

Jan. 9, 2008

Meeting set to discuss Florida scrub-jay Habitat Conservation Plan

Sarasota County officials will meet with the Florida Scrub-jay Habitat Conservation Plan Steering Committee and Advisory Panel from 1-4 p.m., Friday, Jan. 18, to discuss the county's Habitat Conservation Plan. The meeting will take place in the Green Room at Twin Lakes Park, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota and the public is invited.

During the meeting, representatives from Sarasota County Natural Resources will provide a brief overview of the proposed plan which addresses items required by the Endangered Species Act and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Currently, USFWS requires coordination with individual property owners before the county may issue a building permit or tree removal and protection permit on properties that contain scrub habitat or are occupied by Florida scrub-jays. The Habitat Conservation Plan will reduce the regulatory process for properties within scrub habitat and provide conservation of the county's Florida scrub-jays through a comprehensive county-wide approach to the protection of the species and a consistent, predictable permit process at the local level.

The county's plan, which includes a draft modeling report by John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and a recognized expert on the species, will define a preserve network and establish a mitigation credit system for landowners who work to protect existing habitat.

Natural Resources staff will discuss the next steps for the plan and solicit feedback on the draft modeling report from the steering committee, advisory panel and the public.

For more information about the county's Habitat Conservation Plan, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Natural Resources.