

[Bluffton Today](#) » August 24, 2009

We say ... Don't forget the developers

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There's an elephant in the room with Bluffton as it and various environmental groups shape their save-the-May-River plans: The developers.

Nobody's made much of a point of acknowledging the hulking thing, but it's there and covering our eyes won't make it go away.

At some point, and quickly, town officials must sit down with all our developers and get them on our side of the "war plan" to save the river from overdevelopment.

Unless new laws apply to the entirety of the town – and yes, this means you – the developers can simply opt out of any new plan and rest comfortably on the development agreements they fought for (and watched town officials sign) a decade ago.

Simply put, they don't have to do anything they don't want to, unless whatever new rules the town adopts applies to everybody, no exceptions. That's why they signed those binding development agreements in the first place.

The only way to keep impervious surfaces below the 10 percent threshold the town and Coastal Conservation League have cited as a goal is to get the developers on board, 100 percent. Because right now they have the right to build nearly limitless rooftops pretty much wherever they want to.

One can argue, validly, that the developers were given far too much when they annexed their properties into town and protected their zoning with development agreements, but one can also argue that it shouldn't be wet when it's raining. It is what it is; we just have to deal with it.

Muddying the waters, pardon the pun, is the city of Hardeeville, which has permitted developments similar to, and in some cases larger than, Bluffton has. And they touch both the New and Okatie rivers.

None of these plans can happen in a vacuum. All of the plans we've seen presented need to be adopted, and the sooner the better. But we can't leave the developers out of it.