

The Pembroke Pines Bald Eagle Sanctuary Steering Committee

History and Mission

In the spring of 2008, Bald Eagles were discovered nesting near the west end of Pines Boulevard. The nest, containing one nearly grown chick, was situated on undeveloped City property, and was readily visible only about 150 feet from the shoulder of the road. This was Broward County's first active eagle nest since before DDT was abolished in the early 1970s. The eagles returned to the same nest that fall, and produced two young in January, 2009, attracting media attention and great public interest. Local residents expressed concerns about the safety of the eagles as well as traffic dangers and disturbances created by unrestrained crowds of onlookers, sometimes numbering over 100 at once during March through May, when the eaglets were very active at the nest.

On June 1, 2009, Mayor Frank Ortis assembled a small group of representatives of organizations interested in wildlife conservation, as well as several private individuals who had been active in observing and protecting the Bald Eagle nest. Mayor Ortis asked them to assist the City in creating a sanctuary for the eagle nest and the surrounding habitat.

Doug Young, President of South Florida Audubon, was appointed to chair a Steering Committee with the stated purposes of protecting and preserving Bald Eagle nesting sites in the City of Pembroke Pines, promoting public knowledge and appreciation of local Bald Eagles, and providing opportunities for the public to safely observe their nesting activities. As appropriate, the City and other public and private organizations have provided representation and valuable support to the Committee.

Objectives and Progress

Bald Eagle Protection, Safe Public Access and Viewing, and Education

The Bald Eagle Sanctuary Steering Committee is working with City administration to develop a bald eagle protection ordinance. The foundation for this ordinance is included in the proposed policies of the Conservation Element which is scheduled for adoption in September 2010.

The Mayor and Committee are working with various agencies to install a web cam for public viewing of the bald eagle nest.

Another objective of the Steering Committee is to develop plans for sanctuary-related public education and research. The Committee has offered support and encouragement to the 7th grade science students of Silver Trail Middle School, who, for the past two nesting seasons, conducted a study of the relationship of traffic density to the behavior of the eagles. In 2009 and 2010, the students also conducted nationwide Internet polls to select names for the eaglets. The Broward County School Board recently awarded the school a grant to support this and related eagle research.