**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS**
**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**
**NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA — SPRING 2010**

*Buster Longino has lived in the Sarasota area since 1934. After graduating from the University of Florida with a degree in forestry, He returned to manage the 8,000-acre Longino Ranch in eastern Sarasota County. The ranch is a diversified operation with cattle, timber products, and citrus among others being produced. There is a conservation easement and a mitigation bank on the property to preserve the natural areas of the ranch. He has also served on the board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Manasota Basin Board, and as a Sarasota County Commissioner. He retired from day-to-day management of the ranch in 2005, but he and his wife, Jane, continue to live there.*

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| **Interview with:** | **Berryman "Buster" Longino** |
| **Date of Interview:** | **April 1, 2010** |
| **Interviewer:** | **Willis Schueler** |
| **Subject of Interview:** | **Agricultural Land Use in Sarasota County** |
| **Transcription Date:** | **April 26, 2010** |

**Schueler:** Do you think you can introduce yourself?

**Longino:** My name is Berryman T. Longino, but most people call me Buster or B.T. How far do you want to go with an introduction?

**Schueler:** That's just fine. So, I guess we might as well start at the beginning. You're not originally from Sarasota County, are you?

**Longino:** I'm originally… Well, I was born in Jacksonville. I grew up in Bradenton…

**Schueler:** Okay…

**Longino:** …and I lived in Sarasota County for oh, going on sixty years.

**Schueler:** Sixty years, alright. But I guess, I mean, you moved down here with your family as a kid. What first drew your family down to, you know, Sarasota, Bradenton, this area?

**Longino:** Okay, well my... That opens a big can of worms now, and I can give you a history and... Shut that dog up! *(dog barking).* Uh, well to start with, I have to go back to my grandfa-

ther, ‘cause that’s how we got here. It all ties back there and all that’s on that other tape by the way. If you want to use it, but do you want me to go back?

**Schueler:** Yeah, could you just give me a brief introduction, if that’s alright?

**Longino:** Alright, we’ll try the brief version. My grandfather was a turpentine man in North Carolina and when the...Wait a Minute, that’s not gonna work. Shut up, Dog!

**Schueler:** Do you think it would be alright, maybe, if I closed the door?

**Longino:** No, they’re outside. That won’t help a bit. Gretchen! Gretchen! Come here. The boys are back. We’ll try again.

**Longino:** My grandfather came from North Carolina down to Florida. That was my mother’s father. And as a turpentiner, he had turpentine stills scattered around the state and in fact my mother was born on a turpentine still up near Lake City. And when—during the big Depression when everybody in Florida was in the real estate business, including my dad—he was an electrical engineer to start with, but he went in the real estate business like everybody else back in the ‘20s and then when the boom busted in ‘29, everybody was broke. And, for the next ten years, we were in a terrible Depression much worse than the one we are in. And, but anyway, the turpentine business was still going well, so. We were in Jacksonville, and coming down here to Southwest Florida and starting a turpentine operation because he knew there was stands of pines, virgin pines that was in eastern Sarasota County. So, to short that story up, they came down, they bought the property, my grandfather and my father together and my dad started a turpentine camp, here. And built a still here, and for oh, 15–16 years operated a turpentine camp here and also he started one up in Bee Ridge on Clark Road and McIntosh, there. And so, that how’s we got to this part of Florida.

**Schueler:** So you grew up on a turpentine ranch—farm?

**Longino:** Well, what he had down here was called a turpentine camp and a still. Just a turpentine operation. But I actually grew up in Bradenton. Uh, there were no white people involved in turpentining. You know, actual production. But there were… it was a big industry at one time. The biggest industry probably in the Southeast.

**Schueler:** Right, and so, just so—I’ve never even heard of turpentine before. It’s tree resin, right? Or?

**Longino:** Pine tree resin. And it’s distilled. It’s distillate, distillate *(different pronunciations).* That’s turpentine. Anyway, that’s what brought us here and that’s why we acquired this property. It was for turpentining and then later on when I got out of service, got out of after the Second World War and got out of college, I came down here to manage the property and I started raising cattle.

**Schueler:** Alright, going back just a bit. So, you went to college at University of Florida, right?

**Longino:** I did.

**Schueler:** And you studied?

**Longino:** Forestry.

**Schueler:** Yeah, so silviculture? Am I saying that right?

**Longino:** That's part of forestry, yeah. Silviculture is one part of forestry.

**Schueler:** So, what does that... So, when you were studying forestry, what exactly were you studying?

**Longino:** Well, that's a whole... Well you start with... You have to have a little scientific background, you know history, I mean chemistry and things of that nature, botany and uh... But in forestry you study... First, you study dendrology, that's the study of trees. You know, you learn trees. Learn to identify them and in your botany part you learn how trees grow, and why trees grow and all that sort of thing. And… And then you know, it progresses from how to measure trees, and how to manage forests in order for production of timber, and other things.

**Schueler:** After you got your degree, you moved back down here. And were you planning to do forestry? Did you do some sort of forestry business on this land? Or, I mean how did your degree factor into what you were planning to do?

**Longino:** Well, we came here because of pine trees, you know and so, well I figured that's what I want to study. And we still have about a third of our land is in forest land, and we still produce timber and other things that are derived in the forest. We'll get to that maybe in a bit, but as a young man, I decided fairly early on it takes a long time to grow a tree and to make a living in the meanwhile, I decided that cattle were a little faster turnover, so that's when I started adding cattle to the mix.

**Schueler:** Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. So, you basically started a cattle ranch and pretty much starting when you settled down here? Or?

**Longino:** When I came out of college, yeah.

**Schueler:** Alright. So I guess. Going back to...How was the property like when you came to the...

**Longino:** Well, it was no improved pasture. It all... In years past, we had leased the property to a cowman who ran open range cattle. I mean, and you know there were very few fences and they just ran their cattle on the native land. But when I started, there were like a whole area that you see out there was all... That was a big palmetto prairie and then there were other areas that were timber land. I decided instead of clearing and as the industry was beginning to change during the early 50's, people began to improve pastures. Prior to that, there were very little improved pastures in Florida or in South Florida. But, starting in the late '40s, early '50s, people began to clear land and plant grasses and cultivate 'em for cattle to graze on. And so, we did the same. But, I didn't clear any forestland. All the land I cleared was palmetto prairie land. And for several reasons: One, I was interested in the forest. I wanted to maintain our forest land for tree production. But also, it was easier and cheaper to clear the palmetto land then it was forest land. So,

that's what we did and I started planting grasses, but we still maintained our forest. Now, besides timber for, you know, lumber, plywood, pulpwood or paper and other timber products, they… Anymore, there are other things we can get income, we can derive in our forest that we didn't used to do. Most of them are what my son refers to as our environmental capital and things like mitigation for vast endangered species. Right now, we have a mitigation area for the gopher tortoise, and that brings in income. And we have wetland mitigation, areas we have restored that we get credits for that we can sell to developers. And I foresee in time to come you know carbon credits, and various things like that, our environmental capital will be our main source of income.

**Schueler:** So, you mentioned that you had restored some wetlands as part of these environmental capital projects.

**Longino:** Mm hmm.

**Schueler:** So originally, back some decades ago, had you like filled in a wetland?

**Longino:** Well, actually there was a large area that, uh, it's kind of a long story. Well, we sold a portion of the ranch back around 1960 and while it was sold to—actually, it was the Bronfman family who were Seagram's people. They owned the Seagram's distilleries. And they bought part of the ranch. But, 'bout ten years later, they sold, but they sold that ranch to a man named Walton, who owns it today. But there was part of it that was sort of jutted out into our other land, and we bought that back. Oh, a section, a square mile. And that section contained almost all wetlands. I mean a great portion of the section was in wetlands. While they owned it, they had drained it. They dug these big canals through it when the Bronfman's owned it. And so, it was just a piece of drained land. And it did provide more grass that way for pasture and cattle.

Well, when we bought it back, we conceived of a mitigation bank by restoring that back to what it was before it was drained and it involved all sorts of agencies. You know—the EPA, the DER, the NRCS, the Fish and Wildlife—you name it, they were involved. And it was a lengthy process. We took on a partner who runs an environmental business and he had the lead on how to do all those things. We applied for mainly the water management district for credits, some to the Corp of Engineers, and they allocated credits to us as we restored certain areas of that property. And so, we have accumulated a sizable number of credits and when development building starts back after this Depression we should be able to sell more credits. We occasionally sell one now and it's quite lucrative when you do. But, as in everything in the building industry right now, it's pretty dead.

**Schueler:** Okay, just going back a bit. So, I suppose the whole process of, once… you know, bought the property back from your neighbors. And then you were trying to make it... What's the whole... How do you restore a wetland?

**Longino:** Okay, what we did, we went in and filled in the ditches that had been dug through there. We built a berm across about, oh, three-quarters of a mile, I guess, and spillways and to raise the water level. *[Recorder accidentally stops]*

**Schueler:** The recorder sort of had just a bit of a problem. Could you just, I'm sorry, just repeat the answer about the whole process of you know, restoring the wetland?

**Longino:** The process of restoring the wetlands... First, we got all these agencies that told us what we had to do, and so we would go in and fill in all the ditches that had been dug and we built a berm about three-quarters of a mile long that would raise the water level back to its pre-development level. And one of the expenses involved in this process was getting rid of the exotics that had come in—Brazilian pepper, and tropical soda apple and things of that nature. We had to keep on top of that all the time. That's an ongoing thing, to keep control of the exotics.

**Schueler:** So, going back a bit. So, you said from this restoring the wetland, you get like credits. What exactly are those?

**Longino:** Alright, you're allocated credits and this is a formula derived mainly by the water management district. It's a nationwide process sort of thing. I mean, it's not something that was invented in Florida or by us, and it's done throughout the country in various areas, these mitigation projects. And, it's pretty scientific. They map the area very carefully. They determine the hydrology of the area. They get a very good topographic view of the area and then they determine through some magical process, they determine that this is... if you restore this to this level of restoration, then you will be allocated so many credits.

**Schueler:** So, these credits have... You know, you can sell them?

**Longino:** The credits are on the open market. You know, there's no agency, no governmental agency that buys these credits or anything. Well, occasionally the highway department will have to buy credits, but it's on the open market. Mostly, people who are developing land for one reason or another that has a wetland on it. Alright, and you take a man who is putting in a Wal-Mart and he's got a 100-acre parking lot that they have, you know. Well, then there's a one-acre or two-acre part wetland right in the middle of where they want to put their parking lot. Well, what they can do? They can go out and buy a thousand acres of land somewhere and mitigate it themselves… if they possibly… but the cheapest and easiest thing is to buy credits from us.

**Schueler:** So basically, how these credits function is so that developers can fill in wetlands that makes sure the amount of wetlands remains the same, correct?

**Longino:** Right, right. No net loss of wetlands and when you apply for a permit to develop an area all sorts of agencies are involved in the permitting. The water management district is one of them and so they say alright we want to pave over that one-acre pond out there in the middle of this area. Well, then you will have to buy enough credits where a pond has been created, in other words, to offset that. Theoretically, it offsets any loss, and so they come to us and say we want to buy a credit, you know. And, the market for credits is... and we're not the only bank in the world for credits, but right now we're the only in this watershed, and it's limited to a watershed. And ours is the Myakka River Watershed.

**Schueler:** So what you're saying is basically if I wanted to do some sort of development in the Myakka River Watershed you have to buy credit from someone in the Myakka River Watershed?

**Longino:** Yeah, Yeah.

**Schueler:** Alright, so you're the only one in this watershed.

**Longino:** Right now, we're the only bank, I think. There have been some thoughts of other people starting one, but I don't know of another one right now, so. And, it's rather complicated how the value of the credit is determined and our partners handle most of that, 'cause they're in the business.

**Schueler:** I mean, you earlier mentioned that you're not really selling credits now because of the economy. When the economy gets moving like five, six, seven years ago. I mean, do you see the values of those credits will go up a lot?

**Longino:** Well, yeah. Of course, we weren't in business back then. I mean, our bank wasn't. I mean, but 'bout the time we got our bank established and started selling credits that's when the bottom fell out, and nobody was buying them. But, there's still a little market. Occasionally, somebody will develop something now, mostly in the North Port area is where our big market is.

**Schueler:** So, this is a mitigation bank.

**Longino:** That's it, a mitigation bank.

**Schueler:** But you also have, I believe, a conservation easement on the land as well.

**Longino:** What we did several years ago, about five or six years ago, we decided, I mean, the water management district and the county, desired to do this and we desired to do it, too. Or, at least some of the family did, and enough of the family wanted to preserve the land because our family had this land since 1934, and the current generation is all in favor of preserving it and keeping it as a ranch, and as much natural areas as possible cause they love to come here. They like to hunt and they just like to see Florida. This is Florida. So, we sold to both the water management district and the county. They cooperated and bought a conservation easement on about half of the ranch, which provides income for us, and protected about 4,000 acres of Sarasota County for the public for the future.

**Schueler:** So, is this like a unique arrangement that you have? The conservation easement?

**Longino:** No, it's not too unique anymore. It used to be, but today there is a number of conservation easements around. Our neighbors the Carltons have a large conservation easement on their property, which is a big piece of property. There's a few smaller ones around. I know we have… I belong to the Myakka Conservancy, and we have conservation easement on a small piece of property over on the Myakka River near there up in Manatee County, and umm… I'm trying to think if there are any other large ones in this area. There are a number of them scattered around the state, but I don't know of any more right in this area.

**Schueler:** You've talked a lot about working with the regional water management district. Correct, or?

**Longino:** The water management district is a sixteen-county area they cover, it's called Southwest Florida Water Management District better known as "Swift Mud" (SWFWMD). And...

**Jane Longino *(Buster's Wife):*** Need to have some sort of estimation of how much longer you will be?

**Schueler:** Well, I'm planning on coming back. So, I'm pretty flexible. Are you getting close to dinner time?

**Jane Longino:** Yes, and I got a daughter here with three kids and so I got work through that.

**Schueler:** Is fifteen more minutes ok?

**Jane Longino:** That's fine.

**Longino:** We'll talk fast. You got to come back some more, and we can tour around, take pictures.

**Schueler:** We were talking about the water management district. So, I mean this is more of a recent thing, right? I mean, was it around when you first came?

**Longino:** No, the water management district wasn't. It was just getting started back in the, probably, early '60s or in the late '50s. There was... It has sort of evolved and SWFWMD [Southwest Florida Water Management District] has, and back in the '70s, I think it was, early '80s. I was on the governing board of SWFWMD, and then for years, I was on the Manasota Basin Board, which is a division of SWFWMD. But prior to that there was no water management at all in Florida.

**Schueler:** Right, so you said you actually served on the board. When you were on the board, what exactly were you doing?

**Longino:** Well, on the board I just went to board meetings and we okayed permitting and policies and things like that. But, the water management district, what they do, it's a pretty big agency. They've got hundreds of people that work for the district now, and they're engineers, a lot of them, and they regulate the use of land wherever it has any effect on water. Well, every piece of land has an effect on water. So, in order to farm a piece of land like that you gotta go to the district and get a permit. They come out, and they tell you, well, you got to stay this far away from that little wetland, and they've got rules and regulations for about everything, and also they permit well water. So, you have to... In order to withdraw water from a well in this part of Florida, in fact anywhere in Florida today, you have to have a permit. And, periodically you have to renew that permit for how many gallons of water you can withdraw in one well or one area, and it has to be tied into the use of the water in that area. Like, for a citrus grove you're allocated so much water or for row crops, you're allocated so much water, and for watering cattle, just water troughs. You have to have a permit on that well.

**Schueler:** As a farmer and a rancher, is that the government agency the one you're dealing with the most, or?

**Longino:** Say what, now?

**Schueler:** You know, working as a farmer you must have to deal with them quite a lot.

**Longino:** We do, we... and sometimes it's... I have gotten along very well with the water management district. I found, and I do that with most things, I prefer to work with somebody than

against them. They are a lot of people—a lot of ranches, a lot of farmers—who don't like the water management district because they have regulated them. And well, I've been on the other side of the regulation there. Sometimes, some agency, government agencies can get heavy handed and can be most obnoxious. But, I have found the water management district to be pretty good to work with. They're good people, most of them, and if you work with 'em, you can get along fine, but they have fingers in every aspect of life almost.

**Schueler:** How would you say having the regulation—since you were farming before they had regulated water management—has that changed like for you and other farmers, farming a lot?

**Longino:** Well, it has, and some for the good. It's made farmers be more conservative in their farming techniques, and actually, the [water management] district has helped a lot in doing research work, and that sort of thing. It has made life different 'cause back in my father's time and really early on when I started, we could do most anything without a permit. You know, we burn the woods, we burn our woods periodically, and routinely. And back then, when I started, you didn't have to do anything, but go out there and start burning whenever you wanted to and wherever you wanted to. Well, today you got to have a permit, first from the county. You get an annual permit that you have to buy, and that's always been a sore spot having to buy a permit to do what we used to do all the time for nothing, and then you get a daily permit from the Division of Forestry—which, that's a good thing, I think that's fine because you call on them, when you need help. When you get a wildfire—a fire gets out of control—they're there to help you. And, they've got techniques of burning. And they tell you whether or not it's too dry today, the winds blowing too hard, "I don't think you ought to do that today." That's good. So, we get the two permits every time we go to burn the woods, and what other permitting... Building permits, but everyone has that, has to have a permit to build something. Whenever we want to dig a ditch to drain an area for something, we want to farm it or something, that has to be a detailed permit from the water management district and from the county. Actually, it's easier to get a permit from—I mean to deal with—the water management district than it is the county. The county seems to be a little more particular, and sometimes it's not too pleasant. But we live with it, you know.

**Jane Longino:** Are you being recorded? I don't want to use the orange juicer, if you're trying to talk.

**Longino:** Right, don't use it.

**Jane Longino:** Okay, thank you. That's all I needed to know.

**Schueler:** Even though, obviously, there's a lot of red tape, you'd say a lot of this environmental and legal regulation is worth it, right?

**Longino:** Yeah, it is, it is. It's a good thing, and you know, I used to be... I used to think that all this regulation was terrible, and a lot of people still do. But, you know, I've been here all my life in Florida. And I watched it go from back when I was a boy and there were about a million people, I think, in the whole state, if that many. And today, there are what how many millions of people?

**Schueler:** About twenty million, I think.

**Longino:** About twenty million people. So, I watched the land being gobbled up into all sorts of developments, not only just agriculture. You fly over the state, you know, there are mobile home parks everywhere, and they are roads, and they are vast areas that have been cleared for this, that, or the other, and housing developments, and... I came to the conclusion a long time ago, that we have to be regulated. You know, we can't be independent, but some people would brand me a liberal on that score, and I guess I am, but I believe in government regulation when it comes to use of the land.

**Schueler:** Especially in regards to, for example, water management. Do you think without any regulations, there would be problems? Would there be shortages of water?

**Longino:** Well, yes. As a matter of fact, all agriculture, municipal water sources too, and phosphate and all sorts of industries use a lot of water. Without it being regulated, you'd have water wars. You know, you suck an area dry. There is an area in parts of several counties here on the West Coast, called SWUCA [Southern Water Use Caution Area]. Have you ever heard of that? It's… I'm trying to think what the acronym stands for. But anyway, it's an area where the aquifers have been drawn down to the point where it's dangerous. And as they are drawn down, it creates saltwater intrusion from the coast. And so, without... The water management district has been trying to slow that intrusion down, and keep that area of depression of the aquifers from expanding or getting deeper and so, they have limited water use, water withdrawal in that whole area, and... But without it, some people would get water, you'd have to go deeper and deeper and it would eventually, nobody would have any water, and there would be saltwater intrusion. And so without the regulation, people don't regulate themselves. Somebody has to do it for them.

**Schueler:** But around here, like Manatee County, Sarasota County. There hasn't been such a problem with saltwater intrusion...

**Longino:** Well, there is some. A good bit of Manatee County and some of Sarasota County is in that SWUCA. I'm trying to think what that stands for. I've lost it right now. It's the area of endangered withdrawal. I think that type of regulation is necessary because of our population increasing. Back when we didn't have anybody, there was no problem at all. You could go out and pump all the water you want and do whatever you want because you were just one little entity, you know. And there's a lot of land. Now, there's a lot of people. A lot of people, and we use a lot of water, and we use a lot of land, and people aren't always very good stewards of our land.

**Schueler:** You were talking about wells. When you moved here, did you get water from a well to start?

**Longino:** Yeah, we have wells today, but back... Well, for instance, back in the 1950s and '60s, the Soil Conservation Service was very beneficial or instrumental in guiding us and helping us to learn how to irrigate land, and grow clovers out here. And if you see an aerial photo from those years or sometimes if you fly over a lot of this land, you'll notice a lot of the pasture you see around have got herringbone patterns. Little ditches in 'em. All that was irrigated land, and it took big wells. We put down two big twelve-inch wells down about a thousand feet, and a couple more smaller wells, six- and eight-inch wells. And put big turbines in 'em, and to pump that water out. We could irrigate... We irrigated hundreds of acres here, but that was before we were required to have a permit.

But, several factors changed all that. The biggest factor was the fact that we could irrigate with a diesel engine, you know, running our big pumps, and buy that diesel 10 to 12 to 14 cents a gallon. That, in relation with what our calves we're bringing in, was very profitable. Well, all of a sudden there was a time when we had a fuel crunch here in the country. And you probably don't remember that, but there was a time when we got on fuels you know gasoline and diesel fuels. People were lined up at gas stations and everything trying to get a gallon of gas. But gasoline went from 12 cents a gallon up to over a dollar in a very short time, and that just made it impractical to pump water using diesel. I mean, it didn't pay off. You know it cost more to pump water than you were getting out of the crops you were raising. So, everybody quit, but still there's evidence of it all over Sarasota County and Manatee, too.

**Schueler:** When, you're talking about the fuel crunch, the 1970s or…?

**Longino:** Yeah, it was the Sixties and Seventies.

**Schueler:** So, I think your wife probably wants you to be with your family for dinner, now. So, we'll have to finish up some other time.

**Longino:** I think it would be fun if you come back one day, and we'll just come back a little earlier and then, we'll take a ride, and we can take a ride and talk too. I'll show you what the country looks like.

**Schueler:** Alright, thank you.

**Longino:** And if you want to bring anybody, that would be alright too.

**Interview with:** **Berryman "Buster" Longino**
**Date of Interview:** **April 6, 2010**
**Interviewer:** **Willis Schueler**
**Transcription Date:** **April 28, 2010**

**Schueler:** So, when we first started, the first thing we passed was the cattle pastures and stuff.

**Longino:** Mm hmm, the cow pens—they were working. Working cattle. Periodically during the year, they have to bring all the cows in, we don't do it all at one time, but we do a little bit every few weeks. We bring a bunch of cows in and do whatever has to be done to them. Like worm them or spray them for insects and things like that. Right now, they're worming calves. So, that's a sort of a constant thing that we do year-round. Work those cattle. You have to go down in the field and round them up, two or three guys on horses, and several cow dogs, and bring those cattle into the cow pens. Is that working?

**Schueler:** Let's see, let me check.

*(Interviewer and interviewee drive to another part of the ranch)*

**Longino:** Alright, we left the headquarters up there where the cow pens are and where we were working the cattle, and we drove down the road. Right now we're about two miles south of that point and we're stopped here at the corner of four sections: section 27, 28, 33, and 34. And this is the point where our land, our conservation easement, starts and we have from this point south, the land is in a conservation easement through the water management district, and the county, Sarasota County. They'll control that easement. What that means is that this land is dedicated from here on down to never be developed any more than what it is now. It's what we're looking at here. It's timberland here and pasture land. That's what it's slated to remain in perpetuity. Which is what we sort of desired. I say "we," the Longino family and the extended families, the Mitten' and the Currys, who are my sisters' family. We all own this land together. We have dedicated this land to be undeveloped forever as far as we're concerned. And while we're at this point down here in this section 33 and were in the northeast corner of section 33 back on the southern part, we have what's know as a mitigation bank. Have I talked to you about...?

**Schueler:** Yeah, we talked about it last time.

**Longino:** We talked about it, ok. You know what a mitigation bank is.

**Schueler:** Just going back a bit to what we were talking when we were going by the cow pen area. So, that's what the main interest of the ranch has been going back 55, 60 years. It's always been there. Cattle—as far as water usage—is fairly minimally intensive, right?

**Longino:** Yes, it's minimally intensive today for water use for cattle ranching. But at one time, it was not. Back in the late '50s and early '60s and up to the 1970s, a lot of those fields that we came through, that you just saw, were irrigated. Have we talked about that before?

**Schueler:** Yeah, you talked about, you know, you had the well and then you used diesel and diesel motors, right?

**Longino:** Right, right. But it became impossible to do that when the price of diesel fuel went so high. And so, we don't do that anymore. We still have those wells there and occasionally we will pump one a little bit for cattle to drink, but that's not very much of a use, really. Now in our citrus grove, we do irrigate that. But, we use a state of the art technique with micro-jets, little sprinklers beneath every tree. And it's a very conservative way to irrigate.

**Schueler:** Before I get to talking more about the citrus groves, so you don't irrigate the land anymore. What do you do to make sure the grass is there? Just naturally?

**Longino:** Well, just naturally. Now, we see we graze all these natural areas, too. Mother Nature takes care of that. She... Well, we burn periodically. Which, that's the natural cycle of things in Florida, here. If we didn't burn it, nature would burn it. But we like to burn it on our schedule rather than hers. And sometimes that's good and sometimes it's not so good. But, that's the one of the things we do. We burn it, and occasionally we do some brush control to keep the palmettos from getting too big. And, we do harvest timber on those lands. And on our improved pastures, we don't irrigate them, but we do fertilize them occasionally. And we rotate, graze them, and occasionally we'll do some mowing. We make hay on some of them and some of them we don't. Some of them we lift sod off of the head grass. Occasionally, we will get some sod off of it, and then refurbish it. And sometimes, we'll change it to a different grass after we lift the sod.

**Schueler:** So, now. So, basically the only use we're talking about, sort of, is you pipe in water for the cows to drink?

**Longino:** Actually, we pipe in water to a portion of the ranch for the cattle to drink. But, we have other areas, larger areas of natural pastures that we rely on the natural water system that's there. The ponds, which, in an extremely dry year—which we just got through three dry years up until this one—water gets to be a problem and at times we have to actually just shut off a pasture because there is no water there for cattle to drink, and have to move those cows. But most of the time, we got water holes dug and they'll go down maybe 10, 12, 14 feet down and usually they'll have a little water in them; even in the driest times. It's not the best in the world, but it's something to drink. But other than that, we don't use a lot of water.

**Schueler:** So, just sort of dwelling on quickly the other big thing, which is forestry. You don't use... That's all Mother Nature, right?

**Longino:** As far as reproduction?

**Schueler:** Yeah.

**Longino:** Yeah, I rely on natural reproduction, which this South Florida slash is real good about that. Our problem is too much, and we have to thin it down. What we do rely on here in a lot of places where the trees come up real thick when they go up to the size of—oh, let's say fence posts—we'll come in and thin it for a fence post. Maybe thin twice for the little posts. Then later on, you can come in when they get to be 20, 25 years old, you come in thin it again for pulp wood or other similar products. Today, they use instead of pulp, a lot of trees go into mulch making, and so we thin for that. Then later on, when the tree is about 40 years old, it's usually big enough what we call a "veneer log"—what they make plywood with. That's a much higher-priced product than pulp wood. And we also sell poles; some of these trees make real good light

poles. And that's the highest market we have is for poles. Of course, you have to select a tree here and a tree there to find a good, straight, clear tree.

And between, you know, the veneer logs and some saw logs... Sometimes... There's no sawmills right down in this area, so you have to pick the market where there is a demand. So, for veneer logs there is a demand, but they go all the way up to North Florida to the mills up there that make you plywood. But, pulp wood is… in this part of Florida is so far from the paper mills that it really doesn't pay to grow trees just for pulp wood. That's a byproduct sort of thing. But, we rely on natural regeneration for our pine forest, and there's some really logic to that, in that we seem to have good genetics in our pines here. We have had some people out, attempted one time to... I was going to plant some pines after we had a kill-off, an insect invasion that killed off a lot of pines, and said "Well, I'm going to have to replant that area." But we had some timber geneticist, pine geneticist touring around down here one time and they said "I wouldn't do it." He said "If you do plant a tree, grow your seedling from your own seeds." So, I decided well maybe that's best, because you get good genetics in the timber you got, it's suited for the area where you are, and if you take some seedlings from a state nursery that came from some other place, you could alter the genetics in a negative way.

**Schueler:** It seems to me like the key ingredient in this forestry business is patience.

**Longino:** Forestry has to be a very patient occupation or avocation or industry. That's one reason when I got out of school and decided to come down here and start managing this land. I had forestry in mind, pretty much, but the more I thought about it, the fact it takes a long time to grow a pine tree. You know, if you got a forty-year rotation, you gotta eat in the meanwhile. So cattle is a much faster turnover. So, I decided to start raising some cattle. So, we are a combination cattle ranch/forestry operation and whatever else. I don't know whether I've talked about this or not, we also in more recent years are getting some income from what my son calls our environmental capital. And that is the fact that we do have some natural areas here on the ranch, and we do have... have preserved some of it, and we tend to continue to preserve some of it. So, we can get, actually, get some remuneration for mitigating certain things. For instance, just a couple years ago, we started a gopher tortoise mitigation area, a relocation area. Gopher tortoises, as you know, are protected, and a developer has to—if he wants to put a big parking lot over an area that's got some gopher tortoise on it—he has got to move those tortoises. There's only certain places you're allowed to do that. And we got certified by the Fish and Game department [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission] to accept gopher tortoises. And so that's another source of income. And we have, of course, the mitigation bank where we have mitigated wetlands, and we sell credits from that. And my estimation in time—and this is something I've thought for many, many years since I first started here—that sooner or later these natural areas are going to be valuable, you know. And eventually, when they become scarce, the public will realize their value to, you know, to the ecology, the environment. They have numerous values to the public and in general and nowadays, the public is beginning to realize that. That's how we were able to get paid for our conservation easement. We can get remuneration for gopher tortoises and maybe at some point there'll be some type of plant mitigation or endangered species both plant and animal. So, I think that our future is with our environmental capital.

**Schueler:** One of the things, I've been thinking about is that Florida has so many more people than it did fifty, sixty years ago.

**Longino:** That's right.

**Schueler:** I mean, back when you started, this land must have been all over Florida.

**Longino:** Yeah, Florida was one big, open woodland, and as I remember as a boy I could drive from our home up to Jacksonville—from Sarasota to Jacksonville. And, there would just be miles and miles of cutover stump land. Well, today most of that area is populated with mobile homes, and orange groves, and golf courses, and housing developments and you name it. There's not a whole lot of real, native Florida left. But there's a lot more people. And so, I've come to the conclusion… early in my life I didn't believe this. I believed in rugged individualist, you know. I didn't believe a whole lot in government regulation. But as the state has become so heavily populated, I've changed my thoughts on that. And as a matter of fact, I've been involved in regulation when I was on the water management district board. That... A good part of their duties are regulation of water use, so I have come to believe that we have to have government regulation to keep us from killing our golden goose, here. Which we have a tendency to do because we don't seem to be able to regulate ourselves.

**Schueler:** So, let's see, going beyond that... I guess the one aspect—we've covered cattle, we talked about turpentine a bit last interview, and forestry—we haven't talked a lot about citrus, but are you planning to drive by the citrus fields?

**Longino:** Yep, yep…

**Schueler:** So, do you want to talk about it when we get over there?

**Longino:** Alright, We'll wait till we get there.

*(Interviewer and interviewee drive to orange groves on the ranch)*

**Schueler:** Now, we're looking at the orange groves, right? You said this is the newest part of the ranch, correct?

**Longino:** Well, no… There is no such thing as the "newest part" of the ranch. But, this used to be… well originally, when I first started, it was just a palmetto prairie out here. Then, I planted in grass, and these were grass patches in here. This was an irrigated grass patch, this little area here, this 300 acres here in this grove. So about ten, twelve years ago we decided it would be a good idea to branch out into citrus. And so, we planted this 300 acres of citrus and we joined as a partner my brother-in-law—my late brother-in-law, who had a citrus operation over on the East Coast in Fort Pierce, a packing house and groves over there. We did this as a joint venture, and we planted this 300 acres, half grapefruit and half oranges. The grapefruit did well while they were able to market them through the packing house there over in Fort Pierce. It's a long drive from here to there to haul it, but it paid off there for a little while when we could ship grapefruit over there. Well, the grapefruit market went way down, so we are kind of mostly depending on oranges now. Oranges still, for juice, are bringing in a pretty good price. Grapefruit are not. You can lay that to a lot of different things. One of them is the fact that some doctor, medical group came out and said you shouldn't eat grapefruit and take any of the statins or Lipitor or things like that. And that hurt the grapefruit quite a bit. But anyway, when we had a freeze last year, a pretty bad one, it damaged mainly our grapefruit pretty badly. And we had another bit of freeze this

year. We had a long, cold winter here in 2010. You know, late '09 and '10. And, it's done some damage, too. But the trees are coming out now, and the orange trees are loaded with blossoms and we're hoping that we'll get a good set on a crop of oranges for next year. The grove has not been, the past few years, has not been the most profitable venture, but we're hoping maybe in the future, it will be.

**Schueler:** Just going back a bit, this isn't traditional citrus country is it?

**Longino:** Right, prior to 1980, the mid '80s, nobody planted much citrus down in this area. And when I went to school in the 1940s, a professor who taught citrus culture said that you can't grow citrus down there in that flatwoods country. So, it wasn't considered citrus land. Well, in the 1980s we had a series of freezes throughout most of Florida. And over a period of four, five years, it killed all the citrus in Central Florida. Over, you know, between here and Orlando. That was probably the most prolific citrus growing area in the world. There was just thousands and thousands of acres, as far as your eyes could see, of big, beautiful citrus groves. Well, within a period of what—five or six years—they were all killed by the series of freezes. Well, the industry, rather than putting back citrus groves, they put them back into houses. If you ride up US-27 through all that citrus area, there is nothing but houses as far as the eye can see. And the industry moved south. There was a lot of people who had a lot of assets and money tied up in the citrus. You know, your big packing companies, your big juice companies. So, they moved south and so they developed other techniques, such as a better system of drainage and irrigation that would work better down here in South Florida. And that's just what we did. When we started this grove, we adapted the latest technique of drainage. We hired the engineers that knew how to do it, and did this. And also, our irrigation system is state-of-the-art micro-jet irrigation. There's probably hundreds of miles of pipe that's buried under this grove for irrigation purposes. And then along every row to every tree, there is a pipe that runs along the surface, and a little sprinkler under every tree, and that not only is good for irrigation for when it's dry, but during a cold period, a night when a freeze is predicted, if you run those pumps and sprinklers, there is a certain amount of heat that comes off from that sprinkler, and frequently it will save the tree from being frozen. Another thing we did here when we put the grove in—a grove is a very intensive use of land and we had to have all sorts of permitting primarily through the water management district for putting in the grove. And they told us how we had to do it. And one of the requirements for any type of development, whether it be citrus or a row crop, or putting in a subdivision or parking lot: You had to have a place for your runoff water to go, a retention pond. You know, a lot of your highways and so forth have retention ponds for water runoff. Well, we had to have one for this grove. Rather than going out and digging a big excavation and making a big hole in the ground, we had about a 40-acre pond or lake that we had drained, I guess about 40 years ago. Put a big canal through it and drained it. Well, through our negotiations with the water management engineers, we were able to go back and re-establish that drained wetland or pond. We put like a fixed weir that would hold the water level back up and we were able to use that as our retention area, which was real good. It served several purposes. Not only is it a place for the water from the grove to go, it's grown up with a tremendous amount of vegetation in there. It's a great wildlife area. With the amount of vegetation that's in that wetland, the water that comes in is thoroughly purified before it goes out. The grove doesn't—in my estimation—doesn't have a lot of polluted runoff. There's bound to be some, because we do fertilize the grove, and we do spray the fruit. But the runoff from that is minimal and with our drainage system here, it captures most any contaminant that might get in there. But what it does go through, goes out into that retention area,

that restored wetland, and by the time it leaves it, that water is quite pristine. And so, we killed two or three birds with that stone.

**Schueler:** Before we get back to the citrus, what kind of wildlife can you see at that pond?

**Longino:** Well, to start with, it's a great duck area. I mean the ducks love that because it keeps water in it year-round now. But also around the perimeters, there is turkeys, a lot of turkeys, all sorts of wildlife like deer, and all your varmints like 'coons and opossums and things like that. They all utilize it. All kinds of animals utilize the water and the shelter that comes in that retention area.

**Schueler:** Just going back to the grove and stuff. So with the drainage system you have, the irrigation system you have, it saves a lot of water potentially compared to the technologies available say thirty, forty years ago?

**Longino:** Right, the way we used to irrigate—and we were involved in a grove over in Hardee County. My old grandfather had a grove over there going back into the 1920s. It was irrigated with big spray guns, and sprinkler type things, big volume type water system. It was quite labor-intensive to move those pipes around and everything. And it wasn't the most efficient method of watering. So, this micro-jet uses considerably less water than the old system. In some groves—not much over here on the West Coast, but over on the East Coast—they did a lot of flood irrigation. They had these canals over there, and they would pump water out of the canal up into the grove for a matter of hours, and just flooding it. Well, filling the ditches in between trees with water up around the roots, and then they would open them up and let it go back into the canal. That worked pretty well where you had a good supply of water, where the canals had a lot of water in them, and when the cost of pumping wasn't so expensive. The price of fuel has a lot to do with how people farm. And that was one of them. They had to stop that type of pumping because it was too expensive.

**Schueler:** So now, since you use less water especially comparatively, that must be pretty good for the bottom line as well, right?

**Longino:** In a way, it does. In the long run, probably so. But the initial cost for your infrastructure is pretty high. The cost for installing micro-jet systems in a grove is pretty high. There is a lot of piping—you know, piping or type of sprinklers and that sort of thing—as well as your pumps. You have to have pressure to pump, and you have to have a good source of water. It has to be clean water, because dirty water won't go through a sprinkler, you know, a little microjet. So, it has to be filtered and there are quite a few costs involved in actually getting it established. Once it's in, the biggest cost is maintenance. These little sprinklers break down, you know, and they get knocked over, clogged up. Somebody has to, when you're irrigating, constantly go around and check these sprinklers. But still, in the long run, if you're in citrus for the long run, it's probably cost-effective to do that.

**Schueler:** Just give me one second. I forget what I was going to ask. Okay. You have had two pretty bad freezes in the last two winters. Going back, you've been here a while, obviously...

**Longino:** I've been here a long time…

**Schueler:** Has freezes been a problem?

**Longino:** Freezes have always been a problem in Florida, but as my dad used to say, he managed this grove for my grandparents in Hardee County, so he used to go there once or twice a week, and I did it for a while myself. But, from my earliest recollections, there's always been some freezes. We used to fire groves. We used to stack up wood every so often, stack a row in the grove. And then during the night, when the temperature got below a certain degree down in the 20s, you start lighting those fires. Of course, it took a crew of people, not only to keep the fire going, but restack wood and to go get the wood. In some areas, they've used little pot burners, you know the heaters that burns fuel. All those things are not only expensive; they create an awful lot of air pollution. You take thousands of acres of groves with hundreds of thousands of heaters burning, you know, fuel or old tires or something like that. There is a lot of smoke that goes up in there and it's not all the cleanest type of smoke.

My dad used to say it was only the freezes that kept the citrus industry alive in Florida. I said, "Well, how could that be?" Well, going back into the time before the 1960s say, or maybe before the '50s, when the big juice plants came on line. Prior to that time, frozen concentrate didn't happen. All your citrus went for fresh fruit. There was always overproduction. Florida competed with California and we'd be neck-and-neck with what state would be producing the most citrus, because there was a limited market, you know, so many people to buy the fruit. So when you overproduced, the market went down to zilch, and both the growers in California and Florida suffered. Periodically, they'd have a freeze in California, and the Florida growers would rejoice, and the prices would spike up, and they'd get good money for their fruit. And then the vice versa would happen. They'd have a freeze in Florida, and the price of fruit from California would spike up.

And a lot of times, except in a rare instance, the freezes would hit certain areas harder than others. And not necessarily the same areas—sometimes the central part of the state would get really clobbered, but the coastal areas and the southern areas would be not hurt. And then other times, people down around Belle Glade and all that area, that area would get frozen out and we wouldn't be hurt all. So, it's a random sort of thing, the damage from freezes.

But, there's only been very few freezes in history, and the one that is most widely known, most remembered, was in 1894–5, and we read stories about that, how cold it got. Prior to that time, there was a lot of citrus in North Florida up as far as Gainesville and Ocala, that area and over towards Jacksonville. That was a big citrus-producing area. Well, they had a double whammy knockout freeze. In November, they had a pretty heavy freeze one night, and it really damaged—it knocked the trees back. It didn't kill them, but it really knocked the trees back pretty hard. Well, right after that, in late November and early December, the weather warmed up as it does out here sometimes. That time of year, the sun will come out and the temperature will get up in the 80s, and it's summertime again in December. And the trees all put out new shoots, and figured spring was here and began to grow. Well, in late December another freeze came, and the trees were very vulnerable at that time because they just put on all this new growth. It was a knockout freeze. The stories said the trees were exploding out in the groves it was so cold. They'd freeze and went *(exploding sound)*. You could hear 'em. But it killed every tree mostly in the State of Florida, except for a few over here near Parrish, Florida, outside of Bradenton, and a couple more areas of the state, there were a few trees that didn't get killed. Other than that, every

citrus tree in Florida was killed, and they started all over. And then it moved south. They never replanted those areas way up north. Anyway, that's a bit about freezes.

**Schueler:** Looking at just your property in particular, is it common to freeze? I mean, you've had freezes a couple of winters in a row.

**Longino:** Yeah, we've had several freezes here since this grove's been here, but this was probably the worst we had was last year. This year it wasn't that bad. It got cold and it was a long, cold winter, and we had one night when it got down into around 26, I think. And we had some damage in the oranges—the fruit itself had some freeze damage. But, other than that, it wasn't that bad a winter.

**Schueler:** I think that just about does it about citrus. Is it okay if I go on to a few other things that I didn't get to in the first interview?

**Longino:** Anything you want to ask, I'll try.

**Schueler:** You served as a county commissioner, correct? For Sarasota County?

**Longino:** I filled in for my neighbor, Mabry Carlton, who was a county commissioner for a number of years. They have the Carlton ranch, our next door neighbor here. He used to fly his airplane around, and he helped to herd his cattle in an airplane. He'd get up there and direct his men on the ground, where the cattle were, where to get 'em and so forth. And, one time, unfortunately, he had a problem and we don't know exactly what the problem was, but anyway he crashed and killed himself. Well, at that time, my family and I were out in a motor home out in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Is Cheyenne in Wyoming?

**Schueler:** Yep.

**Longino:** Okay... And I had a phone call and they told me that Mabry had been killed. Then, I started getting a lot of phone calls for the next week because they were several people that wanted me to fill in and take his place. You know, finish out his term. Well, I had to think long and hard about that, because I had no ambitions at all of ever being in politics. I had never been in politics in my life and I hadn't even thought about it. But a number of people persuaded me to go ahead and put my hat in the ring, so I did, and the governor appointed me as interim commissioner. So I served for a couple years on the commission, and it was an enlightening experience.

**Schueler:** Do you want to just sort of follow up on that. How was it an enlightening experience?

**Longino:** Well, I enjoyed it in a way. It took a lot of time. That is what the main drawback was. To be a good commissioner, it's not a part-time job. You can't run a business and still be a county commissioner and do good to both, and serve both well. And so, I found out that during my time on the commission, things didn't go all that well here at the ranch, 'cause I wasn't here very much of time because about three or four days a week, I had to go to town, and spend all day in town. And then, I was still trying to run the ranch here. I had a pretty good foreman at the time, and he was able to kind of keep things going.

But I got to know a lot of people. I found out that there are a lot of good people in government, in county government. There are a lot of fine people. Everybody is not the best in the world in county government, but there are a tremendous number of outstanding people who are dedicated. That's something I don't think everybody understands or realizes. A lot of the people who are public servants are—they're not "leeches on society"—they're doing their job, and most of 'em are doing it well. They're people we owe a debt of gratitude to. But it seems like an awful lot of people distrust government, period.

And, I remember the first meeting I went to....It was down in Venice. It was a budget meeting, I think. I was brand new, and I remember that meeting down there. The things that some of those people called you was terrible. I mean, you know, I came back home and I told my wife, "You know, I always thought I wasn't a bad sort of a guy, but after being down there, and hearing what some of those people were saying, I must be a crook, a thief, and some worse things." Because there is an awful lot of people have that attitude, I'm speaking from the county government, but it's true throughout all branches of government. People have the attitude that the government is out to get you, or that they are all a bunch of thieves. Most people I have run into government are honest, hardworking people, and they are trying to do that which is best for the public. So, that's something I learned while I was there.

I learned to do a lot of reading, a lot of preparing. Those guys just don't go there and sit once a week, and make these pronouncements. They study. I spent all my weekends, every weekend, studying this big pack about that thick. I picked it up on Friday afternoon—it was prepared by the staff—and you had to go through that packet before your Tuesday meeting so you know what you're talking about, and what people were going to be asking and expecting. Also, you need to get out and visit with the people that you represent. It was... I enjoyed it. It was kind of a fun—no, I wouldn't say fun. It was a satisfying thing to do. However, I wasn't best qualified for doing that, but you know, I caught on and was able to make do.

**Schueler:** Alright, so you were doing this in the '80s, correct?

**Longino:** Yeah.

**Schueler:** So, since this project has sort of a broad focus on water, was there any big water issues when you were working on the county commission then?

**Longino:** Okay, yeah there were. Prior to Mabry's death—and I had supported this throughout the time I had been on the water management district, the basin board, and various other agricultural-type committees—the county had bought a tremendous amount of land, and all this land, that was it, was south of the park there, you know. It is what became the Carlton Reserve. It was called the... well, the Ringlings at one time owned it, and then Macarthur's people owned a lot of it for a long time because of the foundation… and the county, well part of it, during Mabry's term, bought a good bit of that land, and proposed a wellfield and water system, a water treatment system. And all that was controversial. At the time, the county had some smaller systems, well fields and what not, they were getting water from, and we were buying water from Lake Manatee through Manatee County. And of course, Manatee County had us by the throat then, because they could cut off our water. So Mabry proposed that we do this new water system, a new wellfield, and we had all this acreage that we could do it in. Well, there was a lot of opposi-

tion to it from various environmental and various taxpayer groups, and so forth. But I supported it because I wanted to see us have an independent water system that would be available in emergency times. So when Mabry died, I continued that policy. We did develop the water plant and the wellfield, which today is doing fine. During that period of time, the Peace River Water Supply Authority was established. I was involved in that somewhat, both before I was on the County Commission, and when I was on the SWFWMD board, and the Manasota Basin Board. We were involved with municipal water supply systems. Anyway, we began to deal with General Development, who developed all of Port Charlotte and North Port. They owned the Peace River plant, the water supply plant. We—through the water management district —promulgated, established the Peace River Water Supply Authority, which was originally a four-county conglomerate that would cooperatively seek water supply for our municipalities. And that included Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, Desoto, and Hardee County. Well, we spent a lot of time going around from county to county trying to get the county commissions to buy into this water supply authority. Hardee County didn't want any part of it. They let us know right off the bat that they were not interested whatsoever in joining us in seeking any new water supplies. So, we crossed them off. But Desoto County came along with it. Charlotte County sort of reluctantly joined us, and of course Sarasota and Manatee joined. Our first projects were interconnects between the cities, a pipeline. So if Longboat Key ran out of water—you know, had a water shortage—they could pipe water from Sarasota or from Manatee County. If they had a problem with the Manatee system up there at Lake Manatee, they could pipe water from the Sarasota fields up there and vice versa. And there were a number of those interconnected water lines that we promoted. Our big project was to purchase the Peace River water plant. That's when we established the Peace River Water Supply Authority, and it bought that plant from General Development. That wasa long, tedious process, too, getting the various political entities to join in on it. Charlotte County didn't want any part of it. They didn't want to have anything to do with it. But, we hammered at them and hammered at them, and eventually they came around. We got the job done. And today, it's one of the finest systems in this part of Florida. Have you ever seen the water plant over there on the Peace River?

**Schueler:** No, I don't think I've seen it.

**Longino:** It's down off King's Highway, which is southeast of here just a few miles, seven or eight miles right across there, not very far. And, they scalp water off of the Peace River. They've got it rigged so that they can only take water when the flow reaches a certain level, as measured at the bridge in Arcadia. And if that water level goes down below so many cubic feet per second, they have to shut off the pumps down there. Also, the way the intakes are designed, if the river gets down below a certain level, it won't come over the top of the intakes, so that shuts it off, too. And another thing they are doing down there, they have a little reservoir they've dug—you know, a lake that they dug—to hold water. And then they started using the aquifer storage and recovery, which is, they pump potable water down into the deep saltwater zones underground and, contrary to what you might believe, that freshwater pushes out the saltwater, and creates a freshwater bubble down there, maybe a thousand or more feet underground. That water will stay there, not migrate. Oh, a little bit of it does, but the majority of it stays right there. And then during dry times, they'd come back and pump that same water back out. So, they put in a number of those wells, and more recently they have constructed a lake, a reservoir. It's the biggest thing in this part of Florida. Well, I take that back. There's one up near Riverview, just out of Tampa, that is probably equivalent in size. But, it's a monster big lake that they've designed and built,

and now it's full of water from the Peace River, which will help assure us of a fresh water supply for years to come.

**Schueler:** So, basically, in your estimation, having the Peace River Water Authority...

**Longino:** Yeah, that's right…

**Schueler:** It's done a lot to secure for the future a clean and plentiful supply of water for all the counties in it?

*(Call from Mrs. Longino on his cell phone.)*

**Longino:** Can you turn this off?

*(Interview continues)*

**Schueler:** Are you ready to start again?

**Longino:** Alright. From the Peace River Water Supply Authority over there with their source of water. A few years ago they tied in with a big pipeline all the way from that plant westward to the Sarasota County wellfield and water treatment plant, which is on the Carlton Reserve. This pipeline ties into that, and from there, there's a distribution to Sarasota, you know, Venice and parts north. So it's all tied in together and in my estimation... For years, there was a fear we were going to run out of water, you know, our population was growing so, and we didn't have enough sources of water to feed everybody. And there were sometimes when things got kind of low. But I feel now, with this system and some of the smaller entities that can tie into it, we are pretty safe for a long time to go as far as fresh water.

**Schueler:** Even if a single town, or Longboat, or whatever, the whole system is pretty well interconnected...

**Longino:** Right, every town now is pretty well connected up, so that if there's a shortage in one area, other areas can make up for that. You know, it goes to Punta Gorda… All parts of Charlotte County area are served by this water plant, Arcadia gets some of its water from that water plant, and all the cities over here get water from that.

**Schueler:** Just to sort of wrap it up… Compared to like other parts of Florida, would you say that having this makes the water supply more bountiful and more secure, especially just looking at other parts of Florida?

**Longino:** Up in Central Florida and parts north, they seem to have adequate water supplies from underground water. Our problem here in Southwest Florida was that we are withdrawing too much water and we're getting saltwater intrusion, drawing all that water from the ground. And, our population was increasing so rapidly. You know, it's a pretty dense population in this area right now down to Fort Myers. So, fresh water supplies, sources were not all that available. And, there's another factor too. For years, there's been a move afoot to withdraw water from the Myakka River. Well, from an environmental standpoint, there's a lot of people who are quite opposed to that because it's a Wild and Scenic River, and it's very, very seasonal. We believe that

it could do a lot of damage to it if we withdrew too much water from it. A lot of the damage is in the estuaries, you know, Charlotte Harbor.

**Schueler:** Alright, that brings up just one more thing. You've also been involved in Friends of Myakka, right? Could you talk about your involvement in that?

**Longino:** Well, I forget how many years ago it was that Julie Morris asked me if I would like to join her and two or three other people in starting what we called the Myakka Conservancy, a group to promote conservation in the Myakka River valley and in the watershed. We formed this group, about six or eight of us, it depends how many show up. And, we've been doing this for, I don't know, ten, twelve years now. I don't remember how long. Our main concern is protection of the Myakka River. There are other groups like Friends of Myakka that have a similar goal. Ours is sort of political in that, well, we all have that goal of protecting the Myakka River. And, in a meeting of the minds, what we can do to promote that goal. We own a couple of conservation easements that we monitor. We own a piece of land up on the Myakka River right up north of the park. We've promoted the purchase of vast pieces of property along the river. We have conducted tours for people on the river, and we have had seminars about like conservation easements and things of that nature in the county. That's what the Myakka Conservancy does.

**Schueler:** Finally, have you felt that it has had a definite impact in helping conserve and preserve the Myakka over the past ten, twelve years?

**Longino:** I think it probably has. Every little effort that anybody makes, I think, has an impact. Sometimes, it's hard to measure that sort of an impact. You know, we have urged the water management district and the county to buy certain lands, and that sort of thing.

**Schueler:** Well, I think that about covers it. So, I think we're good. Thank you very much. I'm going to turn this off now.

**Longino:** Okay.