

ITEM 2:

Consider the February 10 meeting and March 13 and 14 regional hearing summaries.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

None

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the meeting summaries.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____

DEFER

WITHDRAW

NOT APPROVE

OTHER: _____

Acquisition and Restoration Council Meeting Summary

Council Meeting: February 10, 2023

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

Members in Attendance:

Ms. Alissa Lotane, DHR
Mr. Keith Rowell, FFS for Mr. Johnny Sabo
Ms. Lynetta Griner, Citizen Member
Dr. Thomas Eason, FWC
Dr. Bill Palmer, Citizen Member
Ms. Elva Peppers, Citizen Member
Ms. Mara Gambineri, ARC Chair, DEP

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

Item 1: Call to order at 9 a.m.

DEP Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation, Mara Gambineri, called the meeting to order and asked Dr. Palmer to lead the pledge of allegiance. Hearing there were no announcements from council members, she asked ARC Staff Director, Ms. Shauna Allen, to conduct the roll call. The quorum was established with seven members in attendance. Ms. Allen provided housekeeping instructions and directions for public comments.

Item 2: Consider the December 8-9, 2022, meeting summary.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the meeting summary.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: The meeting summary was presented for consensus. There being no objections, the meeting summary was approved by unanimous consent.

ARC STAFF REPORTS

Item 3: Status report on Land Management Reviews completed by the Division of State Lands from July to December 2022.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Allen stated the Office of Environmental Services coordinated 18 onsite reviews of managed conservation lands and the results were provided for information.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 4: Division of State Lands Acquisition Update.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Marjorie Karter, Bureau of Real Estate Services, presented an update on the acquisition of conservation lands. Ms. Karter noted the photos included in her presentation feature approved transactions from the most recent Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting. Acquisitions this fiscal year to date include almost 30,000 acres in 19 Florida Forever projects for \$80 million dollars with a good mix between large and small parcels for conservation easements and fee transactions supporting partner agencies. With the January BOT approvals for five projects, one has closed, and another is scheduled in the following week. Ms. Karter shared slides showing Florida Forever and ARPA funding allocation.

Discussion: Ms. Griner asked if the council could have a copy of the slide presentation. Dr. Eason commented on the excellent work by staff at all of the agencies involved in the acquisition process. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: No action required.

Chair Gambineri acknowledged the recent Prescribed Fire Awareness Week in Florida and efforts of prescribed burn teams across the state that have burned 21,960 acres in 79 burns so far this year.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Item 5: Consider a 10-year update to the Deep Creek Conservation Area Management Plan (Lease No. 4524).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Chris Kinslow, St. Johns River Water Management District, presented the management plan update. The management focus is the protection of the numerous waterbodies and surrounding tributaries of Deep Creek and the St. Johns River in St. Johns and Putnam counties. The area includes 5,953 acres north and south of the town of Hastings. It has two miles of frontage on the St. Johns River and 8 miles on Deep Creek. The property provides a large area of natural habitat within the tri-county agricultural area. Acquisition began in 1988 and includes two parcels purchased by the BOT (2005 Lambert 727-acre parcel, 2008 2-acre parcel). Two parcels were surplus for stormwater treatment facilities in Putnam (Edgefield) and St. Johns (portion of Masters) counties. The optimum boundary includes approximately 19,000 acres surrounding the conservation area. The area includes 10 natural communities with the largest being floodplain swamp (79% of the area). Altered land types include active agriculture leased to UF-IFAS, stormwater pond, treatment wetland and hybrid wetland treatment technology project.

Management goals include implementation of the prescribed burn plan, monitoring listed plant and animal species and establishing a wildlife management area. Additional goals include survey and treatment for invasive species, monitoring the one documented cultural site, maintaining the lease with the University of Florida Hastings Agricultural Extension Center and looking for opportunities to restore drainage ditches on former agricultural fields. There were no further comments.

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

Item 6: Consider a 10-year update to the Ochlockonee River and Bald Point State Park Management Plan (Lease Nos. 2469 and 4244).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Daniel Alsentzer, Division of Recreation and Parks, presented the combined management plan update for Ochlockonee River and Bald Point State Parks with the addition of the St. Teresa Tract to Bald Point State Park. The combined 12,700 acres represents a continuous series of park lands with frontage along four major waterbodies, Ochlockonee River and Bay, Apalachee Bay and Alligator Harbor. The parks share boundaries with Tate's Hell State Forest, Apalachicola National Forest and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and provide opportunities for long-distance pursuits like hiking, horseback riding, cross-country cycling and paddling across diverse natural landscapes. Restoration of the uplands and wetlands will yield hydrological and ecological benefits across management boundaries. Each unit will offer opportunities suitable for their unique characteristics and support visitors in other units. Visitor amenities will be designed with adaptation to the dynamic coastal setting.

Ochlockonee River State Park includes 547 acres in Wakulla County acquired in 1970. It features the Ochlockonee and Dead rivers. Management objectives include restoring hydrological conditions, monitoring river water quality, culvert replacement/upgrades, restoring mesic flatwoods and prescribed fire. Planned parkwide infrastructure improvements include entrance area, campgrounds, boat ramp, parking area and new facilities. Visitor management strategies will be employed to reduce shoreline erosion from boat landings along the Ochlockonee River.

Bald Point State Park – Bald Point Tract includes 6,120 acres in Franklin County acquired in 2000. The park features Ochlockonee and Apalachee bays, Alligator Harbor, Chaires Creek and Turner Lake. Management objectives include maintenance of fire adapted uplands, restoration of 2,397 acres of mesic flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods and scrub, and management of invasive species. Planned visitor facilities and infrastructure improvements include a campground and multi-use trail to complement the Chaires Creek day use area, north point beach access, new restroom, trail extensions and added interpretation, potential boat ramp and Alligator Harbor shoreline beach management.

Bald Point State Park – St Teresa Tract includes 6,032 acres in Franklin County acquired in 2020. The property sits north of Tate's Hell State Forest and shares an entrance road.

Management objectives include restoration activities on 4,338 acres, establishing new firebreaks and implementing prescribed fire. Fifteen archaeological sites that have been evaluated will be protected and monitored. Erosion along Bear Creek bluffs will be mitigated and restored along with a new dock and paddle craft landing. Proposed visitor amenities include formalized trails, new signage, primitive campsites, primitive equestrian campground and new entrance road.

There were no further comments.

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

FLORIDA FOREVER

Item 7: Adopt the Fiscal Year 2023-24 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: Ms. Griner asked if the \$92 million dollar difference between the appropriated dollars and commitments and set asides was accounted for. Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services, responded that the commitments and set asides was through the end of the calendar year. Ms. Callie DeHaven, Division of State Lands, added there are projects in the pipeline to account for that difference. There were no further comments.

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

Item 8: Consider a request to remove 0.12 acres from the boundary of the Florida Keys Ecosystem Florida Forever Project.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the owner-requested deletion.

Discussion: Dr. Eason commented that if an owner wants to opt out, then the response is clear from his perspective. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: Dr. Eason made the motion to approve owner-requested deletion with Dr. Palmer seconding. ARC voted unanimously by seven members to approve the deletion.

Item 9: Vote on whether to amend the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever Project Boundary for the FFS to add one parcel totaling approximately 40 acres in Santa Rosa County with a tax assessed market value of \$216,000.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Mr. Alan Davis, Florida Forest Service, presented the proposed amendment for a 40-acre inholding of the Blackwater River State Forest. The unimproved property includes 37 acres of uplands and three acres of wetlands with a dirt road running across the property. The

road is currently used by the FFS for access. The property will contribute to timber production and increase habitat for species, including the gopher tortoise. Acquisition will benefit land management activities including prescribed fire, native planting, wildlife conservation and recreational opportunities including hunting.

Mr. Dehryl McCall, landowner, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment and potential acquisition of the property by the state. He recalled running and hunting on the property purchased by his grandfather in 1947. His grandfather allowed the FFS to run a road across the property. He concluded by stating his family is supportive of the state owning the property. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: Mr. Rowell made the motion to approve boundary amendment with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC voted unanimously by seven members to approve the amendment.

PRESENTATIONS

Item 10: 2022 Florida Forever Progress Report Presentation

Discussion: Mr. Jon Oetting, Florida Natural Areas Inventory, provided an overview of the activities conducted to evaluate and analyze the progress of the Florida Forever program. The Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment corresponds to the 16 measures established in the Florida Forever Act. It is a tool to inform decision makers and provides public accountability. The Florida Forever Tool for Efficient Resource Acquisition and Conservation (F-TRAC) evaluates all projects across all resources together using the “reserved design” analysis. An expert advisory group comprised of representatives from all state land management agencies, non-governmental organizations and academia review and provide feedback on all data and analysis.

The Natural Resource Acquisition Progress Report published each November is provided to ARC along with the ranking tool. The report is a basic accounting of natural resources acquired by the program and includes the Florida Forever measures, statewide acres acquired for each measure for the year and acres in 2001, Florida Forever acquisitions across all programs, other acquisition programs and the percent protected in 2001 and the date of the report.

The Benchmarks Assessment is a “self-assessment” for the Division of State Lands to show how well we are achieving the goals. Since 2001, the results show we are doing really well with surface waters, wetlands, floodplains and forestry, pretty good with species, greenways and recharge and need more focus on natural communities. The priority natural communities represent some of the rarest communities and have less acreage and less opportunity. Ultimately, we do not expect to achieve 100% of the benchmarks because of the various and often competing factors at play. However, variety is good, and the reports help to focus on resources in need.

The advisory group will meet again in the spring to review the benchmarks. The council is always welcome to provide feedback that can help guide the data and analysis.

Chair Gambineri commented the data and science driven approach is instrumental in our day-to-

day operations. Ms. Lotane stated she is interested in the record for acquiring historic and cultural resources to see where that can be improved. Mr. Oetting noted the performance in historic and cultural resources has improved since the first time they ran the analysis. It helped flag that need and improve the ranking and state lands acquisition shows an improvement in that measure. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 11: Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability Presentation

Discussion: Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services, introduced Ms. Addie Thornton, Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) Coordinator. Ms. Thornton thanked Ms. Burr and Ms. DeHaven for their leadership for the past two years and recognized the participation of DEP, FWC and FFS in the partnership since 2005. Ms. Burr shared the history of the SERPPAS established in 2005 in response to rapid urbanization in the southeast affecting military installation ranges and training routes. State officials partnered with the Department of Defense (DOD) and other federal agencies to establish the partnership for a sustainable southeast. Members are senior leaders of the participating agencies which is co-chaired by Mr. Richard Kidd, DOD Office of the Secretary of Defense and a state agency for two years, currently Ms. DeHaven. The steering committee includes staff from the participating agencies. Ms. Burr is currently co-chair of the steering committee. The objectives of the partnership include minimize incompatible development, improve conservation, resilience and military readiness, identify compatible partner priorities, develop policy initiatives and promote innovative projects.

Ms. Burr described the Good Map which uses the best available and consistent data to provide partners with locations of military installations and the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI) Interactive Map which includes a public access tool for partners. Work groups are established around the strategic plan focus areas to accomplish the strategic plan. Partnership successes include the Red-cockaded woodpecker translocation program that contributed to the down listing of the woodpecker from endangered to threatened in 2020, the Gopher Tortoise Candidate Conservation Agreement that contributed to the decision not to federally list the gopher tortoise, Exception Events rule with the EPA that recognizes prescribed fire as beneficial, and establishment of the Avon Park and Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscapes. A new South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative has been established to advance coastal resilience in the defense communities with a goal to restore and conserve one million acres of salt marsh in the south east coast. The 2023 meeting will be held in Jacksonville at Mayport Naval Station in May.

Dr. Eason commented that the military are good conservation partners. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: No action required.

CLOSING COMMENTS

ARC Announcements: Chair Gambineri announced the next FCT meeting would be held on March 7 at 10 a.m. in Tallahassee and two ARC regional hearings for the 2023 Cycle 1 new projects were scheduled for March 13 in DeLand and March 14 in Sebring. The April 14 ARC meeting will be preceded by a regional hearing at 9 a.m. in Tallahassee. Dr. Eason thanked Mr. McCall for participating in the meeting.

There being no objections, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 10:22 a.m.

Summary of the March 13, 2023 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing

Date: March 13, 2023

Time: 4 p.m.

Location: Volusia County Commission Board Room
123 W. Indiana Ave
DeLand, FL 32720

In Attendance:

Ms. Callie DeHaven, ARC Chair Designee
Ms. Shauna Allen, ARC Staff Director
Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services
Ms. Sarah Presley, Volusia County
Mr. Tim Telfer, Volusia County
Ms. Suzanne Scheiber, Volusia Forever
The Honorable Jeff Brower, Chair, Volusia County Commission

Ms. Allen opened the hearing with an orientation for the meeting participants. Ms. DeHaven welcomed those in attendance. Ms. Allen provided a brief overview of the Council's role in the selection process for Florida Forever proposals and the purpose of the regional hearing. Ms. DeHaven called for public comments.

Ms. Scheiber spoke in favor of the Carter-Quail Ranch proposal. Ms. Scheiber shared concerns for the rate of development and need to protect the wildlife corridor and how this proposal contributes to connectivity for existing conservation lands.

Commissioner Brower spoke in favor of the Carter-Quail Ranch proposal as a key link in the interconnected network of conservation lands in Volusia County. The Commissioner spoke of the important diverse habitats including scrub jay habitat and the opportunity to reduce impacts from development. In addition, he mentioned the county's expertise and management ability along with being a funding partner in conservation which began in 1986 with their environmentally significant land program and continues with Volusia Forever.

Ms. DeHaven thanked the participants for sharing their comments. Ms. Allen shared next steps including the regional hearing scheduled for April 14, 2023, with a virtual attendance option. At that meeting public comment will be heard along with the project evaluation reports and the second vote to add the projects to the 2024 priority list. The regional hearing was concluded with no further comments.

Summary of the March 14, 2023 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing

Date: March 14, 2023

Time: 4 p.m.

Location: Highlands County Engineering Training Room
505 S Commerce Ave
Sebring, FL 33870

In Attendance:

Ms. Callie DeHaven, ARC Chair Designee
Ms. Shauna Allen, ARC Staff Director
Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services
Mr. Harold Baxter, Creek Ranch, LLC
Mr. Robert Adams, Creek Ranch, LLC
Mr. Jason Totoin, Center for Biological Diversity
Ms. Gaye Sharpe, Polk County Parks & Natural Resources
Mr. Jeremiah Thompson, Creek Ranch, LLC Representative

Ms. Allen opened the hearing with an orientation for the meeting participants. Ms. DeHaven welcomed those in attendance. Ms. Allen provided a brief overview of the Council's role in the selection process for Florida Forever proposals and the purpose of the regional hearing. Ms. DeHaven called for public comments.

Mr. Baxter spoke in favor of the Creek Ranch proposal. The property is in the path of completing the wildlife corridor circling Lake Hatchineha from the west to the Disney conservatory.

Mr. Thompson spoke in favor of the Creek Ranch and how it contributes to water quality and conserves water quantity along with biodiversity with the scrub habitat and Lake Hatchineha. It connects the wildlife corridor and the headwaters to the Everglades to the south in central Florida which is experiencing a lot of growth.

Mr. Totoin spoke in favor of the Creek Ranch proposal and how it contributes to goals of the Center for Biological Diversity. The property is a critically important piece between several federal, state and private conservation lands. This is an opportunity to close the gap between these conservation lands and prevent habitat loss and fragmentation from development along with impacts to ecological tools like prescribed fire for managing these habitats for wide ranging species. He shared the story of Panther 62 that traveled across the Caloosahatchee River to Catfish Creek State Park and how this opportunity will contribute to providing corridors for other panthers to move across the landscape.

Ms. Sharpe spoke in favor of the Creek Ranch proposal and the county environmental lands programs and conservation and water supply programs. From a local perspective it fits in with

what the county is trying to do in promoting the wildlife corridor. The county is also willing to support as a partner with the state.

Ms. DeHaven thanked the participants for sharing their comments. Ms. Allen shared the next steps including the regional hearing scheduled for April 14, 2023, with a virtual attendance option. At that meeting public comments will be heard along with the project evaluation reports and the second vote to add the projects to the 2024 priority list. The regional hearing was concluded with no further comments.