

**ITEM 2:**

Consider the April 8, 2022 meeting summary.

**DSL STAFF REMARKS:**

None

**DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the meeting summary.

**ARC RECOMMENDATION:**

**APPROVE**

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

**DEFER**

**WITHDRAW**

**NOT APPROVE**

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

## Acquisition and Restoration Council Meeting Summary

**Council Meeting:** April 8, 2022

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Location:** Department of Environmental Protection  
Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building  
Conference Room 137  
3900 Commonwealth Blvd  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

And via Webinar

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### Members in Attendance:

Dr. Tim Parsons, DHR  
Mr. Erin Albury, FFS  
Ms. Lynetta Griner, Citizen Member  
Dr. Thomas Eason, FWC  
Dr. Bill Palmer, Citizen Member  
Ms. Elva Peppers, Citizen Member  
Ms. Callie DeHaven, DEP for Ms. Mara Gambineri, ARC Chair

Ms. Deborah Burr, DEP for Ms. Shauna Allen, ARC Staff Director

### REGIONAL PUBLIC HEARING

Ms. Burr opened the hearing with an orientation for the meeting participants. ARC Chair DeHaven welcomed those in attendance, and recognized ARC members and managing agency staff attending. Ms. Burr provided a brief overview of the ARC role in the selection process for Florida Forever proposals. She concluded with the purpose of the regional hearing to take public testimony on nine new proposals for Cycle 1. Chair DeHaven called for presentations from the applicants. Ms. Burr announced the presenters.

Mr. Peter Kleinhenz, Tall Timbers, presented the Aucilla Corridor less-than-fee proposal. The 18,575-acre property is within FEGN Priority 2 and the Wacissa Basin Management Action Plan and Wacissa Priority Focus Area. Containing significant ecological, geological and cultural features, the property benefits conservation land linkages, water quality, public use and species conservation.

Mr. John Maehl, Martin County, presented the Bar-B Ranch fee simple proposal. The 1,910-acre property is adjacent to the Allapattah Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and C-44 stormwater treatment area. It is within FEGN Priority 2 and CERP Natural Lands priority area. The property has been taken care of by the same family for nearly 100 years and contains an upland pine/wetland mosaic providing habitat for wildlife adjacent to significant surface water

resources. The proposed manager is the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) as part of the Allapattah WMA. Mr. Maehl mentioned that Commissioner Doug Smith, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippish and Hershel Vinyard were present in support of the proposal.

Mr. Carl Salafrio, Environmental Consulting & Design, presented the Eight Mile less-than-fee proposal. The 5,760-acre property consists of mixed hardwood/cypress swamp and planted pine uplands managed for silviculture and hunting in Dixie County. Located within the Coastal Rivers Basin, Eight Mile Creek flows into the Steinhatchee River. The property is within FEGN Priority 1 and 2 and is adjacent to the Bailey Brothers Conservation Easement, Lafayette Forest, Mallory Swamp and benefits coastal aquatic wildlife and commercial fisheries. The owners are also considering their options for a mitigation bank.

Mr. Shane Wellendorf, Tall Timbers, presented the Foshalee Slough less-than-fee proposal. The 945-acre property is owned by the Ireland family and is adjacent to an existing easement with Tall Timbers and the Red Hills Conservation Florida Forever Project. The proposal connects existing conservation lands and is within FEGN Priority 2. The primarily wetlands proposal protects surface waters and contains a diversity of wetlands from mature forested wetlands to open water with emergent vegetation.

Mr. James Hancock, landowner, presented the Lake Sampala Timber and Land less-than-fee proposal. The 1,347-acre property in Madison County connects Lake Sampala to San Pedro and creates a connection to the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Containing shrub scrub wetlands and forested wetlands, the property is adjacent to existing conservation easements included Sampala Lake ARCO Ag & CE. The owners have focused efforts on protecting the wetlands and have plans to reintroduce fire in the uplands.

Mr. Ramesh Bush, North Florida Land Trust, and Mr. Doug Moore, landowner, presented the South Prong of the St. Mary's River less-than-fee proposal. The 1,146-acre property is immediately adjacent to a pending NRCS easement to the north owned by Mr. Moore in Baker County. The property is located within FEGN Priority 1 and is near the Raiford to Osceola Greenway, Ocala National Forest and Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park. A fifth generation Florida Farmer, Mr. Moore's goals are to manage the property for conservation, educational programs and conservation.

Ms. Julie Morris, National Wildlife Refuge Association, presented the Charlie Creek less-than-fee proposal. The 1,033-acre property is in Hardee County within the Peace River Watershed and FEGN Priority 1. Named for the creek that runs through it, this proposal builds on existing Rural and Family Lands Protection Program easements and would benefit water quality in the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor Estuary. The owners maintain a cow/calf operation and there is documented bear and panther use of the property.

Ms. Morris also presented the River Property less-than-fee proposal in Highlands County. The 3,068-acre property lies within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed and is adjacent to the Kissimmee River, Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation and the

Avon Sentinel Landscape. Consisting of primarily improved pasture with a cow/calf operation, there is pressure to convert to more intensive agriculture or development. The property is across the river from NRCS Wetland Reserve Easements and is within FEGN Priority 1. The proposal would make a good restoration project contributing to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project.

Dr. Eason commended the presentations and landowners for bringing these proposals forward.

Ms. Jackie Thurlow-Lippish, SFWMD Governing Board, spoke in favor of the Bar-B Ranch proposal. She noted the condition of the property located next to the C-44 Reservoir and Allapattah Flats project providing habitat for wildlife and the WMD willingness to manage the land.

Mr. Doug Smith, Martin County Commissioner, spoke about the county's ethic of land conservation and commitment to funding acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands that protect critical waterbodies and provide recreation destinations in their rapidly growing area of the state. He noted in their 20+ years of investing in conservation land acquisition to protect over 16,000 acres of lands and generating funding to evaluate the remaining 45,000 acres for acquisition within four priority areas, Pal-Mar, Loxa-Lucie, Blueways and CERP Natural Lands. Martin County is committed to financially contributing to the acquisition of the Bar-B Ranch, one of the remaining CERP Natural Lands.

Mr. Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife and Coordinator for the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape, spoke in favor of all nine projects. He made special mention of the Aucilla Corridor and Foshalee Slough both located in the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape and the goals to retain working lands, increase resiliency and sustainable living systems and mitigate coastal risks and increase climate resiliency for military installations.

Ms. Burr commented that all council members received a packet of support letters.

There were no further comments.

Chair DeHaven adjourned the hearing and called a recess to be followed by the Council meeting.

## **COUNCIL MEETING**

**Item 1:** Call to Order at 10:06 a.m.

Chair DeHaven called the meeting to order and asked Mr. Albury to lead the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Burr conducted the roll call. The quorum was established with six members in attendance. Ms. Burr provided housekeeping announcements.

**Item 2:** Consider the February 11, 2022, meeting and March 2022 regional hearing summaries.

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

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the summaries with Mr. Albury 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 2022 ARC meeting.

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

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** No action required.

### MANAGEMENT PLANS

**Item 4:** Consider a 10-year update to the Rainbow Springs State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3900).

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

**Discussion:** Mr. Joel Albritton, Division of Recreation and Parks, presented the management plan update. He mentioned district biologist Dan Pearson and park manager Larry Steed were present. The park is in Marion County north of Dunnellon and was acquired with CARL funds in 1990. Comprising just over 1,584 acres, the park protects Rainbow Spring, restricts development around the springhead and provides recreational opportunities. Mr. Albritton described 10 natural and 11 altered communities that host 19 imperiled species including the giant orchid, Eastern indigo snake, striped newt and yellow butterwort. Th park also features over 50 historic and cultural sites ranging from the prehistoric period through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Annual attendance for FY20/21 was 273,309 with a variety of water and nature based recreational opportunities. Management objectives include hydrological management and restoration, fire management on 950 acres, imperiled species monitoring and non-native species control. Visitor use management objectives include limiting numbers in certain areas based on monitoring to reduce impacts and adaptive management strategies for recurring issues. Cooperation with other agencies to monitor and manage impacts to the Rainbow River includes interpretive efforts. Infrastructure, facility and visitor use area improvements were also identified. As required by the lease agreement, the management plan was approved by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Governing Board at its February 22, 2022, meeting.

Ms. Griner commented on the visitor use management concept and hopes it is incorporated into other high use areas. She stated it is easy to blame spring degradation on outside influences and

that people also have an impact on the resource. She also noted that five years may be too long for a monitoring interval. There were no further comments.

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

**Item 5:** Consider a 10-year update to the Weeki Wachee Springs State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 4817).

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

**Discussion:** Mr. Tyler Maldonado, Division of Recreation and Parks, presented the management plan update for Daniel Alsentzer. The 927-acre park is under three leases, with SWFWMD (511 acres), the Board of Trustees (388 acres) and a submerged lands lease (28 acres). The park attendance in FY20/21 was 388,727. In 2022, the underwater theater dating to 1947 was listed on the National Register of Historic places bringing the number of listed features to 15. Along with the Mermaid Show, the theater is a significant international draw of significant cultural interest. The park also features 560 acres of scrub habitat and collaborative management for water quality and recreation on the Weeki Wachee River. Resource Management objectives include fire management and restoration/improvement of the scrub community. Recreational improvements include parking and traffic circulation and management of the carrying capacity along with visitor use management to address point bar impacts. Improvements to interpretation and cooperation with Hernando County and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission encourage responsible recreation on the river and enforce existing visitor rules. As required by the lease agreement, the management plan was approved by the SWFWMD Governing Board at its February 22, 2022, meeting.

Ms. Griner commented on the unique Weeki Wachee 2-day mermaid camp which at one time required two years in advance to register.

Ms. Burr noted for the record that comments were received from the Florida Native Plant Society and were distributed to the council. There were no further comments.

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

## FLORIDA FOREVER

**Item 6:** Consider project evaluation reports for the Aucilla River Corridor, Bar-B Ranch, Charlie Creek, Eight Mile Property, Foshalee Slough, Johnson Homestead, Lake Sampala Timber & Land, River Property, and South Prong of the St. Mary's River 2022 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals.

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

**Discussion:** none.

**ARC Action:** Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the project evaluation reports with Dr. Parsons seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

**Item 7:** Vote on whether to add nine 2022 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Vote on the proposals to be added as projects to the 2023 Florida Forever priority list.

Consider, if approved by a roll call vote as a Florida Forever project, adding the Charlie Creek less-than-fee project to the Old Town Creek Watershed Florida Forever project boundary by a second roll call vote of ARC.

Consider, if approved by a roll call vote as a Florida Forever project, adding the Foshalee Slough less-than-fee project to the Red Hills Conservation Florida Forever project boundary by a second roll call vote of ARC.

Consider, if approved by a roll call vote as a Florida Forever project, adding the Johnson Homestead less-than-fee project to the Peace River Refuge Florida Forever project boundary by a second roll call vote of ARC.

Consider, if approved by a roll call vote as a Florida Forever project, adding the Lake Sampala Timber & Land less-than-fee project to the San Pedro Bay Florida Forever project boundary by a second roll call vote of ARC.

Consider, if approved by a roll call vote as a Florida Forever project, adding the South Prong of the St. Mary's River less-than-fee project to the Raiford to Osceola Greenway Florida Forever project boundary by a second roll call vote of ARC.

**Discussion:** Dr. Eason stated that his agency had reviewed all and if it was permissible to lump them all into one vote. DSL confirmed that it would be permitted.

**ARC Action:** Dr. Eason made the motion to approve all nine proposals with one vote with Ms. Peppers seconding. Dr. Palmer recused himself from the vote. ARC voted by six members to add the nine proposals to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List.

ARC voted unanimously by seven votes to amend the Old Town Creek Watershed Florida Forever project boundary to add the Charlie Creek project.

ARC voted unanimously by seven votes to amend the Red Hills Conservation Florida Forever project boundary to add the Foshalee Slough project.

ARC voted unanimously by seven votes to amend the Peace River Refuge Florida Forever project boundary to add the Johnson Homestead project.

ARC voted unanimously by seven votes to amend the San Pedro Bay Florida Forever project boundary to add the Lake Sampala Timber & Land project.

ARC voted unanimously by seven votes to amend the Raiford to Osceola Greenway Florida Forever project boundary to add the South Prong of the St. Mary's River project.

**Item 8:** Vote on whether to amend the Florida's First Magnitude Springs Florida Forever Project Boundary to add five parcels totaling approximately 486 acres in Levy County with a tax assessed market value of \$1,745,229.

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

**Discussion:** Ms. Joanna Reilly-Brown, Alachua Conservation Trust, presented the fee simple boundary amendment. The 487-acre property is within the optimum boundary of Manatee Springs State Park and is comprised of forested uplands and wetlands. Located within FEGN Priority 1, the property is owned by two willing sellers, the Alachua Conservation Trust and North American Land Company. Acquisition would expand protection of the mapped Manatee Springs cave system and water quality in the spring and Suwannee River. Habitat restoration on the property would expand habitat for imperiled species.

**ARC Action:** Ms. Peppers made the motion to approve the boundary amendment with Dr. Eason seconding. Ms. Griner recused herself. ARC voted by six members to approve the amendment.

### CLOSING COMMENTS

**ARC Announcements:** Chair DeHaven announced upcoming meetings for the Florida Communities Trust on April 20, 2022, and the next scheduled ARC meeting on June 10, 2022, in Tallahassee. She also reminded everyone of the deadline for the Florida Forever Cycle 2 project proposals on April 30, 2022. The Public Land Acquisition & Management Partnership (PLAM) conference is in November 2022 with more information posted on the website. In closing, Chair DeHaven acknowledged the efforts of DSL staff in the Office of Environmental Services and the Florida Communities Trust in conducting the meeting. There were no further comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.