



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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Lt. Governor

Herschel T. Vinyard Jr.
Secretary

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FROM:  Melissa L. Meeker, Deputy Secretary for Water Policy and Ecosystem
Projects

DATE: April 25, 2011

SUBJECT: Land Acquisition

Florida has been extremely progressive in its land acquisition programs and the state has benefited from the Water Management Districts' participation and leadership in these efforts. The State, however, now finds itself facing substantial financial constraints and must prioritize its limited resources. Specifically, I would like to ensure that land acquisition and the associated expenditures reflect the Governor's policies and can be accomplished with current and projected funding.

As such, I request that the Districts evaluate your land acquisition programs for consistency with the Governor's policies and priorities. I have asked the Department's Division of State Lands to participate with you as you undertake this evaluation in order to better understand your programs and processes. Prior to the states' financial challenges, there were significant land acquisition efforts related to water resource protection, flood protection, conservation and recreation. In addition, capital projects were developed that had land acquisition requirements. At this juncture, we have a fiscal responsibility to do the following:

- Evaluate ongoing and future projects that have land acquisition requirements to ensure they meet the core District functions, flood protection and water resource management.

- Evaluate planned and/or constructed projects to determine if lands previously targeted or acquired are essential to the project's success.
- Conduct an analysis of the existing publicly owned lands within the District boundary so that a comprehensive, multi-agency strategy can be formulated that meets the needs of our constituents. For your agency, this should include a thorough evaluation of existing parcels, and sections of parcels that do not meet your agency's core functions.

Until this effort can be completed, the purchase, disposal or exchange of any land should go through the review process as outlined below. This review should take place early in the process and prior to a Governing Board action.

1) Pre-Negotiation

Prior to beginning negotiations on any land acquisition, regardless of funding source, the Districts will provide the Department a description of the acquisition including the parcel or project, and indicate why the acquisition is necessary for meeting the District's statutory responsibilities.

2) Pre-Closing

Before closing on a parcel(s), the Districts will provide justification to the Department for any closing price above the appraised value and why acquiring such parcel is critical to core District functions.

3) Surplus and Exchanges

Before proceeding with either surplus or exchange of property, the Districts will work with the Department to ensure that the surplus or exchange is in the best interest of the State.

The secret to our success of furthering effective resource protection is communicating and working together. This coordination should be viewed as an opportunity to garner support and collectively be responsible stewards of our public resources. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 850-245-2031 or via email at Melissa.Meeker@dep.state.fl.us.