

Babcock Ranch

Making It Real



PUNTA GORDA

Punta Gorda
Airport

 PRESERVE

 TOWN

CAPE CORAL

FORT MYERS

BONITA SPRINGS

GULF
OF
MEXICO

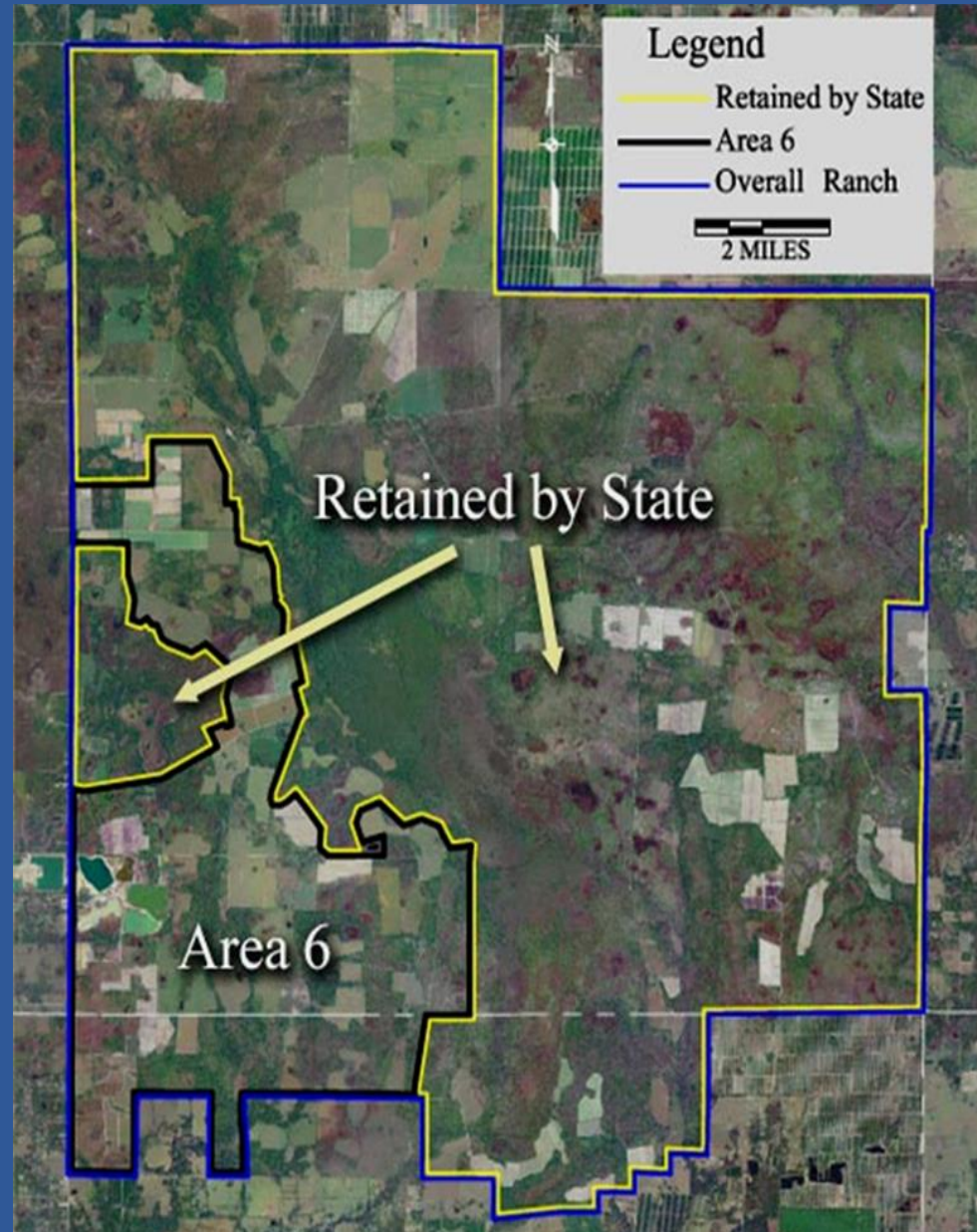
Southwest Florida
International Airport

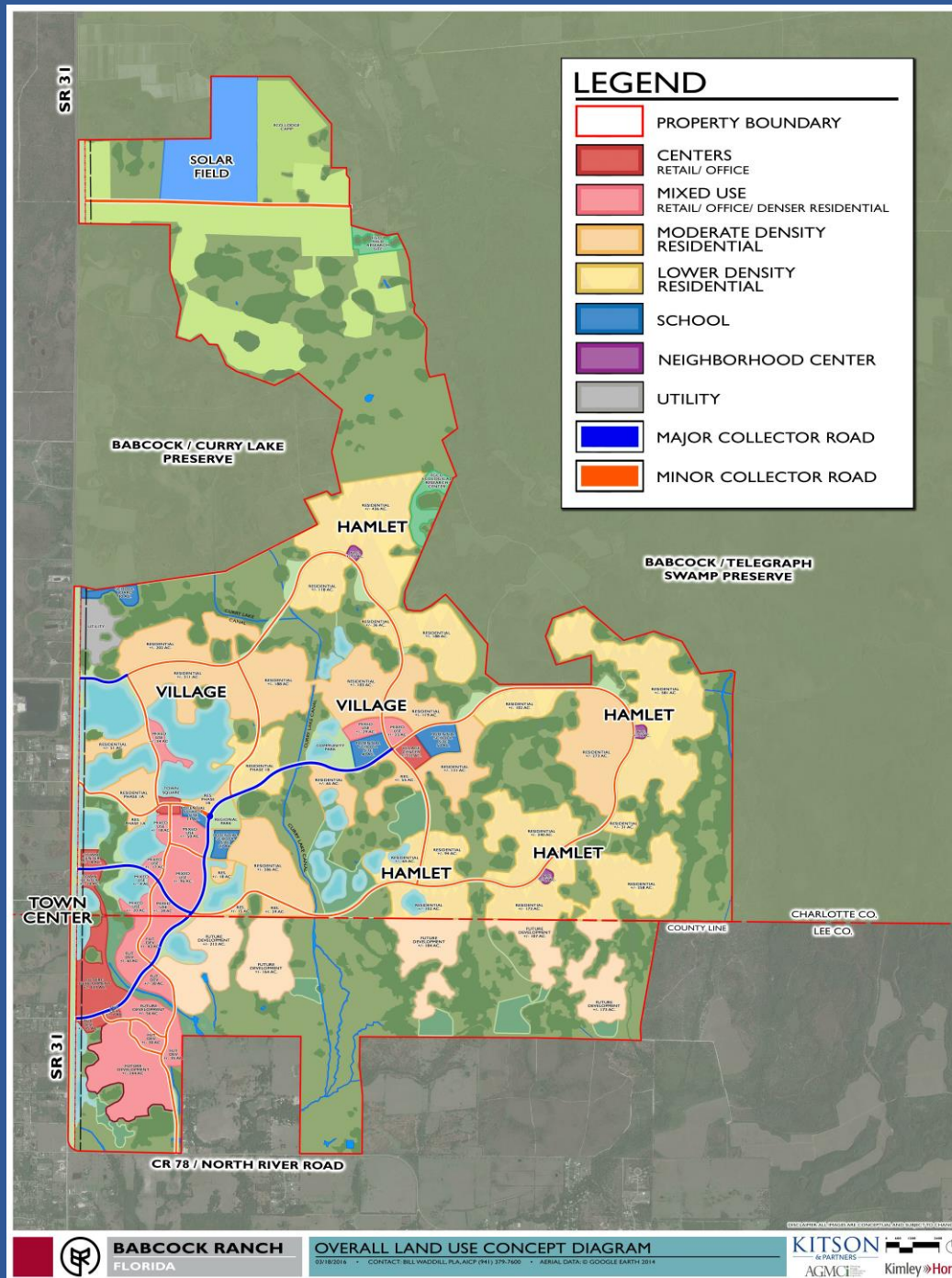
SOUTHWEST
FLORIDA

NAPLES

HISTORIC FOUR-PARTY AGREEMENT

LARGEST LAND PURCHASE IN FLORIDA'S HISTORY





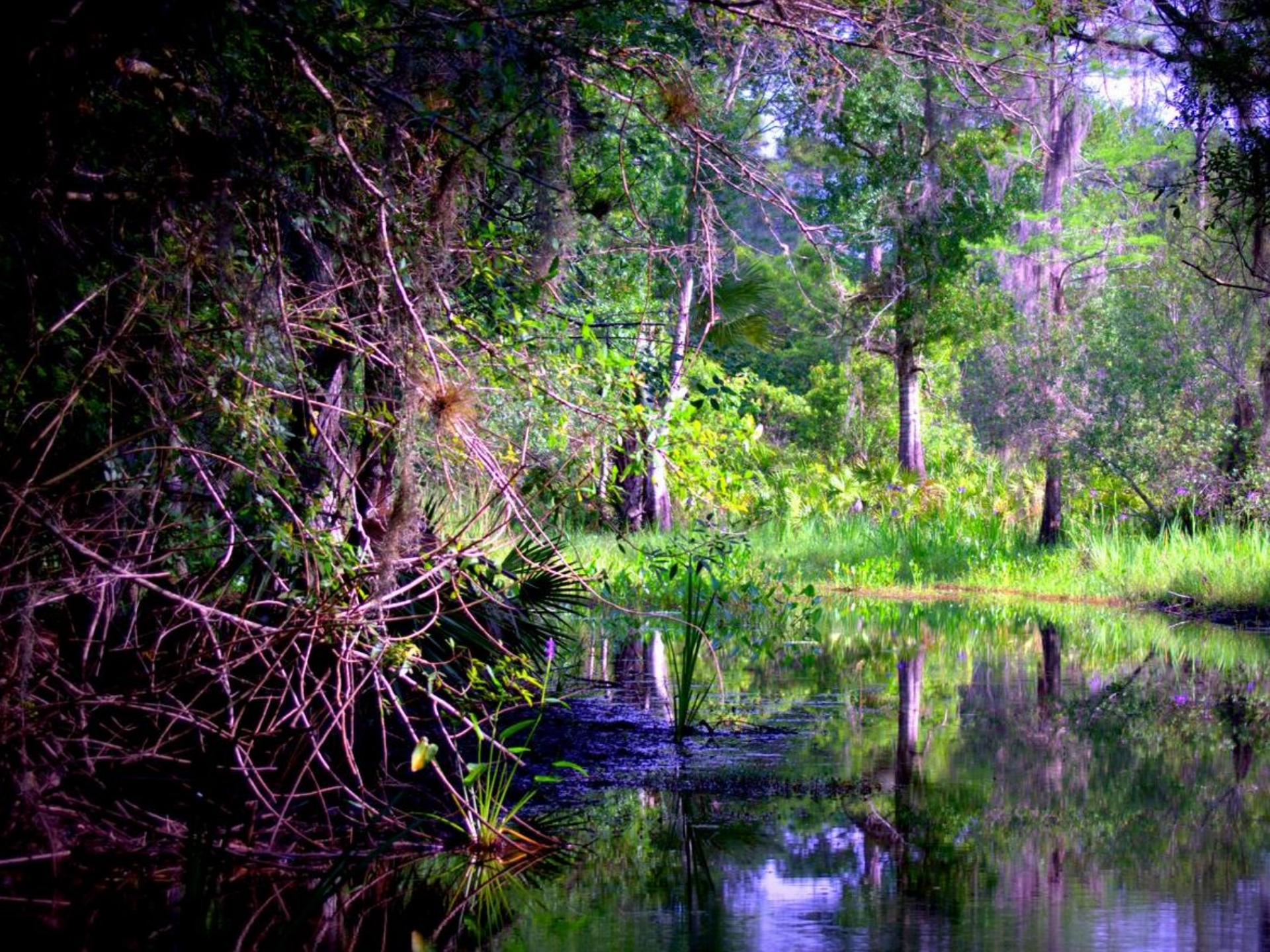














Autopsy: Illness didn't kill boy at boot camp

See REPORT, page 15



Credit scoring changes

See BUSINESS, page 1

Minnesota Vikings deal Culpepper to Dolphins

See REPORT, page 1



Charlotte Sun



WEDNESDAY MARCH 15, 2006

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America's Best Community Daily

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\$6 CENTS

Today in Charlotte

TAX EXTENSION

Charlotte County decides whether to approve a property tax extension of 1 mill per year through 2010 for school district operating expenses. The referendum would raise between \$215 million and \$250 million, officials say.

See FRONT, PAGE 6



Kitson unveils Babcock plan

Developer's blueprint shows 'many miles' of hiking trails

By ARNOLD MARTIN
Staff Writer

Charlotte would be able to walk, ride a bike or even drive electric vehicles on trails through both forested and urban areas to get to school, Babcock Ranch, planning from parking lots would find way through marshes to filter out pollutants before flowing into creeks.

And buildings would be tightly clustered into villages to

allow room for an 800-acre wildlife corridor.

These are some of the elements revealed in a master plan for the development of a city on Babcock Ranch. Kitson & Barnett's plan was unveiled before the Charlotte County Commission Tuesday.

It represents a vision that people around the country will see "for the right way to develop

See BLUEPRINT, page 4

More inside

After a brief hiatus, the Charlotte Sun will be back in print. The paper will be published weekly, with the exception of the summer months, when it will be published bi-weekly. The paper will be published by the Charlotte Sun Publishing Co., a subsidiary of the Charlotte Sun Publishing Co. The paper will be published by the Charlotte Sun Publishing Co., a subsidiary of the Charlotte Sun Publishing Co.

See FRONT, page 1

Funding for state land buy clears first legislative hurdle

By DANNY WILLMAN
Staff Writer

TALLAHASSEE — With an almost 600-vote margin, a vote to fund the state's land buy program cleared the first legislative hurdle Tuesday.

If it becomes law, CS 1226 would divert \$100 million

from the state's general revenues diverted from the sale of documentary stamps on real estate transactions and funnel it into the Florida Forever and Acquisition Trust Fund for the purchase of the "Babcock Ranch & Ranch."

It was unanimously approved by the Senate — known as a "unanimous vote" — the members of the Senate's Environmental

See FUNDING, page 4

LOCAL & STATE

TRANSIT AUTHORITY MAY REQUIRE HIGHER SALES TAX

■ Proposed organization would provide driving alternatives such as light rail B4

B
SECTION

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2005 | THE NEWS-PRESS | news-press.com

Charlotte backs Babcock plan

State to review land-use changes

BY JAMIE PAGE
jpage@news-press.com

Despite objections from some residents and staff members, Charlotte County leaders took another step Wednesday toward paving the way for a city on Babcock Ranch.

County commissioners voted 4-1 to have the state review Babcock-related amendments to the county's comprehensive

land-use plan.

Most of the people who showed up were concerned about traffic problems and urban sprawl, and asked commissioners to deny developer Syd Kitson's request to send the amendments to the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

Others came to urge officials to move forward on the project and jump on the opportunity before them.

Without approval, there was the risk of the land deal falling apart. Still, the action doesn't commit Charlotte to anything

but only authorizes sending the comprehensive plan amendments to the state department of community affairs for review, which is the next anticipated step in the process.

In October, Kitson of West Palm Beach, who has a contract to buy all 91,362 acres of Babcock Ranch, submitted amendments to Charlotte's comprehensive plan outlining what he hopes to amend to accommodate building a city for 50,000 from scratch.

"Charlotte's Community Development Department found 36 issues with Kitson's

application, and recommended against sending the amendments to the state. Those issues include incomplete information on the application and development conditions that weren't acceptable.

Commissioner Adam Cummings voted against the move, saying of the proposed development, "we've heard these promises before ... and look how that turned out. We hope we can learn from history."

Most commissioners said they still had concerns about the application and would continue to work with Kitson until it is to

their satisfaction, but they wanted to get it to the state to keep the process on track.

Meanwhile, a group of county officials and staff will attempt to work out the kinks with the 36 objectionable items with Kitson and his attorney.

Even with the 36 issues outstanding, Charlotte's Planning and Zoning Board last week recommended sending the changes to the state. But Community Development was against it for several reasons.

For example, Charlotte County planners wanted Kitson to show that the community won't

news-press.com

■ From our archives: Video, photos and past coverage from Babcock Ranch

create urban sprawl. Community Development Director Mike Konefal said Kitson hasn't shown that yet.

Allie Boyd, a member of Babcock Preservation Partnership, which has made it their mission to fight for preserving as much of the land as possible, said she was against the move partly

■ See **BABCOCK B2**



**Iraq charges Saddam
with genocide of Kurds**

See FRONT, page 10



Delta pilots OK strike

See FRONT, page 1

**Maryland women win
national title in OT**

See SPORTS, page 1



Charlotte Sun



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Today in Charlotte



RIVALS FACE OFF

Teyssie and Piaton take their rivalry to the basketball field.
See SPORTS

DRY WEATHER

March was one of driest on record. With each passing day without measurable rain, the drought index rises.
See FRONT, PAGE 2

WATER RATES

The City Council will be asked today to review a study calling for new water rates.
See OUR TOWN



PET PLEASURES

Suburbanites enjoy walk that

Babcock city gets go-ahead

Most residents wanted entire ranch preserved

By GREG MARTIN
Times Writer

To voters' surprise, parents of the proposed Babcock Ranch, the Charlotte County Commission allowed developers to turn 25 percent into an urban center Tuesday.

The decision came on a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Adam Cummings dissenting, to grant a "large-scale" amendment to the county's comprehensive growth plan.

The change will allow the developer, a partnership of Kitchin & Partners and Hengen Group Inc., to build 17,000 residential units and 6 million square feet of office and commercial space on a 14,000-acre portion of the ranch that lies in Charlotte County.

Kitchin also plans to build another 1,000 units in Lee County.

The deal also calls for the state to buy almost 7,000 acres for \$800 million. The Legislature will decide whether to fund the acquisition by early May. About 17 residents who spoke during the commission's public hearing wanted the proposed city will be broken a rural area that is now farming, as a wildlife refuge.

But at least 10 others described the deal as the best, and perhaps last, opportunity to save most of the ranch.

"I look at the bigger picture," said Commissioner Matt Dillner, who made the motion for approval. "I think the opportunity before us is a historic opportunity."

The county staff has remained "neutral" in the proposal, Dillner said. But the staff's reluctance to endorse it led to the creation of a "very intensive development agreement" that addresses many of the county's concerns, he said.

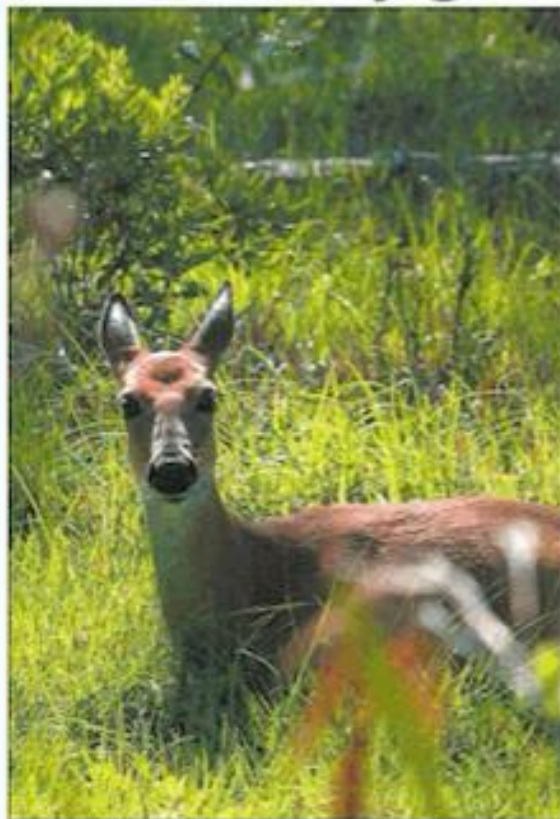
For example, under the agreement, Kitchin pledges to mitigate traffic impacts by paying up to \$200 million in Charlotte County and \$400 million in Lee County to widen roads.

Staffs based on what Kitchin considers a "work-case scenario" in which Babcock residents fund on

Inside

Charlotte County got involved in the project by using Secretary Robert M. Hargrove's - a national war proposal.

See FRONT page 4



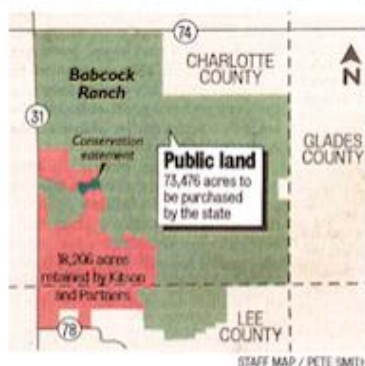
For the photo by Jonathan Smith

Babcock developer, Kitchin & Partners, plan to build a city on a 14,000-acre portion of the ranch that lies in Charlotte County. The state plans to buy the remaining 74,000 acres for preservation.

See BABCOCK, page 4

CABINET OKS BABCOCK DEAL

State will buy 73,000 acres for \$350 million; developer's next step is approval of adjacent city



By LLOYD DUNKELBERGER
CAPITAL BUREAU

TALLAHASSEE — Florida officials approved the largest environmental land purchase in state history on Tuesday, agreeing to pay \$350 million to buy more than 73,000 acres of the Babcock Ranch, home to the Florida panther and other endangered species.

While endorsing the purchase, Gov. Jeb Bush and Cabinet members said they hope the state Legislature agrees to use cash to close the deal, saving the state millions of dollars in interest and keeping enough money in the state's Florida Forever program to buy other environmental land projects around the state.

"This is historic," said Attorney General Charlie Crist. "Teddy Roosevelt would certainly be proud of what Florida is doing to preserve this land for future generations. It's the right thing to do."

A majority of environmental groups praised the purchase.

"We're going to protect a piece of Old Florida that's rapidly vanishing," said Preston Robertson of the Florida Wildlife Federation.

The purchase of the land in Charlotte and Lee counties is considered environmentally critical because it will simultaneously protect endangered animals, preserve the Telegraph Swamp and provide a vital link in a natural land corridor stretching from Lake Okeechobee to Charlotte Harbor.

In addition, it will save some of Florida's agrarian



STAFF PHOTO / ARMANDO SOLARES / armando.solares@heraldtribune.com

Gov. Bush, Cabinet vote to buy 74,000 acres of Babcock Ranch

PURCHASE FROM 1A

heritage — as a working ranch will remain on a portion of the property.

Although Tuesday's vote marked a significant advance in the Babcock purchase, the deal isn't quite done.

Syd Kitson, the West Palm Beach developer who is brokering the deal, likened the process to a marathon race that will not be over until sometime next year. "It's a series of steps," Kitson said. "But this sends a very strong message out to the state."

The next major step will be winning approval from Charlotte and Lee counties for a new city — that will be called Babcock Ranch — that will cover 18,206 acres adjacent to the state's conservation tract. The city would have up to 19,500 homes and 6 million square feet of commercial and retail space.

It's a community roughly the size and population of nearby Fort Myers, which covers 39 square miles and has a population of 58,000 residents. Kitson's town would cover 28 square miles and have nearly 50,000 residents.

If Kitson wins approval from the counties and the state Department of Community Affairs for his city, the next arena will be the state Legislature, where lawmakers will consider a plan to pay for the purchase, which works out to \$4,763 per acre for the conservation land.

With state economists projecting Florida will have an additional \$3.5 billion to spend in the next two years, Gov. Bush said Tuesday he will likely use



STAFF PHOTO / ARMANDO SOLARES / armando.solares@heraldtribune.com

Eco tour guide Mike Winters explains the habitats on the Babcock Wilderness Adventures Eco Tour during a trip last week. The state is moving to preserve the land as both wilderness and working ranch.

saying it would save the state an estimated \$155 million to \$175 million in interest payments.

Using cash also has the advantage of avoiding a heavy hit on the state's Florida Forever land-buying program, which provides \$300 million a year to acquire environmental properties around the state. Environmental groups have been lobbying for using cash or issuing extra bonds for the Babcock purchase to avoid taking money away from other critical projects.

Unless lawmakers approve a different plan, the state Department of Environmental Protection has recommended that

"There are a lot of one-time revenues that need to be focused on long-term things. The Babcock Ranch is a historic purchase. We'll close on this property, I promise you."

GOV. JEB BUSH

from Kitson in July.

A key player in the remaining decisions involving the Babcock Ranch will be Charlotte County, which will have to amend its local growth-management plan to accommodate Kitson's community.

Charlotte officials had raised concerns about the Babcock purchase in recent weeks, questioning whether the state's purchase agreement put too many restrictions on their plan to use the conservation tract as a water source.

In some last-minute deal making, state officials removed language from the agreement that seemed to restrict Char-

although that could be avoided

It's official: Florida owns most of Babcock



Syd Kitson will develop nearly 15,000 acres of the property, creating a new city in Charlotte and Lee counties.

"I can't begin to describe how great this feels."

EVA ARMSTRONG,
director of Division
of State Lands for
the FDEP

The road to protection for 74,000 acres of rare ranch property not an easy one

By JOE FOLLIACK
H-T CAPITAL BUREAU

TALLAHASSEE — The state sealed the deal Monday for the purchase of 74,000 acres of Babcock Ranch, ending a six-year process that resulted in the state's largest purchase of land for environmental protection.

"I can't begin to describe how great this feels," said an emotional Eva Armstrong, director of the Division of State Lands for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Armstrong grabbed the deed from the hands of Syd Kitson at a press conference in the Capitol on Monday marking the official close of the purchase. Kitson will develop nearly 15,000 acres of the property, creating a new city in Charlotte and Lee counties.

The \$350 million purchase provides an almost uninterrupted corridor of protected land from Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf of Mexico. The land, which will continue as a work-

ing ranch, is home to the Florida panther, the Florida black bear and Telegraph Swamp.

"Babcock Ranch is probably the most important, and certainly the largest, investment Florida's ever made to protect our environmental lands," said Eric Draper, Audubon of Florida vice president.

The road to the purchase was not smooth. Persuading the Florida Cabinet and the Legislature to spend \$350 million was not a hard sell. But a lawsuit filed by

the Sierra Club threatened the plan until an agreement was reached last month.

The agreement requires more than 1,600 homes to be shifted toward less environmentally sensitive land, and requires all homes in the development to be 10 percent more energy efficient than ordinary houses.

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The land — home to the Florida panther, the Florida black bear and Telegraph Swamp — will continue as a working ranch.



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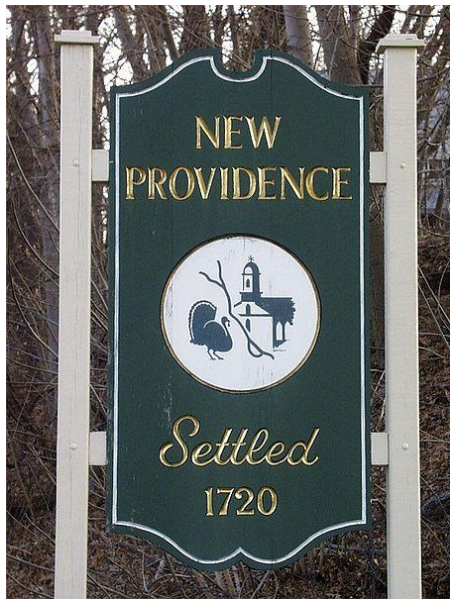
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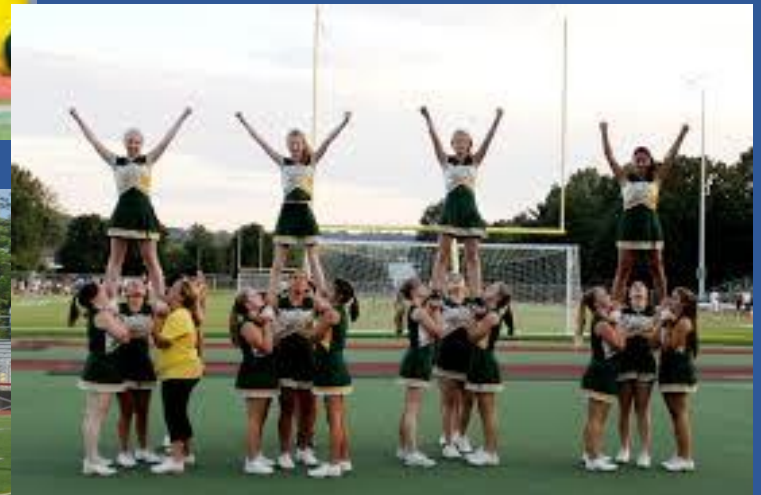


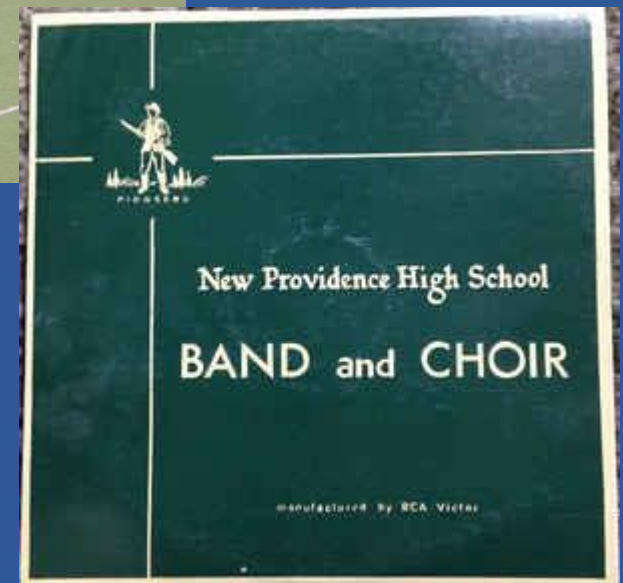


























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Environment

Energy

Education

Health

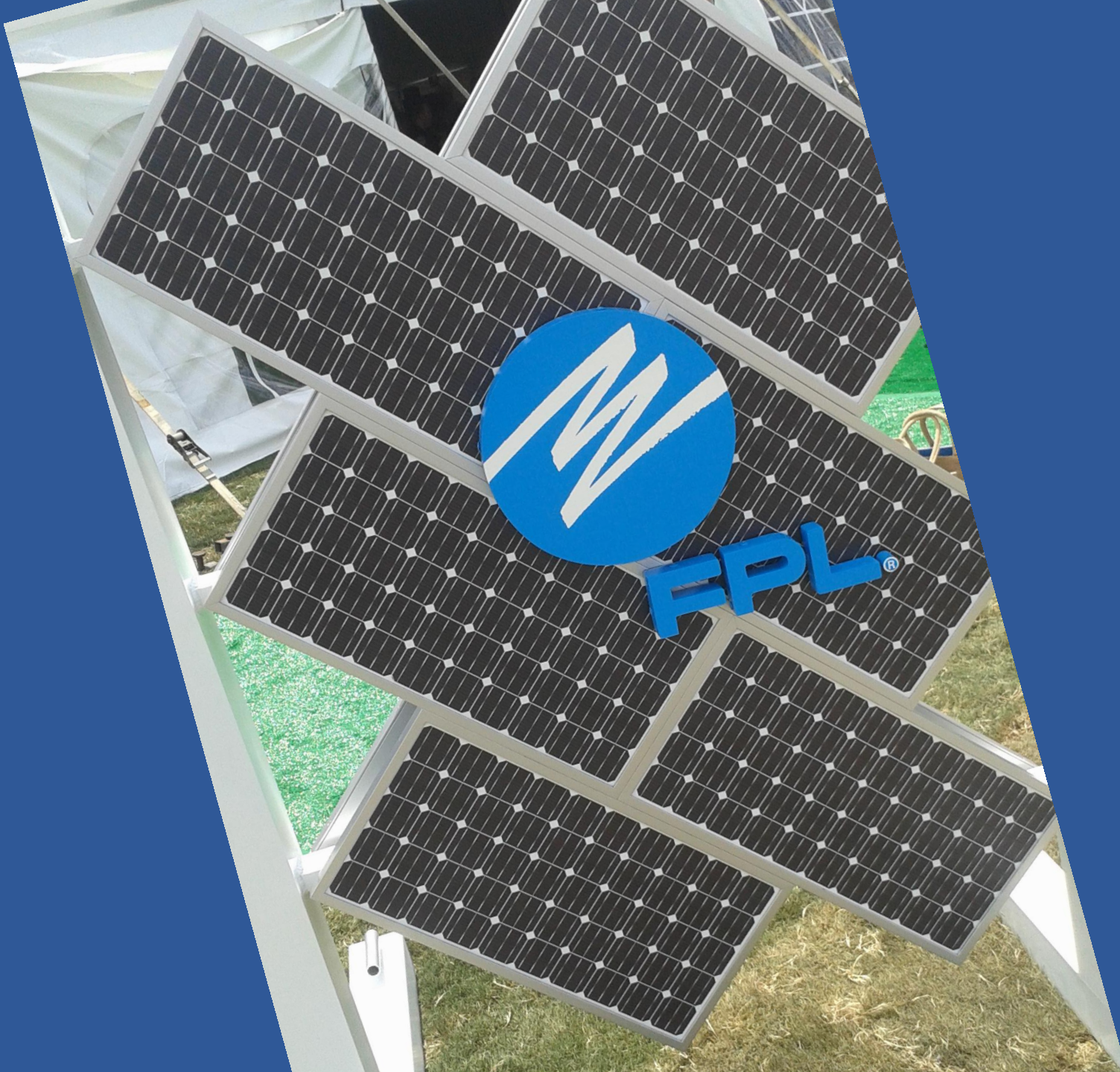
Transportation

Technology

Public Safety

Fun







EDUCATION BUILDING





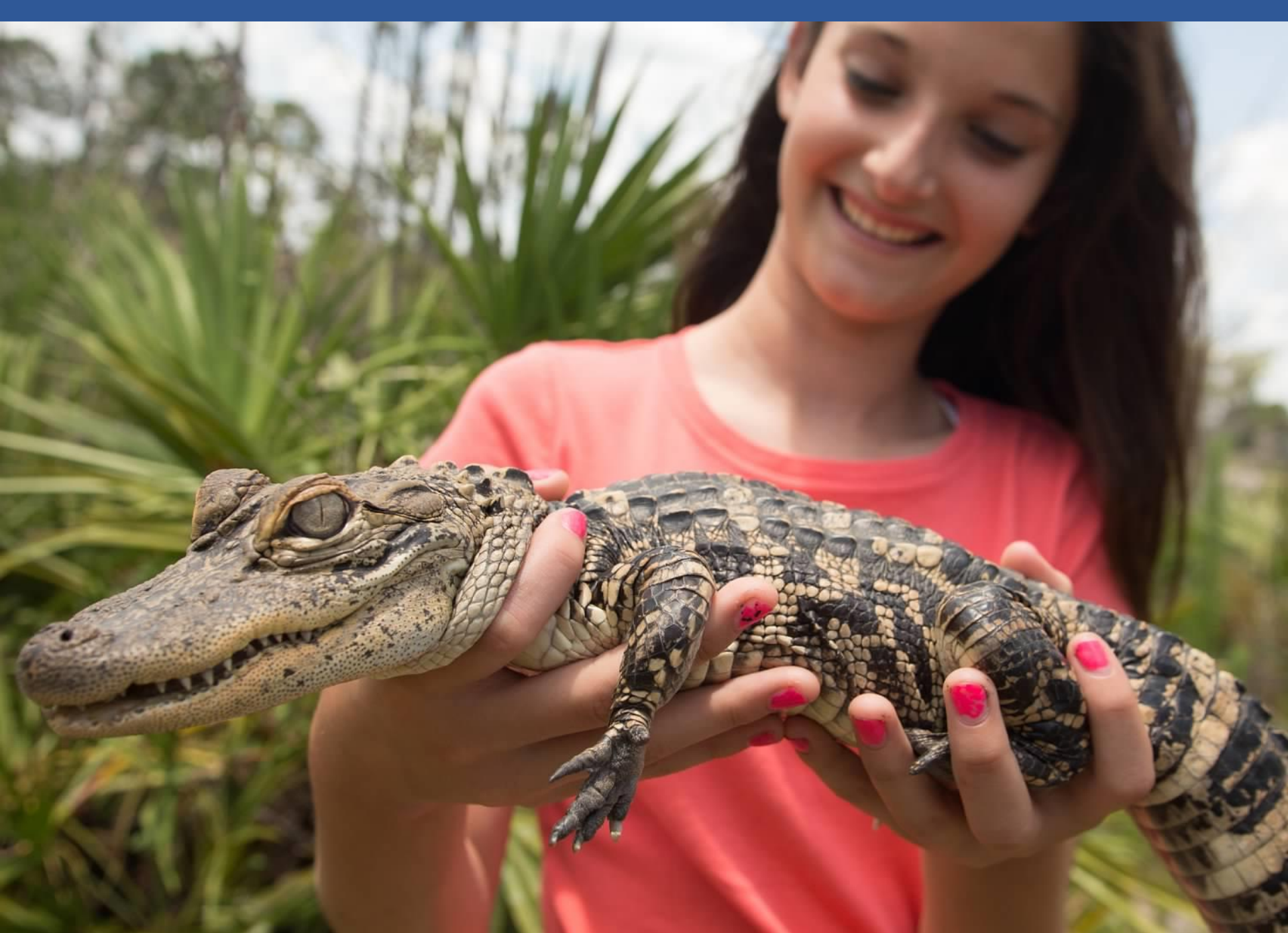


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