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Crist's legacy unclear after three years

10/12/2009

Bradenton Herald

Herald, Bradenton

Governor: 'Time will tell' if he was effective leader

By STEVE BOUSQUET

Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Charlie Crist says he doesn't think much about his legacy. To hear his critics talk, perhaps it's just as well.

As the first Florida governor to forgo a re-election bid, Crist has little more than a year left in his term. Already, the Republican's tenure appears destined to be marked by incomplete grades on issues such as property insurance, health coverage for the uninsured, climate change and the economy.

"Charlie is breaking a 40-year record of governors who wanted to seek another four years to complete their agenda of what they thought was important to the state," said Bob Graham, a two-term Democratic governor who also served three terms as a U.S. senator. "As an indicator of whether he can keep his eye on the things that are important to Floridians, I would say the jury is still out."

Graham named three areas where he thinks Crist needs to show meaningful progress to bolster his claims of effectiveness: spending stimulus dollars in ways that immediately create jobs as the state's unemployment rate approaches 11 percent; making health insurance available to more uninsured children in the taxpayer-subsidized Florida KidCare program; and enrolling more uninsured in Cover Florida, the low-cost and bare-bones initiative that has just 4,000 members in a state with 4 million uninsured.

"He may be right. Time will tell," Crist said.

A disaster

University of Florida historian David Colburn, who has written extensively on Florida's governors, said Crist has a unique rapport with Floridians "unlike any I recall in the post-World War II era." But on two key issues — property insurance and the need to revitalize the economy — it's a very different story, he added.

"His effort to reform the insurance industry has been a disaster," Colburn said. "He has done nothing to examine the economic crisis before us, what the state should do to avoid another crisis and how the state can emerge from this crisis stronger."

Crist disagrees: "I think the people really appreciate what we've done as it relates to property insurance. I think on the whole, people are relatively pleased with Florida."

On property insurance, Crist says average rates have fallen 16 percent since 2007. But the largest insurer, State Farm, is trying to leave the state, and Crist signed legislation that massively increased the state's exposure from future hurricanes.

On education, Crist supported a 15 percent tuition increase for state university students, and often cites a national study by Education Week showing the quality of Florida's K-12 system rose from 31st in 2007 to 10th this year. But the 31st ranking was a snapshot of various economic indicators, such as high school graduation rates, family income and parents' education.

On spending, Crist claims credit for reducing Florida's budget, but he had no choice. The collapse of the real-estate market caused massive tax-collection shortfalls, which forced the budget to shrink by \$7 billion. State employees have not had a pay raise in three years.

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As for what kind of record he'll leave, he says that's for others to judge. "I just try to work hard for the people every day and honor what we talked about during the course of the campaign," he said. "You try to accomplish as much as you humanly can, given any term of office. We're trying hard every day and I think people understand that."

Common-man image

A gifted politician, Crist rakes in campaign money from special interests, yet maintains a humble, common-man image. His approval rating remains high, but his bid for the U.S. Senate suddenly looks competitive with Republican rival Marco Rubio raising \$1 million in the past three months and drawing raves from conservative commentators.

About this time last year, Crist went on an extended "listening tour" to reinforce his genuine concern for the challenges Floridians face. In recent months, he has devoted increasing time to raising money for his Senate race.

"It's challenging," Crist said. "You try to strike a balance. . . . I know my first duty is to the people of the state."

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Crist's populist impulse is most obvious in his high-volume criticism of a "greedy" insurance industry, his recent decision to remove two regulators from the Public Service Commission, and his call for a delay in rate increases sought by Progress Energy and Florida Power & Light.

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But Crist's political antennae are not perfect. His choice of former chief of staff George LeMieux to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy was panned by the media as an act of political expediency. His recent comparison of President Barack Obama to an ineffective, one-term Jimmy Carter seemed politically calculated when just eight months ago, Crist embraced the president in Fort Myers as Obama promised billions of stimulus dollars for Florida.

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ANALYSIS Key issues dog Crist's legacy

10/12/2009

Miami Herald, The

BOUSQUET, STEVE

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Gov. Charlie Crist says he doesn't think much about his legacy. To hear his critics talk, perhaps it's just as well.

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"People elected him to a position, and they expect him to lead," Paulson said. "One thing no politician wants to get tagged with is that he's looking for the next opportunity. He's got to get back to being governor and that he can do the job here, and that's why he should be elevated to the next position."

Herald/Times staff writer Mary Ellen Klas contributed to this report. Steve Bousquet can be reached at

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Governor, interrupted Some say Crist legacy incomplete

10/12/2009

Jupiter Courier

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Palm Beach County industrial plans could conflict with Everglades restoration, state reg

10/12/2009

Sun Sentinel - Deerfield Beach Bureau

Reid, Andy

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Palm Beach County's push to create a job-producing 'inland port' on western agricultural area targeted for Everglades restoration faces new hurdles from state environmental regulators.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection considers the proposed Palm Beach County location for an industrial distribution center as 'incompatible' with multibillion-dollar efforts to store, clean and redirect water to the Everglades.

The County Commission in August agreed to change county codes to allow industrial development on 318 acres of land owned by sugar giant Florida Crystals. The site, near the company's Okeelanta power plant south of South Bay, is among four near Lake Okeechobee that are vying to become home to the inland port.

The distribution center would connect coastal ports from Miami to Palm Beach County, delivering cargo to and from the coast via truck routes and rail lines crisscrossing the state and linking with routes to the rest of the country.

State regulators warn that the proposal to start with Florida Crystals' 318 acres eventually could grow to industrial development on more than 3,000 acres to accommodate inland port plans, which could get in the way of Everglades restoration. 'A development of this type and size will impact sensitive natural resources and spur incremental development and conversion of surrounding agricultural areas to more intense uses, which will further impact those resources,' Sally Mann, DEP director of intergovernmental programs, wrote in an Oct. 9 letter.

The Port of Palm Beach, which is leading the selection process, is scheduled to pick an inland port location as early as Oct. 21.

Unless the county can persuade state regulators to sign off on the change to growth guidelines needed to allow the inland port, the standoff could end up going before a judge.

Palm Beach County commissioners last week renewed their support for the Florida Crystals location, arguing the environmental concerns can be addressed and that the need to create jobs in economically depressed Glades communities is a priority.

Commissioner Karen Marcus cast the only vote against putting the inland port at Florida Crystals -- on former Everglades land that was drained to make way for farming.

Marcus said Palm Beach County industrial development should not be allowed to become an obstacle to building reservoirs and treatment areas needed to move water from Lake Okeechobee to what remains of the Everglades. 'Everglades restoration doesn't happen unless it gets fixed in Palm Beach County,' Marcus said. 'We need to ... not get in the way.' Other sites vying for the inland port are in Hendry County, near Clewiston and in St. Lucie County.

The plan is to open the inland port by 2014, to be ready for an expansion of the Panama Canal that would allow larger shipments to ports in Florida and along the East Coast.

Andy Reid can be reached at abreid@SunSentinel.com or 561-228-5504.

Many fear rocky road ahead for Delta fix

10/12/2009

Hollister Free Lance

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NEWS > NATIONAL AND WORLD

By Alex Breitler, McClatchy News Service

When Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar called fixing the Delta a "huge priority" for the federal government, the estuary in Stockton's backyard joined a short list of sadly struggling natural treasures.

Places such as the Everglades, the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay.

"How we deal with the Bay-Delta system is a defining moment in how this country is going to deal with complex natural resources problems," California Department of Water Resources Director Lester Snow told legislators at a September hearing in Washington.

"If we can't figure out a way to deal with this system, we need to pack it up and go home and wait for the entire system and economy to collapse," Snow said.

There has been a lot of talk lately about working together to fix the Delta. But if these other restoration efforts are any indication, there is a rocky road ahead:

- Nine years after a much-celebrated and "historic" Everglades restoration plan was signed into law by President Bill Clinton, none of the 60-plus projects that are part of the plan have been completed.

- Removing toxic sediment from the Great Lakes is expected to take 77 additional years if the work continues at its current pace, according to a report released last month.

- And at Chesapeake Bay, the Environmental Protection Agency has acknowledged that water quality goals set forth in a 2000 agreement will not be met by 2010 as had been hoped.

"To be fair, there has been great science done by the EPA," said Roy Hoagland, a vice president at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. "They have done really quite a remarkable job in identifying the problems. This is one of the most studied estuaries in the world."

"What they have not done," Hoagland continued, "is implemented a solution. They have not been a leader."

The federal government is promising leadership on the Delta. Grants totaling \$400 million have been awarded to bolster California's water supply; six federal agencies have signed an agreement to coordinate on Delta issues.

Already, however, the feds have drawn criticism from more than one side in California's water tussle.

Politicians representing agricultural areas in the south San Joaquin Valley, where water exports from the Delta have declined because of drought and endangered species, have blasted the federal government for failing to act sooner and more decisively.

"We are long past the point of more committees. What we need is action," said U.S. Rep. Dennis Cardoza, D-Atwater.

On the other hand, some Delta advocates are upset over the Obama administration's decision to seek further review of new rules intended to protect smelt and salmon - rules that also hamper water deliveries to the south Valley and Southern California.

U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein requested that review, saying "it may well bring a different point of view. ... And we all ought to be open to a different point of view if it's based on sound science."

If Delta interests' renewed relationship with the feds runs aground at times, that is nothing new. It has happened before with ambitious restoration projects.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation earlier this year sued the EPA over the bay's continually poor water quality. In a story that should sound familiar to those who follow Delta issues, the 200-mile bay that stretches from southern Virginia to Baltimore is overloaded with nutrients and sediment because of agricultural and urban runoff. Algae blooms rob the water of oxygen, killing fish.

Also roughly comparable to the Delta is the situation in the Everglades, once-vast wetlands that were reclaimed by workers who shoveled out 720 miles of canals and piled up 1,000 miles of levees. Farmers later planted sugar cane while the water was diverted for south Florida's growing population.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' implementation of the 2000 agreement to restore what is left of the Everglades was criticized last year by the National Research Council, which found that inadequate project planning and lack of funding left the plan well behind schedule.

Corps spokeswoman Karen Tippett said work is about to begin on one pump station.

"It's been a very long road," she said. "What we hear from our sponsors is that our processes take too long. I don't know how we can improve upon that."

COLUMN No paycheck but plenty of pride

10/11/2009

Palm Beach Post - Online

Sally Swartz

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At his second meeting as a member of the South Florida Water Management District's board last month, Indiantown's Kevin Powers was surprised.

A delegation from the Seminole Tribe, scheduled before Mr. Powers took office, shared the history of a water agreement between the United States, Florida and the district. Photos of Mr. Powers' father, Timer Powers, posing genially with tribe members and alone in a Seminole patchwork jacket, flashed on the screen.

The water pact Timer Powers crafted remains in force today and serves as a model for others - an example of his extraordinary skills as a peacemaker and negotiator. A former Martin County commissioner, he was responsible for the county's famous four-story building height limit.

The Seminoles' presentation was an example of the water district's institutional memory of Timer Powers, who died in 1992.

"I was humbled beyond words," Kevin Powers said. "I know he was so good at what he did."

Mr. Powers comes to the water district with a background different from his father's. He grew up in Martin, then left after he graduated from South Fork High School. After college, he worked for the sales division of Lykes Brothers out of Tampa, marketing citrus in Asia and Europe and traveling all over the world.

Ten years ago, with a growing young family, he came back and went to work for Owens Grove, where he learned "I was not cut out to be a grower." He and brother David now are partners in Indiantown Realty Corp.

While he has not been active in local conservation or environmental causes, he said he is aware of the need to provide stewardship for Florida's waters.

"Everything you contemplate in Florida has something to do with water," he said, whether you're a landowner, a grower, or a teenager waterskiing in local canals and rivers.

Mr. Powers believes the district's plan to focus on cleaning water before it flows into the lake from the north is important.

He hasn't decided yet how he will vote on the U.S. Sugar Corp. deal, which proposes buying land south of the lake for \$536 million, allowing a slow flow of water south to the Everglades.

Mr. Powers points with pride to Martin County utilities' reuse of nearly 100 percent of its wastewater, and believes other South Florida counties will have to follow that trend.

He supports the district's efforts to conserve water by imposing twice-weekly watering restrictions, even during times when plenty of water is available. While the use-less-pay-more situation isn't popular, particularly in counties where wastewater reuse is the exception, he said he believes "it's a diet we're all going to have to stay on."

Mr. Powers said he agreed to serve on the water board, which provides no paycheck, because of his father's example. Many remember working with Timer Powers and are eyeing his son with positive expectations. "I recognize the shoes I have to fill are enormous," Kevin Powers said. "But public service is part of who I am. It's how I was raised."

Sally Swartz is a former member of The Post Editorial Board. Her e-mail address is sdswartz42@comcast.net

Crist's agenda looks incomplete as he skips bid for second term

10/11/2009

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St. Petersburg Times - Online

Times Staff

By Steve Bousquet, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

Sunday, October 11, 2009

TALLAHASSEE Gov. Charlie Crist says he doesn't think much about his legacy. To hear his critics talk, perhaps it's just as well.

As the first Florida governor to forgo a bid for re-election, Crist has little more than a year left in his term. Already, his tenure appears destined to be marked by incomplete grades on issues such as property insurance, health coverage for the uninsured, climate change and the economy.

"Charlie is breaking a 40-year record of governors who wanted to seek another four years to complete their agenda of what they thought was important to the state," said Bob Graham, a two-term Democratic governor who also served three terms as a U.S. senator. "As an indicator of whether he can keep his eye on the things that are important to Floridians, I would say the jury is still out."

Graham named three areas where he thinks Crist needs to show meaningful progress to bolster his claims of effectiveness: spending stimulus dollars in ways that create immediate jobs as the state's unemployment rate approaches 11 percent; making health insurance available to more uninsured children in the taxpayer-subsidized Florida KidCare program; and enrolling more uninsured in Cover Florida, the low-cost and bare-bones initiative that has just 4,000 members in a state with 4 million uninsured.

"He may be right. Time will tell," Crist said.

University of Florida historian David Colburn, who has written extensively on Florida's governors, said Crist has a unique rapport with Floridians "unlike any I recall in the post-World War II era." But on two key issues property insurance and the need to revitalize the economy it's a very different story, he added.

"His effort to reform the insurance industry has been a disaster," Colburn said. "He has done nothing to examine the economic crisis before us, what the state should do to avoid another crisis, and how the state can emerge from this crisis stronger and with a more promising future."

Crist disagrees. "I think the people really appreciate what we've done as it relates to property insurance," he said. "I think on the whole, people are relatively pleased with Florida."

On property insurance, Crist says average rates have fallen 16 percent since 2007. But the largest insurer, State Farm, is trying to leave the state, and Crist signed legislation that massively increased the state's exposure for future hurricanes.

On education, Crist supported a 15 percent tuition increase for state university students, and often cites a national study by Education Week showing the quality of Florida's K-12 system rose from 31st in 2007 to 10th this year. But the 31st ranking was a snapshot of various economic indicators, such as high school graduation rates, family income and parents' education.

On spending, Crist claims credit for reducing Florida's budget, but he had no choice. The collapse of the real estate market caused massive tax collection shortfalls, which forced the budget to shrink by \$7 billion. State employees have not had a pay raise in three years.

On the environment, Crist gushed over climate change in 2007, but the issue is unpopular with many conservative Republicans and has receded from view. Instead, Crist says offshore oil drilling is "worth looking at" with sufficient environmental safeguards.

The Cover Florida health initiative is vintage Crist: It's symbolism as much as substance. It was launched with lots of fanfare but no money to market it. The governor used weekly news conferences to urge reporters to "get the word out." Many people don't know it exists.

Crist says his proudest accomplishment is his plan to purchase 70,000 acres of land from the U.S. Sugar Corp. for Everglades restoration, a \$641 million project that has been downsized and is now the subject of a fierce court battle. He also touts lower property taxes and less violent crime as major accomplishments.

As for what kind of record he'll leave behind, he says that's for others to judge.

"I just try to work hard for the people every day and honor what we talked about during the course of the campaign," he said. "You try to accomplish as much as you humanly can, given any term of office. We're trying hard every day and I think people understand that."

A gifted politician, Crist rakes in campaign money from special interests, yet maintains a humble, common-man image. His approval rating remains high, but his bid for the U.S. Senate suddenly looks competitive with Republican rival Marco Rubio raising \$1 million the past three months and drawing raves from conservative commentators.

About this time last year, Crist went on an extended "listening tour" to reinforce his genuine concern for the challenges Floridians face. In recent months, he has devoted increasing time to raising money for his Senate race.

"It's challenging," Crist said. "You try to strike a balance. I know my first duty is to the people of the state."

Crist's populist impulse is most obvious in his high-volume criticism of a "greedy" insurance industry, his recent decision to remove two regulators from the Public Service Commission and his call for a delay in rate increases sought by Progress Energy and Florida Power & Light.

"The actions the governor took mean more to the average person and small business person back home than anything that goes on in Tallahassee or Miami," said Sen. Mike Fasano, R-New Port Richey. "I assure you, Gov. Crist made a huge positive impact with the consumer."

But Crist's political antennae are not perfect. His choice of former chief of staff George LeMieux to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy was panned by the media as an act of political expediency. His recent comparison of President Barack Obama to an ineffective, one-term Jimmy Carter seemed politically calculated when just eight months ago, Crist embraced the president in Fort Myers as he promised billions of stimulus dollars for Florida.

Republican state Sen. Paula Dockery of Lakeland said that while Crist remains popular, the political ground beneath him is shifting.

"People are generally unhappy with the economy. They're unhappy with the direction Florida is going in," said Dockery, who's weighing her own campaign for governor. "I see an antiestablishment feeling out there, a hunger for something other than politics as usual."

Crist campaigned for governor in 2006 as a "Jeb Bush Republican" who was "fighting for Florida." Once in office, he gravitated to the political center and drew praise for bringing a more civil and less partisan tone to Tallahassee.

He named a handful of Democrats to key posts and spearheaded efforts to make it easier for convicted felons to get their civil rights restored. At the urging of Democrats, he expanded early voting in 2008, championed an "anti-murder" bill that makes it harder for felons to win parole, and restored legislative budget cuts to handle a record backlog of citizen requests for concealed weapons permits.

Politically, Crist's dilemma is that staunchly conservative voters who are a force in GOP primaries are the part of the electorate where Crist's centrist philosophy is held in low regard. By appearing on stage with President Obama, "he weakened his appeal among the base of his party," said retired USF political science professor Darryl Paulson.

"People elected him to a position, and they expect him to lead," Paulson said. "One thing no politician wants to get tagged with is that he's looking for the next opportunity. He's got to get back to being governor and that he can do

the job here, and that's why he should be elevated to the next position."

Times/Herald staff writer Mary Ellen Klas contributed to this report. Steve Bousquet can be reached at bousquet@sptimes.com or (850) 224-7263.

Florida Crist deja su obra a medias

10/11/2009

El Nuevo Herald

BOUSQUETT, STEVE

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Charlie Crist asegura que no piensa mucho en su legado. Oyendo hablar a sus detractores, quizás el gobernador haga bien en no hacerlo.

Como el primer gobernador de la Florida que ha renunciado a buscar la reelección, a Crist le queda poco más de un año en su cargo. A estas alturas, su gestión parece destinada a pasar a la historia por proyectos a medio terminar en asuntos como los seguros de la propiedad, la cobertura médica para quienes no tienen seguro, el cambio climático y la economía.

"Charlie está rompiendo un récord de 40 años de gobernadores que querían buscar otros cuatro años para completar la agenda de lo que ellos pensaban que era importante para el estado", dijo Bob Graham , un demócrata que gobernó dos términos y después fue senador federal por tres periodos. "Como un indicador de si es capaz de poner atención a las cosas que son importantes para los floridanos, yo diría que la moneda está en el aire".

Graham nombró tres áreas en las que considera que Crist debe mostrar algún progreso para respaldar sus argumentos de efectividad: utilizar el dinero del plan de estímulo del gobierno de forma que genere empleos de inmediato, cuando el nivel de desempleo del estado se aproxima al 11 por ciento; hacer disponibles seguros médicos para más niños en el programa Florida KidCare , subsidiado por los contribuyentes; e incluir a más personas sin seguro en Cover Florida , la iniciativa de bajo costo que solamente tiene 4,000 miembros en un estado con 4 millones de personas sin seguro.

"Tal vez tenga razón", reconoció Crist.

David Colburn , historiador de la Universidad de la Florida especializado en los gobernadores del estado, señaló que Crist se entiende muy bien con los floridanos, "como ningún otro que yo recuerde desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial". Pero en dos cuestiones de importancia clave: el seguro de la propiedad y la necesidad de revitalizar la economía, la historia es muy distinta.

"Su esfuerzo por reformar la industria de los seguros ha sido un desastre", afirmó Colburn. "No ha hecho nada por examinar la crisis económica que confrontamos, lo que el estado debe hacer para evitar otra crisis, y cómo podemos salir de esta crisis con más fuerza y un futuro más prometedor".

Crist difiere: " Creo que la gente aprecia verdaderamente lo que hemos hecho en relación a los seguros de propiedad" dijo. " Creo que, en general, la gente está relativamente complacida con la Florida".

En cuanto a los seguros de propiedad, Crist dice que las tarifas promedio han bajado 16 por ciento desde el 2007. Pero la mayor compañía de seguros, State Farm, está tratando de irse del estado, y Crist ha firmado leyes que han aumentado muy significativamente la exposición del estado a futuros huracanes.

En cuanto a la educación, Crist respaldó un aumento de 15 por ciento a las matrículas de las universidades estatales y frecuentemente cita un estudio nacional de Education Week que muestra que la calidad del sistema K-12 de la Florida subió de ocupar el número 31 en el 2007 al número 10 este año. Pero la posición 31 se derivó de un vistazo a a varios indicadores económicos, tales como niveles de graduados, ingresos familiares y nivel de educación de los padres.

En cuanto a gastos, Crist se adjudica el crédito por haber reducido el presupuesto de la Florida, pero no tuvo otra opción. El colapso del mercado de bienes raíces causó grandes reducciones en las recaudaciones de impuestos, lo cual redujo el presupuesto estatal en \$7,000 millones. Los empleados del estado no han tenido aumentos de salario en tres años.

En lo tocante al medio ambiente, Crist habló muy enfáticamente sobre el cambio climático en el 2007. Pero el tema no

es popular con muchos republicanos conservadores y se ha ido desvaneciendo. Ahora Crist dice que las perforaciones petroleras en las costas son algo que "vale la pena considerar", siempre que haya suficientes precauciones ambientales.

La iniciativa de Cover Florida es típica de Crist: simbolismo tanto como substancia. Se lanzó con grandes fanfarrias, pero sin dinero para promoverla. El gobernador usó conferencias de prensa semanales para instar a la prensa a "hacer correr la noticia". El resultado es que muchas personas no saben que existe.

Crist dice que su mayor logro ha sido su plan de comprar 70,000 acres de terreno de la U.S. Sugar Corp. para la restauración de los Everglades, un proyecto de \$641 millones que se ha reducido de amplitud y ahora es objeto de una feroz batalla judicial. También dice que los impuestos a la propiedad están más bajos y que hay menos crímenes violentos, y los cita como logros suyos.

Con referencia al tipo de huella que dejará, el gobernador dice que eso lo deben juzgar otros.

"Trato de trabajar duro para el pueblo todos los días y de cumplir con lo que hablamos durante la campaña", dijo. "Uno trata de lograr todo lo que humanamente pueda dado el término de un cargo. Nosotros tratamos a diario, y creo que la gente lo entiende".

Crist es un político talentoso, y sabe recaudar dinero de los intereses particulares, pero mantiene una imagen humilde, de ciudadano común. Su nivel de aprobación sigue siendo alto, pero su intento de ganar un escaño en el Senado federal repentinamente tiene competencia. Su rival republicano Marco Rubio recaudó \$1 millón en los pasados tres meses y es objeto de toda clase de elogios de parte de comentaristas conservadores.

Aproximadamente en esta época el año pasado, Crist hizo unan extensa "gira para escuchar", para reforzar su preocupación genuina por los retos que confrontan los floridianos. En meses recientes, ha dedicado más tiempo a recaudar dinero para su campaña para el Senado.

"Es un desafío", señaló el gobernador. "Hay que mantener un equilibrio. . . Sé que mi deber primero es hacia la gente de mi estado".

El impulso populista de Crist es más obvio en su decisión reciente de quitar a dos reguladores de la Comisión de Servicios Públicos (PSC) y su petición de que se pospongan los aumentos de tarifas solicitados por Florida Power & Light y Progress Energy .

"Las acciones del gobernador significan más para la persona promedio y el propietario de una empresa pequeña en cualquier pueblo, que cualquier cosa que pueda pasar en Miami o en Tallahassee", sostuvo el senador Mike Fasano , republicano de New Port Richie. "Les aseguro que el gobernador Crist logró un enorme impacto positivo con los consumidores".

Pero las antenas políticas de Crist no son perfectas. Su decisión de escoger al ex jefe de despacho George LeMieux para ocupar un escaño vacío en el Senado federal fue criticada como un acto de "conveniencia política". Su reciente comparación del presidente Barack Obama con el ex presidente Jimmy Carter , que sólo presidió un término, pareció políticamente calculada cuando hace sólo ocho meses, Crist acogió entusiastamente al presidente en Fort Myers, cuando éste prometió miles de millones de dólares de estímulo para la Florida.

La senadora estatal republicana Paula Dockey , de Lakeland, dijo que aunque Crist sigue siendo popular, el terreno político es cada vez más movedido.

"En general, la gente está descontenta con la economía, descontenta con la dirección que está tomando la Florida", dijo Dockey, que por su parte aspira a ser gobernadora del estado. "Siento una ola contraria al sistema por ahí, un ansia de algo que no sea lo mismo de siempre".

Crist hizo su campaña para gobernador en el 2006 como un "republicano al estilo Jeb Bush " que estaba "luchando por la Florida". Una vez que asumió el cargo, gravitó hacia el centro político y atrajo elogios por haber llevado un tono más cortés y menos partidista a Tallahassee.

Nombró a un grupo de demócratas a puestos clave, y encabezó los esfuerzos para facilitar la restauración de derechos civiles a los convictos de delitos serios. A instancias de los demócratas, expandió la votación por adelantado en el 2008, respaldó fuertemente un proyecto de ley que dificulta que los culpables de delitos serios consigan la libertad condicional.

Políticamente, el dilema de Crist es que hay votantes sumamente conservadores que influyen mucho en las primarias

republicanas, y esa es la parte del electorado en el que su filosofía centrista está mal vista. Al salir al escenario con el presidente Obama "él debilitó su magnetismo en la base de su partido", dijo el profesor retirado de ciencias políticas Darryl Paulson , de la Universidad del Sur de la Florida.

"La gente lo eligió a él para un puesto determinado, y esperaban que fuera un líder", dice Paulson. "A ningún político le gusta que le cuelguen la etiqueta de oportunista. Tiene que volver a su trabajo de gobernar el estado y probar que puede realizar esa labor, y que es por eso que debe ser ascendido a la siguiente posición".

Mary Ellen Klas , del Herald /Times, contribuyó a este reportaje. Se puede contactar a Steve Bousquet en .

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SWA Drops Landfill Sites; Land Swap Favored

10/10/2009

Town-Crier Newspapers, The

Ron Bukley 09.OCT.09

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The Palm Beach County Commission, meeting as the Solid Waste Authority Governing Board, rejected the two existing offers of a new landfill site Wednesday, instead pinning hopes on a future land trade with the South Florida Water Management District.

The SFWMD is the public entity negotiating the states purchase of 73,000 acres of U.S. Sugar property for Everglades restoration, and the commissioners decided to delay choosing a new landfill site for 12 months with the goal of getting some of that land in exchange for 1,600 acres already owned by the Solid Waste Authority near the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

The commissioners generally agreed that the prices being asked for the two sites on offer were inflated to about three and a half times their appraised value, and also noted that falloffs in the countys population growth and economic activity have extended the life expectancy of the existing county landfill, giving them more time to reach a decision. The Solid Waste Authority is also planning a waste-to-energy plant that will reduce the waste going to the landfill by as much as 75 percent, according to SWA staff.

The commissioners also agreed to remain open to other possible garbage disposal alternatives.

The current SWA site west of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge was purchased in 1996, but plans to place a landfill there have drawn opposition from environmentalists, refuge representatives and others, according to SWA Deputy Director Dan Pellowitz, who gave commissioners status reports on the landfill sites. The sites previous owner, a subsidiary of Florida Crystals, retains an option to buy it back for \$10.5 million if the SWA decides not to use it for a landfill.

A search for alternative sites and willing sellers began in August 2007, and of 11 initial submissions, the SWA narrowed its choices to two: one at State Road 80/U.S. 98 and another on County Road 880.

The SR 80/U.S. 98 site drew opposition from residents both of Wellington and the Glades over concerns of visual pollution. The County Road 880 site drew objections from environmentalists over its proximity to Stormwater Treatment Area 1-West.

The 1,733-acre SR 80/U.S. 98 site was offered for about \$68 million. The 1,493-acre site on County Road 880, dubbed the Hundley site, was offered for about \$54 million. Although both of the sites were priced at more than 3.5 times the appraised value, Pellowitz pointed out that the SWA has the right to negotiate the best and final price.

A cost analysis projected that the Hundley site would be the least expensive and have less visual impact than the SR 80/U.S. 98 site, Pellowitz said. The SR 80/U.S. 98 property would be about 11 percent more expensive to operate.

In March, commissioners decided to work on a deal to give the SFWMD six months to arrange a possible land swap if the SFWMD decides to use the SWA-owned site as an additional stormwater treatment area. Pellowitz said SWA Executive Director Mark Hammond and Commissioner Karen Marcus met with the SFWMDs director and staff several times with positive results for a possible swap.

Any transaction with the SFWMD is contingent upon closing of the U.S. Sugar acquisition, and a land swap requires the participation of Florida Crystals because Florida Crystals has the right of first refusal on the existing site, Pellowitz cautioned.

The South Florida Water Management District has expressed optimism and a willingness to work with the [Solid Waste] Authority, but there are several critical issues, he said.

Marcus said she felt positive about a deal between the SWA and the SFWMD. There are things we can do as far as effecting some sort of a swap, she said. To me, cost is the issue.

Marcus said the SWA is anticipating nearly a billion dollars in facility upgrades and expansion. You're looking at the only mass-burn facility being built in this country in the last 20 years, she said. Well have two when were done. To me, any way we can minimize the cost to the taxpayer, I think we have the option to wait because the landfill hasn't been filling up as rapidly as we thought and development is down, so we have a longer life cycle. I believe we can make a meaningful swap with water management.

Marcus said the SFWMD is in the final stages of closing on the U.S. Sugar deal and was optimistic that the SWA can reach an agreement on a swap shortly thereafter.

The bottom line is the money, Marcus said. If we can do an equal swap and don't have to do any cash out for the land, good for the public, and buy down that billion dollars of investment that we have.

SFWMD Deputy Executive Director Ken Ammon said there have been open and honest discussions of potential options and if the SFWMD closes on the U.S. Sugar deal there will be many opportunities for different available sites in the area.

It would be premature to point on a map or get into significant negotiations until that closing in fact takes place, he said.

The sales bond validation has been appealed to the Florida Supreme Court, but with the support of Gov. Charlie Crist, who has been the driving force behind the acquisition, the SFWMD anticipates an expedited bond hearing of about March 2010.

County Commissioner Burt Aaronson made a motion to reject the current offers and give the SFWMD 12 months to find a specific site to offer for a swap, and failing that, to invite proposals for more potential landfill sites. Commissioner Steven Abrams seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

09.OCT.09 SWA Drops Landfill Sites; Land Swap Favored

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Environmental agency rejects Florida Crystals land as inland port site

10/10/2009

News Press - Online

PAUL QUINLAN

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10:14 P.M. — Politically powerful Florida Crystals Corp. was dealt a blow Friday by state environmental regulators, who said a transportation, warehousing and distribution complex the sugar company wants built on its land south of Lake Okeechobee would interfere with Everglades restoration.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection sided with environmentalists in urging the state's growth management agency to reject Crystals' request to build the complex near its Okeelanta sugar mill, refinery and power plant.

The say the Crystals property - 318 of the more than 3,500 acres Crystals has available to develop the complex - sits too close to the 73,000 acres of farmland that Gov. Charlie Crist is working to purchase from competitor U.S. Sugar Corp. for Everglades restoration.

"The department believes that development of a transportation, warehousing and distribution complex that serves heavy diesel truck traffic and rail operations - whether 318 acres or 3,500 acres - is incompatible with restoration efforts in the South Florida Ecosystem and Everglades," Sally Mann, of the DEP's Office of Intergovernmental Programs, wrote in a letter dated Friday.

Crystals has fought the U.S. Sugar land deal in court, arguing that the restoration plans are too vague and public purpose too unclear to justify the taxpayer expense. The case is headed to the Florida Supreme Court.

Crystals spokesman Gaston Cantens called the DEP's letter objecting to this proposed change to Palm Beach County's comprehensive plan, or growth blueprint, as retaliation for the company's opposition to the Crist's land deal.

"This is politics," said Crystals spokesman Gaston Cantens. "It has more to do with our objections to the U.S. Sugar deal than it has to do with the substance."

He said the objections were unsubstantiated and that any concerns could be addressed when the company seeks environmental and other permits.

But Lisa Interlandi, an attorney with the Everglades Law Center, said the land use change would lead to greater development of surrounding land.

"We believe that it is clearly urban sprawl," said Interlandi. "It will result in multiple other future land use changes in the area that cumulatively will have a very negative impact on the region."

Crystals is one of several major landowners vying to develop the distribution complex known as an inland port. Backers of the project see it as a way to add capacity to South Florida's three seaports, offering an off-site location where shipping containers could be broken down and goods reshipped. Interested developers see it as a potential gold mine that could generate millions in rent from big-box retailers.

Landfill County Made The Right Decision

10/10/2009

Town-Crier Newspapers, The

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Town-Crier Staff Opinion 09.OCT.09

After postponing the decision six months ago, the Palm Beach County Commission this week revisited the issue of choosing the location for a new landfill. Sitting as the Solid Waste Authority Governing Board, the commissioners again made the smart move with their decision to buy more time. The latest plan gives the county another 12 months to find a site while the South Florida Water Management District negotiates with U.S. Sugar for the sale of land for Everglades restoration. The plan is to set aside some of those 73,000 acres for the landfill, giving the county a clean slate by taking the previous options off the table and avoiding sites that were financially, environmentally and economically problematic.

Originally, the new landfill was slated for a parcel of land west of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, which the SWA purchased in 1996. However, concerns raised by environmentalists have since made this option no longer viable.

The search for a new location began a little more than two years ago, with the plan eventually narrowing to two options: the Hundley site, on the north side of County Road 880 about four miles west of 20-Mile Bend, and a tract of land located directly along Southern Blvd. (State Road 80) at the intersection of U.S. 98. The negative impact the latter would have on the Glades and western communities is quite clear. Having a landfill at such a prominent location would be disastrous for our shared economic futures. And the manner in which it was initially pursued with little public input drew much criticism from elected officials and residents alike, including Wellington Councilwoman Lizbeth Benacquisto, who was among those leading the charge to oppose the plan.

While the Hundley site, in the opinion of this newspaper, would have been better than the SR 80/U.S. 98 site, we understand the concerns of environmentalists given the proximity to sensitive stormwater treatment areas. Further, if either of these plans had been given the green light, there would be a huge, unnecessary financial burden to the county. Both of the sites were priced at more than 3.5 times their appraised value, and overpaying for land is the last thing the county needs to do at this time.

Hopefully, the extra year that the commissioners bought for the county should be enough time for a deal to be reached that will ease environmental and financial concerns, and quiet the concerns of community leaders both here and in the Glades. Further, using the original environmentally problematic SWA site as part of a land swap with the SFWMD will make acquiring the landfill far more affordable.

Southern Blvd. runs right through the heart of the western communities, serving as a border between Wellington, Royal Palm Beach and Loxahatchee Groves. It is the regions main thoroughfare, and its the only roadway that stretches clear across the county. The county commission deserves praise for not making a hasty decision that would ridiculously overpay for a landfill while putting it in the wrong place. While we understand that a landfill needs to go somewhere in the western part of the county, the proper space needs to be found that wont harm our shared economic and environmental futures.

09.OCT.09 Landfill: County Made The Right Decision

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10/09/2009

Palm Beach Post

Quinlan, Paul

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U.S. Sugar deal

Browse all the news, see photos and video, get facts about the company and the agreement plus more.

Crist downsizing the deal

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If Dockery enters race for governor, expect fireworks

10/09/2009

St. Petersburg Times - Online

Times Staff

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By Steve Bousquet, Times columnist
Friday, October 9, 2009

Paula Dockery for governor?

With each passing day, the Republican state senator from Lakeland sounds closer to jumping into the race with both feet, creating a primary within the GOP and potentially causing a lot of headaches for Attorney General Bill McCollum.

Dockery says she'll announce her decision in three weeks. She has enlisted the advice of David Hill, a Texas political consultant who has experience running a race against McCollum in Florida, so he knows the front-runner's strengths and weaknesses.

At this moment, nobody gives Dockery a snowball's chance of beating McCollum and becoming the Republican nominee for governor.

McCollum has the experience, the name I.D. and the money (though not nearly as much as he'd like).

But Dockery's style, message and (possibly) family money has the potential to transform the race overnight. Her husband is C.C. "Doc" Dockery, who opened his checkbook and almost single-handedly got a high-speed rail in the Florida Constitution (only to see voters repeal it later).

Who is Paula Dockery? She's 48, born in Queens and raised in Broward (maiden name: Bono). She's Catholic. She went to high school in Coral Springs, got two degrees at the University of Florida: bachelor's in political science, master's in mass communications and Dockery has a Crist-like ability to distill a complicated policy or project into stark, simple terms.

She was elected to the House in 1996, the year Republicans took control of the chamber for the first time since Reconstruction; she became a senator in 2002.

She chairs the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, but she is best known in the Senate for her tenacious, successful crusade to defeat SunRail, the big CSX commuter rail project in Central Florida that was the top priority of the region's political and business leadership (and a priority of Gov. Charlie Crist).

In the clubby and clannish Senate, Dockery would not win many popularity contests.

But if she runs, she'll deploy that as an asset as proof of her ability to stand up to the good ol' boys and question the misuse of taxpayers' money. For McCollum, a career politician, that could be very dangerous.

Having sunk SunRail, Dockery's current crusade is slowing down Gov. Charlie Crist's plan to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to buy U.S. Sugar land for Everglades restoration.

Dockery has decided the price is too high and the wrong land is on the table.

"I question some of the big deals that have been put together, that they're not in the best interests of the taxpayers," Dockery said. "I think we're throwing things around here a little haphazardly and someone needs to be the nerdy policy wonk and really dig into the details."

Here's what Paula Dockery says about her fellow Republicans running things in Tallahassee: "I see an anti-establishment feeling out there and a hunger for something other than politics as usual," Dockery said. "As you see more and more scandals unfolding, as you see more and more questionable activity, people want something different and somebody to believe in that has shown they're going to fight for the people."

If she runs, she'll have a hard time explaining a few past votes to her party's conservative base.

On April 30, 2008, she was one of seven Republicans who voted to kill a bill that would require women seeking a first-trimester abortion to first be shown an ultrasound, an image of the fetus.

Dockery is strongly opposed to offshore oil drilling. Listen to this sound bite: "One spill, and Florida is not Florida anymore," she said.

One Dockery candidacy, and Republican politics in Florida may not be the same.

County Commissioners reject 2 western landfill sites, hope to get free site in swap

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10/08/2009

Palm Beach Post

Sorentrue, Jennifer

Palm Beach County Commissioners unanimously rejected bids today from owners of two controversial sites under consideration for a future landfill.

Instead, commissioners hope to save tens of millions of dollars by waiting a year and trying to cut a deal with the South Florida Water Management District after it completes its purchase of land owned by U.S. Sugar Corp.

The commission hopes the county's Solid Waste Authority will be able to trade land it already owns for property purchased as part of the U.S. Sugar deal. The resulting deal could give the county a landfill for free.

The authority owns 1,600 acres next to the refuge, the northernmost remnant of the Everglades. It once planned to build a new landfill on the property, but county commissioners agreed in 2007 to pursue alternate locations. The decision came after environmentalists objected to the site.

Until this afternoon, commissioners were considering two sites west or northwest of 20-Mile Bend for the landfill: a 1,733-acre site near the intersection of State Road 80 and U.S. 98, and a 1,500-acre tract on County Road 880 owned by Hundley Farms.

But proposals from those sites' owners came in at 3.5 times above the land's appraised value, according to Solid Waste Authority staff members.

"Hopefully, this will be a lesson for us all, that we will be more alert for things like excessive pricing," commissioner Jess Santamaria said.

The choice pitted environmentalists against leaders of the Glades region.

Several environmental groups feared the Hundley Farms site is too close to a filter marsh that cleanses runoff water entering wildlife refuge. Glades leaders, however, had opposed the State Road 80 site, saying it would have marked the entry to their community with an eyesore.

The site selection process has mired in controversy.

Palm Beach County's Caucus of Black Elected Officials released a statement last week backing the Hundley Farms site. But at least two of the group's top members now say the caucus never actually voted in support the farmland.

Mangonia Park Mayor William Albury, the group's president, said Tuesday that a resolution sent Friday to The Palm Beach Post and county commissioners stating that the group's "preferred location" for the landfill was the Hundley Farms site was incorrect.

Although Albury signed the resolution, he said the caucus' vote was not about that specific site. Instead, he said the group voted to support Glades leaders in their push to create jobs for their community by bringing a landfill to the area. The resolution that he signed misstated the decision, he said.

"I should have read the document thoroughly," Albury said. "It should have been, we simply support their effort."

Former County Commissioner Addie Greene, the group's executive director, disagrees. She says the executive committee voted on Sept. 23 to support the Hundley Farms site, and acknowledges the resolution was incorrect only in the date of the vote that it listed: Sept. 25.

But State Rep. Mack Bernard, who chairs the caucus' executive committee, said the group never voted. No recommendation was made favoring a landfill site on either date, he said Tuesday.

"That is not correct in my opinion," he said.

Colson Hicks Eidson Settles Class Action Lawsuit on Behalf of Employee Shareholders and Other Shareh

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10/08/2009

AOL

Attorney Lewis S. (Mike) Eidson, Senior Partner at the Coral Gables-based law firm Colson Hicks Eidson, announced today that the Firm has successfully reached a settlement for a total potential value of \$15.9 million with the U.S. Sugar Corporation on behalf of the employee shareholders and other shareholders of the Clewiston, Florida-based company. U.S. Sugar is the country's largest producer of sugar cane and refined cane sugar and is one of Florida's major producers of oranges and orange juice products.

The class action lawsuit was filed in West Palm Beach Federal Court in January 2008 on behalf of 4,000 current and former U.S. Sugar employees including farm field workers, union mill workers, administrative staff, and others who own or owned a large percentage of the company's shares through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), and other shareholders including several Michigan-based charities. The lawsuit alleged U.S. Sugar's Board of Directors failed to inform shareholders of two lucrative buyout offers thus denying them a substantial profit on their shares and undervalued the shares held by the ESOP.

A final approval hearing has been scheduled for January 4, 2010. The settlement requires U.S. Sugar to pay \$8.4 million to the employee shareholders and other shareholders upon final approval, with the balance of \$7.5 million to be paid upon U.S. Sugar and the State of Florida successfully completing their deal relating to the U.S. Sugar property, expected to be completed in 2010.

"We have been litigating this action very aggressively for almost two years and are very pleased to have reached a settlement of all claims. We believe the settlement is fair for the ESOP participants and shareholders of U.S. Sugar," said Plaintiffs' attorney Mike Eidson who filed the case along with his partners Roberto Martínez and Curtis Miner. Eidson is a past president of the American Association for Justice, the world's largest trial lawyers' bar with 60,000 members worldwide.

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Four sites vie for inland port designation

10/08/2009

Palm Beach Post

Quinlan, Paul

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The nation's two largest sugar growers, U.S. Sugar Corp. and Florida Crystals, are among the companies vying to partner with the state in a development deal to expand the capacity of South Florida's three seaports.

Four finalists have proposed vast tracts of rural land they hope will be selected as the site for the inland port.

The inland port concept is modelled after similar facilities in Virginia, Georgia and Texas. Plans call for an industrial campus with as much as 8,000 acres of warehouse and distribution space, where South Florida's three crowded seaports - Port Everglades, Port Miami and Port of Palm Beach — could whisk shipping containers via road and rail for unloading and reshipment.

The concept's boosters at the Port of Palm Beach say the inland facility could generate jobs and tax revenues, as well as the millions that the chosen developer could earn renting space to retailers and other importers. Port officials say the facility would let South Florida to capture some of the growth expected in mega-freighter traffic, after the 2014 widening of the Panama Canal.

The port commissioners are scheduled to hear presentations from applicants on Oct. 15 and make a final decision Oct. 21.

The finalists are Florida Crystals, which has offered up to 3,500 acres near their Okeelanta sugar mill and power plant south of South Bay; the Hilliard Brothers of Florida, which has partnered with U.S. Sugar Corp. with a Hendry County site that includes the AirGlades Airport; the Weekley Brothers Industrial Park in Clewiston; and the Treasure Coast Intermodal Campus, a partnership of landowners that includes Ken Kennedy and his family, Indian River County citrus growers, and the Caruso family, longtime farmers and real estate developers out of Orlando.

The profit potential has triggered intense lobbying from not only the property owners but also counties, which are struggling with high unemployment and shrinking tax bases. Palm Beach County Commissioners gave Florida Crystals a favorable land use change and this week an official endorsement of the site. Hendry County Commissioner Kevin McCarthy appeared alongside Joe Hilliard in a meeting with The Palm Beach Post Editorial Board to endorse the Hendry County site and defend against arguments that there's no need - that large freighter traffic will ultimately sail by South Florida en route to bigger, better-located seaports farther north.

"I think you can argue the point of whether there's a need or an opportunity," McCarthy said. "If you want to limit the future growth of Florida you can say we don't need it. But we have an opportunity."

Colson Hicks Eidson Settles Class Action Lawsuit on Behalf of Employee Shareholders and Other Shareh

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10/08/2009

Earthtimes.org

Posted : Wed, 07 Oct 2009 16:53:58 GMT

Author : Colson Hicks Eidson

News Alerts by Email ([click here](#))

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COUNTY DUMPS LANDFILL SITES

10/08/2009

Palm Beach Post

Sorentrue, Jennifer

Palm Beach County Commissioners rejected two controversial sites as replacements for the county's near-capacity landfill Wednesday, hoping instead to spare tens of millions of dollars -- and political fallout -- through a land swap with the South Florida Water Management District.

The water district is poised to purchase 73,000 acres from U.S. Sugar Corp. for Everglades restoration. But since much of that land may not be needed for restoration projects, commissioners said they will explore trading land the county's Solid Waste Authority owns nearby for water district land that would make a better landfill site.

The resulting deal could give the county a landfill for free, they said.

The authority owns 1,600 acres next to the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, the northernmost remnant of the Everglades. It once planned to build a landfill on the property, but county commissioners agreed in 2007 to pursue alternate locations. The decision came after environmentalists objected to the site.

The county's current landfill off of Jog Road, just north of 45th Street, is expected to run out of space in 2024 -- or sooner, depending on how much debris would be hauled there if hurricanes hit Palm Beach County.

Until Wednesday afternoon, commissioners were considering two sites west or northwest of 20-Mile Bend for the landfill: a 1,733-acre site near State Road 80 and U.S. 98, and a 1,500-acre tract on County Road 880 owned by Hundley Farms. But proposals from those sites' owners came in at 3.5 times above the land's appraised value, according to authority staff members.

"Hopefully, this will be a lesson for us all, that we will be more alert for things like excessive pricing," Commissioner Jess Santamaria said.

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entering the wildlife refuge. Glades leaders, however, opposed the State Road 80 site, saying it would mark the entry to their community with an eyesore.

~jennifer_sorentrue@pbpost.com

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Palm Beach County faces Hobsons choice in its new landfill

10/07/2009

Sun Sentinel - Online

THE ISSUE: County faces a Hobson's choice in its new landfill.

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Palm Beach County commissioners will convene today and select a site for a new landfill. Unfortunately, there's a good chance that the commission may choose the wrong location to build a 1,400 acre county dump. The commission would be smart to approve a third option backed by Commissioner Karen Marcus.

The Hundley site is far enough away from people, but it's proximity to a key site in the ongoing efforts to rid the Florida Everglades of pollution makes it a problematic choice. The other alternative, the SR80/US98 site, lies further away from the storm water treatment area, but closer to the county's western communities, whose citizens already feel dumped on by the rest of the county.

Neither site is appealing for good reasons.

The Hundley site would put a major potential source of pollution one-tenth of a mile away from the Stormwater Treatment Area 1 West that filters pollutants out of water flowing from sugar farms into the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and the Everglades Protection Area. It would also block efforts by the U.S. Department of Interior to expand the treatment area and further rid the water of phosphorous.

The SR80/US98 site may be further away from the storm water treatment area and far enough away from Belle Glade, South Bay and Pahokee to seem like a plausible alternative, but the idea has provoked a rash of complaints from area residents. The very thought of building a landfill at what is the primary gateway to the 'Glades would send the wrong signal to a part of the county that has become almost jaded to the promise of any new community and economic development.

Initially, the county hoped to cut a deal with the South Florida Water Management District and swap property for the new landfill. That option remains a promising alternative, according to Marcus, who is prepared to offer a proposal to disengage from choosing between two bad locations and instead pursuing further talks with the district.

The Marcus proposal amounts to a viable alternative to a Hobson's choice. If the commission were smart, they'd take it.

BOTTOM LINE: County needs a new site for the western landfill.

Colson Hicks Eidson Settles Class Action Lawsuit on Behalf of Employee Shareholders and Other Shareh

10/07/2009

Yahoo! News

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Thomson Reuters - Online

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THE ISSUE County faces a Hobson's choice in its new landfill.

10/07/2009

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Orlando Sentinel - Online

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10/07/2009

PR Inside

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10/07/2009

Financial24

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Landfill site decision delayed at least a year; bids rejected

10/07/2009

Sun Sentinel - Online

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Several environmental groups feared the Hundley Farms site is too close to a filter marsh that cleanses runoff water entering wildlife refuge.

Glades leaders, however, had opposed the State Road 80 site, saying it would have marked the entry to their community with an eyesore.

Colson Hicks Eidson Settles Class Action Lawsuit on Behalf of Employee Shareholders & Other Sharehol

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Attorney Lewis S. (Mike) Eidson, Senior Partner at the Coral Gables-based law firm Colson Hicks Eidson, announced today that the Firm has successfully reached a settlement for a total potential value of \$15.9 million with the U.S. Sugar Corporation on behalf of the employee shareholders and other shareholders of the Clewiston, Florida-based company. U.S. Sugar is the country's largest producer of sugar cane and refined cane sugar and is one of Florida's major producers of oranges and orange juice products.

The class action lawsuit was filed in West Palm Beach Federal Court in January 2008 on behalf of 4,000 current and former U.S. Sugar employees including farm field workers, union mill workers, administrative staff, and others who own or owned a large percentage of the company's shares through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), and other shareholders including several Michigan-based charities. The lawsuit alleged U.S. Sugar's Board of Directors failed to inform shareholders of two lucrative buyout offers thus denying them a substantial profit on their shares and undervalued the shares held by the ESOP.

A final approval hearing has been scheduled for January 4, 2010. The settlement requires U.S. Sugar to pay \$8.4 million to the employee shareholders and other shareholders upon final approval, with the balance of \$7.5 million to be paid upon U.S. Sugar and the State of Florida successfully completing their deal relating to the U.S. Sugar property, expected to be completed in 2010.

"We have been litigating this action very aggressively for almost two years and are very pleased to have reached a settlement of all claims. We believe the settlement is fair for the ESOP participants and shareholders of U.S. Sugar," said Plaintiffs' attorney Mike Eidson who filed the case along with his partners Roberto Martínez and Curtis Miner. Eidson is a past president of the American Association for Justice, the world's largest trial lawyers' bar with 60,000 members worldwide.

Colson Hicks Eidson is a trial firm with more than 35 years of experience handling local, national and international litigation. Partners at the firm have had the distinction of holding the following offices: President of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America; President of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers; President of the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers; President of the Dade County Bar Association; United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida; and, Chairman of the Florida Federal Judicial Nominating Commission.

Eidson is best known for his work as the lead counsel in some of the largest automobile recalls in U.S. history: the Ford Pinto, the Chrysler Minivan and most recently, the Firestone/Ford tire tread separation. The outcomes of these cases created higher safety standards in the automobile industry safeguarding consumers across the globe. Martínez is a former United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida known for his work as a former federal prosecutor and as counsel for plaintiffs in major commercial and tort litigation, including the Brothers to the Rescue anti-terrorism litigation, the Eller Media bus shelter electrocution case, and the Rafael Sanchez lawsuit against the Government of Aruba. Miner is best known for his work as a former Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida prosecuting major political, police, and public corruption cases and for serving as lead counsel to the Federal Receivership of the Mutual Benefits Corporation.

Landfill sites rejected, decision delayed

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WPEC-TV - Online

Chuck Weber

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Where to put a new landfill in Western Palm Beach County has been the subject of debate for years. But a decision will have to wait at least another year.

Wednesday county commissioners considered two locations for the waste dump-- one at State Road 80 and U.S. 98, the other just to the south on County Road 880.

At a packed meeting at the headquarters of the county Solid Waste Authority, Glades residents opposed the northern site, because it's on the main road to their communities.

"It's pitiful for the Glades," complained Pahokee resident Leroy Jackson, Jr. "The Glades area needs something positive."

On the other hand, environmentalists fought the southern location, because of fears a landfill there could contaminate the nearby Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, which is home to Palm Beach County's remaining Everglades. It's also next door to a Stormwater Treatment Area, where water runoff from Glades farms is cleansed.

In the end, commissioners decided to reject both locations, and hold off on making a landfill decision, to see if they could find better-- and less expensive-- sites, through the state's planned U.S. Sugar land buy. That land sale is now being challenged in the Florida Supreme Court. However staff at the South Florida Water Management District told commissioners the Court could rule in a matter of months. Commissioners have property in Western Palm Beach County they would trade for the sugar land.

Joanne Davis, of the environmental group 1,000 Friends of Florida, said she was happy with the decision to delay action. "I think it's good to look a little bit further and see if we might get a better deal for the taxpayers and a better deal for the environment," Davis explained.

But Pahokee resident Jackson said even though the location on the main road is out of the picture, he still worries about the eventual landfill site will hurt the Glades communities.

Commissioners said they will revisit the landfill issue next October.

