



annual report 2009

PLANNING, PROTECTING AND IMPROVING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



*Front Cover Photo Courtesy of:
David Hutchinson
Badcock Ranch 2008*



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Message From the Chair

During 2009, I am pleased to say, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council continued to work with member agencies to protect, improve and strengthen our regional community. Our Region has exceptional land and water resources, and under the leadership of Mayor Mick Denham, the Council furthered the work of the Lower West Coast Watershed Implementation Committee with its efforts to insure future protection of our rivers, flow ways and Gulf Islands.

The Council took action encouraging the Southwest Florida Water Management District to expand conservation efforts, as well as its land acquisition program, to provide much-needed water storage and treatment facilities. We continued to support restoration of the Everglades.

The Council supported efforts by our inland counties to encourage a selection process for a multimodal logistics center or inland port that will bring an economically and environmentally sustainable facility within our region. The Council supported regional initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure and promote sustainability throughout the region.

One of the highlights for me as Chairman was to join with the Vice Chair, the Executive Director and the Planning Director, along with a delegation of regional business and industry leaders, in making a presentation at the Climate Prosperity Project national Leadership Meeting in San Jose, California in February

2009. Our Southwest Florida region was one of only seven areas selected as pilot projects. Ken Heatherington outlined the efforts of our Regional Planning Council in Climate Prosperity, including creation of the Council's Energy & Climate Committee.

October 2009 was another highlight, with the Council hosting a Regional Planning Workshop and Green Region Expo at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center. The title of the workshop was "People, Prosperity, Preservation." The workshop featured members of the Council and knowledgeable leaders within our State addressing "Health Care Reform," "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs," "Education," "Climate Prosperity" and "Preservation."

I appreciated the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council during the past year, and am proud of my long-time involvement with the Council. For 35 years I've observed this Council to be an effective partnership for improving our region and contributing to our quality of life. As a region, we should be optimistic that our communities will emerge from today's challenges even stronger, more innovative and more prosperous. I encourage our community and regional leaders to continue advocating for the preservation and protection of our region's natural resources, and to help make this part of a shared vision for the region--this will be one of the best legacies we can leave for future generations.



As a region, we should be optimistic that our communities will emerge from today's challenges even stronger, more innovative and more prosperous."

James Humphrey, 2009 Governing Board Chair



Message From the Executive Director

Today Southwest Floridians face a fiscal condition that has escalated over the past two years only to become more embedded in the local economy this past year. As with many state and local governments, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC) continued to face a challenging year. The SWFRPC adapted to the times and found ourselves making changes in the way we operate and do business. In an effort to control expenses we have negotiated new contracts with vendors for the best price available; proactively reduced travel and professional development; and we have not filled vacant positions nor has staff had any salary adjustments. The SWFRPC staff is constantly attempting to grow revenue by applying for additional grants and contracts; sustainability and energy efficiency continue to be a source of new revenue. Nonetheless, revenue reflects a conservative approach to on-going and forecasted activities. The SWFRPC is resolved to move toward the future with a sharp eye and conservative approach. As I said last year, I am proud of our team that has stayed strong through the tough economic downturn. That does not mean that the SWFRPC can provide less service to local government, tribal communities and to the private sector whose business and legal needs are changing. To help meet those needs, the SWFRPC moved about the region to various counties, experiencing various venues in an effort to further regional thinking and regional problem solving.

In March, the SWFRPC traveled to the Trailhead lot of the Corkscrew Regional Ecological Watershed (CREW) off of Corkscrew Road in Lee County. The CREW Land and Water Trust was established in 1989 as a non-profit organization to coordinate land acquisition, land management and public use of the 60,000 acre CREW lands. In an effort to meet CREW's environmental educational mission and public outreach component, the SWFRPC meeting focused on the expanded use of renewable energy as a tool to create jobs and benefit the environment.

In May, the SWFRPC traveled out to the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in eastern Collier County and Hendry County that was sponsored by the Urban Land Institute (ULI). The SWFRPC had a joint meeting with the Seminole Tribal Council and

exchanged information for future collaboration before heading out to the AH-TAH-THI-KI museum. The Council and guests enjoyed the permanent exhibits which display various aspects of Seminole life during the 19th century. After lunch at the Seminole Swamp Water Café members and guests loaded the bus for the trip to Ave Maria and back to Ft. Myers.

In August, the SWFRPC held its Annual Retreat at the Hilliard Family Lodge in Hendry County. The meeting began with a facilitated exercise called the "Art of Possibility" led by Betsy Allen of Gaining Results and then continued with a discussion of the Council's Strategic Business Plan and two presentations on possible locations for an in-land port near Lake Okeechobee and the railroad.

In September, the SWFRPC traveled to the Kimal Learning and Event Center in Sarasota County. The Kimal Event Center/Kimal Lumber Company proved to be a perfect regional venue for learning about the facility and development in the area. The Event Center promotes and encourages sustainable, green and healthy building practices.

In October, the SWFRPC and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice hosted a conference titled "State of the Region: People-Prosperity-Preservation: Working Together for a Better Tomorrow" held at the Charlotte County Event and Convention. The conference was made up of panelists and keynote speakers who spoke about Florida's economy and how growth, while it may stabilize, is not expected to grow the local economy and protect the environment as well as it has in the past. In conjunction with the conference, an exposition and symposium were held that weekend entitled "Creating a Green Region". The exposition was held outside on the Great Lawn at the Charlotte County Event and Convention Center. In addition to a very successful conference and exposition the SWFRPC endorsed October as National Community Planning Month. The SWFRPC acknowledged the day as an opportunity to highlight the contributions sound planning and plan implementation make to the quality of our settlements and environment.



The SWFRPC is resolved to move toward the future with a sharp eye and conservative approach."

Ken Heatherington, Executive Director



Council Staff



Ken Heatherington, AICP
Executive Director



David Hutchinson,
Planning Director



Liz Donley, Esq.,
Legal Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

<i>Nancy Doyle</i>	H/R Operations Manager
<i>Nichole Gwinnett</i>	Senior Administrative Specialist
<i>Debbie Kooi</i>	Senior Administrative Specialist
<i>Angela Tomlinson</i>	Accounts Clerk
<i>Gaila Triggs</i>	Information/Records Clerk
<i>Janice Yell</i>	Finance Manager

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

<i>Jim Beever</i>	Principal Planner
<i>David Crawford, AICP</i>	Principal Planner
<i>John Gibbons</i>	Principal Planner
<i>Whitney Gray</i>	Environmental Scientist
<i>Jennifer Pellechio</i>	Network Administrator/ Senior Planner
<i>Daniel Trescott</i>	Principal Planner
<i>Jason Utley</i>	Senior Planner/ Assistant DRI Coordinator

GRAPHIC INFORMATION SERVICES

<i>Timothy Walker</i>	GIS/Graphics Manager
<i>Daniel Cobb</i>	GIS Analyst

LIBRARY/INFORMATION SERVICES

<i>Rebekah Harp</i>	Webmaster / Public Information Specialist
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CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

<i>Lisa Beever, Ph.D.,</i>	Director
<i>Liz Donley, Esq.</i>	Deputy Director
<i>Judy Ott</i>	Program Scientist
<i>Maran Hilgendorf</i>	Communications Manager

LEE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

<i>Don Scott</i>	Director
<i>Ron Gogoi, AICP</i>	Deputy Director
<i>Brian Raimondo</i>	Senior Planner
<i>Meghan Marion</i>	Planning Technician



COUNCIL OFFICERS

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VICE CHAIRMAN.....*Mayor Mick Denham*
SECRETARY.....*Commissioner Paul Beck*
TREASURER.....*Councilman Charles "Chuck" Kiester*

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Commissioner Robert Skidmore
Councilman Don McCormick
Ms. Andrea Messina
Mr. Alan LeBeau

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Commissioner Frank Halas
Councilman Teresa Heitmann
Councilman Charles Kiester
Ms. Laura Holquist
(Governor Appointee Vacancy)

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Commissioner Paul Beck
Dr. Edward Elkowitz
Councilman Michael Brantley

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Councilman John Spear
Ms. Laura Holquist
Mr. Paul Pass

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Commissioner Carolyn Mason
Commissioner Tom Jones
Councilman Ernie Zavodnyik
Mr. George H. Mazarantani
Mr. David Farley

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Phil Flood, SFWMD
Mr. Jon Iglehart, FDEP
Ms. Dianne Davies, SWFWMD
Mr. Johnny Limbaugh, FDOT
Ms. Tammie Nemecek, EDC of Collier County

The Council & The Region

The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council was created by an interlocal agreement between Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota Counties in 1973. The Council acts as a regional information clearinghouse, conducts research to develop and maintain area-wide goals, objectives, and policies, and assists in implementing a number of local, state and federal programs. The Council serves as an advocate for the region with State and Federal agencies, including the Legislature and Congress.

The Council is directed by a thirty-four member Council composed of local elected officials and gubernatorial appointees. Five individuals who represent State interests provide additional assistance through service as Ex-Officio members of the Council.

The Council is staffed by more than twenty professionals with expertise in planning, law, emergency management, public administration, environmental science, business administration and information technology.

The Council Meets Monthly To:

- ❖ Develop agreement on a common vision for the region and assess the progress we are making toward reaching that vision;
- ❖ Deliberate on proposed projects deemed developments of regional impact and on proposed changes to local comprehensive plans;
- ❖ Review federal projects, programs and documents of statewide significance that may affect the region;
- ❖ Collaborate on projects and programs that benefit multiple jurisdictions; and
- ❖ Discuss issues that emerge as matters of regional interest, for example, infrastructure needs and proposed growth management initiatives.

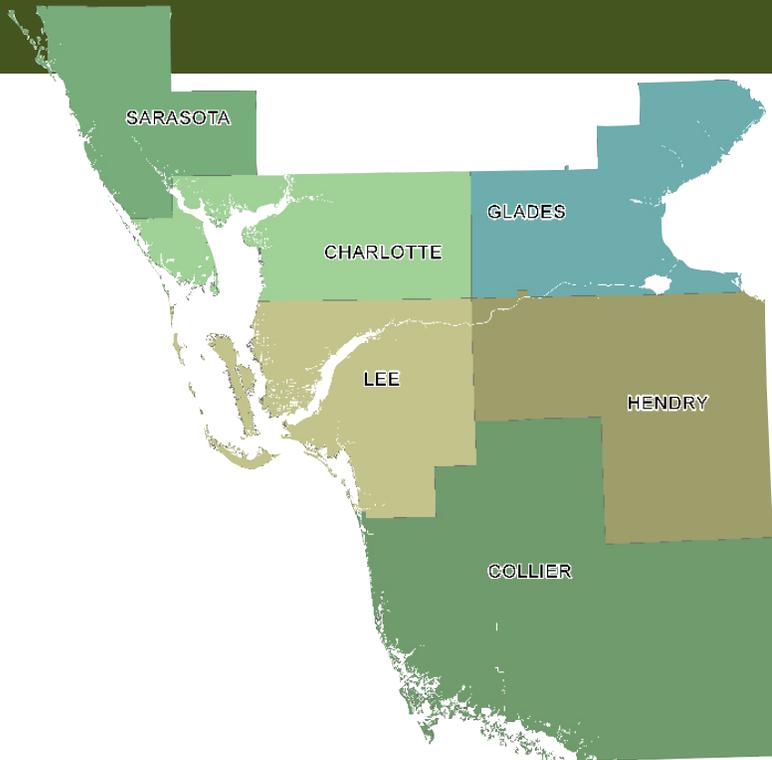
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council serves Regional District 9 and consists of six counties with a total area (land and water) of 6,663 square miles and a land area of 5,986 square miles. Four of the counties border the Gulf of Mexico and comprise a large portion of the region's urban area. Two counties are bounded by Lake Okeechobee, the second largest freshwater lake in the United States.

The population of Southwest Florida is dominated by retirees. People age 65 and older comprise 27 percent of the total population, and retirement incomes are the greatest single component of the region's economic base. Tourism is the next largest component of the economy – the population swells by as much as 30 percent each winter! Agriculture is the third largest economic component, thanks to a climate that allows for three growing seasons (winter, spring and fall) each year. Concurrent with the rise in population and its growing popularity as a tourist destination, the region's rural (non-urban) counties have emerged as a principal growth center for the State's sizeable agricultural community.

Natural resources have had a major influence on the area's economic development and growth. The most important of these resources are the region's location and climate, land and water resources, vegetation and wildlife, and inland and tidal wetlands. These resources have attracted large numbers of retirees and tourists to the region, thereby fueling the area's service, trade and construction industries.

Our Mission:

The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council's mission is to work together across neighboring communities to consistently protect and improve the unique and relatively unspoiled character of the physical, economic and social worlds we share... for the benefit of our future generations.



CHARLOTTE COUNTY

Area: 690 Square Miles

Population: 165,455*

County Seat: Punta Gorda

Incorporated Communities: Punta Gorda

Established: 1921

HENDRY COUNTY

Area: 1,163 Square Miles

Population: 41,320*

County Seat: LaBelle

Incorporated Communities: Clewiston and LaBelle

Established: 1921

COLLIER COUNTY

Area: 1,894 Square Miles

Population: 333,032*

County Seat: East Naples

Incorporated Communities: Everglades City,

Marco and Naples

Established: 1921

LEE COUNTY

Area: 803 Square Miles

Population: 615,124*

County Seat: Fort Myers

Incorporated Communities: Bonita Springs, Cape Coral,

Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel

Established: 1887

GLADES COUNTY

Area: 763 Square Miles

Population: 11,311*

County Seat: Moore Haven

Incorporated Communities: Moore Haven

Established: 1921

SARASOTA COUNTY

Area: 573 Square Miles

Population: 389,320*

County Seat: Sarasota

Incorporated Communities: Longboat Key, North Port,

Sarasota and Venice

Established: 1921

* From Florida Estimates of Population 2009: April 1, 2009, produced by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida.

Council's Key Accomplishments

Comprehensive Planning

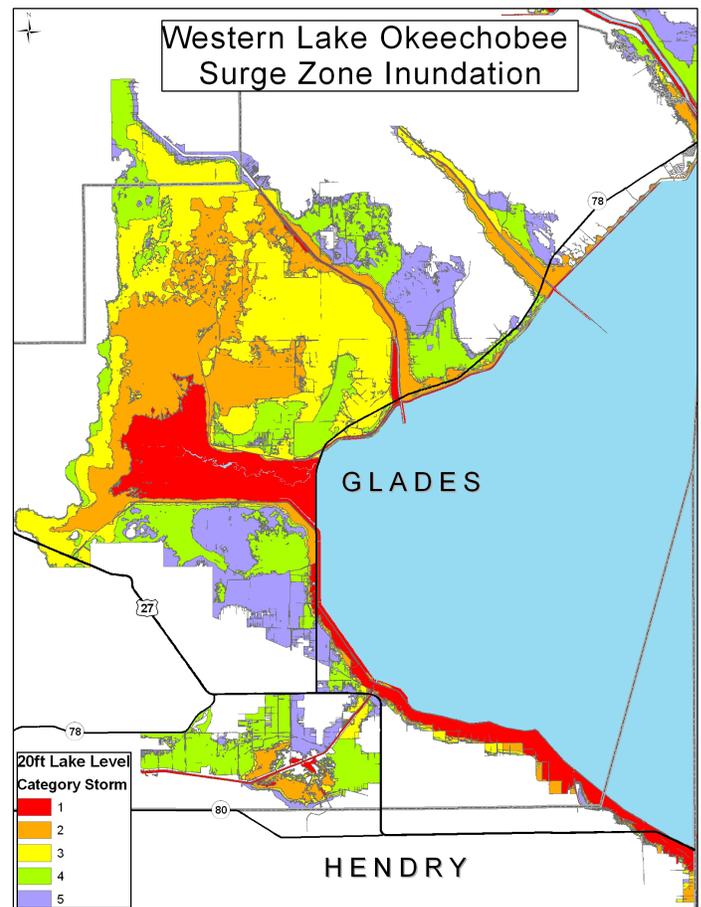
The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council plays an important role in planning for growth management, community development and quality-of-life issues throughout our region. We provide technical assistance to local governments, coordinate the review of Developments of Regional Impact, review local plans and plan amendments for consistency with our Strategic Regional Policy Plan and facilitate intergovernmental coordination and cooperation. As the convener of the region, the Council helps articulate multi-jurisdictional issues that need resolution, and we champion the unique themes of our region with state agencies and the Legislature.

During the past year, Council staff members reviewed and provided technical input on 34 proposed small-scale amendments and 23 proposed large-scale amendments to local comprehensive plans. Council staff members also provide technical planning assistance to communities and private entities in the region with respect to issues that are regional in magnitude, location or character.

Hurricane Update

In the previous annual report, an explanation of the evacuation study completed components was discussed. These parts include the behavioral survey, the hazard analysis, LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) or elevation data and the small area data demographic analysis. Other parts of the study completed since the last annual report is the Land Use Analysis that includes a generalized Future Land Use Map for the region. Also completed is the Regional Evacuation Routes Network for the year 2007 and 2012 that will be used for the transportation analysis. Parts of the study that we are currently working on are the Shelter Analysis and the Vulnerability Analysis. The Vulnerability Analysis includes the Storm Tide Atlas, in which many people and local governments are most interested. The Storm Tide Atlas will show the extent of hurricane storm surge over the land for each county in the region. Even the

inland counties of Glades and Hendry now show hurricane storm surge from Lake Okeechobee for lakes levels of 16 and 20 feet (see map below). The final part of the evacuation study will be the Technical Data Report which brings all the part of the study together. Any questions about the study, please contact Dan Trescott at extension 220.



Economic Development

Glades, Hendry and the Immokalee area of Collier County were included within the Round II Federal Enterprise Community by Governor Bush in January 2001, as a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern.

In 2009, President Obama made a visit to Southwest Florida, for his second speaking engagement as President. He discussed his Economic Recovery Plan in some detail. For the past 2 years, the unemployment rates in Lee and Char-



lotte Counties, both located in Southwest Florida, have exceeded the national unemployment rate. Due to the downturn in the economy, Southwest Florida has a high number of unemployed skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled laborers that can be easily retrained. Moreover, the number of foreclosed real estate properties in Lee County and Cape Coral is among the highest in the nation.

Economic Development District

Through the Economic Development Strategy Committee, the Regional Planning Council assisted in clarifying any projects and support for several grant opportunities thought the year. The Council also publishes the Economic Views monthly.

Grant Team

During 2009, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC) grant team worked diligently to submit a grant application to EDA (Economic Development Administration) to fund a Disaster Resistance Planning & Recovery Program for the region. The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council requested \$675,000 from EDA.

This project consists of the following four components:

- Regional Climate Change/Hurricane Disaster Resilience Adaption Plan
- Analysis of Structural Hurricane Hardening Needs
- Plan for Temporary Housing
- Associated Outreach Materials to Educate the Communities

Although EDA choose not to fund this project, the grant team continues to work together and find potential funding sources for similar projects.



Intergovernmental Coordination and Review

The Council reviewed approximately 47 applications and proposals in 2009. Of these, 35 were deemed regionally significant and the Council recommended actions necessary to ensure that each project would

be consistent with the Strategic Regional Policy Plan for Southwest Florida.

Transportation Disadvantaged

In Glades County, the CTC, Good Wheels, Inc. provided 3,541 total trips, a decrease of 18.54% from 2008. Vehicle miles for 2009 were 130,531, an increase of 9.22%. Expenses increased 80.51% over 2009 for a total of \$310,817. Revenues decreased 11.29% over 2009 for a total of \$326,890.

In Hendry County, the CTC, Good Wheels, Inc. provided 20,252 total trips, an increase of 6.75% from 2008. Vehicle miles for 2009 were 439,761, an increase of 6.66%. Expenses decreased 11.61% over 2009 for a total of \$1,470,758. Revenues decreased 7.34% over 2009 for a total of \$1,630,829.

In Lee County, the CTC Coordinator, Good Wheels, Inc. provided 109,742 total trips, a decrease of 18.75% from 2008. Vehicle miles for 2009 were 1,429,262, a decrease of 8.07%. Expenses decreased 13.28% over 2009 for a total of \$3,249,138. Revenues decreased 10.34% over 2009 for a total of \$2,944,163.

Technology

The Information Technology Team at the Regional Planning Council continued to look for ways to improve the agencies needs. There were a number of initiatives discussed and implemented in 2009:



Fiber Connectivity Initiative

The Council currently has a T1 bandwidth of 1.544 Mbps line. The council is currently looking at connecting using the Internet at fiber-optic speeds from 5Mbps up to 10Mbps.

Web Conferencing

The RPC has been using this service for the past year. It has

Council's Key Accomplishments Continued...

Technology Continued...

given us the ability to hold web conference meetings, which would promote more attendance by allowing members to attend via the web conferencing application, ultimately using less gas and less travel time, and providing more attendance via the web. This solution continues to be useful to staff and others at the SWFRPC.

Disaster Recovery Consortium Meeting

The SWFRPC staff began attending these meetings to connect with key IT resources in the region. Due to the Council's limited resources, it is crucial to building relationships for advancing our Information Technology infrastructure. Staff will continue work towards a disaster recovery mechanism such as a continuity plan.

SWFLA innovation Committee

In June 2009, meetings began with the Southwest Florida Innovation Network Committee. The committee's main focus was to obtain stimulus funding for the regional committee to include project ideas in the CEDS document.

The CEDS Committee, working closely with the newly formed Southwest Florida Innovation Network, identified in September 2009 a new initiative to include in the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council's Annual CEDS update.

The group is now focusing on a broad-based adoption effort with an emphasis on establishing a fiber infrastructure to support future needs. This is generally defined as a high capacity DWDM core network with speeds of at least 320 gigabits channelized (also defined as the "middle mile" level.) This is not the type of local connectivity businesses currently enjoy; it is however, what we will need to foster economic diversification and regional sustainability in the future.

Developments of Regional Impact

In 2009, 14 DRI ADAs, 11 Notice of Proposed Changes to DRIs, one Essentially Built-Out DRI and one DRI Abandonment were under review. Review of the projects submitted in 2007/08/09 will continue into 2010. Some of these proj-

ects are on hold due to the recession and depressed real estate market. However, other projects that were on hold are now moving forward toward completion. Therefore, we believe most of the projects on hold will ultimately be finished with local development orders. The two DRIs submitted and reviewed by the SWFRPC in 2009 are discussed below.

Babcock Ranch Increment I



The Babcock Ranch Increment I DRI is the first increment of the Babcock Ranch Master Development Plan. The 3,051 acre Babcock Ranch Increment I area currently consists of 1,673.86 acres of uplands, 810.05 acres of mined areas, 483.23 acres of wetlands, and 13.26 acres of surface waters. The project consists of two parcels which are not contiguous. The northern parcel is 442.56 acres and the larger southern parcel is 2,583.5 acres. Both parcels are located within the legal description of the Babcock Ranch Master Development Order in southeastern Charlotte County, north of Lee County Road (CR) 78, south of Charlotte County Road (CR) 74, and immediately east of State Road 31. The proposal at buildout will include 2,500 residential units, 126,000 square feet of retail development, 250,000 square feet of general office, 50,000 square feet of medical office, 90,000 square feet of industrial uses, 100 hotel rooms, and 22,500 square feet of civic/government/church uses. The proposed concept plan includes 1,039.87 acres of developed land, 715.56 acres of greenway/open space, a +/- 30 acre utility easement, 528.65 acres of lakes, 367.4 acres of active greenways, and 328.92 acres of wetlands/preserve area. According to the applicant, the project is envisioned to be sustainable and will encourage a high-tech, energy efficient and environmentally friendly mix of land uses. Regulations and development standards for the project have been created with the goal to create an integrated community that fosters civic life, walkability, human interaction, economic health, sustainability and preservation of the natural environment. Construction is to commence in 2010. The project will be divided into two phases; Phase 1 being year 2010 through 2014, and Phase 2 from 2015 through 2019. The proposed project buildout date is December 31, 2019. Based on transportation issues, only Phase I was approved.



Developments of Regional Impact Continued...

Lee County Red Sox Ballpark and Spring Training Facility

The Lee County Red Sox Ballpark & Spring Training Facility project is located immediately north of Daniels Road about two miles east of the I-75 interchange (see page iv for regional location map). The site was originally approved as a DRI in 1989. The name of the DRI at that time was Airside Plaza. The 125 + acre Airside Plaza is currently approved for 125,400 square feet of retail commercial uses, 150 hotel rooms, 270,000 square feet of office uses, 525,000 square feet of "tech/flex" (an industrial type land uses), and a "swing" land use which could be 40,000 square feet of office/research uses or 150 hotel rooms, depending on market conditions. The original project included 8.3 acres of lakes, 19.0 acres of preserved wetlands and 2.5 acres of road right-of-way and was to be constructed in two phases over the course of 10 years. The project's development order was amended twice between 1989 and 2005. During that time, the project was located in Lee County. In September 2006, the City of Fort Myers adopted a new development order for the Airside Project after it was annexed by the City. In July 2009, the City contracted its territorial boundaries effectively de-annexing the project site. The proposed project would have a mix of uses including 50,000 square feet of office use, 150 hotel rooms, 200,000 square feet of retail use, 50,000 square feet of wellness/fitness/rehab athletic performance and sports medicine uses, a baseball stadium with capacity for 12,000 attendees, and 2.5 acres of recreation uses in addition to the stadium area. A South Florida Water Management District Environmental Resource Permit has been issued for the project site. The project, as proposed, will be constructed in a single five-year phase with a 2015 buildout date.



Table 1 includes the DRIs that had activity presented to the Council in 2009 by month.

TABLE 1:
DRI ACTIVITY PRESENTED TO COUNCIL IN 2009

DRI	Activity
JANUARY	
1. Murdock Increments I, II & IV	NOPC
2. North Port Gardens	Request for Extension
3. Toll-Rattlesnake	Request for Extension
FEBRUARY	
1. Big Cypress	Request for Extension
2. Harborview	Request for Extension
3. North Port Gardens	Request for Extension
MARCH	
1. Florida Gulf Coast Technology and Research Park	Request for Extension
APRIL	
1. Toll-Rattlesnake	Request for Extension
2. Big Cypress	Request for Extension
3. North Port Gardens	Request for Extension
JUNE	
1. Florida Gulf Coast Technology and Research Park	Request for Extension
2. Harborview	Request for Extension
3. Alico Interchange Park	Request for Extension
4. Toll-Rattlesnake	Request for Extension
5. North Port Gardens	Request for Extension
6. Sandhill	NOPC
7. Victoria Estates	NOPC
SEPTEMBER	
1. Big Cypress	Request for Extension
2. Harborview	Request for Extension
3. Florida Gulf Coast Technology and Research Park	Request for Extension
4. North Port Gardens	Request for Extension
5. Red Sox Stadium	Pre-App Checklist
6. Jetport	Request for Extension
OCTOBER	
1. Toll-Rattlesnake	Request for Extension
2. The Fountains	Request for Extension
3. Villages of Lakewood Ranch South	Request for Extension
4. Alico Interchange Park	Staff Assessment
NOVEMBER	
1. Babcock Ranch Master Development Order	NOPC
2. University Town Center	NOPC
3. The Fountains	Request for Extension
4. North Port Gardens	Request for Extension
5. Babcock Ranch Increment I	Staff Assessment
DECEMBER	
1. Toll-Rattlesnake	Request for Extension
2. Florida Gulf Coast Technology and Research Park	Request for Extension
3. Lee County Red Sox Stadium	Staff Assessment

Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee



In 2009, the Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee played a pivotal role in promoting hazardous materials awareness and community safety in the region.

Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) are crucial to the success of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA). In addition to its formal responsibilities, the LEPC serves as a focal point in the community for information and discussions about hazardous substances, emergency planning, health and environmental risks. As in previous years, the LEPC updated its emergency plan which serves as a reference document. Moreover, the LEPC has other responsibilities besides developing an emergency response plan. It receives emergency release and hazardous chemical inventory information submitted by local facilities, and must make this information available to the public upon request. The success of EPCRA is the result of the close

relationship which exists between the LEPC, industry, Florida's State Emergency Response Commission, and first response organizations.

Awards Initiative

The Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Com-

mittee was pleased to honor Veolia Environmental Services of Florida as the 2009 Thomas Yatabe Award recipient for the Southwest Florida area. Award recipients are recognized for outstanding achievement, accomplishment or superior participation in the State's Hazardous Materials Program. Additionally, Ms. Linda Dunwoody (center photo) of Veolia Environmental Services was honored with a certificate of appreciation for superior participation in Florida's hazardous materials program. Veolia Environmental Services provided over sixteen (16) Compact Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Kits to local emergency planning committees during and following Florida's Hazardous Ma-



terials Awareness Week. Pictured on the left is Mr. Richard Smith conferring the award on behalf of the Florida State Emergency Response Commission. Chairman Bruce Porter of the Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee is shown on the right.

Hazardous Materials Program - Facility Compliance

In 2009, there were more than 1,000 chemical records housed at the offices of the Council, congruent with the mandates of EPCRA which are administered by the LEPC, an organization staffed by the Council. Facilities with either hazardous or extremely hazardous chemical inventories at a threshold planning quantity are required to submit formal reports to the Florida State Emergency Response Commission and the LEPC annually.

Electronic Submission

In February 2009, the State Emergency Response Commission began beta testing of facilities reporting their Tier II data through a new online system. The Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee has supported this effort which will replace the need to mail in the Tier II forms. The program will be introduced and implemented by the Florida Division of Emergency Management with the assistance of Florida's Local Emergency Planning Committees.

Top 10 Hazardous Materials and Inventory Levels	
Chemical	Inventory Level (lbs.)
Sulfuric Acid	4,468,843
Aldicarb	454,168
Ammonia	429,951
Methyl Bromide	383,906
Chlorine	325,146
Nitric Acid	72,525
Ethaneperoxoic acid	47,950
Endosulfan	41,392
Sulfur dioxide	20,057
Ethylene Oxide	24,325



Hazardous Materials Training

Hazardous material training is an important mission of the LEPC. In 2009, a total of 158 individuals (see below) benefited from the training conducted by the LEPC. Training programs included the following:

- Hazmat Chemistry IQ, April 17, 2009
- Hazardous Materials Awareness Level I Course, March 3, 2009
- Fire Chemistry Course, July 6 – 11, 2009
- OSHA 1910.120 Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response, September 4, 2009
- EPA Air Monitoring Course, September 9-11, 2009

In addition to the noted workshops, the LEPC conducted four (4) quarterly meetings and hosted three (3) quarterly meetings for the Southwest Florida Regional Hazmat Teams Group.

Program Training by Occupation				
Profession	Awareness	Operations	Technician	Total
Fire	14	8	50	72
Law Enforcement		2	1	3
EMS	4		1	5
Public Works	8		3	11
Other	60	5	2	67
Total	86	15	57	158



Community Safety Outreach Initiatives

Annually for a number of years, the Committee has coordinated and supported initiatives promoting Hazardous Materials Awareness Week in the Region. In concert with this endeavor, a How to Comply Facility Compliance Workshop was conducted, January 20, 2009, for the benefit of industry regulated under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act. Also, local governments were encouraged to endorse chemical safety in their jurisdictions by passing proclamations and inviting either Fire Chiefs or County Emergency Managers to receive the promulgated instruments and by speaking on the issue during the official meeting following the passing of the instrument. Additionally, chemical awareness information and notifications were published in the print media. Also, the LEPC was instrumental in hosting or participating in several community workshops held within the region.

US Environmental Protection Agency E-Plan

The Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee was very active in 2009 encouraging emergency responders to register under the U.S. EPA E-Plan program initiative. E-Plan allows emergency responders to review facility chemical data over the internet fairly rapidly during a chemical incident. Provided below is a picture taking during the regional table-top exercise of March 26, 2008. The event was held in Collier County, and over thirty (30) public and private agencies participated. The table-top event was held mainly to address issues and facilitate discussions likely to confront the full-scale activity.

Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program



The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) is a partnership of citizens, elected officials, resource managers and commercial and recreational resource users who are working to protect the greater Charlotte Harbor estuarine system by improving the water quality and ecological integrity of the 4,400 square mile watershed. The partnership is hosted by the Council and works as an advocate for the estuarine system by building consensus that is based upon sound science.

Activities of the CHNEP are coordinated through the Management Conference, a body which is comprised of four committees (Citizens Advisory, Technical Advisory, Management and Policy) and the staff. Major accomplishments of the CHNEP in 2009 follow.

HIGHLIGHTS

Coastal Wetlands Study

Work continued on the EPA Region 4 Wetlands Program Development Grant entitled, "A Watershed Analysis of Permitted Coastal Wetland Impacts and Mitigation Methods within the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program Study Area". A total of 67 field visits evaluating permitted projects involving tidally-influenced wetlands have been completed and are being documented. These projects have been located in Lee County, within the jurisdiction of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The study area extends into the jurisdiction of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) as well, and efforts were made to identify appropriate permits; however, SWFWMD electronic resources were not found to be as detailed as those of SFWMD, and coordinating with the former agency has been more problematic than with the latter. Due to this delay in reaching the northern part of the study area, an extension on completion of the study was requested from EPA Region 4 and has been granted. Currently, a percentage of the project funds have been expended and the completion date has been moved from March 2010 to September 2010. In order to clarify identified projects and assist in finding new projects to assess, staff has attended interagency meetings which are hosted by SFWMD and include staff from various lo-

cal governments and agencies. The meetings have been opportunities to have positive interactions with partner agencies to the RPC and have created beneficial connections with agency staff members.

ABM

ABM environmental awards were presented to Dave Burr (2007 recipient), and to Dr. Win Everham and Ms. Ellen Peterson (2009 joint recipients).

Presentations to the ABM included: details about the process and considerations of choosing a site for the new Red Sox Stadium; rock mining in the DR/GR; results of the Regional Climate Change Vulnerability Study; TMDLs and Impaired waters in the Estero Bay watershed; funding of water quality sampling; results of a nitrogen isotope study in the San Carlos Park area and associated volunteer activities; the 2009 Update of the State of Estero Bay Report; status and considerations of the solar array being constructed at FGCU; changes to FDEP's Designated Use Classifications for waterbodies; and proposed DR/GR comprehensive plan amendments.

At the February meeting, discussions were held as to the role of the ABM as a committee of the RPC and the funding issues associated with the RPC hosting and staffing the ABM in light of recent severe cutbacks in RPC discretionary funding. By the end of the calendar year, RPC staff working with ABM was reduced to Mr. Beever only.

The *Estero Bay Watershed Public Symposium* was held on September 27 and 28. Field trips were held on Sunday, September 27. These field trips were generously offered at no cost by Conservation 20/20, the Koreshan State Historic Site, Lover's Key State Park, CREW, and Vester Marine. On Monday, September 28 at FGCU, presentations included land use and transportation, planning and mining issues in the south Density Reduction/Groundwater Recharge (DR/GR) area, water quality, bird rookery surveys, fish surveys, amphibian monitoring, FGCU, projects and outreach in the watershed, climate change, and the State of Estero Bay update. A poster session highlighted current research.



Amy Bennett Williams, editor of *Tropicalia*, a publication of the Ft. Myers News-Press, shared her observations during a complimentary lunch. Following the conference, an art show and sale featured works by local artists featuring the watershed. Finally, a fund-raising dinner featured author and journalist Craig Pittman, whose recent book, *Paving Paradise: Florida's Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss*, highlights many environmental issues of concern in southwest Florida. Proceeds from the dinner and art show will fund conservation land acquisition in the Estero Bay watershed. Sponsors of the two-day event are the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Florida Gulf Coast University, the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, the FGCU Progressive Student Alliance and the FGCU Student Environment Association. One hundred twenty-four people participated in the various field trips and approximately 116 people attended throughout the day Monday. About 50 people attended the art show, and 50 attended the dinner. The event paid for itself, and raised \$2,205 for conservation land acquisition.

Climate Change

The Comprehensive Southwest Florida/Charlotte Harbor Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, funded by the EPA Climate Ready Estuaries program, was completed in September. The project utilized six staff members of the RPC, not including administrative staff.

The follow-up to the Regional Vulnerability Assessment, the City of Punta Gorda Adaptation Plan, was completed during 2009. This process included three public meetings with citizens of Punta Gorda to develop and refine a list of acceptable adaptations the city could undertake to adapt to potential climate change effects. The meetings were held on April 9, June 2 and September 3. The plan was presented to the Punta Gorda City Council and was approved by the Council on November 18.

State of the Bay Update

The State of the Bay Report for Estero Bay, which was initiated in 1997, was updated in 2009. Parameters examined included water quality, hydrology, salinity, wildlife, conservation lands, and social factors including population and building permits.

Conclusions reflected the effects of increasing population in the watershed of Estero Bay, as well as ongoing efforts to improve water quality. Seagrass acreage has improved since the 2004 report, but is still below the 1950 level. Landings for many economically valuable fish are significantly decreased, but mullet landings are up. Red-cockaded woodpeckers and scrub jays have been extirpated from the 300 square miles of the watershed, but amphibians, valuable environmental indicator species, are now being monitored more closely. Gopher tortoise habitat continues to be eliminated by development despite efforts to mitigate for its loss. Copper levels in waters of the Estero Bay watershed have decreased, but so has the level of dissolved oxygen in many creeks that flow into the bay. Nutrient and fecal Coliform impairments continue to be a problem.

Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an intergovernmental transportation planning agency created by an agreement among Lee County, Bonita Springs, Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Sanibel, Fort Myers Beach and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). State and federal laws require the formation of an MPO in urbanized areas with populations of more than 50,000 in order for surface transportation projects to be eligible for federal funding. The MPO is responsible for the comprehensive transportation planning process for all of Lee County and must plan for the movement of both people and goods within the county by all modes of travel - including highways, public transportation, bicycles and walking foot.

The MPO develops a long range transportation plan (LRTP) every five years. This document addresses the future multimodal transportation needs of the Lee County area. It is a plan which coordinates and guides the capital improvement programs of FDOT and the local governments which are members of the MPO, as well as recognizes the ongoing maintenance and operational activities of these entities. The plan is developed to meet the provisions of SAFETEA-LU (Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users), the current Federal Transportation Bill. In 2009, the MPO began the update of the LRTP jointly with the Collier MPO. The new Plan will be completed by December of 2010 and will include converting the model from the Florida Standard Urban Transportation Model Structure (FSUTMS) to CUBE/Voyager, modeling transit and listing the projects that are financially feasible in five-year increments through the 2035 horizon year.

The MPO is responsible for the development and implementation of a balanced, integrated, and multimodal transportation program that efficiently moves passenger and freight traffic. In 2009, the MPO developed and approved a Freight and Goods Study that will be incorporated in the LRTP to further integrate freight and goods movement considerations into its transportation program.



The objectives of the Lee County Freight and Goods Mobility Study is to help identify the freight transportation investment needs in Lee County; establish an ongoing freight program for Lee County; enhance the integration of freight into the existing transportation program; and promote the development of key freight partnerships between the State, MPO, the county, cities, other major public agencies, and the private sector.

Bicycle and pedestrian transportation issues have long been an important part of transportation planning efforts in Lee County and in recognition of that, the MPO is also underway in the development of a county-wide Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, which will also be completed by the end of 2010. The development of a county-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan will help provide a more consistent network of facilities across jurisdictional boundaries, and will also provide the local jurisdictions an opportunity to capture the federal and state bicycle/pedestrian funding for high priority projects.

The MPO was also heavily involved in 2009 with the development of production ready project lists trying to get federal stimulus funding for various transportation projects throughout the county. To date, the Lee County area has been successful in getting over \$73 million dollars to fund road widening, transit, bridge, intersection and bicycle/pedestrian projects. Also, over the last year the MPO has submitted grant and funding applications for additional funding for projects and planning studies and to date has been successful getting funding for the bicycle/pedestrian master plan and a rail feasibility study.

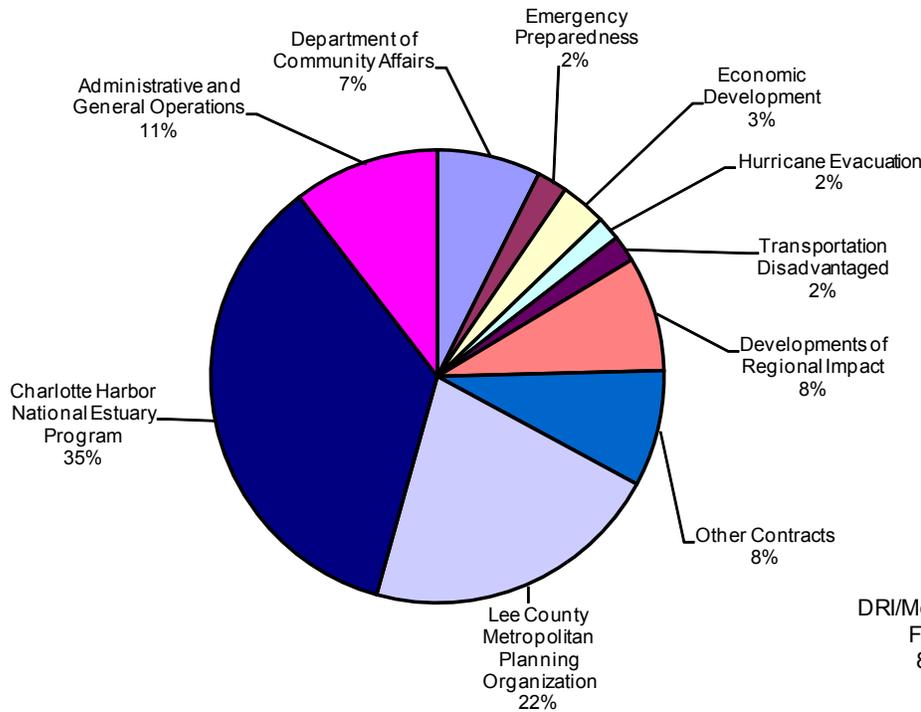
The MPO's website, www.mpo-swfl.org, was launched in May 2006, and during 2009 the website had 13,734 hits. If you would like to receive updates throughout the year on current issues that the Lee County MPO Board is undertaking via the Transportation Advisory Network distribution list, or to take the MPO's Public Participation Plan Survey, please contact Meghan Marion at 239-338-2550 ext. 219, by email at mmarion@swfrpc.org or visit the MPO's website.



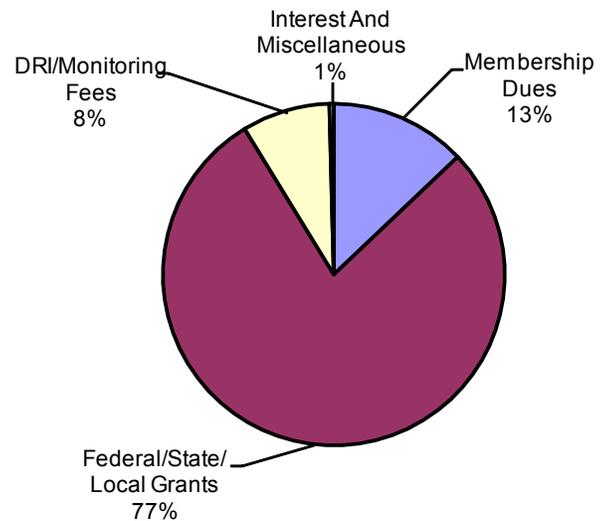
Financial Operations



2009 Council Expenses



2009 Council Revenue



In its annual Independent Auditor's Report to the Council, Tuscan & Company P.A. opined that the basic financial statements of the Council presented "fairly, in all respects, the financial position of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council as of September 30, 2009 and the results of its operations for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."

The Council's fund balance stood at \$665,716 on September 30th, an increase of \$17,728 from the prior year-end balance. Total expenses increased 8.2% and revenue increased by 5.57%.



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