



# GULF COAST CONSERVANCY

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August 28, 2009

Mr. Thomas Pelham, Secretary  
Department of Community Affairs  
2555 Shumard Oak Blvd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Secretary Pelham,

We the undersigned leaders in Florida's conservation community **urge you to find the SunWest Harbourtowne DRI application and comprehensive plan amendment not in compliance** in order to halt the unsustainable development and preserve the ecological resources of Florida's Nature Coast.

Florida's undeveloped coastlines provide ecological and societal benefits to citizens statewide. These undeveloped areas provide habitat for native species, support and nourish recreational and commercial fisheries, provide hurricane protection, and cleanse pollutants from our waters. Unfortunately the undeveloped coasts of Florida are diminishing due to unsustainable development. The undersigned organizations oppose the SunWest Harbourtowne development for its unsustainable land use practices and environmental harm it will inflict upon the region.

The proposed SunWest Harbourtowne development is a perfect example of unsustainable coastal development that threatens Florida's environment and citizens. The proposed SunWest Harbourtowne development will introduce 2,500 homes, a 500 boat marina, hotel, conference center, and 18-hole golf course in rural, low lying, coastal Pasco County. This extreme large scale development in the coastal high hazard area will significantly increase the risk of hurricane damage, destroy natural habitats, and result in higher costs to local and state taxpayers.

SunWest Harbourtowne and the associated 2.7 mile channel dredge will cause significant environmental harm to the coastal ecosystem. These environmental impacts include destruction of vital coastal habitat, damage to the regional recreational and commercial fisheries resulting from degradation of the coastal marsh and estuaries, impacts to numerous terrestrial species, and severing access to core habitat for the imperiled Chassahowitzka population of the Florida black bear.

SunWest Harbourtowne, if built, will stand in stark contrast to the surrounding communities. The intensity of the land use and resulting urban sprawl will change the character of neighboring Aripeka and Hudson. Insurance rates and sea levels are rising in Florida. Increasing residential development in the velocity zone will negatively impact insurance rates and preclude Florida's Nature Coast from smoothly transitioning to higher sea levels by eliminating critical coastal transitional habitat.

SunWest Harbourtowne threatens Florida's vital economic and environmental resources. For these reasons we urge you to find the SunWest Harbourtowne DRI application and comprehensive plan amendment not in compliance.

Sincerely,

Dan Stack  
President  
Gulf Coast Conservancy

Mary Dowdell  
President  
Hernando Audubon Society

Charles Lee,  
Director of Advocacy  
Audubon of Florida

Dan Hilliard  
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Help Save the Apalachicola River Group

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