



Direct Dial: (239) 590-4620
Fax: (239) 590-4688

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ROBERT M. BALL, A.A.E.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DAVID M. OWEN
PORT AUTHORITY ATTORNEY

BOARD OF
PORT COMMISSIONERS

A. BRIAN BIGELOW

TAMMY HALL

BOB JANES

RAY JUDAH

FRANK MANN

Mary Gibbs
Director Community Development
Lee County Development
1500 Monroe St. 2nd Floor
Fort Myers, FL 33902-0398

Re: Southeast Lee County Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource Study

Dear Mary,

The Lee County Port Authority (LCPA) would like to thank you for the opportunity to review the draft DR/GR study prepared by Dover, Kohl & Partners and would like to offer the following comments divided into four categories – airport lands outside the DR/GR Area, airport lands inside the DR/GR Area, adjacent land uses that may affect airport operations, and general comments:

Airport Lands Outside the DR/GR – The designated DR/GR Area, as referenced through adopted Lee County ordinances, Comprehensive Plan amendments, and as depicted in this study, has never and currently does not include the operational areas of the Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). This land is owned by Lee County and operated by the LCPA, with numerous contractual, grants, regulatory and funding obligations and conditions previously committed by the Board to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), partner airlines, permitting agencies, etc. As transportation infrastructure that has been planned and zoned since the site was selected in 1977, allowable uses and activities are set by the Board in concert with this prior contractual, grant, regulatory and funding commitments. Mining is currently not an allowable use under the airport's existing AOPD zoning nor has mining ever been depicted as a potential use as part of the Airport's Master Plan approved by the Board, FAA and FDOT. Although excavation of fill material sometimes provides a source of embankment for airport projects, there are no plans for limerock mining activities on the airport. Any use of airport lands for non-airport purposes would require renegotiation of previous contractual and permitting commitments to the FAA, FDOT, and other regulatory agencies, reimbursement of applied grant funds, and the receipt of fair market value

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www.flylcpa.com

for the use of the property, whether by long-term lease or outright release as surplus property, and as such would not be a financially viable option.

The LCPA recommends that airport lands outside the DR/GR Area not be included as part of the DR/GR study. All areas of Lee County outside the DR/GR boundaries have the potential to be used as mining as allowed by that property's Board approved zoning, land use, regulatory permitting, and contractual agreements. The DRGR is an area that covers 82,560 acres of Lee County with an exterior boundary of over 60 miles. The RSW operational areas should be identified and treated in the same manner as the other over 300,000 acres of Lee County outside the designated DR/GR Area. If a recommendation of the DR/GR report is to maximize mining opportunities outside the DR/GR boundary, additional analysis identifying limestone quantities, access, availability of land to be used as a mine, surrounding compatible land uses, contractual constraints, financial viability, etc. needs to be done before these areas can be specifically identified for mining.

Airport Lands Inside the DR/GR Area –

As part of the Midfield Terminal Complex project, the airport purchased 7,000 acres to offset anticipated environmental impacts for the new terminal and future parallel runway. Through this effort, the airport conducted restoration, enhancement, and creation activities within many acres of this mitigation park. This program has been a great success and maintains the park at less than 5% exotics. The airport plans to take advantage of Mitigation opportunities that are still available (such as restoration) to offset additional future impacts due to the airport's plans for a parallel runway. Any proposed restoration activities would need to be consistent with existing SFWMD, ACOE, and other permits.

DR/GR Land Uses That May Affect Airport Operations –

Residential areas depicted at the end of existing Runway 6L/24R or planned future Runway 6R/24L would be subject to overflights and aircraft noise. It is possible that height conflicts could exist with multi-story homes and waste-energy plants if within close proximity to runway approaches. Such development may not be a compatible use and would require FAA approvals.

The Port Authority is currently working with Lee County to discourage littoral zones within 10,000 ft. of the airport due to the issue of wildlife attractiveness per FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33B (see attached). Within this Advisory Circular, surface mining is cited as an area that can present potential hazards to aviation if the mining activities encourage wildlife to enter the airport's approach or departure airspace.

General Comments -

- Pg 1.25 – LCPA is also a Key Environmental Stakeholder
- Pg 4.18 – Further consideration would be needed to confirm whether this was an allowable use consistent with all permit requirements and special conditions, as well as grant conditions tied to the receipt of funds which were used to secure and restore, enhance, and create improvements within the park.
- Pg 4.20 -.... “hydrologic impacts of large mine pits will be less consequential where water levels have already been lowered by drainage features installed for the airport and nearby roads”. Is this statement true? What is the study or data source that substantiates airport drainage features have lowered water levels?
- Pg 4.20 - . . . “Large mine pits create a biologically sterile environment with very little bird life, a desirable condition near airport runways.” Per FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33B, surface mining is cited as an area that can present potential hazards to aviation if they encourage wildlife to enter the airport’s approach or departure airspace. Any lakes constructed on airport property have to be approved by the FAA.
- Pg 4.20 - . “Mining would provide an economically valuable use for land that would otherwise be continually affected by aircraft noise.” Various uses are currently allowed within the different noise zones around RSW approved by the Board as part of the RSW FAR Part 150 Noise Study and subsequent zoning amendments.
- Pg 4.22/23 - Areas shown east of I 75 and west of Treeline Ave could have impact to FDOT’s planned I 75 Collector Distributor Roadway project that provides access to the airport. Preferred mining area shown east of Treeline and just west of Chamberlin Pkwy could impact the FAA’s existing VORTAC navigational aid facility.

In summary, the LCPA will work with your staff, consultants and the DR/GR committee to address any study recommendations that affect airport lands within the DR/GR and other DR/GR land uses that may affect airport operations. However, if the study is recommending resolving mining issues within the DR/GR by maximizing mining opportunities outside the DR/GR boundary, then additional research and analyses for all other areas of Lee County, not just the airport, should be performed. Use of RSW lands for mining does not appear to be a viable option at this time.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Either I or others from the LCPA are planning on attending the remaining meetings of the committee and also the presentation to the BOCC on August 1st.

Sincerely,

LEE COUNTY PORT AUTHORITY



Ellen L. Lindblad
Senior Manager
Planning & Environmental Compliance

Cc: Emily Underhill, PE – Development
Gregory S. Hagen – Port Attorney