

# **Cone Ranch Environmental Advisory Panel**

## **Final Recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners On the Future of Cone Ranch November 16, 2009**

We, the Cone Ranch Environmental Advisory Panel, recommend to the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to direct Water Resource Services (WRS) to convey title to the Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP) of the entire Cone Ranch property. We believe this is the best way to protect, preserve, and restore Cone Ranch in perpetuity.

Additionally:

- All available legal mechanisms should be put in place to protect the land from development;
- The BOCC should authorize ELAPP to update the existing December 1998 Final Draft Plan for the Use and Management of Cone Ranch and to pursue a wetlands mitigation bank, conservation bank and carbon credits;
- The BOCC should require ELAPP to make a timeline of three years for completing the updated plan and to carry it out;
- The BOCC should require ELAPP to create a mechanism to allow public access to a portion of the land for passive recreation consistent with protection of the land;
- Time is of the essence and the BOCC needs to take immediate action to transfer Cone Ranch to ELAPP; or if a decision is made in the interim to consolidate water utilities, that this Cone Ranch property will not be a part of that transfer;
- The County should vigorously pursue vacation of the Tampa Bay Water claim to water development rights from the entity.