

Thank You – and Major New Revelations About the Borrow Pit

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you to everyone who attended the FDOT open house October 9th. Your presence mattered! We heard officials admit they were surprised at how informed and prepared our community is on the borrow pit issue. That is a credit to each of you who has taken time to learn, speak out, and stand together. We also apologize some of you may be getting this email late or this may seem a little repetitive but even with this update there is new information included. We have been very busy working to protect our community and the county.

Check out this article in the Citrus County Chronicle:

Community pushback grows against FDOT sand mine deal By MICHAEL D. BATES Chronicle Reporter Oct 20, 2025

We now have **confirmed new information** that makes our case even stronger. This is information we are actively sharing with you the public, agencies, elected officials, and the media:

PRESS RELEASE

**Citizens Say FDOT Misled Public, Subverted Process in
Southworth Borrow Pit Deal**

CITRUS COUNTY, FL — Florida DOT misled the public and is now poised to spend millions of taxpayer dollars on a failed sand mine project in one of the state’s most fragile spring zones, residents say.

“What should have been a transparent, science-based process has become a case study in how FDOT and Citrus County subverted public oversight.”

Citrus County residents fighting the proposed Southworth borrow pit allege FDOT worked behind the scenes to advance a project that collapsed at the local level, while subverting public oversight to push through a multi-million-dollar land acquisition.

The Public Was Told One Thing, The Record Shows Another

At an October 10, 2025 FDOT open house, officials told residents evaluation of the Southworth site was “just beginning.”

But records prove otherwise:

- **March 3, 2025** – FDOT’s consultant TestLab delivered a report warning of karst terrain, sinkholes, and direct aquifer connection.
- **April 18, 2025** – A TestLab report filed in the ERP record already labeled the site a “Future Borrow Pit.”
- **August 11, 2025** – That March 3 FDOT report surfaced publicly for the first time — **eight months later.**

“FDOT told the public review was just beginning — even though it had held detailed geotechnical reports for eight months.”

August 12, 2025 – County Attorney Announces Eminent Domain Before It Was Filed

On the day the BOCC hearing was canceled, **County Attorney Denise Dymond** told individuals the State had taken the property by eminent domain — before FDOT filed anything.

She did not clarify which parcel, leading residents to believe the **borrow pit itself was already seized**. In reality, the filing (on Aug. 13) applied only to adjacent parcels.

“Why was the County Attorney the one announcing state action that hadn’t legally happened yet?” residents ask.

June 27, 2025 – Special Master Finds Project Violates County Policy

The Special Master ruled the Southworth project violated **Policy 17.13.4** because the site cannot be restored. The applicant’s own expert admitted it would remain a permanent lake.

“The County’s own Special Master already ruled this site cannot be reclaimed.”

September 23, 2025 – Procedural Loophole: A Shift From Denial to Purchase

Citrus County adopted **Resolutions 2025-070 to 072**, giving unelected staff authority to sign “any and all instruments” with FDOT, SWFWMD, and FDEP — without BOCC approval, public hearings, or even the County Seal.

Just weeks later, neighbors saw FDOT staff on the property. At the October open house, FDOT’s Teresa Driskell stated the Southworth ERP was “set to be approved.”

That left residents asking: **If the ERP was on track for approval, why was FDOT also moving to buy the property?**

The timing of the September resolutions only deepens the concern. By giving unelected staff blanket authority to sign “any and all instruments” with FDOT, SWFWMD, and FDEP, the County created an avenue that could have supported behind-the-scenes coordination — possibly even helping smooth the path for land acquisition.

Residents stress they don’t know for certain how these resolutions were used — but the overlap in timing, agency activity on the site, and FDOT’s contradictory statements make the sequence appear less than transparent.

October 10 Open House Raises More Questions Than Answers

Residents pressed FDOT on:

- The spring seep/spring potentially misclassified as **Wetland H**
- Aquifer vulnerability
- Why Phase 2's sand surplus was sold off
- Why no competitive sourcing was considered
- What Phase 3A diagrams and cut/fill calculations show

Instead of answers, residents say they were **shuffled table-to-table**, told “construction,” “environmental,” or “procurement” staff could only answer part of their questions.

When asked **who decided to purchase the Southworth property**, FDOT staff responded only “they did” — but could name no person or board.

FDOT's Duty to Bid and Justify Purchases

Florida law and FDOT's own manuals require competitive bidding and independent appraisals. Yet:

- **No alternative sites were evaluated.**
- **No appraisal or cost analysis has been disclosed.**

At the May 27 BOCC meeting, FDOT District 7 Secretary **Justin Hall** said contractors had already “been able to source the material” and that he “personally thinks the issue's been addressed.”

“If the need was already met, why is FDOT pursuing what could be a \$22 million taxpayer-funded purchase?”

Why This Site Is the Wrong Place to Take Sand

FDOT’s own consultant warned:

“It is not possible to investigate or design to completely eliminate the possibility of future sinkhole-related problems. In any event, the Owner must understand and accept this risk.”

Despite that, FDOT is moving to purchase a **344-acre site** located in a:

- **Priority Focus Area for the Kings Bay Outstanding Florida Spring**
- **BMAP zone**
- **FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area**

Excavation would cut directly into groundwater, destroy a spring-fed wetland, and drop the pit **up to 10 feet below FEMA flood levels** — with no flood protections in place.

Southworth’s Long History With State Agencies

- Southworth’s company, **Concrete Impressions of Florida, Inc.**, advertises its “favorable and valuable relationship with FDOT” after 40+ years.

- In 2021, **SWFWMD purchased 589 acres** from Southworth for the Weekiwachee Preserve.

“This isn’t an isolated deal — it’s part of a long pattern of lucrative state transactions with Southworth.”

What the Public Needs to Know

- FDOT had detailed reports for **eight months** but told the public review was “just beginning.”
 - The County Attorney announced eminent domain **before it was filed.**
 - The Special Master ruled the site violates **County restoration policy.**
 - **BOCC resolutions eliminated transparency and could have enabled back-room coordination between FDOT, SWFWMD, FDEP, and County staff.**
 - FDOT’s own leadership said **no sand was needed** — then reversed course.
 - Taxpayers face a **multi-million-dollar purchase** in a flood- and sinkhole-prone zone.
 - Southworth’s long history of **state land deals raises favoritism concerns.**
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Closing Statement

In our opinion, this site is too environmentally fragile, too procedurally flawed, and too dangerous to the aquifer and springs to justify any public investment. FDOT, SWFWMD, FDEP, and Citrus County should be held accountable for pushing this deal behind closed doors — at the expense of taxpayers and one of Florida's most vulnerable spring systems.

How You Can Help

We've put together a press release with all the details. To protect our springs and water, we need to get this story into the hands of major media outlets across Florida.

Please help us by:

- Forwarding the attached release to newspapers, TV stations, radio, or reporters you know,
- Sharing it with friends and community groups,
- Posting it online where more people will see it.

The more eyes on this, the harder it will be for FDOT to push this through quietly.

The Website should be updated this week! stopthesandmine.com
Please share the site! Here is our [change.org](https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-sand-mine?recruiter=1287868778&recruited_by_id=4a568d00-731f-11ed-b169-877545fe0256&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initial&utm_medium=copylink&utm_content=cl_sharecopy_490568902_en-US%3A8) link.

https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-sand-mine?recruiter=1287868778&recruited_by_id=4a568d00-731f-11ed-b169-877545fe0256&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initial&utm_medium=copylink&utm_content=cl_sharecopy_490568902_en-US%3A8

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we are making a difference.

With gratitude,

Stop the Sand Mine Committee Colleen Farmer, Tony Ayo and
David Bishop