

**ITEM 2:**

Consider the August and September 2022 meeting and regional hearing summaries.

**DSL STAFF REMARKS:**

None

**DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the meeting and regional hearing summaries.

**ARC RECOMMENDATION:**

**APPROVE**

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

**DEFER**

**WITHDRAW**

**NOT APPROVE**

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

# Acquisition and Restoration Council Regional Public Hearing and Meeting Results

**Date:** August 12, 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:

Ms. Alissa Lotane, 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. Mara Gambineri, ARC Chair, DEP

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

## REGIONAL PUBLIC HEARING

Ms. Allen opened the hearing at 9:00 a.m. with an orientation for the meeting participants. ARC Chair Gambineri welcomed those in attendance (including Alissa Lotane, newly appointed Director of the Division of Historic Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer) and recognized ARC members and agency staff. 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. Chair Gambineri called for presentations from the applicants.

Mr. Peter Kleinhenz, Tall Timbers, presented the Rosewood-Avalon project proposal. The 3,680-acre less-than-fee property located in Jefferson County provides habitat for several state listed species, recorded archaeological sites, and lies within the Wacissa Springs Group priority focus areas. The property is threatened by development due to its location along Highway 19 and proximity to I-10. Uplands are managed with regular prescribed fire burn intervals while the undisturbed bottomland areas contain freshwater swamps, sinkholes and seepage streams. The county designated heritage WPA Road runs along the east side of the property completing over 11 miles of scenic views. Conservation of the property benefits water quality and quantity and contributes to the public/private conservation of wildlife corridors from the state line to the coast.

The regional hearing was concluded with no further comments. Following the call to order, the council meeting staff received a request for public testimony, which was recorded during public comment for the council meeting. The testimony is included here as part of the regional hearing.

Mr. Dean Saunders, representative for Turner Enterprises, spoke in favor of the Rosewood-Avalon proposal and in consultation with Tall Timbers amending the current proposal to add another 8,000 acres of land the family is interested in conserving.

There were no further comments.

## COUNCIL MEETING

**Item 1:** Call to Order immediately following the Regional Hearing at 9:10 a.m.

Chair Gambineri called the meeting to order and asked Dr. Palmer to lead the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Allen conducted the roll call and established the quorum with seven members in attendance. Dr. Eason recognized Ms. Laramie Ferry as the new Land Conservation and Planning Administrator replacing Tom Houston. Dr. Eason also shared the news of a recent acquisition in partnership with the Florida Forest Service to add 150 acres on Seminole State Forest, and staff would give a presentation on panther conservation at the October ARC. Ms. Allen reminded attendees of the meeting and public testimony instructions.

**Item 2:** Consider the June 10, 2022, meeting summary.

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

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the meeting summary 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 June 2022 ARC meeting.

**DSL Staff Remarks:** Ms. Allen stated two items were submitted and approved via the negative response process including one management plan amendment for Spring Hammock Preserve and easement on the Blackwater State Forest.

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** No action required.

**Item 4:** Update on the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever Project from the Office of Environmental Services.

**DSL Staff Remarks:** Ms. Sine Murray, Office of Environmental Services, provided an update on the Strategic Managed Area Lands List (SMALL) Florida Forever project approved in

October 2018. The project was sponsored by managing agency partners to protect the state investment in adjacent lands, expand recreational opportunities and improve management efficiency. Properties must meet the criteria of being within the optimum boundary of the management plan, not in another project boundary and will augment or improve management of the adjacent state-owned lands. An August 2021 amendment increased the allotment for each managing agency, bringing the total parcels to 60. Since 2019 there have been seven acquisitions totaling 461 acres with a remaining 11,383 acres to be acquired. Ms. Murray noted the acquired acres may seem small compared with other projects, however, the impact of the acquisitions is mighty in terms of benefits to management efficiencies, habitat protection and recreational opportunities.

Dr. Eason commented on the small but mighty, noting these acquisitions are critical to management and acknowledging the cooperative efforts of staff in the acquisitions. There were no further comments.

**Discussion:** None.

**ARC Action:** No action required.

#### LESS THAN 40-ACRE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

**Item 5:** Determine whether a 26.14-acre conservation easement in Jefferson County, Florida, over property belonging to Belle Terre Land Partners, LLC fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy and yields a significant public benefit.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Find that the easement (1) fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy and (2) yields a significant public benefit.

**DSL Staff Remarks:** Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services, provided background on the 2009 Legislature criteria for lands comprising less than 40 acres exemption from ad valorem taxes. The landowner granted a conservation easement to Tall Timbers in 2006 for 26.14 acres. Together with adjacent landowners, the property comprises 130 acres of conservation lands including Crow Pond and bottomland forest significant natural areas. The property protects habitat for the black bear and gopher tortoises. The property fulfills state conservation policies, located in the Red Hills Strategic Habitat Conservation Area, natural floodplain functions, functional wetlands and aquifer recharge. The significant public benefit criteria is fulfilled by management for protected species, protected landscape and protection of the St. Marks River Watershed.

**Discussion:** Ms. Griner commented this is for less than 40 acres. Ms. Burr responded that if it is greater than 40 acres they do not come to ARC. Ms. Griner added that larger easements do pay taxes, just at a reduced rate. Dr. Palmer commented that the state reimburses the counties for the taxes. There were no further comments.

**ARC Action:** Ms. Griner made the motion to approve the easement with Ms. Peppers seconding. Dr. Palmer recused himself. ARC approved the item unanimously.

## LAND ADMINISTRATION

**Item 6:** Consider whether an approximately 1.61-acre, 20-foot wide, public underground wastewater force main within Rainbow Springs State Park and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area is consistent with the Board of Trustees' Linear Facilities Policy.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Approve the proposed easement.

**Discussion:** Mr. Jay Sircy, Bureau of Public Land Administration, notified the ARC that the applicant verified it is a public agency and therefore not subject to the easement fee. The easement request in Marion County was to remove a failing package plant and reroute wastewater to the City of Dunnellon. The Division of Historical Resources requires a cultural resource assessment survey prior to construction. The proposed easement will improve water quality in the area. As additional compensation, the applicant will provide wastewater connections to a central sewer system for Rainbow Springs State Park campground. There were no further comments.

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

**Item 7:** Consider whether an approximately 5.199-acre public transportation easement to the State of Florida Department of Transportation within the Withlacoochee State Forest Whispering Pines Park is consistent with the Board of Trustees' Linear Facilities Policy.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Approve the proposed easement.

**Discussion:** Mr. Joe Murphy, Florida Department of Transportation, described the proposed easement request to accommodate the widening of US-41 from two to four lanes for current and future demand. In Citrus County, the easement runs from State Route 44 to the Withlacoochee State Trail (Trail) and will include sidewalks and a shared-use path along with improving the park recreational trail connection to the Trail. The park entrance will be relocated to a signalized intersection. Additional compensation also includes 16.51 acres of replacement lands adjacent to Withlacoochee State Forest in Hernando County.

Dr. Eason expressed his appreciation for the more than 3:1 offset with the replacement lands. There were no further comments.

**ARC Action:** Mr. Albury made the motion to approve the easement with Dr. Palmer seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

## LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS

**Item 8:** Consider a 10-year update to the Janet Butterfield Brooks Wildlife and Environmental Area Management Plan (Lease No. 4594).

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

**Discussion:** Ms. Jackie Bucheck, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), presented the management plan for this 319-acre unit in Hernando County. Adjacent to the Fickett Hammock Preserve, the property was donated to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 1974 by Ms. Brooks with a deed restriction for conservation use with no public access. In 2008, TNC donated the property to the State of Florida. The FWC entered into a lease in 2009 to manage the property as a Wildlife and Environmental Area (WEA) focused on promoting habitat conditions for the gopher tortoise. The area contains natural communities comprised primarily of sandhill and upland hardwood forest and host the gopher tortoise and Southeastern American kestrel. Planned management objectives include species surveys and management of the one cultural site, Baily Hill Homestead. Guided educational tours are permitted and management of approximately four miles of roads. Resource management objectives include prescribed fire, species monitoring, invasive species management and timber assessment update. Proposed improvements include one well and bridge installation for prescribed fire management. There were no further comments.

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

**Item 9:** Consider a 10-year update to the Oleta River State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3154).

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

**Discussion:** Ms. Yasmine Armaghani, Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP), presented the management plan for the 1,032-acre park in Miami-Dade County. The property was acquired in 1980 with Preservation 2000 funding and hosts paddling, camping and fishing activities. The annual visitation was 312,231 in Fiscal Year 2020-21. The park includes six natural communities comprised largely of mangrove swamp and altered landcover. Management objectives include restoring water flow and 170 acres of spoil to maritime hammock, non-native plant control and landscape improvements in the public use areas. Cabin renovations, new paths, restroom renovations, playground upgrades and replacing the fishing pier are additional proposed improvements. 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.

**Item 10:** Consider a 10-year update to the Yellow River Marsh Preserve State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 4306).

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

**Discussion:** Mr. Joel Allbritton, DRP, presented the management plan for this 976-acre park in Santa Rosa County. Acquired by the State in 2000, the park includes the largest collection of pitcher plants in the state. Natural communities include 514 acres of wet prairie and 357 acres of wet flatwoods that provide habitat for eight imperiled plants and five imperiled animals. There is one recorded unspecified archaeological site. Recreational activities include birding, hiking and wildlife viewing. Annual attendance was 10,260 in FY 2020-21. Resource management objectives include hydrological assessment for restoration, restoration of 879 acres, prescribed

fire on 922 acres, manage invasive species, expand the parking lot from six to 12 spaces and add three miles of trails. Additional improvements include an interpretive kiosk, picnic pavilion, restroom and new observation platform.

Dr. Eason asked about the unspecified archaeological site. Mr. Allbritton responded there was no timeframe specified and the site is now underwater due to erosion. There were no further comments.

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

## FLORIDA FOREVER

**Item 11:** Vote on whether to combine the Aucilla River Corridor, Econfina Timberlands, West Aucilla River Buffer, Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks Florida Forever projects, and the Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks tracts of the St. Joe Timberlands Florida Forever project to create a new Florida Forever project named the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Florida Forever project to be added to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List.

**DSL Staff Recommendation:** Vote to approve the item.

**Discussion:** Ms. Murray presented the proposed Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed project proposal to combine several projects within the watershed of the Aucilla and Wacissa Rivers. During the review of the recently approved Aucilla River Corridor project it became apparent to staff that the projects had similar and overlapping purposes, namely improving water quality, protecting the Wacissa springs, rural working landscapes, wildlife corridors and important archaeological sites. The new project will help refocus efforts in the region facing a growing threat for land conversion and has the support of all project sponsors. The combined project of 101,260 acres added to the Partnership and Regional Incentives Category will be 60% complete.

Dr. Eason asked about staff input on shifting the categories. Ms. Murray responded in internal discussions about categories, considering the RCPP efforts it fit well with the Partnership and Regional Incentives because it requires a match.

Mr. Peter Kleinhenz, Tall Timbers, spoke in favor of the proposal and category. He noted the proposal contains the second oldest evidence of humans in north America, contains two springs, endemic species and hydrological connectivity within the watershed. Efforts in public and private conservation have created a network of conservation lands from the state line to the gulf. The proposal will raise the profile of this watershed and focus efforts with partnership opportunities including the NRCS RCPP Funding that Tall Timbers has received along with other funding including the Forest Legacy and Gulf Environmental Improvement Fund. There were no further comments.

**ARC Action:** Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the staff recommendation with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC voted unanimously by seven members to approve the project and add it to the 2023 Priority List.

**Item 12:** Vote on whether to amend the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever Project Boundary for the FWC to add two properties totaling approximately 161 acres in Franklin and Glades counties with a combined tax assessed market value of \$1,064,036.

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

**Discussion:** Ms. Susie Nuttall, FWC, presented the boundary amendment. The proposal to add one 40-acre parcel to the Apalachicola River WEA includes a large garage and residence. The parcel protects habitat for the gulf sturgeon, wood stork, Florida black bear and provides a critical fireline. Acquisition would enhance protection of resources and expand recreational opportunities. The proposal to add 123 acres to the Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area includes an owner requested five-acre life estate. The property provides habitat for the Red-cockaded woodpecker, Florida scrub jay, and Florida panther. Acquisition would enhance existing recreational opportunities and management of upland flatwoods habitat including prescribed fire, invasive species and conservation land connectivity.

Dr. Eason clarified that both properties would be handled as one boundary amendment. Ms. Allen confirmed that they would be approved with one vote. There were no further comments.

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

**Item 13:** Vote on whether to amend the West Bay Preservation Area Florida Forever Project Boundary to add one parcel totaling approximately 87.9 acres in Bay County with a tax assessed market value of \$194,259.

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

**Discussion:** Ms. Maranda Barnes, Beachy Beach Real Estate, presented the boundary amendment. The 87.9-acre property is in a desirable location of Lynn Haven with adjacent upscale waterfront development. The property is similarly configured to the adjacent property developed for homesites with bridges between the islands. As currently zoned, it could be developed with up to 175 units providing direct access to the Gulf of Mexico. There were no further comments.

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

## PRESENTATIONS

**Item 14:** Sentinel Landscapes in Florida Presentation

**Discussion:** Mr. Kent Wimmer, Coordinator for the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape (NFSL), presented an overview of the sentinel landscape program in Florida. The Florida Forever program is instrumental to achieving the goals of the sentinel landscapes. The United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense and Department of the Interior established the sentinel landscape partnership in 2013 to collaborate with partners to maintain compatible land uses, minimize constraints to military missions, working lands, important



species habitat and sustainable management practices. Over \$200 million has been spent on 78,000 acres near military installations in Florida. Florida Forever acquisitions protect military buffers and military operations on 225,000 acres in the Avon Park Sentinel Landscape established with TNC in 2016. The NFSL was established in 2022 with Defenders of Wildlife as coordinator. Florida is the first state with two designated sentinel landscapes and a third proposed for northeast Florida. The NFSL includes six military installations including the largest testing and training range in the country along 165 miles of the Gulf coast. The partners have acquired 190,000 acres in fee simple and less-than-fee to protect and buffer military missions, habitat, working lands and contribute to the landscape conservation goals for the military installations.

Dr. Palmer expressed appreciation for Kent's leadership and hard work to establish the NFSL. There were no further comments.

**ARC Action:** No action required.

### **CLOSING COMMENTS**

**ARC Announcements:** Chair Gambineri announced the Public Land Administration and Management Conference registration is open and the next ARC meeting will be October 14, 2022.

Mr. Dean Saunders comments were included in the Regional Hearing. There were no further comments.

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

## Summary of the August 29, 2022 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing

**Date:** August 29, 2022  
**Time:** 4:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Lecanto Government Building  
3600 W. Sovereign Path, Room 280  
Lecanto, FL 34461

**In Attendance:**

Ms. Callie DeHaven, ARC Chair Designee  
Ms. Shauna Allen, ARC Staff Director  
Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services  
Ms. Felicia Halley, Owner, Double G Legacy

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. The regional hearing was concluded with no further comments.

## Summary of the August 30, 2022 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing

**Date:** August 30, 2022  
**Time:** 4:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Highlands County Commission Board Room  
600 South 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. Rick Dantzler, Keith Fountain Law

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. Dantzler spoke in favor of the Heartland Wildlife Corridor and shared the support of the landowners. Bentley Ranch had some agricultural uses that were more compatible with conservation under an agricultural easement and will be pulled from the application. The properties all contribute at the landscape scale to wildlife corridor linkages and the owners and applicants see DEP as the folks to pull the wildlife corridors together. Ms. DeHaven thanked Mr. Dantzler for championing the project and noted it gives the owners options. The regional hearing was concluded with no further comments.

## **Summary of the September 6, 2022 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing**

**Date:** September 6, 2022

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Blackwater Heritage Trail Visitor Center  
5533 Alabama St.  
Milton, FL 32570

### **In Attendance:**

Ms. Callie DeHaven, ARC Chair Designee  
Ms. Shauna Allen, ARC Staff Director  
Ms. Deborah Burr, Office of Environmental Services  
Ms. Sine Murray, Office of Environmental Services  
Mr. Doug Hattaway, Trust for Public Land  
Mr. Vernon Compton, The Longleaf Alliance and Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership

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. Hattaway spoke in favor of the Wolf Creek Forest Addition II proposal to add three tracts to the Blackwater River State Forest and NAS Whiting Field. The proposal will benefit natural resource management and conservation, base buffering and public access for people to connect with nature in a variety of activities.

Mr. Compton spoke in favor of the Wolf Creek Forest Addition II proposal in terms of the conservation value for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem with the largest state forest in Florida. Military buffering with an important local partner further benefits protection for biodiversity. The proposal also provides public recreation opportunities and additional public access. The Blackwater River watershed is a high protection priority for several decades and is important because of the development pressure in the rapidly growing Santa Rosa County.

Ms. DeHaven thanked everyone for attending to provide their comments. The regional hearing was concluded with no further comments.