

ITEM 5:

Annual Land Management Review Team findings and the Land Management Uniform Accounting Council 2020 Annual Report and Biennial Report.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

Section 259.036, Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires the Board of Trustees, acting through the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), to conduct land management reviews of selected conservation, preservation and recreation lands titled to the Board of Trustees to determine whether those lands are being managed for purposes compatible with conservation, preservation, or recreation, and in accordance with their adopted management plans. The legislation requires DEP to submit a report of its findings to the Board of Trustees no later than the second board meeting in October of each year. The 2003 Florida Legislature amended chapter 259.036, F.S., to require that all lands that are subject to being reviewed that are over 1,000 acres, be reviewed at least every five years.

The Land Management Uniform Accounting Council (LMUAC) was created by the 2000 Florida Legislature with the enactment of Section 259.037, F.S. As mandated by the legislation, the Council developed a uniform method for compiling and reporting accurate costs of land management activities. This includes an agreed-upon list of standardized land management categories and sub-categories under which to group management activities, which is attached as an addendum to this report. Although the individual management activities conducted varies between agencies, they can be grouped within this structure in most all cases. This report contains a summary of Fiscal Year 2019-2020 expenditures by these agencies, grouped according to the established categories and subcategories. It also includes a brief profile sheet for each agency outlining their missions and primary goals for state lands management.

Biennially, the LMUAC submits an operational report for each management area. The report assesses the progress toward achieving short-term and long-term management goals of the approved management plan, including all land management activities, and any deficiencies in management and corrective actions to address identified deficiencies as appropriate.

Section 259.037(4), F.S. requires that the LMUAC submit their Annual Report to the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) and the Division of State Lands (DSL) for inclusion with the above Land Management Review Report.

All three reports are placed on the DSL website at:

<https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/land-stewardship>.

ANNUAL LAND MANAGEMENT REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS

Properties reviewed were selected from a database of the Board of Trustees' lands based on: size of the property, management plan due dates, managing agency, when previous land management reviews were conducted, and, geographic location. Regional review team members were selected in accordance with the requirements of the legislation to include representatives of the following: (1) the county or local community in which the parcel is located, (2) the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP), (3) the Florida Forest Service, (4) the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, (5) the Department of Environmental Protection district office, (6) a private land manager, (7) the local Soil and Water Conservation District board of supervisors or Water Management District, and (8) a conservation organization. Participating state agencies, soil and

water conservation districts, and conservation groups have had continual input into the development and ongoing evolution of the review process. Additionally, DEP coordinates with representatives of the Water Management Districts (WMD) to integrate management reviews where WMD lands are adjacent to Board of Trustees' lands and when the Board of Trustees has joint ownership of parcels with a WMD.

Thirty-three reviews were originally scheduled, but consistent with recent precautionary guidance provided by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Governor DeSantis and the Florida Department of Health regarding COVID-19, the Department of Environmental Protection postponed nine land management reviews that were scheduled from April through June of 2020. Twenty-four reviews were conducted during the 2019-20 fiscal year, involving more than 367,000 acres of managed lands. Reports of the management review team findings were provided to the managing agency, and the Acquisition and Restoration Council. The reports are also made available on the DSL web site. The management activities are scored on a 1 to 5 range. Applying the criteria that a score of 3.5 and above is considered excellent, a score of 2.5 to 3.49 is considered adequate, and a score of less than 2.5 is considered inadequate, the management review team provides the following:

- Public access: Public access was excellent on 24 (100 percent) of the sites the teams visited.
- Prescribed fire scope: Prescribed burning is considered an appropriate management tool on 23 of the 24 sites reviewed. On three sites (12.5 percent of sites), over 30 percent of the fire dependent lands had been treated according to prescription. On 19 sites (79.2 percent) over 60 percent of the fire dependent lands had been treated according to prescription. On one site (4.2 percent) less than 30 percent of the fire dependent lands had been treated according to prescription. One site (4.2 percent) have no fire dependent lands.
- Prescribed fire frequency: On 23 of the 23 sites requiring prescribed fire (95.8 percent), the teams found the burn frequency adequate or excellent.
- Fire quality: On 23 of the 23 sites where prescribed fire has been implemented (95.8 percent) the teams found fire quality to be excellent.
- Invasive species control: Control of non-native invasive plants was a management issue on all the lands reviewed. Control and maintenance measures were adequate on one site (4.2 percent), and excellent on 23 (95.8 percent) of the sites reviewed.
- Surface water quality: Lands that have significant hydrological resources should be monitored to ensure protection. Fourteen sites (58.3 percent) had plans that adequately covered testing for degradation of surface waters, and three sites (12.5 percent) had plans that provided insufficient surface water testing information. Seven sites had no surface water testing needs.
- Groundwater quality: Thirteen sites (54.2 percent) had adequate monitoring for groundwater quality and quantity. Eleven sites had no groundwater monitoring needs.
- Species protection: Twenty-two sites (91.7 percent) were found to be excellent, two sites (12.5 percent) were adequate, in actual management practices to protect listed plants and animals on site. The plans were deemed adequate or excellent to ensure protection on 24 sites (100 percent).

- Law enforcement: On 23 sites (95.8 percent), law enforcement was adequate or excellent to protect the resources, and one site (4.2 percent) demonstrated a need for improvements in law enforcement.
- Public education and outreach: Twenty-four sites (100 percent) demonstrated adequate or excellent public education and outreach programs.

It should be noted that, even in instances where overall management was deemed adequate or excellent, any specific areas meriting improvement were noted by the teams and can be found in the individual reports. Likewise, the review teams observed many examples of management meriting special mention, including:

- At John M. Bethea State Forest in Nassau County, the review team commended FFS for continuing efforts to improve the forest's resilience to wildfire by converting to longleaf, widening firebreaks, and increased prescribed fire.
- At Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area in Marion, Putnam, Levy and Citrus Counties, the review team commended the FPS for an exemplary prescribed fire program and results in sandhill community, particularly considering a significantly challenging urban-wildland interface, including residential subdivisions and public roadways and highways, including I-75.
- At Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area in Hernando County, the review team commended FWC for their efforts to consider the resident Florida black bear subpopulation during management activities by protecting potential denning habitat and maintaining forage and cover for bears on the CWMA.
- At Spring Hammock Preserve in Seminole County, the review team commended Seminole County for a very good proactive and reactive management of invasive species.

Overall, the review teams found that the managers of these areas are dedicated professionals who are doing an excellent job with the resources available.

Many of the management issues noted in the findings may be directly related to the following:

- Staffing Levels: On 7 sites (29.2 percent) the teams found that staffing levels were less than adequate to protect the resources, while on 17 sites (70.8 percent) the staffing levels were adequate or excellent;
- Funding Levels: On 14 sites (58.3 percent) the teams found funding levels were adequate or excellent for proper management of resources, while on 8 sites (33.3 percent) funding levels were less than what the review team thought is needed for proper management;
- Equipment: On 21 sites (87.5 percent) the team found adequate or excellent equipment to properly manage the property, while on three sites (12.5 percent) the team found equipment to be inadequate.

Pursuant to section 259.036, F.S., if the land management review team determines that reviewed lands are not being managed for purposes compatible with conservation, preservation, or recreation or in compliance with the adopted land management plan, DEP shall provide the review findings to the Board of Trustees, and the managing agency must report to the Board of Trustees its reasons for managing the lands as it has.

All properties reviewed were found to be managed for purposes compatible with conservation, preservation, or recreation; and actual management practices, including public access, were found to be in compliance with the adopted management plans. The report of the annual review team findings is consistent with section 259.036, F.S., and with the Natural Systems and Recreation Lands section of the State Comprehensive Plan.

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Accept (1) the Annual Land Management Review Team Findings, and (2) the LMUAC 2020 Annual Report and Biennial Report for submittal to the Board of Trustees.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Not required.