

December 20, 2011

CITIZENS CHALLENGE UNWISE DEVELOPMENT DECISION BY MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FILE IN COURT TO STOP CONSTRUCTION

Clean Water Action, 1000 Friends of Florida, Tropical Audubon Society, and local residents Andres Fernandez, Angel Santos, and Charles Boyd took legal action last week by filing in Miami-Dade Circuit Court to stop an inappropriate land-use decision by the Miami-Dade County Commission.

On October 20th the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners by a 7-5 vote gave the green light for Santa Fe Haciendas and Cemex Construction Materials to move forward with a permit that would allow lake excavation and rock mining in dangerously close proximity to Everglades National Park and surrounding water resources. This proposed development would also be directly adjacent to a residential community whose homeowners already experience impacts from other nearby mining operations.

"Miami-Dade has a Comprehensive Development Master Plan that is intended to direct growth and protect natural resources, yet the County continues to approve applications that make exceptions to the rule instead of following it. The County Commission approves development west of the UDB – against the recommendation of its professional planning staff – so bit by bit, they will be filling in pieces of sprawl like a jigsaw puzzle" said Kathy Aterno, Florida Director, Clean Water Action.

Charles Pattison, President and CEO of 1000 Friends of Florida, notes that "the comprehensive plan is very specific as to where it does and does not allow new mines. This approval is clearly inconsistent with the provisions of the Miami-Dade Comprehensive Master Development Plan."

Residents and environmental organizations are asking the Court to declare the County's approval of this development inconsistent with its own Comprehensive Development Master Plan and state law, and to stop developers from moving forward with this unwise development that would be adjacent to a residential community, Everglades National Park, and Miami-Dade County's invaluable water resources.

Miami-Dade residents are tired of vacant office complexes, deserted strip malls, and failing commercial facility developments that strain public resources and negatively impact the local economy. Their desire is simply for the County to follow its own comprehensive plan requirements.

The Plaintiffs' attorney Robert Harstell said "This mine is located outside the lands the County has designated and set aside for rock mining operations. To allow such an

intrusive and destructive land use so close to residential development and Everglades National Park is just poor judgment."

Residents Andres Fernandez, Angel Santos and Charles Boyd believe that a new rock mine adjacent to their residences is incompatible with the rural and agricultural use on their property. These residents have already suffered damage to their homes and agricultural activities from the existing blasting and aquifer draw down. "The damage is only going to get worse with a new mine adjacent to the property," says resident Andres Fernandez.