

June 23, 2021

Summer Araque, MPA  
Conservation Collier Coordinator  
Parks and Recreation Division  
3300 Santa Barbara Blvd,  
Naples, FL 34116

Dear Ms. Araque-Brown,

As you might know, the Marco Island City Council and City of Marco Island have been working closely with Audubon of Western Everglades (AWE) and the Collier County Historical and Archaeological Preservation Board to preserve and protect open space on the island that is significant for four reasons:

- It houses and provides excellent habitat for Gopher Tortoises.
- It houses and provides excellent habitat for Burrowing Owls.
- It contains recent historical (from the 1800s through Marco's early settlement) ruins and artifacts.
- It contains ancient archaeological (2,000 years ago and older) sites of major importance.

Because of these and other factors, both Audubon Western Everglades and the Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF), submitted recommendations to Conservation Collier earlier in the year asking you to prioritize for preservation as a new Target Protection Area (TPA), parcels near the Conservation Collier Otter Mound Preserve.

Prioritizing these lots as a new TPA would have put them on your priority list to be considered for acquisition in Cycle #10. For reasons beyond our comprehension, the Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Advisory Committee (CCLAAC) did not consider these properties, or any other lots on Marco Island, worthy of being considered for prioritization. Two of the lots we nominated are contiguous to the Otter Mound Preserve. Being contiguous to an existing Conservation Collier Preserve is one of the major criteria for consideration for acquisition.

Quite frankly, this is unacceptable.

Did all of the members of the CCLAAC actually visit Marco Island and look at the lots the Marco Island City Council recommended before deciding that the parcels we nominated near Otter Mound Preserve did not meet your criteria for being designated as a new TPA?

We would like to communicate our displeasure directly to your Board of Directors at their next Board Meeting in July but neither the date nor the names are available on your website as of this morning.

Please provide us with the following information so we can communicate directly with your Board Members:

- The date, time, and location of your July Meeting.
- Contact information for your Board Members.
- Links to the video of the meeting during which our TPA status was determined.

The taxpayers of Marco Island contribute significantly to the funding for Conservation Collier and other County projects. I personally supported your referendum and have championed your cause during my campaign for office last year. I now feel that Conservation Collier has turned its back on the citizens of Marco Island in their attempt to preserve our wetlands and uplands areas.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rich Blonna Councilman, Marco Island