

“Setting the Course for a Sustainable the Treasure Coast”
Senator Ken Pruitt – October 17th, 2005

The Treasure Coast is a vibrant and growing region, well positioned to share in the benefits of national growth and prosperity. This special place provides citizens with a quality of life virtually unmatched in the state. For years, residents of this region have been able to avoid the intense growth pressures surrounding areas have faced. Now, however, the tranquil lifestyle Treasure Coast citizens have worked so hard to preserve, has made the region an attractive place to many new residents and businesses. Treasure Coast citizens and leaders now face a formidable challenge: How can we encourage sensible growth while preserving a healthy, sustainable Treasure Coast for our children and future generations?

With this challenge in mind, I requested that Governor Bush issue an Executive Order creating the Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast (CSTC). For 18 months, thirty-seven dedicated leaders from public, private, and not for profit organizations came together to learn what challenges and opportunities face the region and what actions and tools are available to help.

These efforts have concluded and produced a detailed report with a bold vision for the future of the Treasure Coast, including a series of specific action steps for achieving it. Their vision for the future can be summarized as follows:

- The Treasure Coast region will have a diversified and prosperous economy that focuses on creating, retaining, and expanding higher wage jobs within the region’s businesses.
- The Treasure Coast region will have a healthy natural environment that has been preserved, conserved, enhanced and restored to a quality significantly higher than it is today.
- Development and preservation on the Treasure Coast will have created an attractive landscape that is admired by all who visit or live here.
- Our built environment will accommodate the demands of the new growth while retaining agricultural lands and large expanses of preserved green space and natural systems.
- The Treasure Coast region will have a convenient and competitive multi-modal transportation system, and a full array of housing choices including workforce housing for all segments of the region.
- The Treasure Coast region will have popular institutions, facilities and events that promote the fine and performing arts, preserve and communicate the unique heritage of the Treasure Coast region and respond to a culturally diverse and changing population.
- The Treasure Coast region will support world-class research and education, including life-long learning opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse and growing population and provide programs tailored to the economy, culture, and environment of the region.

- Citizens and communities within the Treasure Coast region will be healthy and vital, have access to the finest health care, and enjoy a quality of life that is unrivaled in the nation.
- Citizens and decision makers in the Treasure Coast region will collaborate to develop and achieve a shared vision.

The CSTC Report is intended to be a direction setting document. Its sustainable principles and action steps will only be executed to the extent the public and private sectors adopt some or all of the report to carry out. The report is not intended to be a mandate or dictum to local government, special districts and citizens in the region. It is an instruction manual to be used by those who choose to participate in building a more healthy and sustainable Treasure Coast.

Encouragingly, some have already begun to move forward in carrying out CSTC recommendations. The Towns, Villages and Countryside Plan for North St. Lucie County and the Rural Lands Stewardship Program for the Adams Ranch offer tremendous opportunities for balancing the demands of new growth and our desire to retain agricultural lands and large expanses of meaningful public open spaces.

At the same time, I know there are some who don't believe we can be as great as the CSTC Report envisions and challenges us to be. There are those who will resist and are fearful of change. Those who are entrenched and find comfort in falling back on a 20-30 year old operating system for planning, building, and growing the Region – a failed operating system that will not achieve the excellence we all seek and will never preserve what we love about living on the Treasure Coast. I would like to suggest at this point that the status quo is not an acceptable option.

My proposal is that we not settle for mediocrity. That we not follow the same trends, development ideas, and mistakes that have erased the quality of life in so many other places in Florida. This is why I call on all of you: local legislators, local elected officials, county administrators, city managers, business leaders, chambers of commerce, our school and university system, the regional planning council, the water management districts, FDOT, FDEP and other regulatory agencies, and all our concerned citizenry; to adopt an agenda and tailor your actions to carry out the CSTC Report.

The CSTC Report recognizes the “vision” can never be implemented or built overnight. It will take patient, coordinated growth, designed in such a way that every planning decision sanctioned by state and local government is always helping to create or generate sustainable patterns and forms of development on a small and large scale. Over time, the end result will be to achieve a more sustainable future for the Treasure Coast Region.