

ITEM 2:

Consider the August 13, 2021, public hearing and 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

Date: August 13, 2021

Time: 10 a.m.

Location: Lakeland City Commission Meeting Room
228 South Massachusetts Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33801
and via Webinar

Members in Attendance:

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

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

REGIONAL PUBLIC HEARING

Ms. Allen opened the hearing with an orientation to the webinar. ARC Chair DeHaven welcomed those in attendance and recognized the ARC members in attendance. Ms. Allen provided a brief overview of the ARC Florida Forever selection and ranking process. Ms. Sine Murray completed the opening remarks with an overview of the Adams Ranch II proposal being considered for Cycle 2. Chair DeHaven asked Ms. Allen to call for public comment. There was no further comment.

Chair DeHaven adjourned the hearing and called a recess to be followed by the Council meeting.

COUNCIL MEETING

Item 1: Call to Order 10:22 a.m.

DEP ARC Chair Callie DeHaven called the meeting to order and asked Ms. Griner to lead the pledge of allegiance. ARC Staff Director Shauna Allen conducted the roll call. The quorum was established with six members in attendance. Ms. Allen provided housekeeping announcements including instructions for in-person and webinar attendees.

Item 2: Consider the June 11, 2021, meeting summary.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the meeting summary.

Discussion: None.

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

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

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 4: Status report on Land Management Reviews completed by the Office of Environmental Services from October 2020 to June 2021.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Allen stated the Office of Environmental Services conducted onsite reviews of 19 managed areas from October 2020 to June 2021. The reports were provided to the Council for information.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: No action required.

FLORIDA FOREVER

Item 5: Consider a revision to the project evaluation report for the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever Project.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the item.

Discussion: Ms. Murray provided an overview of the Strategic Managed Area Lands List approved in 2018 and the specific procedures approved in the project evaluation report. The proposed revisions were the result of collaboration with the managing agencies to improve implementation of the process, allow potential acquisitions to be pursued more effectively, and expand benefits of the project. Ms. Murray stated that the ORCP (Office of Resiliency and Coastal Protection) was added as a participating agency and the number of ownerships was increased from 40 to 60. Ownerships is defined as one or more parcels under a single owner. In addition, the agencies may bring amendments throughout the year.

Dr. Eason expressed appreciation to State Lands and the partners for flexibility in moving the project forward.

Ms. Griner asked about the Georgia to Cross City Trail. Ms. Murray responded that the parcel was proposed by the OGT (Office of Greenways and Trails) and includes a railroad corridor adjacent to Highway 27.

Ms. Peppers asked about the allocation of the additional properties to the agencies. Ms. Murray stated three agencies, DRP (Division of Recreation and Parks), FWC (Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) and FFS (Florida Forest Service) would have 5 additional properties each. The OGT and ORCP as additional entities within the Department of Environmental Protection will collectively have 15 properties on the list bringing the total to 60.

Mr. Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife, spoke in support of the staff recommendation and the changes to provide greater flexibility to the agencies to pursue critical inholdings and additions. Mr. Wimmer also spoke in favor of Item 7, to amend the Myakka Ranchlands project, stating the proposal contributes to conserving land within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and connecting habitat for imperiled species.

ARC Action: Ms. Griner made the motion to approve the project evaluation report revision with Dr. Eason seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

Item 6: Consider a request to remove approximately 19.26 acres from the boundary of the Flagler County Blueway Florida Forever Project.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the proposed amendment.

Discussion: Ms. Murray presented the proposed request submitted by the owner to remove the property from the project.

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

Item 7: Vote on whether to amend the Myakka Ranchlands Florida Forever project boundary to add one parcel totaling approximately 996 acres in Manatee County with a prorated tax assessed market value of \$1,442,968.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

Discussion: Ms. Julie Morris, National Wildlife Refuge Association, presented the J Bar C Ranch amendment. The 996-acre property offered for less than fee is in Manatee County on the border of Sarasota County to the south and DeSoto County to the east. The property is surrounded by Mosaic Fertilizer land on three sides. The proposal will buffer the large complex of Myakka lands from future mining and protect habitat for listed species. Ms. Morris indicated that both the water management district and county are working in the region to acquire and protect lands. The property is 25 miles from Lakewood Ranch, reportedly the largest growing development in the country. Ms. Morris concluded with emphasizing the importance of retaining the agricultural lands, ecological importance, and rural landscapes.

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

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Item 8: Consider a 10-year update to the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 4288).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the item.

Discussion: Ms. Yasmine Armaghani, Division of Recreation and Parks, presented the management plan update. She mentioned park biologist Rob Rossmanith was present. The state park is in Martin County in Stuart, Florida and was acquired with CARL P2000 funds in 1998. With just 4,886 acres, the park features hiking, biking, and horseback riding with equestrians as the largest user group. Ms. Armaghani described the resources including 10 natural communities, five imperiled plants and seven imperiled animals including the banded wild pine, pine lily, American alligator, and Florida manatee. The management objectives include restoring hydrological conditions, prescribed fire, treating exotic plants and conducting archaeological surveys. Ms. Armaghani discussed proposed improvements for visitor facilities including a trail head, formalized park entrance, paddling launch, day use area, and primitive campsites.

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

Item 9: Consider a 10-year update to the Carl Duval Moore State Forest and Park Management Plan (Lease No. 4662).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the item.

Discussion: Mr. Stephen Montgomery, Forest Resource Administrator at the Waccasassa Forestry Center, presented the management plan update. The state forest is in two tracts north and south of State Route 20 and near the town of Interlachen in Putnam County. The 336-acre forest was acquired in 1993 with deed restrictions and is managed under the multiple use concept. Objectives include updating the five-year and annual plans and forest inventory. Recreational opportunities include lake access on both tracts, hiking, fishing, and nature study. Improvements include three trailheads, boat access and primitive camping. Mr. Montgomery described the prescribed fire program goals for the 240 acres of fire-dependent communities; reduce hazardous fuels, control disease and pests, and improve wildlife habitat. Imperiled species on the forest include the bald eagle and gopher tortoise. Seven non-native invasive species are managed along with an education effort to help neighbors manage pest species. There are no known cultural or historical resources. Lake access to the Up & Down Lake on the north tract and Hardesty Lake on the south tract is identified in the management plan, including plans for a small dock on Hardesty Lake.

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

Item 10: Consider a 10-year update to the Charles H. Bronson State Forest Management Plan (Lease No. 4580).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the item.

Discussion: Mr. Stephen Stipkovitz, Florida Forest Service, presented the management plan for Charles H. Bronson State Forest (named after the former Agriculture Commissioner). The 11,264-acre forest is adjacent to the St. Johns River in Seminole and Orange counties. It is owned by the Board of Trustees, St. Johns River Water Management District and Orange County and adjacent to multiple conservation managed lands. Objectives include updating the five-year and annual plans and forest inventory. Recreational activities include hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and fishing and the Florida National Scenic Trail. Cooperative management with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on the wildlife management area includes managing wildlife populations, setting hunting seasons, establishing limits and overall law enforcement. Prescribed fire for habitat management, restoration of groundcover and to reduce wildfire in the urban interface accomplished 5,896 acres burned in the last 10 years. Mr. Stipkovitz described the plans to develop wildlife management strategies for 44 imperiled species, management of 21 non-native invasive species, 15 cultural and historical resources and hydrologic protection for the St. Johns River and four named creeks. Improvements include a new trailhead, primitive campsites, and trails.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

ARC Announcements: Chair DeHaven announced the upcoming Florida Forever Applicant webinar scheduled for September 30, 2021, at 2 p.m. and the next scheduled ARC meeting for October 8, 2021, in Tallahassee.

Dr. Eason expressed appreciation to staff for the hybrid meeting on the road. He also commented on the excitement for the wildlife corridor legislation and funding for acquisition. He asked State Lands to plan a series of presentations for the next ARC meeting on the wildlife corridor. He would like to have some discussion on what is out there and what ARC can do to help, keeping in mind the broader picture of over 20 years of acquisition and planning. Dr. Eason recommended that we build on this foundation with all the tools we have and not reinvent the wheel.

Chair DeHaven noted that July was the 20th anniversary of Florida Forever and the long history of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN) informing the Council's priorities. Of the 125 projects on the priority list, 95 fall into FEGN priorities 1, 2 and 3. Chair DeHaven stated this is the foundation for implementing the next pieces and leveraging funding including REPI (Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration) and Forest Legacy funds.

Ms. Griner asked what the next steps are and will it follow the Florida Forever process. Chair DeHaven affirmed that Florida Forever is a great foundation that is science based, publicly vetted, brought through the Council and approved by the BOT.

There were no further comments.

Dr. Eason moved to adjourn the meeting with Ms. Griner seconding. ARC approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.