ITEM 2:

Consider the December 12-13, 2019, public hearing and meeting summaries.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

None

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the meeting summaries.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

( ) APPROVE
( ) APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____
( ) DEFER
( ) WITHDRAW
( ) NOT APPROVE
( ) OTHER:_____

Summary of the December 12-13, 2019 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing and Business Meeting

December 12, 2019

Members in Attendance:
Dr. Timothy Parsons, DHR
Mr. Keith Rowell, FFS
Ms. Lynetta Griner, Citizen Member
Mr. Tom Houston, FWC
Dr. Bill Palmer, Citizen Member
Ms. Elva Peppers, Citizen Member
Ms. Barbara Goodman, ARC Chair, DEP

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

ITEM 1: Call to Order at 9:00 a.m.

DEP Deputy Secretary Barbara Goodman called the public hearing to order and welcomed all in attendance. ARC and Staff members introduced themselves. ARC Staff Director Shauna Allen announced that the applicant for the Rainbow River Corridor Nine Island Cove proposed boundary amendment has withdrawn the proposal from consideration followed by general housekeeping announcements. There were no callers on the phone lines.

ITEM 2: Florida Forever 2020 Cycle 1 Proposal Presentations for Amtel Farms, Buck Island Ranch, Hendrie Ranch and Withlacoochee River Corridor.

Discussion: Mr. Lane Boy, Cushman and Wakefield, presented Amtel Farms, a 2000-acre property on the north bank of the Caloosahatchee River proposed in collaboration with the Nature Conservancy to create continuous panther habitat. The property overlaps the panther dispersal zone and extends it west by another 2,000 acres.

Ms. Griner asked if the property was for less than fee? Mr. Boy responded that the owners would like approximate market value for this fee simple proposal based on appraisal. The sellers are overseas and may be willing to go below market value.

Mr. Gene Lollis, Archbold Station Buck Island Ranch Manager, presented Buck Island Ranch, which has for the past 26 years supported land conservation, recharge and agricultural production. Mr. Lollis spoke about his experience working with agricultural production, water retention and wildlife management on the 10,500-acre facility next to Lake Okeechobee. The proposal includes 6,533 acres of the ranch which excludes 3,784 acres sold to the Wetland Reserve Program for conservation. Managed for agri-ecology research by Archbold Biological Station, the facility looks at the ecology of "ridge to ranch to river" and has documented over 500 species. Mr. Lollis encouraged everyone to watch the Cowboys and Scientists video to learn more about what they do.

Ms. Griner asked if the proposal was for less-than-fee? Mr. Lollis confirmed that it was.

Mr. Keith Fountain, Keith Fountain Law representing Hendrie Ranch, spoke of his charge 30 years ago to protect Hendrie Ranch. This 7,242-acre property proposed for less-than-fee in Highlands county sits at the toe of the Lake Wales Ridge. The ranch is managed for cow-calf operations and has scrub and shrub islands throughout the property. The land use has not changed much since 1944 and features large rosemary scrubs, flatwoods and bay gall habitats, providing habitat for the Florida panther, scrub jay and black bear. The property is adjacent to existing conservation properties in the region.

Mr. Keith Fountain, Conservation Advisors for Conservation Florida, presented Withlacoochee River Corridor in Citrus county. This 1,714-acre parcel between Triple S Ranch Game Farm and the Scott Adams property is part of an extensive natural corridor protecting wildlife diversity and includes the 50-acre Moon Lake. This property is part of a long-range vision for the Withlacoochee River corridor that includes karst structures and limestone formations. The owners are interested in protecting potential maternity caves and floodwater storage for the river.

ITEM 3: Florida Forever Project Boundary Amendment Presentations for Wakulla Springs Protection Zone, St. Johns River Blueway, Seven Runs Creek Final Phase, Upper St. Marks River Corridor, and Rainbow River Corridor.

Discussion: Mr. Keith Fountain, Conservation Advisors on behalf of the Florida Forest Service, presented the 801-acre Wakulla Springs Protection Zone, Wakulla Springs Addition boundary adjustment for fee-simple acquisition. The proposal is adjacent to the Farrell property which recently closed and the Wakulla State Forest. The proposed property protects karst features in the Wakulla-Leon Sinks cave system. The uplands are managed pine plantations which were also submitted to the Forest Legacy Program for acquisition funding. There is interest in mapping the sinks on this property. The proposal provides opportunity for recreation access and trail use, aquifer protection, and landscape connectivity for wildlife.

Ms. Carolyn Morgan, Clay County, presented the St. Johns River Blueway, Fort San Francisco de Pupo proposal. The area of Bayard Point in Clay County has a long history of use dating back to the indigenous tribes in prehistoric times. During the Spanish period there was a ferry linking St. Augustine to the Camino Real which led to the construction of the Fort to defend the river crossing in 1716. Following the cessation of Florida to the U.S. the old Spanish trail was enlarged to become Florida's first nationally funded road. The county has established a historic marker acknowledging the site but now has the potential to protect the site and create opportunities for archaeological research on this property which is surrounded by conservation lands managed by SJRWMD.

Dr. Parsons commented DHR's concerns about the integrity of the archaeological resources on the site. Their last recorded assessment was in 1972 when Jim Miller noted that the original square embankment had eroded by half. He would like to know more about the resource and if a professional archaeologist had assessed the site recently. Ms. Morgan stated that the owner had protected the sites and indications were that any materials collected from the site were donated to

the University of Florida. An archaeological assessment would be the County's first step should they acquire the property.

Mr. Alan Davis, Florida Forest Service, presented the Seven Runs Creek Final Phase, Washington Crossing boundary amendment. The 620-acre proposal includes 500 acres of uplands and 120 acres of wetlands adjacent to Pine Log State Forest. The uplands would be managed silviculture and expand opportunities for public access and hosting Operation Outdoor Freedom. The property is an essential piece to create a corridor to the Choctawhatchee River Water Management Area including a mile of frontage on Pine Log creek.

Daniel Hautamaki, Woodvest LLC (Southeastern Land Group), presented the Upper St. Marks River Corridor Woodvest boundary amendment. The proposal shares 2.5 miles of boundary with Plank Road State Forest and was previously owned by St. Joe Timber Company. It is also near the Aucilla Wildlife Management Area and lies along the Connell Tram Road. The private easement currently used for administrative use to the forest would provide public access to Plank Road State Forest from Connell Tram Road. The property has been professionally reforested on 347 acres and includes 24 acres of mature pine and 330 acres of natural wetlands with abundant wildlife.

ARC Action: The Rainbow River Corridor boundary amendment was withdrawn by the applicant. No action required.

ITEM 4: Take Public Testimony on the Florida Forever 2020 Cycle 1 Proposals and Florida Forever Project Boundary Amendments and other Florida Forever Projects.

Discussion: Mr. Jim McCarthy, North Florida Land Trust, spoke in favor of several projects including: Northeast Florida Blueway, Flagler County Blueway, Ocala to Osceola Greenway, Marjorie Carr Harris and Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway, Northeast Florida Timber and Watershed Reserve and the Raiford to Osceola Greenway.

Mr. Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife, spoke in favor of the 2020 proposed projects and boundary amendments. He stated that the projects fit into the Florida Ecological and Greenways network habitat for the Florida Panther, complement existing conservation areas and river corridors protecting the springs from the north.

Mr. Keith Fountain, Keith Fountain Law & Conservation Advisors, spoke in favor or several projects as the keys to creating green infrastructure, notably the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway for black bear movement, Natural Bridge Creek with Forest Legacy Funding, Volusia Conservation Corridor for wildlife movement, Big Bend Swamp/Holopaw Ranch with willing ranchers, and Hardee Flatwoods important to water and wildlife.

The public hearing was adjourned at 9:52 am.

December 13, 2019

Members in Attendance:
Dr. Timothy Parsons, DHR
Mr. Jim Karels, FFS
Ms. Lynetta Griner, Citizen Member
Dr. Thomas Eason, FWC
Dr. Bill Palmer, Citizen Member
Ms. Elva Peppers, Citizen Member
Ms. Barbara Goodman, ARC Chair, DEP

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

ITEM 5: Call to Order at 9:00 am

DEP Deputy Secretary Barbara Goodman called the meeting to order. Dr. Palmer led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Goodman established that a quorum was present.

Ms. Allen announced that Agenda Item 17, the Rainbow River Corridor: Nine Island Cove proposed boundary amendment was withdrawn by the applicant.

There were 7 callers on the phone lines in attendance.

ITEM 6: Consider the October 18, 2019 public hearing and meeting summaries.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the meeting summaries.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the October 18th meeting summaries with Mr. Karels seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

ITEM 7: Consider the proposed 2020 Acquisition and Restoration Council calendar.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Allen stated, the proposed 2020 calendar has a couple of time changes to note from last year's calendar, the August meeting is scheduled for the 3rd Friday at 10 am and the Thursday, December 10th public hearing is scheduled for 1 pm.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Mr. Karels made the motion to approve the 2020 Acquisition and Restoration Council calendar with Dr. Parsons seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

ITEM 8: Develop the 2020 Florida Forever Priority list.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Allen stated, we will now develop the 2020 Florida Forever Priority List. The process contains three parts: ranking, breaking any ties, and approving the final list.

Ranking Step: Each ARC member submitted their ranking numbers for each project with categories. These numbers were revealed for all members by category and all members confirmed their numbers were correct for all projects in all categories.

Discussion: Dr. Eason commented that we are not picking winners and losers, we have a bunch of gems and we are trying to sort them out in an order that puts one above another when they are pretty much even. We value all projects and are pleased that we have so many excellent projects on the list.

Tie breaker Step:

Substantially Complete Category: Spruce Creek and Save our Everglades. Ms. Griner moved to rank Spruce Creek higher, Dr. Eason seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Climate Change Lands Category: Coupon Bight/Key Deer and St. Joe Timberland. Ms. Griner moved to rank St. Joe Timberland higher, Dr. Parsons seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Climate Change Lands Category: Taylor Sweetwater Creek/West Bay Preservation. Ms. Peppers moved to rank Taylor Sweetwater Creek higher, Dr. Parsons seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Less-Than-Fee Category: Hardee Flatwoods and Maytown Flatwoods. Mr. Karels moved to rank Hardee Flatwoods higher, Ms. Griner seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Less-Than-Fee Category: Limestone Ranch, Oldtown Creek Watershed and West Aucilla River Buffer. Dr. Eason moved to rank the projects in alphabetical order, Mr. Karels seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Partnerships and Regional Incentives Category: Annutteliga Hammock and Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods. Mr. Karels moved to rank Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods higher, Dr. Parsons seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Partnerships and Regional Incentives Category: Lafayette Forest and Sand Mountain. Ms. Peppers moved to rank Sand Mountain higher, Dr. Palmer seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Critical Natural Lands Category: Blue Head Ranch and Panther Glades. Ms. Griner moved to rank Blue Head Ranch higher, Dr. Eason seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Critical Natural Lands Category: Caloosahatchee Ecoscape and Twelvemile Slough. Dr. Parsons moved to rank Caloosahatchee Ecoscape higher, Mr. Karels seconded, ARC approved the motion unanimously.

Discussion: Dr. Eason requested time to review the list and noted that the group was generally in agreement with the projects with only a few outliers. Dr. Palmer remarked that he appreciated the streamlined, efficient and accurate process.

Mr. Billy Rollins, LSI, commended that he appreciated the opportunity to work with the agencies and staff on the Stolle property and Charlotte 580.

ARC Action: Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the 2020 Florida Forever Priority list with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously. See the attachment for the approved list.

Land Management

ITEM 9: Consider whether an approximately 0.02-acre public right of way easement to the Florida Department of Transportation within the Big Lagoon State Park is consistent with the Board of Trustees' Linear Facilities Policy.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Ms. Allen stated the applicant has requested an easement to install, operate and maintain out fall drainage structures to improve paved shoulders and roadway drainage systems, and to improve the overall roadway level of service and safety considerations for the intersection of S.R. 292 and C.R. 292A.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Mr. Karels made the motion to approve the proposed easement with Ms. Peppers seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

Management Plans

ITEM 10: Consider a 10-year update to the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3786).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Joel Allbritton with Division of Recreation and Parks provided an overview of the park acquired in 1988 in Citrus County. Attending on the phone were Park Biologist Mr. Rick Owen and Park Manager Ms. Trisha Fowler. The 200-acre park protects the first magnitude Homosassa Spring, provides interpretive and recreational opportunities and conserves imperiled species habitat. The park is unique in containing a wildlife care and rehabilitation facility and was ranked #1 for the total number of volunteer hours in 2018-2019. Proposed improvement include updates to the public use facilities, raising and renovating wildlife exhibits and constructing a bear rehabilitation facility.

Ms. Peppers and Dr. Eason commended the park for the good job they are doing, especially the collaborative work with the rehabilitation center. Dr. Palmer asked about the status of water quality and volume in the spring. Mr. Owen remarked that the park works closely with the SWFWMD and that nutrients were higher than background levels, nitrates are a problem and there is very little SAV.

ARC Action: Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the management plan update with Dr. Palmer seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

ITEM 11: Consider a 10-year update to the Topsail Hill Preserve State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3967).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Daniel Alsentzer with Division of Recreation and Parks provided an overview of the 1,647-acre park acquired in 1992 between the Choctawhatchee Bay and Gulf of Mexico. Attending on the phone were Park Biologist Mr. John McKenzie and Park Manager Ms. Sasha Croft. The park is adjacent to a mosaic of conservation lands and distinguished as a preserve which offers active recreation. The park is also one of the most well visited in the panhandle with over 200k visitors annually. Featuring 16 upland and wetland natural community types including significant freshwater dune lakes and natural dunes. Proposed land management identified in the plan includes hydrologic restoration, prescribed burns, assessing the 16 cultural sites, and enhancing existing facilities including new interpretive pavilion and bicycle amenities.

Mr. Kent Wimmer, Defenders of the Wildlife, stated that he has followed the development of the management plan and options for proposed access and commended the park on preserving habitat for beach mice and shorebirds.

ARC Action: Ms. Griner made the motion to approve the management plan update with Mr. Karels seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

Florida Forever

ITEM 12: Vote on whether the Amtel Farms, Buck Island Ranch, Hendrie Ranch and Withlacoochee River Corridor 2020 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals will proceed through the project evaluation process for potential addition to the 2021 Florida Forever Priority List.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the boundary amendment. An affirmative vote of at least five council members is required to add property to an existing project.

Discussion: Ms. Allen stated that we heard presentations and public testimony on four proposals for the Florida Forever 2020 Cycle 1 application period yesterday.

Ms. Griner recommended that everyone view the Cowboys and Scientists video mentioned by Mr. Gene Lollis because it really demonstrates just how agriculturists in general are so interested in helping sustain the landscape. Working landscapes offer solutions for climate change.

ARC Action:
ARC members voted unanimously for Amtel Farms by seven yes votes to initiate a full review.
ARC members voted unanimously for Buck Island Ranch by seven yes votes to initiate a full review.
ARC members voted unanimously for Hendrie Ranch by seven yes votes to initiate a full review.
ARC members voted unanimously for Withlacoochee River Corridor by seven yes votes to initiate a full review.

ITEM 13: Vote on whether to amend the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone Florida Forever Project Boundary to add 12 parcels totaling approximately 801 acres in Wakulla County with a tax assessed market value of $1,925,754.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the boundary amendment. An affirmative vote of at least five council members is required to add property to an existing project.

Discussion: Ms. Allen stated the Florida Forest Service proposes adding the Wakulla State Forest Addition comprised of 12 parcels in Wakulla County within 8 ownerships adjacent to Wakulla Springs State Forest. The property also connects Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park with Wakulla State Forest.

ARC Action: Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Dr. Palmer seconding. ARC members voted unanimously by seven yes votes to approve the boundary amendment.

ITEM 14: Vote on whether to amend the St. Johns River Blueway Florida Forever Project Boundary to add two parcels totaling approximately 20 acres in Clay County with a tax assessed market value of $100,000.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the boundary amendment. An affirmative vote of at least five council members is required to add property to an existing project.

Discussion: Ms. Allen stated the Clay County Board of County Commissioners proposes adding the site of the Spanish Fort San Francisco de Pupo built sometime before 1734 on the west bank of the St. Johns River. The site is generally surrounded by the St. Johns River Water Management District owned Bayard Conservation Area. The property is accessed through a private easement from County Road 226.

Dr Parsons commented that since the property is being submitted because of significant archaeological resources, it is the opinion of DHR that a site assessment is needed to determine if the resources are still extant. The last reported archaeological assessment in 1972 noted significant erosion. Dr. Parsons offered an amendment to defer the item to allow for a professional archaeologist to assess the state of the resources.

Dr. Eason noted that there were other values of the site and intended that the deferral be short term to assess the archaeological issue and bring it back soon. Dr. Parsons agreed that his intention was not to vote no, but to allow time to get more information on the resource.

ARC Action: Ms. Griner made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Dr. Parsons seconding. Dr. Parsons offered a friendly amendment to defer the proposal to allow additional time for investigation of the historic resources. Mr. Karels seconded the motion for the friendly amendment. ARC members voted unanimously to approve the motion to defer.

ITEM 15: Vote on whether to amend the Seven Runs Creek Final Phase Florida Forever Project Boundary to add three parcels totaling approximately 619 acres in Washington County with a tax assessed market value of $692,149.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the boundary amendment. An affirmative vote of at least five council members is required to add property to an existing project.

Discussion: Ms. Allen stated, Washington Crossing LLC proposes to add approximately 619 acres to the Seven Runs Creek Final Phase Florida Forever Project. The property is adjacent to Pine Log State Forest and Pine Log Creek and has access along Crews Lake Road and Strickland Road.

ARC Action: Mr. Karels made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Dr. Parsons seconding. ARC members voted unanimously by seven yes votes to approve the boundary amendment.

ITEM 16: Vote on whether to amend the Upper St. Marks River Corridor Florida Forever Project Boundary to add two parcels totaling approximately 727 acres in Jefferson County with a tax assessed market value of $1,074,500.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the boundary amendment. An affirmative vote of at least five council members is required to add property to an existing project.

Discussion: Ms. Allen stated the Jefferson Plank amendment proposed by Woodvest, LLC, adds approximately 727 acres to the Upper St. Marks River Corridor Florida Forever Project. The property is adjacent to Plank Road State Forest and lies along Connell Tram Road in Jefferson County. A limited access easement runs east-west through the property from the county road to the state forest.

ARC Action: Ms. Griner made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Dr. Eason seconding. ARC members voted unanimously by seven yes votes to approve the boundary amendment.

ITEM 17: Vote on whether to amend the Rainbow River Corridor Florida Forever Project boundary to add 16 parcels totaling approximately 49 acres in Marion County with a tax assessed market value of $122,740.

DSL Staff Recommendation: The item was withdrawn by the applicant. No action required.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: None.

Closing Comments

ARC Announcements: Chair Godman acknowledged the smooth progress and everyone's time commitment for this important work. She announced the next FCT meeting was scheduled for January 16, 2020 and the next ARC meeting February 14, 2020 both in Tallahassee.

Dr. Parsons recognized the hard work of staff who does most of the heavy lifting and particularly Josh Goodwin with DHR. Dr. Eason echoed that the staff at State Lands runs a smooth meeting and wished happy holidays, be safe and enjoy family.

Chair Goodman announced that copies of the 2020 Florida Forever priority list and the 2020 DEP calendar were available at the check-in table.

Mr. Karels made the motion to adjourn with Dr. Eason seconding. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 10:08 am.