

**ITEM 2:**

Consider the April 9, 2021, meeting summary.

**DSL STAFF REMARKS:**

None

**DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the public hearing and meeting summary.

**ARC RECOMMENDATION:**

**APPROVE**

**APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFER**

**WITHDRAW**

**NOT APPROVE**

**OTHER:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Acquisition and Restoration Council Meeting Summary

**Council Meeting:** April 9, 2021  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m.  
**Location:** Webinar meeting

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### Members in Attendance:

Dr. Tim Parsons, DHR  
Mr. Erin Albury, FFS  
Ms. Lynetta Griner, Citizen Member  
Dr. Thomas Eason, FWC  
Ms. Elva Peppers, Citizen Member  
Mr. Shawn Hamilton, ARC Chair, DEP

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

### Item 1: Call to Order at 9:00 a.m.

DEP Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation, Shawn Hamilton, called the meeting to order. Hearing that there were no announcements from council members, he asked ARC Staff Director, Shauna Allen, to conduct the roll call. The quorum was established with six members in attendance; Dr. Palmer was excused. Ms. Allen provided housekeeping announcements including webinar instructions and information for public comments.

**Item 2:** Consider the February 12, 2021 meeting and March 2, 2021 regional hearing summaries.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Approve the meeting summaries.

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the summaries with Ms. Peppers seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

### ARC STAFF REPORTS

**Item 3:** Items approved by the Division of State Lands via the online negative response process since the February 2021 ARC meeting.

**DSL Staff Remarks:** Ms. Allen stated several items were submitted and approved via the negative response process including two management plan amendments, one management plan for properties less than 160 acres and two incompatible use requests.

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** No action required.

**Item 4:** Consider a request to approve revisions to the Interim Management Guidelines.

**DSL Staff Remarks:** Ms. Allen stated the Division of State Lands (DSL) established an agency working group to review the interim management guidelines and negative response process. The group suggested changes and clarifications with input from field units to improve understanding of the review process and help agencies manage newly acquired lands and minor management plan amendments.

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the guidelines with Dr. Eason seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

### MANAGEMENT PLANS

**Item 5:** Consider a 10-year update to the Julington-Durbin Preserve Management Plan (Lease No. 4402).

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Approve the management plan.

**Discussion:** Mr. Brent Bachelder, Land Resource Specialist, St. Johns River Water Management District (District), presented the management plan update. He mentioned that District land manager Heather Venture and City of Jacksonville (City) management partner Jill Enz were present. The 2,042-acre preserve in the lower St. Johns River basin is located 15 miles south of Jacksonville and west of I-95. The majority of the preserve is in Duval County with approximately 30 acres in St. Johns County. The eastern boundary is bordered by residential and commercial development. The property is owned by the District 25% and the Board of Trustees (BOT) 75%. Mr. Bachelder discussed the potential surplus of 10 acres identified in a 2012 lands assessment on the west side of Durbin Creek. The District received comments on this potential surplus which will be addressed in the final plan.

Mr. Bachelder stated the cooperatively managed preserve is one of their most heavily visited conservation areas. The City manages recreation, security, and routine maintenance while the District is responsible for natural and cultural resource management. The elevation is from sea level to 30 feet in the sandhills. The preserve includes over nine miles of shoreline along Julington and Durbin Creeks. The District collects water quality data at two sites and oversees eight natural communities hosting over 350 total species including 26 listed species. Mr. Bachelder also mentioned that FWC comments on the plan will be addressed in the final plan. There are 23 archaeological sites recorded by DHR and the District works with the Florida Public Archaeology Network to monitor known sites and document new sites. Management objectives include maintenance of two canoe launch/landings, over six miles of multi-use trails, bank fishing, educational outreach and group events, environmental education, and guided hikes. Resource management includes prescribed fire and mechanical fuel mitigation, sandhill restoration and infrastructure improvements for public access and recreational opportunities.

Ms. Griner asked for clarification on the statement that the comments would be addressed in the

final version. Mr. Bachelder indicated that he was directed by DSL to address comments in the final plan. Chair Hamilton responded that the expectation for the managing agencies is to affirm that they will address comments in the final plan. The Council has been voting to approve plans with that commitment. He also stated that Council reserves the right to ask specific questions or make recommendations to make sure that they are comfortable with the direction the managing agency may take.

Dr. Eason asked for more information on the location of the potential 10-acre surplus. Mr. Bachelder referred to the map in his presentation and stated that the property straddles Durbin Creek in the southern portion. There is a small outparcel on the west side of Durbin Creek that is split between uplands and floodplain swamp. The uplands are surrounded by residential development and a stormwater pond with limited access and management challenges to maintain the fire adapted community. The 2012 assessment recommended potential surplus to tie into the adjacent land before the area was developed. He stated, now that the area is developed, surplus may not be the most appropriate solution and the District is open to reassessing the situation. Ms. Allen stated DSL's understanding is the matter will come back for review by the Council if surplus is the preferred option.

Chair Hamilton stated the Council will appreciate continued evaluation to maintain the property and is not advocating one way or another just because there is a reference in the plan. The expectation is to look at it in more detail as a subsequent action should it get to that point. The District could opt to find an option that keeps it in the footprint of the approved plan. Dr. Eason stated that he is not intending to approve a surplus designation for the 10-acres. A plan to appropriately assess the options is acceptable. Ms. Peppers suggested the property could serve the adjacent development as an amenity and buffer for the creek.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the management plan with Ms. Peppers seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

**Item 6:** Consider an update to the Ichetucknee Springs State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 2459).

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Approve the management plan.

**Discussion:** Mr. Daniel Alsentzer, DRP Office of Park Planning, presented the management plan update. He mentioned that District Biologist Dan Pearson and Park Manager Robert Soderholm were also in attendance. Ichetucknee Springs is a flagship park encompassing over three miles of the Ichetucknee River including the first and second magnitude springs, eight major springs and numerous karst seeps. The Ichetucknee Head Spring and Blue Hole are National Natural Landmarks, Outstanding Florida Waters and Outstanding Florida Springs. Located in Columbia and Suwannee counties, the 2,531-acre property was acquired in 1970. The park offers a wide variety of water based recreational activities including swimming, tubing, paddling, cavern, and cave diving. The park draws more than three times the visitation of other spring parks. Geology plays a major role along with the hydrogeological features of the park. There are also 15 terrestrial natural communities including upland mixed hardwood, sandhill and upland hardwood

forest. The complex and diverse aquatic community includes submerged aquatic vegetation that has many benefits including water quality. The park is home to 39 imperiled animal and plant species including the endemic Ichetucknee silt snail. Cultural resources span from the Weeden period to 20<sup>th</sup> century tobacco farms and include 54 archaeological sites and four historic structures. Resource management objectives include restoring 10 miles of spring run stream, hydrological restoration assessments, recreation use impacts, upland community restoration and fire management. The conceptual use plan includes enhancements and safety and access improvements to existing facilities and use areas.

Mr. Alsentzer discussed changes to river access management to improve the ecological health of the river and allow recovery of submerged aquatic vegetation based on 50 years of ecological monitoring and visitor use studies. The upper portion of the river from north launch to midpoint contains shallow waters and submerged vegetation vulnerable to trampling and turbidity. The lower portion from midpoint to south takeout has deeper water and is less vulnerable to impacts. The plan involves converting access to the upper portion to non-motorized paddle craft only, with the current carrying capacity of 100 vessels per day. The carrying capacity for tubing on the upper portion will be moved to the lower portion beginning at midpoint for 3,000 tubes per day. Dampier's landing will continue to be unlimited. No changes to swimming which will continue at head spring and Blue Hole.

Ms. Peppers commended Mr. Alsentzer on the excellent presentation.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the management plan with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

## **FLORIDA FOREVER**

**Item 7:** Hear presentations and take Public Testimony on the Florida Forever 2021 Cycle 1 Proposals and other Florida Forever Projects.

**Discussion:** The Florida Forever 2021 Cycle 1 projects were presented by the applicants.

Ms. Susan Carr, North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) Program Manager for the Ocala to Osceola Wildlife Corridor, presented the Big Pine Preserve Proposal. The 541-acre inholding of the Ocala National Forest is comprised of three parcels located in Marion County on Lake Kerr. The property is the largest single owner inholding around the town of Salt Springs. The western parcel surrounds the County Moorehead Boat Ramp. Historic Kerr City is located between the two northern parcels. The property is also within the U.S. Navy military operating area for Pinecastle Bombing Range. Proposed for fee simple acquisition, the property provides imperiled species habitat for the Red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW), gopher tortoise, diamondback rattlesnake and other sandhill species. Restoration of prescribed fire would increase habitat for the adjacent Ocala National Forest RCW population. The Florida Forest Service has indicated willingness to be the managing agency if acquired and the U.S. Forest Service is a willing managing partner.

Mr. Andrew Ketchel presented the Wilson Ranch Proposal in Polk County near Bartow. The

450-acre property contains forested and herbaceous wetlands along with river floodplain. The most significant feature is the confluence of Saddle Creek and Peace Creek forming the headwaters of the Peace River. The property has high potential for wetland restoration and enhancement with regulatory oversight. It also advances the goals of the Florida Headwater Protection and Sustainability Act for the Peace River. Acquisition would provide regional benefits and enhance investments toward protection of this river. Polk County has indicated their intent to manage this property if acquired.

Following the proposal presentations, public testimony was offered.

Mr. Carmen Rosamonda, City Manager for the City of DeBary (DeBary), spoke in favor of the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway – St. Johns Riverbend South property acquisition. Rosamonda stated the project was a win-win for central Florida and the State. Acquisition would preserve the historic oaks on the property and habitat for over 46 species of birds documented by Audubon Society volunteers. The proposed research and education center in partnership with the Aquatic Preserve Alliance Citizens Support Organization (Alliance) would focus on water quality. DeBary is participating in the septic to sewer program and the center could provide information to assess the effectiveness of the program. The proposed 150-acre nature park would provide two miles of riverfront nature trail and economic benefits as it becomes a destination in close proximity to the SunRail station and Main Street. The project has broad local support and a commitment from DeBary and the Alliance to raise funds to develop and manage the property. Rosamonda concluded with a request for the ARC to move the project forward for BOT approval.

Ms. Deborah Shelley, Vice President for the Alliance, spoke in support of DeBary and consideration of the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway, specifically the St. Johns Riverbend South property. The Alliance is committed to working with the Wekiva-Middle St. Johns Aquatic Preserve and DeBary to develop the freshwater research and education center on the St. Johns River.

**ARC Action:** No action required.

**Item 8:** Adopt the FY 2021-22 Division of State Lands Annual Florida Forever Work Plan for presentation to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Adopt the annual work plan.

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to adopt the annual work plan with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

**Item 9:** Consider project evaluation reports for Big Pine Preserve and Wilson Ranch 2021 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Approve the project evaluation reports.

**Discussion:** Ms. Griner asked if there were efforts underway to present the Big Pine Preserve to the U.S. Forest Service for acquisition. Ms. Carr responded that there is currently no mechanism in place to fund the acquisition. NFLT is working with the U.S. Forest Service to set up an inholdings acquisition program and funding source. Forest Legacy is the alternative with a grant application cycle several years into the future.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve project evaluation reports with Mr. Albury seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

**Item 10:** Vote on whether to add two 2021 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals to the 2022 Florida Forever Priority List.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Vote on proposals to be added as projects to the 2022 Florida Forever priority list.

Consider, if approved by a roll call vote as a Florida Forever project, adding the Big Pine Preserve project to the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Forever project boundary by a second roll call vote of ARC.

**Discussion:** Ms. Griner commented that the staff report lists both proposals as fee simple, however, in the project evaluation reports the landowners were open to less-than-fee. Chair Hamilton asked if both options were in play. Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services Program Administrator, responded that fee simple is the preferred acquisition mechanism from the landowners. The final determination will be made during negotiations with the DSL.

**ARC Action:** ARC voted unanimously by six members to add Big Pine Preserve and Wilson Ranch proposals to the 2022 Florida Forever Priority List.

ARC voted unanimously by six members to amend the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem boundary to add Big Pine Preserve.

**Item 11:** Vote on whether to amend the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever Project Boundary for the FWC to add one parcel totaling approximately 158 acres in Charlotte County with a tax assessed market value of \$604,350 and remove one property totaling approximately 40 acres in Taylor County.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

**Discussion:** Ms. Laramé Ferry, Land Conservation Coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, presented the Ennis property amendment. Located in Charlotte County, the 158-acre property is the largest inholding of the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Proposed for fee simple acquisition, the property would be managed by the FWC if acquired. Ferry described the adjacent WMA and Babcock Ranch Preserve property to the east as the largest and highest quality remaining South Florida slash pine forest within a network of conservation lands. The area protects water quality and provides wildlife habitat and corridors and provides recreational opportunities. The owner has allowed FWC to

control burn the property to reduce fuel loads and improve fire management of the adjacent lands. Currently, there are no structures on the property which is listed for sale. If developed, the property would present management challenges.

**ARC Action:** Mr. Albury made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Ms. Peppers seconding. ARC voted unanimously by six members to approve the amendment.

**Item 12:** Vote on whether to amend the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever Project Boundary for the DRP to add five properties totaling approximately 184 acres in Columbia and Sumter counties with a tax assessed market value of \$707,769 and remove one parcel totaling approximately 91 acres in Washington County.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

**Discussion:** Mr. Steve Cutshaw, Division of Recreation and Parks, presented the River Rise State Park (RRSP) addition and Dade Battlefield addition amendments. The two items total five properties. The RRSP addition, owned by four family members, is the last remaining inholding in the park. The 160-acre property proposed for fee simple acquisition has been sought after for many years. It was recently timbered and is on the market. The property is surrounded by fire dependent sandhill communities restored by the park. Acquisition would contribute to the expansion of sandhill habitat, benefit species and enhance recreational opportunities.

Cutshaw described the Hamilton parcel 24-acre addition to the Dade Battlefield Historic State Park in Sumpter County. The undeveloped property is proposed for fee simple acquisition and would be managed by the park if acquired. The property encompasses a portion of the original site of Dade's Battle of 1835 and includes the eastern portion of a freshwater pond and wetland added to the park in 2020. Acquisition would enhance protection and interpretation of significant cultural resources, expand recreational opportunities, resource protection and access with frontage on US Highway 301.

**ARC Action:** Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC voted unanimously by six members to approve the amendment.

## CLOSING COMMENTS

**ARC Announcements:** Chair Hamilton announced the deadline for Florida Forever Cycle 2 proposals on April 30, 2021, and the next scheduled ARC meeting for June 11, 2021. Dr. Eason expressed appreciation to Chair Hamilton for moving through the items.

Ms. Peppers moved to adjourn the meeting with Dr. Eason seconding. ARC approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.