Please send an email today to all of the commissioners at comish@martin.fl.us.

HIPI Opposes Florida HB349

Florida House Bill 349 co-sponsored by Martin County's state representative Toby Overdorf, "would allow coastal developers, — whose projects would have "unavoidable impacts" on the ecosystem, such as seagrass destruction — to buy credits and fund seagrass restoration elsewhere.

The principle behind mitigation banking isn't new. Developers already do it for wetlands. And polluters can buy carbon credits to offset their emissions. But because the bill doesn't address enforcement or a crackdown on nutrient pollution plaguing the Indian River Lagoon, it was met with criticism during a Dec. 1 House Environment, Agriculture and Flooding Subcommittee meeting." Max Chesnes <https://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/2022/01/05/florida-legislature-2022-environment-bills-manatees-seagrass-bacteria-sugar-pfas-particle-emissions/8980876002/>

The bill is opposed by HIPI, Florida Conservation Voters, The Sierra Club and Audubon Florida. According to Lindsay Cross, water and land policy director for Florida Conservation Voters, "It is overly broad and does not address the root causes of our seagrass losses, which is dirty water, and could allow for additional impacts to existing seagrasses," she said. "It opens up the potential of using publicly owned sovereign lands to mitigate for seagrass destruction that may benefit private individuals or businesses."

Contact Toby Overdorf: Toby.Overdorf@myfloridahouse.gov



FDOT TO PRESENT A1A SAFETY STUDY RESULTS TO MPO FEB 21

Last May, the Martin Planning Organization (MPO) requested FDOT perform a safety study of A1A at the behest of Hutchinson Shores Resort & Spa.

The results of this study will be presented to the MPO on Monday, February 21 at 9:00 in the county commission chambers, 2401 SE Monterey Rd.

Due to HIPI's consistent presence at county commission meetings, FDOT officials met with HIPI on November 18 to outline their preliminary findings. Recommendations are likely to include:

- increased and improved signage
- removal of trees in the median near the crosswalk
- installation of pavement warning graphics
- feedback signs with a reduction of speed to 25 mph as approaching the roundabout
- installation of pavement and/or median reflectors
- additional lighting on A1A from Hutchinson Shores Resort, north to the roundabout

Because of our unique, natural island environment and concern for the effects of additional lighting on our native wildlife and nesting sea turtles, the addition of lighting is HIPI's primary concern. FDOT stated the type and intensity of lighting will be determined by a photometric study to be performed during the constructability phase of the project, planned for February 2023. The FDOT design team said the ultimate lighting design will be coordinated with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee (FWC).

FDOT agreed to brief HIPI on the planned lighting schematic before it is presented to the MPO. Please monitor our website and social media for updates.

Senate Bill 2580 Would Change Management of Lake O

Information Courtesy of Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch from her blog article,
"Senate Bill 2508 in Black, White and Toxic Algae Green" <https://jacquithurlowlippisch.com>

Florida Senate Bill 2058 would constrain how the Army Corps of Engineers manages water levels at Lake Okeechobee. If the bill passes, three years of collective stakeholder work on LOSOM (Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual) would be overridden and water supplies would be guaranteed in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) for sugarcane.

Governor DeSantis issued a statement of February 10 critical of the bill, stating he "opposes any measure that derails progress on reducing harmful discharges and sending more water to the Everglades. Moreover, I reject any attempt to deprioritize the EAA Reservoir project south of Lake Okeechobee."

Effects of the Bill:

1. Dilutes the state's prioritization of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir and forces the South Florida Water Management District to embrace and compel a policy for Lake O management that artificially holds water back in the lake at higher levels. Higher lake levels increase the likelihood of harmful toxic discharges to our coastal estuaries and starve the Everglades of water it desperately needs during the dry season.
2. If passed, the bill would require the Army Corps of Engineers to present to President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House with any proposed additions or changes to the LOSOM. These changes could not
 - a. diminish the quantity of water available to any legal user;
 - b. otherwise adversely impact any existing legal user;
 - c. diminish the existing levels of service for flood protection;
 - d. adversely affect adopted minimum flows and levels;
 - e. fail to adapt to meet the needs of the restored natural environment.
3. Hundreds of millions of dollars in critical state funding for the EAA Reservoir and Everglades Restoration projects are effectively held hostage and made contingent on the passage of this bill. If passed, this bill threatens the South Florida Water Management District by indicating the legislature will not pay any past CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan) appropriations unless these new lake management policies are executed. This means that current work on Everglades projects may have to stop if funding from the state legislature ends.

Read Bill 2508 here: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/2508/BillText/Filed/HTML>
Gayle Harrell is the state senator representing Hutchinson Island: harrell.gayle@flsenate.gov



NEW HIPI WEBSITE

HIPI is growing, so we needed a new website!
Check it out at www.hipimartin.com.

We have a beautiful new website to better serve as a resource for information about the preservation and protection of Hutchinson Island, county projects on Hutchinson Island, and issues that may affect our island.

We also changed our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter usernames to **hipimartin**.

If you followed us before, you'll still get our notifications.
New to HIPI? We'd love to be friends! Follow us!



Hutchinson Island Presidents' Council of Martin County

Jim Foley

The Hutchinson Island Presidents' Council of Martin County met at the Elliott Museum on February 2. Fourteen of the island's condominium communities were represented. This first in-person meeting of the Council served as a networking opportunity for association Presidents and their representatives to get to know each other, share information about their respective communities and issues affecting Hutchinson Island. The group was able to identify several areas of common interest and concern.

Just about every community in attendance is undergoing a major renovation or repair project at this time. This is not surprising considering the age of the island's condominiums, most of which are now thirty years of age or older. Meeting participants provided information about their respective projects and shared their experiences with the aim of informing and assisting others. The group also found common interest in a number of topics affecting Hutchinson Island, Martin County, agreeing there is a need to provide better information to property owners about these matters.

The Council is composed of Presidents of all condominium associations on Hutchinson Island, Martin County. Similar groups have been in existence for many years in other counties on the island. Until now, Martin County has been underserved in this regard. HIPI is providing the leadership and administrative support needed to get this group established.



HIPI ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 30, 7:00 PM ELLIOTT MUSEUM

Everyone is invited to attend the HIPI Annual Meeting. Guest speakers will be Martin County Administrator Don Donaldson discussing county projects on Hutchinson Island, Mayor of Stuart Merritt Matheson, discussing growth and development in Stuart, and SFWMD Governing Board Member Jacqui Thurlo-Lippisch discussing Lake O and Everglades water issues. We hope you'll join us!

Upcoming Martin County Commissioners Meetings and Martin MPO Meetings

2/21 9:00 MPO	4/19 9:00 BOCC
2/22 9:00 BOCC	5/3 9:00 BOCC
3/1 9:00 BOCC joint meeting with school board	5/9 9:00 MPO
3/8 9:00 BOCC	5/17 9:00 BOCC
3/22 9:00 BOCC	
4/18 9:00 MPO	

All meetings will be held at the Martin County Administrative Center, 2401 SE Monterey Road, except the 3/1 joint meeting with the school board, which will be at the Blake Library.

Join HIPI!

There's strength in numbers! We need your help!

When developers have tried to make changes to Hutchinson Island that threaten the four story, 40 foot height limit, or endanger our animals and waters, HIPI has been instrumental in preventing those changes.

Our efforts stopped the 2018 project that would have installed hundreds of lights along A1A. Our questions and website and social media posts also prevented new construction on Hutchinson Island that would have included a 50+ ft tower. We were able to stop these changes to our beloved island because of the help of thousands of supporters who love Hutchinson Island and who publicly denounced these changes with us. When we speak together, our collective voices are loud and clear.

Your membership in HIPI allows us to show that you, too, care about preserving and protecting Hutchinson Island in Martin County. Your membership adds your contact information to our data base, so we can send you information about activities on the island that may affect Hutchinson Island. And, most importantly, you will be the first to know when we issue or endorse an urgent call to action. Dues are only \$20/year and help pay for operational costs, facilities rental and other expenses.

If you're already a member of HIPI, THANK YOU! Please renew your membership and continue to help us preserve and protect Hutchinson Island in Martin County. Visit our website, www.hipimartin.com, to pay online or mail the membership form below.

*First Name _____

*Last Name _____

*Email _____

*Membership Category

_____ HUTCHINSON ISLAND MARTIN COUNTY RESIDENT MEMBER

_____ MARTIN COUNTY ASSOCIATE MEMBER

_____ NON-RESIDENT ASSOCIATE MEMBER (INCLUDES SEASONAL RENTERS)

_____ HUTCHINSON ISLAND MARTIN COUNTY BUSINESS ASSOCIATE MEMBER

_____ BUSINESS ASSOCIATE MEMBER

*Name of HOA (or please type private residence) _____

Name of Business, if applicable _____

Address _____

Condo or Unit Number, if applicable _____

*City _____ *State _____ *Zip _____

*Member Opts in for Emails _____ Yes _____ No

Phone _____

Interested in Serving on Committee? _____ YES _____ NO

*Payment Type: CASH _____ CHECK # _____

*Name on check if different than member's name: _____

Please mail dues payments of \$20/member/year to

HIPI

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