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Panther advocates plan to sue feds

Groups say agencies failing to protect cats

Amy Bennett Williams
Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

The timing was almost cinematic: Word of a female Florida panther kitten hit and killed in rural Collier County came hours after news that three nonprofits plan to sue the federal

government for failing to protect the imperiled cats. Though advocates have called the situation dire for years, there’s a new tone when they talk about the potential suit with terms like “last stand,” make or break” and “tipping point.” Three nonprofit advocacy groups have warned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a developer, Tarpon Blue Silver King I LLC, that they intend to file a federal lawsuit in 60 days over a large

proposed development in Collier’s Florida panther habitat. The project, Rural Lands West, is a 10,264-acre residential/commercial development. The groups say federal agencies violated the Endangered Species Act by authorizing the project in what they describe as active breeding and primary zone panther habitat. They say the agencies didn’t take a hard enough look at the project’s potential impact and that what they characterize as a cursory look can spell doom for the

species. Agencies “never considered how this project would affect both the survival and recovery of the species,” said attorney Jason Totoiu, with the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the involved groups, along with the Sierra Club and South Florida Wildlands Association. “What is troubling here is that likely we’ll establish a precedent moving forward that future projects will succumb

See **PANTHERS**, Page 8A

One of Cape Coral’s oldest restaurants is up for sale



Steven “Bubba” Demuro serves a breakfast plate to one of his customers on Jan. 2. He is the co-owner of Annie’s Restaurant in Cape Coral, which opened in 1987 and which he purchased in 2018.

RICARDO ROLON/FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS & NAPLES DAILY NEWS/USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Annie’s has been a breakfast and lunch favorite since 1987

Robyn George
Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

For just the second time in the last 38 years, Annie’s Restaurant in Cape Coral is for sale. The iconic breakfast and lunch joint, which opened off SE 47th Street in 1987, was last bought in 2018 by Ron Demuro and his cousin Steve “Bubba” Demuro.

It’s one of the oldest restaurants in the city. “We’ve been mulling it over for a bit,” Ron said about selling. “We just feel the time is right.” The announcement was initially made Wednesday, Jan. 21, on Annie’s Facebook page, instead of through business brokers or specialized marketplaces. “Our thought was that a regular or

someone who has been here would buy it,” Ron said. “Someone who loves the place and loves what we do, what it’s about. Our phones have been blowing up ever since (the post).” The sale price for the fully equipped, 110-seat restaurant — with a 2COP (beer and wine) license and long-term lease in place — is \$650,000 or best offer.

See **RESTAURANT**, Page 4A

Copters, cops raise concerns in Felda

Some residents fear immigration crackdown

Amy Bennett Williams
Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Armored vehicles. A command tent. Low circling choppers. Is ICE setting up shop in Felda? Since Jan. 20, some in the rural Hendry County farming community have been on edge about the sudden law enforcement presence in a farm field with no explanation. “Some people are staying home from work,” said Juana Oceanes, who works nearby. “The Mexicans, especially, are worried. I’m Mexican too, but I’m legal.” Church worker Rick Burnette

See **FELDA**, Page 8A



A Collier County Sheriff’s Office helicopter circles a field as the agency conducts a training exercise on land off of State Road 29 near Felda on Thursday, Jan. 22. JONAH HINEBAUGH/FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS & NAPLES DAILY NEWS/USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

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