



**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF RECREATION AND PARKS**

OFFICE OF PARK PLANNING



ATLANTIC RIDGE PRESERVE STATE PARK

**03.16.2021 Public Meeting
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

March 30, 2021



Ms. Yasmine Armaghani
Park Planner
Division of State Parks
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park – Unit Management Plan

Dear Ms. Armaghani:

The Treasured Lands Foundation is one of several non-profit conservation organizations that are working to permanently protect a corridor of conservation lands between Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park and Jonathan Dickinson State Park.

We are aware that the State is updating the Unit Management Plan for Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park. We have reviewed the Draft Plan and we offer these comments for your consideration.

We support the updated Optimal Boundary map and encourage you to add verbiage on Page 62 indicating your intent to work with the Acquisition and Restoration Council to amend the Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem Florida Forever project boundary so that it coincides with the new Optimal Boundary as described and shown in the updated Unit Management Plan.

We request that you consider adding a new Objective and Action in Goal IV (page 67) identifying the need to work with the Office of Greenways and Trails to acquire and preserve parcels of land between ARPSP and JDSP. Environmentally valuable resources are present on vacant lands that are presently for sale within this corridor - an area that is subject to intense development pressure. In spite of these properties being within the Florida Forever project boundary for more than a decade, no acquisitions have been completed in this area. Acquiring these parcels and bringing them into management as part of ARPSP areas is critical in restoring hydrologic conditions in the South Fork of the St. Lucie River and in the Kitching Creek/Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, one of the few state-designated and federally-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers in Florida.

We are concerned that an approximately 872-acre tract of environmentally sensitive lands in eastern Martin County that was acquired by the State in 2000 and which had previously been managed as part of the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park appears to have been removed from the State Park system. That tract, locally known as ARPSP's "Medalist property" should be re-instated as part of ARPSP, and details of its flora, fauna, vegetative communities, and other information should be included in this Unit Management Plan.

Thank you for considering these suggestions, and please feel free to contact me at 772-475-5346 if you would like to discuss these suggestions in further detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Charles Barrowclough", is written over a light-colored background.

Charles Barrowclough,
Executive Director



March 30, 2021

Ms. Yasmine Armaghani
Park Planner
Division of State Parks
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park – Unit Management Plan

Dear Ms. Armaghani:

During 2020, the Pegasus Foundation became aware of the horrendous level of human-related wildlife mortality on Bridge Road, the only east-west thoroughfare that bisects environmentally sensitive lands between Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park to the north and Jonathan Dickinson State Park to the south.

As an animal welfare organization, we felt compelled to see that data on this situation be collected and analyzed on a scientific systematic and methodical basis. Soon after the first wood stork was killed, we began underwriting the cost for having wildlife mortality surveys conducted on the ~6-mile stretch of two-lane Bridge Road between Hobe Sound and I-95. Surveys, which began on a weekly basis in early 2020, were increased in frequency to twice per week beginning in June, when it became apparent that weekly surveys were inadequate to fully document wildlife mortality that was on-going, and apparently increasing as water levels rose in response to the rainy season.

We have now documented over 658 incidents of wildlife mortality, which have included species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles (see attached spreadsheet). As the severity of the problem became increasingly apparent, we began working with Martin County's Engineering Department (who is responsible for the road) in search of corrective actions that would reduce wildlife mortality and increase driver safety. "Watch for Wildlife:" signs have been installed, and we are hopeful that future replacement of culverts with wildlife crossings will further reduce wildlife mortality.

We are aware that the State is updating the Unit Management Plan for Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park, and we hope that you will agree that protecting the wildlife that uses the corridor between ARPSP and JDSP should be addressed as part of the update to the ARPSP Plan.

Specifically, we request that FDEP consider revising and adding a new Objective and Action in the Goal IV – Maintain, improve, or restore imperiled species populations and habitats (page 67), as follows:

Goal IV: Maintain, improve, and restore populations of native wildlife species and their habitats

Objective C: Reduce wildlife mortality on roads that impact species present in ARPSP.

Action: Participate in activities to monitor and address corrective action to reduce wildlife mortality in areas that would impact species and individuals that use ARPSP.

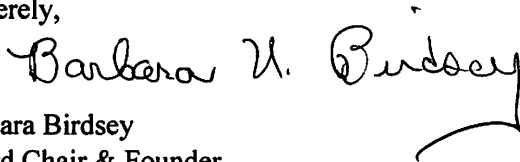
The Pegasus Foundation joins our conservation colleagues in supporting the updated Optimal Boundary map and encourage you to add verbiage on Page 62 indicating your intent to work with the Acquisition and Restoration Council to amend the Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem Florida Forever project boundary so that it coincides with the new Optimal Boundary as described and shown in the updated Unit Management Plan.

We also share the Treasured Lands Foundation's request that you consider adding a new Objective and Action in Goal IV (page 67) identifying the need to work with the Office of Greenways and Trails to acquire and preserve parcels of land between ARPSP and JDSP. Acquiring these environmentally valuable resources from willing sellers is critical for the protection of the wildlife that use this ecological corridor.

We are concerned that an approximately 872-acre tract of environmentally sensitive lands in eastern Martin County that was acquired by the State in 2000 and which had previously been managed as part of the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park appears to have been removed from the State Park system. We believe that the tract, locally known as ARPSP's "Medalist property" should be re-instated as part of ARPSP, and details of its flora, fauna, vegetative communities, and other information should be included in this Unit Management Plan.

Thank you for considering these suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara U. Birdsey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Barbara Birdsey
Board Chair & Founder



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March 31, 2021

Ms. Yasmine Armaghani, Park Planner
Division of State Parks
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park – Unit Management Plan

Dear Ms. Armaghani:

The Guardians of Martin County is a non-profit 501(c)3 conservation organization that supports Martin County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and advocates for smart growth and the conservation of environmentally valuable properties.

We are aware that the State is updating the Unit Management Plan for Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park, and is currently accepting comments on the Draft Plan, and we offer these comments for your consideration.

An approximately 872-acre tract of environmentally sensitive lands in eastern Martin County that was acquired by the State in 2000 had previously been managed as part of the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park. The Guardians' review of the Draft Unit Management Plan suggests that this parcel has somehow been removed from the State Park system, as details of its flora, fauna, vegetative communities and other information is no longer included.

The Guardians are working diligently to support the acquisition and conservation of environmentally sensitive lands in the area of the existing ARPSP parcels and between ARPSP and Jonathan Dickinson State Park. We strongly urge that the 872-acre state-owned parcel be restored as a component of ARPSP. That property and adjoining tracts are critical for restoring hydrologic conditions at the Park and managing natural resources. Thank you for your further consideration.

Yours most sincerely,

Peter H. Conze, Jr.

◆ PROTECTING THE MARTIN COUNTY DIFFERENCE SINCE 2003 ◆

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