

SAVE THE PALM BEACH COUNTY AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

What:

The purpose of the Agricultural Reserve (Ag Reserve) is to preserve farmland soil, farm jobs, water resources and wetlands, and serve as a buffer to the Everglades on the western edge of the Ag Reserve. The horse farms add beauty to these open spaces.

Who:

In 1999, Palm Beach County residents approved a referendum to establish the Ag Reserve that included a \$150 million bond measure. The Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group is concerned about a development proposal that we call the "GL Homes Swap" due to its proposal to pave over 550 acres of existing farmland.

Where:

The "Ag Reserve" is situated north of Clint Moore Road and south of Hypoluxo Boulevard directly east of the Arthur Marshall Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge, the last remaining remnant of a northern Everglade's ecosystem. The GL Homes Hyder West properties in the Ag Reserve total 652-acres. GL Homes' proposal would allow 1,277 new homes on 552 acres plus 75 acres for an excavation pond and a 25-acre passive park. GL Homes proposes to move its Ag Reserve preserve commitment to Indian Trail Groves located in northern Palm Beach County to construct a small reservoir with little to no benefit.



Why:

In direct violation of the voter's will, GL Homes, a development firm, is pressuring County Commissioners to undermine existing zoning regulations in the Ag Reserve. The GL Homes swap proposal will destroy the last of the preserved areas. This land swap proposal modifies the Comprehensive Plan to allow dense development in the Ag Reserve by transferring preserve acreage to Indian Trails Grove. We are concerned that this "swap" will set a precedent for future speculative profit-driven development proposals that further undermine the intent of Ag Reserve. Ironically, GL's "swap" proposal removes approximately 750 acres of agricultural land located in Indian Trail Groves to build an unwarranted water reservoir.

When:

Please join us at the Palm Beach County Commissioners meeting! Ask Commissioners to **reject** the GL Homes Swap Proposal.

For more information, please go to the Sierra Club Loxahatchee website:

www.sierraclub.org/florida/loxahatchee/issues

- We need your voices: Call Commissioners!
- We need your letters and emails: Write to your commissioners!

BCC-AllCommissioners@pbcgov.org

BOCC MEETING:

Tuesday, October 24, 2023, 9:30 AM

**Palm Beach Commission Chamber,
6th FL, 301 N. Olive Ave, West Palm
Beach, FL 33401**

Ask our commissioners to preserve our agricultural lands and vote against the swap in October!

Voted to continue consideration of the GL Swap proposal in May -

- District 1: Maria Marino, (561) 355-2201, MMarino@pbcgov.org
- District 2: Greg Weiss (561) 355-2202 GWeiss@pbcgov.org
- District 3: Michael Barnett, (561) 355-2203, MBarnett@pbcgov.org
- District 6: Sara Baxter, (561)355-2206, SBaxter@pbcgov.org
- District 7: Mack Bernard, (561) 355-2207 MBernard@pbcgov.org



Our heroes, who voted against the GL Swap in May -

- District 4: Marci Woodward (561) 355-2204, MWoodward@pbcgov.org
- District 5: Maria Sachs, (561)355-2205, MSachs@pbcgov.org

Palm Beach County Citizens:

Contact your commissioners and tell them to vote AGAINST the swap—cite some or all the following reasons:

- 1.** The Agricultural Reserve is the last major undeveloped area in the central part of the county and provides a buffer for the Everglades, our most precious natural environmental asset.
- 2.** In 1999, Palm Beach County citizens voted to approve establishing the Ag Reserve by a 2 to 1 margin. The GL land swap would undermine Palm Beach County voters intent to protect agriculture in the Ag Reserve.
- 3.** The swap is based on GL Homes constructing a 740-acre water reservoir in Indian Trail Groves. No independent, peer-reviewed modeling exists to verify the reservoir's hydrologic benefits. Independent water expert analysis suggests significant management obligations and County taxpayer burden, but the GL reservoir benefits would be small and insignificant. The loss of farmland in the Ag Reserve and on the land where the reservoir would be built is unacceptable.
- 4.** If the swap is approved, the construction of one-thousand \$1.5 million homes could raise home and rental prices for average citizens across the county.
- 5.** These proposed changes represent major departures from long established County Comprehensive Plan preserve policies—all to make a huge profit for a developer that acted to undercut workforce housing in the past.
- 6.** Alachua, Brevard, Indian River, Nassau, Pasco, and Polk counties recently voted to preserve undeveloped land. Palm Beach County Commissioners should vote to preserve agricultural land in the Ag Reserve.
- 7.** In the last County Commission election, two candidates who failed to oppose the swap lost. These elections show that the public wants to keep the Ag Reserve and opposes the swap.
- 8.** Palm Beach County's professional staff and Advisory Committee both recommended rejecting the swap. Their expertise should be adopted when making decisions related to the Ag Reserve.
- 9.** The PROTECT movement led by Rabbi Barry Silver will actively support politicians who protect the environment and seek to defeat those who vote against conservation. Conserving resources should be a top priority in the next elections.
- 10.** We are ethically mandated to leave this world a little better than we found it for our children and for future generations.

For more info:



Loxahatchee Group

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