

Morgan, Jean

From: vivbacca@aol.com
Sent: Saturday, October 24, 2009 1:13 PM
To: Stewart, Edith
Subject: Cone Ranch -- Public Comment

Edith,

After yesterday's meeting, one of the panel advisory members asked if I would submit my public comments in writing so that she could read them.

Vivian Bacca
Public Comment -- October 23rd Cone Ranch Task Force Meeting:

I think it's sad that it seems harder for ELAPP to buy property already owned by a County Agency than to negotiate with a private landowner.

If the bondholders are so concerned about highest and best use, how does the water resource department justify minimal rent received for a passive cattle operation? Why hasn't the utility already done a mitigation bank?

It's not as if this property is tied to all Water Resource Bonds. The property was originally only about \$11 million. Why not just retire any remaining debt removing the bondholders from the equation?

The Committee has talked about the need to pay Tampa Bay Water (TBW) for their water rights. I'd like to know what TBW ever paid to retain those rights? This property was purchased by Hillsborough county because the prior water system didn't have the money. The original document, I think a MOU, says TBW paid \$1 for water rights?! I couldn't find any evidence that Hillsborough County got a benefit when TBW was formed for those water rights so why should we need to worry about a large payment to them now? If we did get a benefit, adjust it for inflation and pay them back!

Mike Merrill says that it is not the mission of the water department to restore the property. I disagree! If the water utility's mission isn't to protect vital water resources, what is their mission? Only to deliver water from.....where? We've heard testimony of the importance to the aquifer and stormwater recharge of this system. Holding this property and restoring the stormwater mitigation elements is absolutely the mission of the water department!

If we are to reclaim what's left of Florida's Paradise, we need to stop kidding ourselves that private property owners are good custodians of wetlands. The size and location of Cone Ranch property makes it vital to protect for the citizens of the future. ELAPP should do it!