



# Access Points to Parklands

Community Services Department  
Parks and Natural Resources Division



# Access to Parklands

- Two requests have been made to allow and install additional access points from private lands onto public parks and preserves
- Currently access to County parklands and preserves is limited to designated public entrances



# County Parks and Preserves

- Charlotte County has 63 park facilities
  - 50 active use parks
    - Parks with active recreational amenities
  - 6 environmental parks
    - Parks acquired for environmental preservation: typically smaller in size and have more urban interface; more public use, programming, amenities and multi-use trails.
  - 5 preserves
    - Properties acquired for conservation: generally larger in size with less urban interface, more sensitive habitats and listed species; limited public use, less programming, and less amenities
  - 2 mitigation areas
    - Properties acquired specifically to off-set impacts to listed species or protected habitats



# Concerns Regarding Additional Access Points

- Habitat Conservation Plan (10 properties)
  - Per the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service there is no specific restriction regarding additional access points to lands
  - May contribute to impacts to scrub-jays depending on proximity to scrub-jay families and habitat
  - Impacts to scrub-jays on the Reserve lands may result in the County being unable to meet its obligations outlined in the Plan



# Concerns Regarding Additional Access Points

- Florida Communities Trust (12 properties)
  - The current Grant Award Agreements would not allow public access from private lands
  - The County would need to apply to amend all of the grant agreements; if approved all of the management plans would also need to be updated and approved
  - This is possible, but could be long process



# Concerns Regarding Additional Access Points

- Conservation Charlotte (5 properties)
  - The properties purchased through Conservation Charlotte are governed by the Ordinance; below is an excerpt relating to access:

## **Sec. 3-5-388. - Rules relating to conservation lands.**

*(c) General provisions for public access to conservation lands.*

(1) Conservation lands shall be open to the public for access on foot, except where otherwise restricted or otherwise provided herein.

(2) Public access to conservation lands shall be only at entry points designated by signs.

(3) Public access to conservation lands, or portions thereof, may be restricted. The manner of which may include, but may not be limited to, restricting access to certain hours of the day, days of the week, or months of the year.



# Concerns Regarding Additional Access Points

- Additional Concerns
  - Safety considerations
    - Prescribed burning
    - Exotic treatment (chemical spraying)
    - Mechanical treatments; use of heavy machinery
    - Separation of use (horse trails, walking trails, biking trails)
      - None of our trails were designed or built for multi-use by different user groups



# Concerns Regarding Additional Access Points

- Additional Concerns
  - Vandalism/Damage
    - Destruction of habitat (direct impacts listed plants and animals)
    - Criminal activities
    - Destruction of County property (fences and gates)
      - At Prairie Creek Preserve within the last 5 years we have spent approximately \$35,000
  - Increased site monitoring
    - Additional access points would add additional staff time to monitor for oversight





# Concerns Regarding Additional Access Points

- Additional Concerns
  - Control of access type and amount
    - Vehicles
    - ATV's
    - Total number of potential private access points per property
      - Ann Dever/Oyster Creek:89 access points
      - Prairie Creek Preserve:25 access points
      - Amberjack Environmental:53 access points



# Recommendations

- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board voted to not recommend allowing private access to public lands in March 2014
- The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee voted to not recommend allowing private access to public lands in August 2014