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Concerns come with Martin's growth

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Will there be one day when we can all drive around and not see some form of construction going on? Through the years Martin County has undergone many modifications. I have lived here for about 10 years and have watched these changes take form.

Though change is good, it sometimes brings about concern. One such concern is the effect of our growing population.

This growth has affected many various areas in our community. Pollution, increasing construction and loss of habitat are all consequences of the rising number of residents in this county.

Martin County had a population of 64,014 in 1980, 100,900 in 1990, and 126,731 in 2000, according to the U.S. Census. This creates an average of 3,136 people coming into Martin County every year for the past 20 years.

Even the Florida Oceanographic Society, a nonprofit organization, has dealt with some of the problems caused by this concern.

Pollution levels have risen, affecting the mangroves and sea grass beds, which protect the shorelines from erosion, an already large problem we in Martin County are trying to prevent. Land loss is also an issue. Because the demand for more property and larger roads is so great, construction seems to be happening all the time. U.S. 1 and Port St. Lucie Boulevard are constantly riddled with construction barricades and lane closures.

Anne Pape, a resident of Martin County for six years agreed.

"It's a little overwhelming," Pape said. "Not only did we lose land because of the hurricanes, but construction now as well."

Should we be concerned with this growing population? Will there be one day when we can all drive around and not see some form of construction going on?

This increase in construction also logically creates a loss of habitat for the wildlife in Martin County. Thankfully this is a problem not forgotten by the County Commission.

"There are very stringent regulations in place," said Nicki van Vonno, the Martin County growth management director.

Organizations are designed to protect the environment, and restrictions have been passed such as the wetlands ordinance, whose goal is to protect the 24 wetlands in Martin County by creating buffer zones for building.

It is a comfort to know that our local government is working to better our community while keeping the interests of the environment in mind.

But how do we ensure animal protection? In the 2005 monthly report of the Nuisance Alligator Control Program Southern Region, a recorded 481 complaints in the first two months of 2003 in Florida were registered. This number dropped to only 431 complaints in 2005.

Along with its state animal, the Florida panther, Florida is home to many other animal species in danger of becoming extinct. Such animals include the American alligator, the Florida pine snake, the Florida black bear and the humpback whale.

So what does this all mean? What responsibilities do we, as residents of Martin County have? As long as we are conscious of our surroundings and of the changes happening around us we can be prepared to find solutions to problems that may arise due to a growing population.

Growth is fine as long as it's controlled.

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