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Lee leaders receive award from 1000 Friends of Florida

The Lee County Board of County Commissioners has received the 1000 Friends of Florida's 2009 Community Steward Award.

"We are pleased to be honoring the Lee County Commission for its accomplishments in protecting the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource area in southeastern Lee County," said 1000 Friends President Charles Pattison, who presented the award. "The commission is to be commended for its proactive efforts to protect this important regional water source."

Lee County Commission Chairman Ray Judah said commissioners were proud to receive recognition from an organization as prestigious as 1000 Friends of Florida.

The Dr/GR area includes approximately 83,000 acres of protected wetlands, conservation areas and agricultural lands. The area also includes a layer of limestone that is essential for aquifer storage and is also in high demand for roads and building construction. The area was designated in 1990 to protect the county's shallow aquifers and to comply with state requirements that the county reduce its population capacity in this area. These lands provide an important buffer between developed urban lands to the north and Corkscrew Swamp and other environmental preserves to the southeast.

Recognizing the need to provide bet-



ter guidance on the appropriate location for agricultural, mining, residential and conservation land uses, in 2003 the Lee County Smart Growth Committee recommended a review of policies for the area. In 2007, the

commission initiated a 14-point Action Plan on DR/GR planning matters including critical mining, traffic and land use issues, and commissioned Dover Kohl & Partners to develop a plan for the area. In 2008, the commission approved recommendations to designate a small area for continued aggregate mining and designate the vast majority of the remaining area for preservation and reclamation.

Don Eslick, chairman of the Estero Council of Community Leaders, nominated Lee County for the award.

"We applaud the Lee County Board for its ongoing efforts to develop a new plan for the DR/GR before the eight pending mine applications are considered," said Mr. Eslick.

The 1000 Friends' Community Steward Award is presented annually to individuals, organizations, local governments, agencies, and public/private partnerships that have brought about positive and lasting change in the way their community manages growth. A statewide nonprofit organization, 1000 Friends was founded in 1986 to serve as Florida's growth management watchdog. For more information, visit www.1000friendsofflorida.org.

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