

**FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST GOVERNING BOARD  
QUARTERLY MEETING SUMMARY  
FEBRUARY 13, 2024**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mara Gambineri, (Chair) Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation, Deborah Denys, Former elected official of a county government, Noah Valenstein, Representative of a nonprofit organization, Frank Mingo, Former elected official of a metropolitan municipal government, Vacant, Representative of the development industry.

**STAFF PRESENT**

Linda Reeves (Program Manager); Shauna Allen (OMC Manager); Karen Armstrong (Assist. Deputy General Counsel); Madison Bloom (Legal Assist.); Roman Black (Attorney); Melanie Orozco (Planner, Region 1); William McMahon (Planner, Region 3); Callie DeHaven (Director of State Lands); Lauren Cruz (Division of State Lands); Jeremy Pe (Division of State Lands); Reilly Allman (Division of State Lands); Amy Horton (Division of State Lands); Saba Shariat-Pearce (Division of State Lands); Marjorie Karter (Division of State Lands).

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Debra Woithe, Manatee County

**VIRTUAL VIA GOTOWEBINAR**

**Item 1:       Opening  
                  Roll Call/Establish Quorum  
                  Call to Order**

Chair Gambineri called the February 13, 2024, meeting of the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board to order at 10:00 a.m.

Linda Reeves was introduced as the moderator for FCT Governing Board meeting. Shauna Allen was introduced as the facilitator for the meeting. The quorum was established with four members present.

**Item 2:       Announcements**

*No announcements from the Board members.*

*No announcements from the Moderator.*

Shauna Allen provided a few housekeeping rules for the meeting including Public Comment Instructions.

**Item 3: Consider the December 13, 2023, Meeting Summary**

Staff recommended approval of the meeting summary.

**Motion by: Noah Valenstein**

**Second by: Deborah Denys**

*No comments or questions from the Board.*

*No comments or questions from the Public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:**
- WITHDRAW**
- NOT APPROVE**
- OTHER:**

**Item 4: Closing Comments**

The Parks and Open Space Ranking and Selection Meeting will begin immediately following this brief quarterly meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Gambineri adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent with no objections at 10:04 a.m.

Request for a ten-minute recess until 10:15 a.m.



**Item 3: FY 2023-24 Eligible Projects  
Application and Evaluation Report Review, Application Scoring  
Consideration, Ranking and Selection of Projects for Funding, and  
Contingent Funding**

Shauna introduced the 14 project presentations. The first seven projects were presented by staff member Will McMahon and the remaining seven projects were presented by staff member, Melanie Orozco.

**1. 23-003-FF24, Shaker Village Community Park and Center  
City of Tamarac**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 68 points.

*Tanya Williams, Grants Administrator, City of Tamarac, presented this project's objections virtually to the Board.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Frank Mingo**

*Tanya Williams, Grants Administrator, City of Tamarac, presented this project's objections virtually to the Board.*

**Deborah Denys:** *Wanted to see the application for procedures in scoring and not awarding points.*

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**2. 23-004-FF24, Ravenswood Park Land Acquisition  
City of St. Augustine**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 62 points.

*Reuben Franklin, Assist. City Manager, City of St. Augustine, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Noah Valenstein**

**Mara Gambineri:** Question about where the nature trail was located in master site file

information.

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**3. 23-005-FF24, Lagoon Conservation Property  
Town of Ocean Ridge**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 114 points.

**Noah Valenstein:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Frank Mingo**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**4. 23-006-FF24, St. Sebastian River Property  
Indian River Land Trust, Inc.**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 116 points.

*Ken Grudens, Executive Director, Indian River Land Trust, Inc. presented this project's objections virtually to the Board.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to award an additional 5 points to Objection #1 and an additional 5 points to Objection #2 for a total of 10 additional points to the final score.

**Second by: Noah Valenstein**

*Ken Grudens, Executive Director, Indian River Land Trust, Inc. presented the project excellence virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation plus 10 points.

**Second by: Noah Valenstein**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**5. 23-007-FF24, The Highlands Property  
Polk County**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 104 points.

*Tabitha Biehl, Land and Water Natural Areas Manager, Polk County, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Noah Valenstein**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**6. 23-008-FF24, Athletic Complex Expansion  
Village of Palm Springs**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 120 points.

*Juan Ruiz, Parks and Recreation Director, Village of Palm Springs, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Noah Valenstein:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Frank Mingo**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**7. 23-009-FF24, Town of Cutler Bay-Old Cutler Road Land Acquisition Project  
Town of Cutler Bay**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 80 points.

***Objections from Applicant withdrawn from consideration to the Board.***

*Rafael Casals, Town Manager, Town of Cutler Bay, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Noah Valenstein:** Motioned to approve the addition of 5 points for project excellence to the total score.

**Second by: Frank Mingo**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**8. 23-010-FF24, Crooked River Preserve  
Manatee County**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 146 points.

*Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, Manatee County, presented the project, in person, to the Board for approval.*

**Noah Valenstein:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Deborah Denys**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**9. 23-011-FF24, San Sebastian Boat Ramp and Waterfront Park  
St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 150 points.

*Jamie Baccari, Assist. Director, Parks and Recreation, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Noah Valenstein**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**10. 23-012-FF24, Fryman Preserve**

## City of Sebring

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 69 points.

*Jared Lee, Budget and Grants Coordinator, City of Sebring, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Noah Valenstein:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Frank Mingo**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

### **11. 23-013-FF24, Nelson's Cove Hydrologic Restoration and Green Space Project Florida's Nature Coast Conservancy, Inc. and the City of Cedar Key**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 95 points.

*Samantha Gibbs, President, Florida's Nature Coast Conservancy, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Noah Valenstein:** Moved to approve the addition of 10 additional points for project excellence to the total score.

**Second by: Deborah Denys**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

### **12. 23-015-FF24, Reddie Point Preserve, Phase II City of Jacksonville**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 103 points.

*Lauren Chappell, Project and Grant Coordinator, City of Jacksonville, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Noah Valenstein:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Deborah Denys**



*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**13. 23-016-FF24, Fort Myers Beach Oceanfront Acquisition Project  
Enriching Community Access to Coastal Recreation and  
Environmental Resources Town of Fort Myers Beach**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 34 points.

*Chadd Chustz, Environmental Project Manager for Operations and Enforcement, Town of Fort Myers Beach, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Deborah Denys:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Frank Mingo**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**14. 23-017-FF24, Surfside Byron Park  
Town of Surfside**

**Staff Recommendation:** Award 29 points.

*Kristina Brown, Procurement and Grant Specialist, Town of Surfside, presented the project virtually to the Board for approval.*

**Frank Mingo:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Deborah Denys**

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**Recess to calculate final scores and prepare preliminary priority list. The meeting was resumed at 12:25 p.m. with all members present.**

**Item 4: Approve Preliminary Priority List for the Parks and Open Space Ranking and Selection**

Copies of the preliminary ranking list were provided to the Board and meeting attendees and were shown on the screen.

**Staff Recommendation:** Approve the preliminary ranking list.

**Frank Mingo:** Motioned to approve the staff recommendation.

**Second by: Noah Valenstein**

**Noah Valenstein:** Would like to see FCT and FRDAP staff work with the last two projects for community beach access.

**Deborah Denys:** Please remember to label everything; don't assume anything to be interpreted.

*No comments from the public.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**Item 5: Closing Comments**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Gambineri adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent with no objections at 12:32 p.m.

## ITEM 5: Staff Reports

### A. FCT # 20-004-FF21 Gladys E. Douglas Preserve Acquisition

Gladys E. Douglas Preserve Acquisition, a joint project by The City of Dunedin and Pinellas County, was provided FCT funding in the amount of \$2,400,000 for the preservation of 44 acres for conservation and passive recreation and an additional \$1,500,000 via Legislative assistance for the acquisition of a 14.84-acre conservation easement. The site is located within an Urban Service Area that will connect the surrounding neighborhoods and greenways to new park access. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory considered the site to be a Locally Significant Natural Area due to the presence of several rare species of habitat in a small area, designated as a rosemary bald area and sand pine scrub area. Recreational developments that are proposed include various trail types, observational viewing elements, educational elements, and opportunities for fishing and canoe/kayaking. In addition to establishing open space and supporting the preservation and restoration of natural habitat communities, the project also commits to furthering comprehensive plan directives that include the enhancement of surface water quality with stormwater management elements.



Witches Broom in Sand Pine

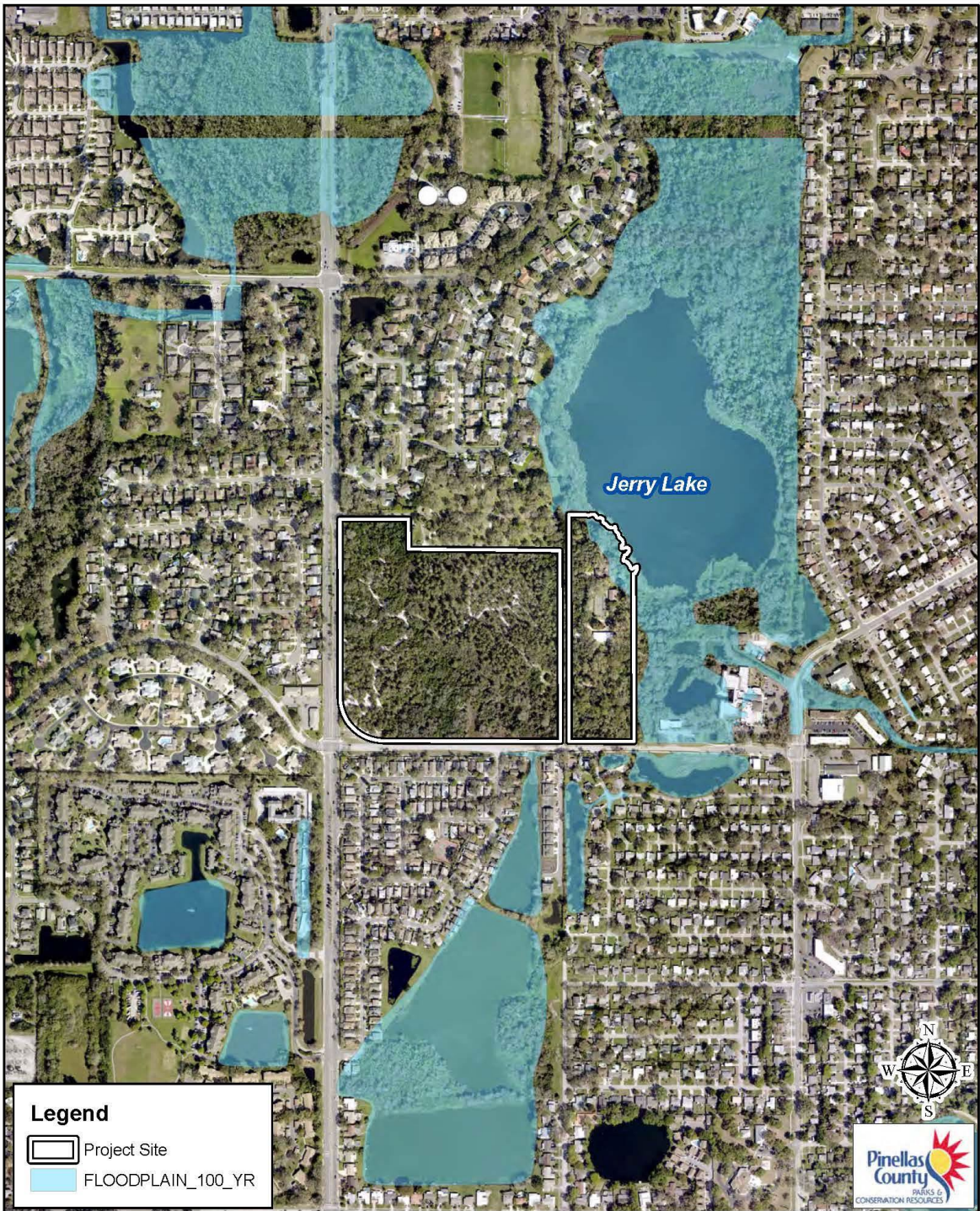


Rosemary Scrub Habitat (L2)



Rosemary Scrub Habitat (L2)





This map was created by Pinellas County Department of Parks and Conservation Resources using the best available sources. This map is a graphical representation of land and/or hydrologic data for use as a visual aid for planning purposes only. These data may not have been collected and/or certified under the supervision of a licensed Professional Surveyor and Mapper. Pinellas County makes no warranty as to the accuracy of the data contained within this map. Please consult a licensed professional land surveyor in any matter involving property boundaries.



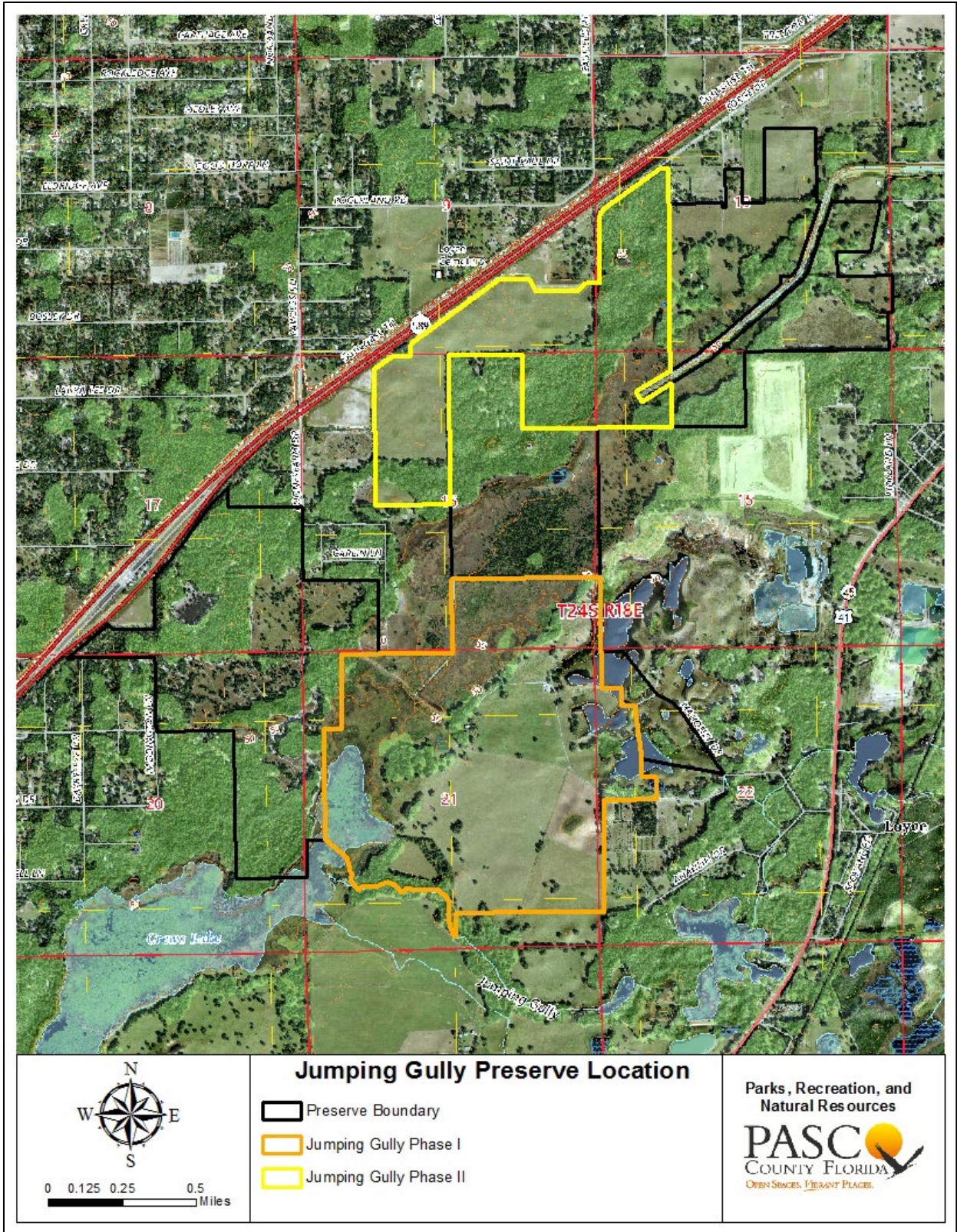
**ITEM 5: Staff Reports**

**B. FCT # 20-001-FF21 Jumping Gully Preserve Phase II**

Jumping Gully Preserve Phase II, a project by Pasco County, was provided FCT funding in the amount of \$1,028,665 for the preservation of 318 acres for conservation and passive recreation. The site is in Spring Hill and serves to build on the original nearly 600-acre Jumping Gully Preserve Phase I project that was funded by FCT in 2013. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory considered the site to be a Locally Significant Natural Area due to the presence of habitat suitable for several rare species and over 25% of the project site is in a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area, as identified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Recreational developments that are proposed include various trail types, educational elements, and opportunities for picnicking, geocaching, and camping. In addition to establishing open space and supporting the preservation and enhancement of natural communities, the project is required to be managed as an ecological corridor. The acquisition of this site completed Pasco County's designated North Pasco to Crossbar Ecological Corridor, an uninterrupted stretch of over 1,700 acres for wildlife to thrive and the public to enjoy.







## **ITEM 5: Staff Reports**

### **C. FCT # 18-014-FF19 Quay Bayside Acquisition**

Quay Bayside Acquisition, submitted by the City of Marathon in 2018, was awarded funding in 2023 due to a rolldown in funds from the 2019 cycle. After working with the grantee through the early acquisition phase, including receiving and reviewing due diligence documents, the Marathon City Council subsequently approved a new design for the project that included installation of two public boat ramps with a fee structure for launching and parking for non-residents and fee-free use for Marathon residents.

It was the determination of the Trust, in close consultation with our Office of General Counsel, that the fee structure put in place was inconsistent with our policy for non-resident fees on sites receiving state financial assistance. It was considering this change in direction initiated by the city that both parties mutually accepted there was not a viable path to move forward with the State's grant funding award to partially reimburse the City of Marathon's purchase of this site.

As such the Grant Agreement was terminated by FCT on July 9, 2024. The funds allocated for this project amounted to \$844,800. Those funds will now become available for the FF24 cycle.



## **ITEM 5: Staff Reports**

### **D. Region, I Workshop, Northwest Florida**

The workshop in Region I's, Northwest Florida, was the first of three regional workshops to be held throughout the state that feature different FCT topics during each workshop. FCT staff hosted the first workshop in Panama City, FL, City Hall on Wednesday, June 26, 2024. The meeting began at 10 a.m. CT and had in-person and virtual attendees. Staff was able to collaborate with Panama City's City Hall staff in securing a meeting space within their building. All FCT staff members were in attendance to provide these presentations and on-site technical support for our grantees. This first workshop focused on FCT's requirements for stewardship reports, annual revenue reports, transition requirements for the 5-year reporting cycle, and the importance of staff site visits.

Northwest Florida currently has 57 FCT project sites in this area of the state and we were excited to work with our grantees on stewardship, compliance, and any challenges they were facing due to local funding issues or recent weather events that may be preventing them from reaching 100% completion at their respective project site.

The workshop itinerary included information about annual stewardship responsibilities at their project sites, the required revenue report due annually by July 31, and opportunities of the sites at 100% completion to transition to 5-year stewardship reporting. FCT staff included educational information on program requirements, guidelines and responsibilities, and the importance of staff site visits to ensure compliance at all FCT project sites.

Grantees who were unable to attend this first workshop can access the webinar recording on the Florida Communities Trust website at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/9127296051478122586> .

We are currently looking into dates and locations for FCT's upcoming workshops. The second workshop will be scheduled for the middle of November 2024, in the Southeast region of Florida. Our third workshop is scheduled for Spring of 2025 in the Southwest region of the State. Once these dates and locations are confirmed, they will be posted on the Florida Communities Trust Parks and Open Space Grant Program website at:

<https://floridadep.gov/lands/land-and-recreation-grants/content/parks-and-open-space-florida-forever-grant-program>.



## **ITEM 6. Final Approval of the FCT Parks and Open Space 2024 Priority Ranking List**

### **Proposed Changes to the Preliminary Priority List Approved on February 13, 2024**

#### Changes to Acquisition Types:

The acquisition type changed from Reimbursement to Pre-Acquired for two projects:

- 23-008-FF24, Athletic Complex Expansion, Village of Palm Springs was acquired on January 31, 2024.
- 23-010-FF24, Crooked River Preserve, Manatee County, was acquired on February 12, 2024.

Both changes are denoted by an asterisk (\*) accompanied by a note at the bottom of the Final Priority Funding List.

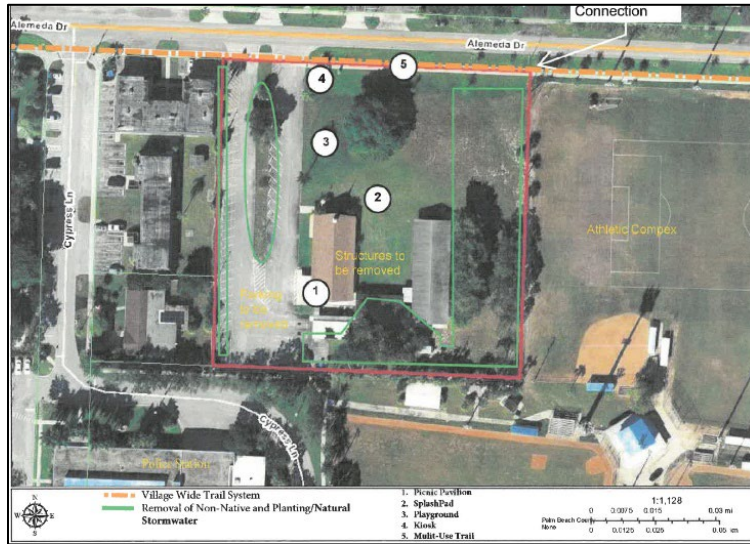
#### Available Funding

The funds reverted to the program with the termination of the Quay Bayside project amounted to \$844,800. Those funds will now become available for the FF24 cycle and will allow for the 2024 Ravenswood Park Land acquisition (#23-012-FF24) to be 100% funded as shown on the priority funding list spreadsheet.

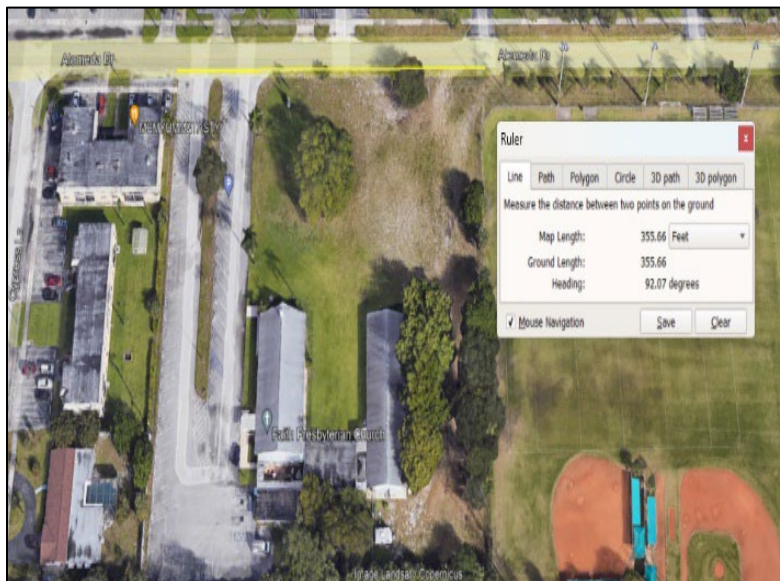
#### Changes to Preliminary Scores based on Site Visit Verification

FCT Staff conducted site visits pursuant to Rule 62-818.009(1). The purpose of the site visits was to confirm facts and conclusions made via the evaluation of each eligible application. One project dropped in their preliminary score based upon observations made during the site visits.

Project #23-008-FF24, Athletic Complex Expansion, Village of Palm Springs, received a preliminary score of 120 points. Criterion (2)(a)(1)b requires a functional trail at least one-half-mile in length. The project was awarded 5 points for this criterion.



FCT Staff observed during the site visit of March 28, 2024, that the trail as depicted in the Conceptual Site Plan was significantly less than one half-mile in length. Additional research conducted after the conclusion of the site visit found the trail to only measure approximately 355 feet in length (*image below*), compared to the 2,640 feet needed to receive full points. The new preliminary score for the project is 115 points. The project did not drop in rank as a result of this reduction in points. The following map reflects the measurement of the proposed trail on the project site.



Changes to Preliminary Scores based on conceptual site plan map

Project, #23-011-FF24, San Sebastian Boat Ramp in St. Johns County, received an original score of 150 points. The grantee notified FCT Staff of proposed changes to the conceptual site plan. This new site plan includes several parking pads to accommodate boats and trailers on the project site. It also requires permits for roadway access, dredging, and a boat harbor and ramp which has resulted in a change from the original passive recreation site plan for this project. Based on the revised conceptual site plan, the application evaluation was rescored and now reflects a reduction of 15 points. As noted on the updated Priority Funding List, the new score for the San Sebastian Boat Ramp is 135 points and has moved the project to number two on the priority funding list.

The following conceptual site plan maps reflect the original site plan and the new proposed changes for this project site.



Original Site Plan (Jan. 2024)



New Proposed Site Plan (July 2024)



**Florida Communities Trust, Parks and Open Space Program  
FINAL Priority Funding List for FY 2023-24  
August 14, 2024**



Total Funds Available **\$15,844,800**

Preliminary Rank	FCT #	Project Name	Applicant Name	County	Acres	Acquisition Type	Preliminary Score	Objections	Site Inspection	Project Excellence	Final Score	FCT Grant Request	Match Amount	Total Project Cost	FCT Share	Applicant Share	Funds Remaining	Cumulative FCT Grant Award
1	23-010-FF24	Crooked River Preserve	Manatee County	Manatee	64.81	Pre-Acquired*	146			0	146	\$1,500,000.00	\$9,234,600.00	\$10,734,600.00	14%	86%	\$14,344,800.00	\$1,500,000.00
2	23-011-FF24	San Sebastian Boat Ramp & Waterfront Park	St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners	St. Johns	31.00	Pre-Acquired	150		-15	0	135	\$3,500,000.00	\$14,069,488.00	\$17,569,488.00	20%	80%	\$10,844,800.00	\$5,000,000.00
3	23-006-FF24	St. Sebastian River Property	Indian River Land Trust, Inc.	Indian River	36.00	Pre-Acquired	116	10		0	126	\$894,645.15	\$383,419.35	\$1,278,064.50	70%	30%	\$9,950,154.85	\$5,894,645.15
4	23-008-FF24	Athletic Complex Expansion	Village of Palm Springs	Palm Beach	2.77	Pre-Acquired*	120		-5	0	115	\$854,000.00	\$1,281,000.00	\$2,135,000.00	40%	60%	\$9,096,154.85	\$6,748,645.15
5	23-005-FF24	Lagoon Conservation Property	Town of Ocean Ridge	Palm Beach	9.13	Pre-Acquired	114			0	114	\$1,054,427.00	\$451,898.00	\$1,506,325.00	70%	30%	\$8,041,727.85	\$7,803,072.15
6	23-013-FF24	Nelson's Cove Hydrologic Restoration and Green Space Project	Florida's Nature Coast Conservancy, Inc. and the City of Cedar Key	Levy	3.41	Joint Acquisition	95			10	105	\$588,923.00	\$0.00	\$588,923.00	100%	0%	\$7,452,804.85	\$8,391,995.15
7	23-007-FF24	The Highlands Property	Polk County	Polk	431.50	Reimbursement	104			0	104	\$1,775,000.00	\$1,775,000.00	\$3,550,000.00	50%	50%	\$5,677,804.85	\$10,166,995.15
8	23-015-FF24	Reddie Point Preserve, Phase II	City of Jacksonville	Duval	15.74	Reimbursement	103			0	103	\$326,000.00	\$400,000.00	\$726,000.00	45%	55%	\$5,351,804.85	\$10,492,995.15
9	23-009-FF24	Old Cutler Road Land Acquisition Project	Town of Cutler Bay	Miami-Dade	3.64	Pre-Acquired	80	0		5	85	\$1,500,000.00	\$7,050,000.00	\$8,550,000.00	18%	82%	\$3,851,804.85	\$11,992,995.15
10	23-012-FF24	Fryman Preserve	City of Sebring & Highlands County	Highlands	25.69	Reimbursement	69			0	69	\$244,200.00	\$162,800.00	\$407,000.00	60%	40%	\$3,607,604.85	\$12,237,195.15
11	23-003-FF24	Shaker Village Community Park and Center	City of Tamarac	Broward	2.53	Reimbursement	68	0		0	68	\$1,875,000.00	\$625,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	75%	25%	\$1,732,604.85	\$14,112,195.15
12	23-004-FF24	Ravenswood Park Land Acquisition	City of St. Augustine	St. Johns	6.57	Pre-Acquired	62			0	62	\$967,500.00	\$967,500.00	\$1,935,000.00	50%	50%	\$765,104.85	\$15,079,695.15
13	23-016-FF24	Fort Myers Beach Oceanfront Acquisition Project	Town of Fort Myers Beach	Lee	0.41	Reimbursement	34			0	34	\$5,000,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000,000.00	100%	0%	-\$4,234,895.15	\$20,079,695.15
14	23-017-FF24	Surfside Byron Park	Town of Surfside	Miami-Dade	0.27	Reimbursement	29			0	29	\$4,450,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,450,000.00	100%	0%	-\$8,684,895.15	\$24,529,695.15
				<b>Total Acres:</b>	<b>633.47</b>							<b>\$24,529,695.15</b>	<b>\$36,400,705.35</b>	<b>\$60,930,400.50</b>				

\*Applicant indicated Reimbursement in Application. Project has since been acquired by the Applicant. If funded, these will be managed as Pre-Acquired projects.

Project rank is subject to full funding of the FCT grant request.

Project rank is not currently subject to funding.

Approved in an open, legally noticed public meeting by the FCT Governing Board per Rule 62-818, F.A.C.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mara Gambineri, Chair, FCT Governing Board

Date