

Osceola Soil & Water Conservation District

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kissimmee – Osceola Soil and Water Conservation District, a board of elected officials, urges the Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) to avoid Split Oak Mitigation Park in its plans for the construction of the Osceola Parkway Extension. The board also calls on Osceola County government to defend their land that has already been set aside for conservation and public recreation.

CFX is presently considering extending the existing 12-mile-long parkway from west of Boggy Creek Road to the proposed Sunbridge development east of Absher Road in Narcoossee.

“We are concerned about plans under consideration to cut a path through unspoiled forest land set aside for conservation and recreation,” says Larry Allen Schneck, chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

Most of the Split Oak Forest is protected by two perpetual conservation easements – the first held by South Florida Water Management District and a second by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. All of the Forest is protected by deed restrictions held by the Florida Communities Trust, dating from March 29, 1994.

“The CFX Board has alternate routes around the park that would leave this area undisturbed. We urge them to respect the irreplaceable land and select a different path.”

Toll way construction through the forest would negatively affect the quality of soil and water and permanently damage ecosystems and endangered wildlife. It would also decrease Split Oak’s value to Osceola County residents as a place to ride horses, walk, and enjoy natural Florida.

“More than 100 gopher tortoises and dozens of species of endangered birds flourish inside the park’s protected boundaries. We were disappointed to learn the construction of the new parkway extension might cut Split Oak in two,” said Schneck.

The mission of the 5-member board of supervisors is to provide information about conservation and keep water and soil clean for future generations. The destruction of a natural resource such as Split Oak Forest has caused the supervisors to take notice and voice concern.

The OSWCD Board of Supervisors meets in the University of Florida Extension Services Office at Osceola Heritage Park. Meeting notices and information about its work is available at www.osceolaswcd.org or call (407) 847-4465 Extension 3.

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