



## CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

1926 Victoria Ave, Fort Myers FL 33901-3414 ✈ www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org  
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November 20, 2006

Honorable Eric P. Feichthaler  
Mayor, City of Cape Coral  
City Council  
P.O. Box 150027  
Cape Coral, FL 33915-0027

Dear Mayor Feichthaler:

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program requests the City of Cape Coral develop and then implement a land conservation program that specifically targets burrowing owl habitat for conservation. The burrowing owl is currently listed as a species of "special concern" and as the City loses owl habitat, the species moves closer to a "threatened" listing. Please schedule FWC staff member Tom Allen to present their findings from an on-going study on burrowing owls in the City at an upcoming City Council meeting.

As you are aware, Cape Coral is part of the Charlotte Harbor estuary, designated an "estuary of national significance" under the federal Clean Water Act. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program has identified the issue of Fish and Wildlife Loss as a priority problem for this region in our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Quantifiable Objective FW-1 states that the NEP will "achieve a 25% increase in conservation, preservation, and stewardship lands within the boundaries of the Charlotte Harbor NEP study area by 2018...", and FW-2 (g) states we will "protect, enhance, restore native upland communities vital to the ecological function of the Charlotte Harbor NEP study area". Through a project with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife, it has become apparent that the protection of upland habitat in the City is imperative for the protection of the burrowing owl species. Loss of habitat due to development, not only decreases the quantity of available burrowing owl habitat, but also forces the owls, listed as a species "of special concern", to travel further in search of nest sites, placing them in danger of predation and road mortality.

We request that the City with the guidance of FWC develop a map of burrowing owl habitat and a plan for its protection, including possible land acquisition through conservation land acquisition programs such as Florida Communities Trust. Purchase and protection of these lands would prevent future habitat loss through development and provide for open-space and educational opportunities for City residents. We request also that FWC staff, Tom Allen, present to the City Council findings from current studies on burrowing owls in Cape Coral to elucidate the importance of our request.

E. Feichthaler  
November 30, 2006  
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The City of Cape Coral has been a significant partner in the development and implementation of the Charlotte Harbor NEP's management plan. The City has long demonstrated a standing commitment to land acquisition for conservation and educational purposes and for dedicating resources toward the proper management of these lands. We thank you for your continuing support of conservation initiatives in southwest Florida and look forward to working with you on this important task.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa B. Beever". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "B".

Lisa B. Beever, Ph.D, AICP  
Director

CC: Cape Coral City Council Members

Enclosure