



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine
Research Reserve
505 Guana River Road
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida 32082

Rick Scott
Governor

Carlos Lopez-Cantera
Lt. Governor

Ryan E. Matthews
Interim Secretary

Memorandum

TO: Jan Brewer, Environmental Division Manager

FROM: Mike Shirley, PhD, Manager GTM NERR *MS*

SUBJECT: Application for Rezoning to Planned Unit Development ("PUD") Prosser Reference No. 113088.01

DATE: 5/18/2017

The parcel being considered for rezoning is adjacent to lands designated as the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (Research Reserve) and the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve. The managing agency for this Research Reserve is the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

Guana River, including the waters north of the dam at Guana River Road, is within a designated State Aquatic Preserve with an Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) water quality classification.

Guana River north of the dam is economically important to the tourism industry of St. Johns County. This waterbody has been identified as one of the best kayaking and canoeing destinations in Northeast Florida. It provides outstanding recreational fishing and hunting opportunities that have been enjoyed by many generations of Floridians and tourists. Recently the Reserve has been hosting ecotourism events such as the Florida Birding and Photo Festival attracting hundreds of visitors benefiting the local economy and promoting sustainable wildlife viewing. This year there are plans for a privately-owned kayak concessionaire to operate at the dam thereby generating additional commercial ecotourism revenue.

The dam placed across the River in 1957 provides unique ecotourism opportunities that merits water quality protection. This impounded estuary (aka Guana Lake) is prone to the deleterious effects of excess stormwater pollutants. FDEP has established a final Fecal Coliform water quality restoration goal for this water body (EPA approved TMDL May 2012). A recent 2014 study by the National Center for Coastal and Ocean Science found that Guana Lake has nearly seven times higher (294 CFU/100ml) concentrations than the Class II Water quality criterion of 43 CFU/100ml. Fish kills are known to occur in Guan Lake that are often related to poor dissolved oxygen conditions which can be exacerbated by excess pollutants.

Based on this information the recommendation from the Research Reserve and the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve management staff is that protecting and improving the water quality of Guana Lake be seriously considered in deliberating this decision.