

ITEM 2:

Consider the February 12, 2021 meeting and March 2, 2021 regional hearing summaries.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

None

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the public hearing and meeting summary.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____

DEFER

WITHDRAW

NOT APPROVE

OTHER: _____

Acquisition and Restoration Council Meeting Summary

Council Meeting: February 12, 2021
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Webinar meeting

Members in Attendance:

Dr. Tim Parsons, DHR
Mr. Erin Albury, FFS
Ms. Lynetta Griner, Citizen Member
Dr. Thomas Eason, FWC
Dr. Bill Palmer, Citizen Member
Ms. Elva Peppers, Citizen Member
Mr. Shawn Hamilton, ARC Chair, DEP

ARC Staff Director: Ms. Shauna Allen, DEP

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

DEP Interim Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation, Shawn Hamilton, called the meeting to order. Hearing that there were no announcements from council members, he asked ARC Staff Director, Shauna Allen, to conduct the roll call. The quorum was established with seven members in attendance. Ms. Allen provided housekeeping announcements including webinar instructions and information for public comments.

Item 2: Consider the December 10-11, 2020 meeting summary.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the meeting summary.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the October meeting summary with Dr. Parsons seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Item 3: Consider a 10-year update to the West Lake Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3417).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Dylan Larson, Miller Legg consultant to the county, presented the management plan update for the 1,500-acre nature park in Broward County. He also mentioned Linda Briggs Thompson with Broward County and Jennifer Shipley with Miller Legg were in attendance to respond to questions. The park is significant for the largest mangrove estuarine area in southeast Florida at just over 1,119 acres. The park features nature education at the Anne Kolk Nature

Center, named for the county commissioner advocate that helped acquire the property. Recreational opportunities include hiking, biking, observation tower, boat tours and kayak trails. Restoration of disturbed areas to remove Australian pines from spoil islands and establish mangroves or maritime hammock. The dredged canals are functional waterways providing habitat for a range of aquatic species. Management objectives include maintenance of existing uses and protection of natural habitats, acquiring the remaining outparcels, controlling exotic nuisance species and implementing the restoration plan.

ARC Action: Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the management plan with Ms. Peppers seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

Item 4: Consider a 10-year update to the Little Big Econ State Forest Management Plan (Lease No. 3958).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Sean Gallagher, Florida Forest Service, presented the management plan for this 10,336-acre forest in Seminole County located northeast of Orlando. The Little Big Econ State Forest was established in 1994 with shared ownership between the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and the Board of Trustees for the purpose of protecting the Econlockhatchee River, cultural resources, and resource education. The neighboring managed areas include SJRWMD, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Charles H. Bronson State Forest. Sustainable forest management supports the production of multiple forest products including apiary leases and cattle leases. Management objectives include updating the activity plans, forest inventory and GIS database. Maintaining and upgrading facilities to support primitive camping, hunting, hiking, canoe/kayaking with improvements to public access, upgrading facilities, improving lighting and security. Habitat restoration and improvement activities include prescribed fire and roller chopping to reduce the threat of wildfire in the urban interface and improve access and appearance. Successful control of non-native species has been achieved with a dedicated OPS staff. Two Archaeological Resource Monitors (ARM) on the field unit monitor over 17 archaeological sites including a celery field and Flagler Railroad trestle. Hydrological resource protection is also achieved using best management practices for the Econlockhatchee River which runs 17 miles through the forest and the St. Johns River along the eastern boundary. Facility objectives include planned maintenance, updating the Road and Bridge plan and Boundary Survey and Maintenance plans.

Dr. Parsons stated for the record that this is the second Florida Forest Service management plan that the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) has submitted comments requesting DHR review prior to ground disturbing activities and activities that could affect cultural and historic resources that has not been included in the plan. Belmore State Forest was the first. He asked that the FFS add language that DHR would be consulted prior to timber harvest and new firelines in accordance with Chapter 267.061, Florida Statutes. Parsons also stated he supported approval and wanted to include these comments in the record.

Mr. Albury responded they will not include the recommended language in the management plan. His staff has had discussions with the DHR and stated timber harvesting is not a ground disturbing activity that impacts the soil greater than 6 inches in depth. His staff of professional

foresters takes their responsibilities seriously and they have staff with ARM training that pays close attention to the protection of cultural resources. He expressed concerns about possible delays from assessments, studies, and reviews. His staff has offered language along the lines of a cabbage palm sale that they are willing to discuss, but not a traditional timber harvest.

Dr. Parsons responded his staff does not want to delay, stop, or impede any timber harvest, just to follow the procedures all state agencies should follow under Chapter 267 that could potentially affect resources. He has offered DHR staff to conduct the investigations when necessary and would like to work collaboratively and cooperatively with the FFS in the consultation process to identify resources we don't know about.

Dr. Eason stated he preferred to delay on the item and allow folks to work the issue and would help where he could.

Ms. Griner stated she was not sure that ARC was the appropriate venue to resolve the issue between two departments on an unfamiliar statute. She would like to see the FFS and DHR resolve the issue.

Dr. Parsons stated the statute does not restrict or imply restriction on any agency nor does DHR have the authority to stop any agency from conducting normal business operations. Chapter 267 is a consultation process that provides for Archaeological experts to look at the property and ensure there is not a significant potential for impacts to resources because of the activity. He restated he recommends approving the plan.

Ms. Griner asked if the agencies have trained staff in the archaeological sciences.

Dr. Parsons stated the ARM program is provided by DHR to train agency staff to oversee basic activities and identify problems and not all agencies have archaeological staff. DHR mandate is to review state undertakings that could potentially affect cultural resources. The ARM training helps agencies manage their resources. The Chapter 267 process is for consultation between the agency staff and DHR archaeological professionals.

Chair Hamilton suggested since Dr. Parsons recommended approval, the agencies should continue dialogue outside of the council and move the item forward for approval with the understanding that the partner agencies will continue the discussion and involve other experts as needed. Dr. Palmer, Dr. Parsons, and Mr. Albury agreed with the suggestion.

Dr. Eason stated he was in favor and recommended including DEP, Parks and FWC staff in the discussion.

Chair Hamilton reiterated the understanding is for technical staff discussion, not decision-making purposes.

ARC Action: Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the management plan with Dr. Parsons seconding for discussion. Following discussion, Chair Hamilton restated the motion for approval, Dr. Palmer seconded, and ARC approved the item unanimously.

Item 5: Consider a 10-year update to the Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve Management Plan (Lease No. 3577).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Mr. Gary Nychyk, Johnson Engineering consultant to the City of Cape Coral, presented the management plan for the 387-acre public park established in 1977. The park is located north of Veteran's Parkway on the Caloosahatchee River in Cape Coral. Significant habitats include mangrove swamp, salt marsh, and needle rush marsh. It provides habitat for numerous listed species including the manatee, gopher tortoise, wading birds, and the small tooth sawfish. The tidally influenced estuarine habitat improves water quality upstream by filtering stormwater and pollutants. Recreational resources include hiking, fishing, kayaking and Veteran's Memorial Park. Resource management objectives include exotic plant and animal management, improving habitat by increasing needle rush and restoring gopher tortoise habitat and submerged vegetation in the river. Improvements include expansion of the lost pond loop and pathways between the trailhead and kayak rental facility. Feasibility studies to update the welcome center and add a new environmental center are underway along with plans to extend the kayak portage boardwalk, floating dock, and pier replacement. The Veteran's Memorial Park is managed with collaboration with the city and community groups.

Ms. Peppers asked if the maps of existing and proposed improvements will be included in the management plan. Mr. Nychyk stated he would investigate including the improvements map. The City is conducting the feasibility phase and has not determined the locations of the new trails and potential environmental center.

ARC Action: Chair Hamilton made the motion to approve the management plan with Dr. Eason seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

FLORIDA FOREVER

Item 6: Consider a request to remove approximately 1.27 acres from the boundary of the Bombing Range Ridge Florida Forever Project.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the owner requested deletion.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Ms. Griner made the motion to approve the owner-requested deletion with Ms. Peppers seconding. ARC voted unanimously by seven members to approve the boundary amendment.

CLOSING COMMENTS

ARC Announcements: Chair Hamilton shared an invitation to the March 2, 2021 Regional Hearing Webinar to take public testimony on the Florida Forever 2021 Cycle 2 proposals. He announced the Office of Environmental Services will host an applicant webinar on March 31,

2021 and the next ARC meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2021 either in person or virtually. Lastly, the deadline for Cycle 2 Florida Forever Proposals is April 30, 2021.

Dr. Palmer made the motion to adjourn with Dr. Parsons seconding. ARC unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 9:46 a.m.

Summary of the March 2, 2021 Acquisition and Restoration Council Regional Public Hearing

Date: March 2, 2021

Location: GoToWebinar

Time: 3:00 p.m. EST

In Attendance:

Shauna Allen, DEP, ARC Staff Director
Deborah Burr, DEP, Division of State Lands (DSL)
Simone James, DEP, DSL
Sine Murray, DEP, DSL
James Parker, DEP, DSL
Susan Carr, North Florida Land Trust
Andrew Ketchel, Capital City Consulting
Tom Houston, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Catherine Ingram, Florida Forest Service
Jackie Bucheck
Shari Simmans
Sarah Ketron
Jennifer Lomberk
The Florida Channel

Ms. Allen opened the hearing with an orientation to the webinar. Ms. Deborah Burr chaired the meeting on behalf of DEP. Ms. Burr noted that there were several managing agency personnel in attendance as well.

Ms. Burr outlined the ARC Florida Forever selection and ranking process and the two new proposals being considered for Cycle 1. Project sponsors, Ms. Susan Carr provided an overview of the Big Pine Preserve project proposal. Mr. Andrew Ketchel provided an overview of the Wilson Ranch project proposal. Ms. Burr then asked Ms. Allen to call for public comment.

There was no public comment. Ms. Burr adjourned the meeting at 3:17 p.m.