

ITEM 2:

Consider the June 11, 2021, 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: June 11, 2021
Time: 9:00 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:

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

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

Item 1: Call to order at 9:00 a.m.

DEP Division of State Lands Director, Callie DeHaven, called the meeting to order. Chair DeHaven announced that Secretary Noah Valenstein in his farewell appointed Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation Shawn Hamilton to serve as Interim Secretary. She then asked Ms. Peppers to lead the pledge of allegiance. ARC Staff Director Shauna Allen conducted the roll call. The quorum was established with seven members in attendance. Ms. Allen provided housekeeping announcements including instructions for in-person and webinar attendees and announced one correction to the acreage on Item 9.

Item 2: Consider the April 9, 2021, meeting summary.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the meeting summary.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Ms. Peppers made the motion to approve the summary with Dr. Eason 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 April 2021 ARC meeting.

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

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: No action required.

LAND ADMINISTRATION

Item 4: Consider whether an approximately 0.57-acre private electric transmission line easement and 0.13-acre temporary construction easement within Jonathan Dickinson State Park (Park), is consistent with the Board of Trustees' Linear Facilities Policy.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the easement.

Discussion: Mr. Jay Sircy, DEP Bureau of Public Land Administration, presented the easement request located in Martin County. The Florida Power and Light easement amendment request is for a partial realignment of the existing easement no. 9575 issued in 1967 and amended in 2020. The proposal is to release 0.91 acres of the existing easement and place the lines underground at a new location. Mr. Sircy stated a portion of the existing overhead lines and poles will be removed by the applicant reducing the number of structures on conservation lines and the need to replace poles in sensitive areas. The proposed underground lines will also make the transmission line more resilient to storms. The applicant will be required to survey the area for gopher tortoises and if found relocate them within the park. The applicant will be required to pay an easement fee and compensation of 1.5 times the easement value.

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

FLORIDA FOREVER

Item 5: Hear presentations and take Public Testimony on the Florida Forever 2021 Cycle 2 Proposals.

Discussion: Mr. Keith Fountain, Keith Fountain Law, PLLC, on behalf of the applicant, presented the Adams Ranch II proposal. The proposal would secure the legacy of rancher Bud Adams and parts of two ranches including the original ranch in St. Lucie County. The proposal contributes to landscape connectivity and hydrologic resources in the region. Fountain mentioned that the Lake Marion Ranch property includes only those portions of the 24,000-acre ranch that are currently unincumbered by existing easements and not currently in a Florida Forever project.

The property consists of dry prairie, longleaf pine flatwoods and croplands. The property lies in both the Kissimmee and St. Johns River watersheds and is in the Florida Wildlife Corridor. It also provides habitat for the Florida grasshopper sparrow. Fountain described the St. Lucie Ranch as the original ranch of Alto “Bud” Adams, Jr. and includes the entire ranch except for the family residences to the north. The property, adjacent to the Triple S Ranch and NRCS conservation easements, has extensive wetland communities and water storage capacity.

Ms. Allen shared a letter from Mr. Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife, indicating support for the six boundary amendment proposals and further evaluation of the Adams Ranch II proposal. Mr. Wimmer highlighted the contributions of the proposals to conserving wildlife habitat as components of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 6: Vote on whether the Adams Ranch II 2021 Cycle 2 Florida Forever proposal will proceed through the project evaluation process for potential addition to the 2022 Florida Forever Priority List.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposal.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: ARC voted unanimously by seven members to initiate a full review of the Adams Ranch II project proposal.

Item 7: Vote on whether to amend the Little River Conservation Area Florida Forever project boundary to add one property totaling approximately 208 acres in Gadsden County with a prorated tax assessed market value of \$445,047.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Mr. Keith Fountain, Keith Fountain Law, PLLC, on behalf of the applicant, presented the boundary amendment. The Ocala family acquired the 825-acre property in 2018 for recreation and timber management. Most of the property was included in the project boundary except for the south 208 acres proposed to be added. Proposed for less-than-fee acquisition, Fountain stated that the proposal is managed identical to the property within the project.

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

Item 8: Vote on whether to amend the Annatteliga Hammock Florida Forever project boundary to add three parcels totaling approximately 15 acres in Hernando County with a tax assessed market value of \$111,150.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Ms. Larame Ferry, Land Conservation Coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, presented the Yawn & Northrop property amendment. The 15-acre parcel is surrounded on three sides by the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area and contains sandhill and depression marsh providing habitat for the Florida black bear. Proposed for fee simple acquisition, the property would be managed by the FWC if acquired. The property would expand habitat and improve management by filling in the irregular boundary, expand recreational opportunities, surface water protection and aquifer recharge. Ms. Ferry also stated the property is currently under contract.

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

Item 9: Vote on whether to amend the Florida Keys Ecosystem Florida Forever project boundary to add three parcels totaling approximately 1.3 acres in Monroe County with a tax assessed market value of \$150.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Ms. Larame Ferry, Land Conservation Coordinator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, presented the Dixon property amendment. The Dixon property is 3/7 of parcels not within the project boundary. Proposed for fee simple acquisition, the property would be managed by the FWC as part of the adjacent Florida Keys Wildlife and Environmental Area. Acquisition would improve water quality protection, recreation opportunities and address management challenges from vehicular access causing significant damage to the mangrove swamp. In closing, Ms. Ferry mentioned Area Biologist Susie Nuttall was available to answer questions.

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

Item 10: Vote on whether to amend the Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem Florida Forever project boundary to add six parcels totaling approximately 913.2 acres in Polk County with a prorated tax assessed market value of \$407,695.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Ms. Julie Morris, National Wildlife Refuge Association, presented the Armington Ranch proposal on behalf of the owner. The less-than-fee proposal is a low intensity cow/calf operation and provides an important link in the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Ms. Morris stated the property provides habitat for numerous protected species documented on the property, including the Florida scrub jay, Florida sand skink, Britton's beargrass, wood storks and others. The property includes ancient scrub and is bordered by the Lake Wales Ridge State Forest north and south of SR 60. The property is a priority 2 linkage in the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and is an Avon Park Sentinel Landscape which buffers and connects existing conservation lands.

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

Recess: Council approved a ten-minute recess during Item 11 due to technical difficulties, with Chair DeHaven making the motion and Mr. Albury seconding. The council meeting resumed at 9:51 a.m. and established a quorum by roll call with seven members present.

Item 11: Vote on whether to amend the Rainbow River Corridor Florida Forever project boundary to add 14 parcels totaling approximately 47.78 acres in Marion County with a tax assessed market value of \$87,209.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Mr. Burt Eno, Rainbow River Conservation, Inc., presented the Nine Island Cove amendment. He discussed the 2007 approval of the Rainbow River Corridor project to protect the Rainbow River from the headspring to the Withlacoochee River and subsequent acquisition of Blue Run Park. The proposed Nine Island Cove proposal would extend the project boundary along the Withlacoochee River and provide a bookend to Blue Run Park. He also described the phosphate mining history of the property and the canals constructed to connect the spring fed pits to the Withlacoochee River. Proposed for fee simple acquisition, the City of Dunnellon is committed to managing the property as a city park if acquired. The property provides 2,300 feet of river frontage and includes walking trails providing for recreational opportunities and natural buffers for the Withlacoochee River corridor.

City of Dunnellon (City) Mayor Bill White spoke in favor of the proposal describing the potential benefit to ecotourism for the City of 2,000 residents.

Ms. Griner asked how committed we are to the City as manager of the property considering that the local politics may change years from now when acquired. Ms. DeHaven responded that the designated manager does sometime change, but if the City is committed at that time, they will be the chosen manager at closing.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

DSL Staff Announcements: Ms. Sine Murray, Florida Forever Program Manager, presented updates to the Florida Forever website including the recently approved Florida Forever Plan online publication. All components can be accessed individually on the webpage including the projects, appendices and abstract. In addition, Ms. Murry announced the new Florida Forever Story Map, an interactive tool that allows the user to explore the projects geographically, by category and project with links to the project descriptions and maps that can be accessed by bookmarks. New information on the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and the Rural and Family Lands program has been added to the site. Ms. Murray encouraged everyone to visit and

explore the website at <https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/florida-forever>.

ARC Announcements: Chair DeHaven expressed appreciation to the Council, staff and Gary Ballard with the DEP Office of General Counsel and announced the next scheduled ARC meeting for August 13, 2021, in Lakeland. Ms. Murray introduced new OES staff, Allison Beaty and Sharon Rodriguez. Dr. Eason expressed his appreciation and thanked DEP for getting us back together in person.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.