

ITEM 2:

Consider the June 10, 2022, 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: June 10, 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

Members in Attendance:

Mr. Josh Goodwin for Dr. Tim Parsons, DHR
Mr. Keith Rowell for 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

Ms. Shauna Allen, ARC Staff Director

COUNCIL MEETING

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

DEP Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation, Mara Gambineri, called the meeting to order and asked Ms. Peppers to lead the pledge of allegiance. ARC Staff Director, Shauna Allen, conducted the roll call. The quorum was established with seven members in attendance. Chair Gambineri announced the Public Lands Acquisition and Management Partnership Conference (known as PLAM) will be held from November 14-16, in Punta Gorda, Florida; the new Florida Forever logo and wordmark; and the Florida Forever Plan update available on the website. Ms. Allen announced the preliminary evaluation for the Wolfe Creek Forest Addition II was revised in Item 10 and provided housekeeping announcements.

Item 2: Consider the April 8, 2022, meeting summary.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the meeting summaries.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: Dr. Eason made the motion to approve the meeting summary with Ms. Peppers 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 April 2022 ARC meeting.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Allen stated several items were submitted and approved via the negative response process including two management plan amendments and one incompatible use request for an easement.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 4: Status report on Land Management Reviews completed by the Division of State Lands from October to December 2021.

DSL Staff Remarks: Ms. Allen stated OES conducted eight reviews and the results were provided for information.

Discussion: None.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 5: Division of State Lands Acquisition Update.

DSL Staff Remarks: Mr. Robbie Parrish, Bureau of Real Estate Services, provided an update of acquisitions for the current fiscal year through April 30, 2022. The division completed 33 purchase transactions totaling just under 17,000 acres at a cost of just over \$41 million in 14 different Florida Forever Project areas. He stated there is more activity going on throughout the state including the eight March Board of Trustees (BOT) approvals for 15,600 acres at a cost of almost \$36 million nearing contract closings. There is activity on 32 Florida Forever projects across the state and even with market challenges we are still showing success. The figures show only Florida Forever funding, not the ARPA funding which will be tracked separately and reported once those acquisitions begin.

Discussion: Chair Gambineri thanked Robbie for sharing the accomplishments. She also recognized Josh Goodwin, DHR and Keith Rowell, FFS attending for their directors. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: No action required.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Item 6: Consider a 10-year update to the Weedon Island Preserve Management Plan (Lease Nos. 3376 and 3985).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Ms. Pamela Leasure, Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources, presented the management plan update. She mentioned her manager Steve Harper was also present virtually. The management plan was accepted and approved for transmittal by the Board of County Commissioners on February 22, 2022. The preserve consisting of 3,195.3 acres is along the shore of Tampa Bay and is

owned by three partners, Pinellas County (193.7 acres), Duke Energy (385.1 acres) and the BOT (2,616.5 acres). The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) has identified 11 natural community types and imperiled species including the Florida golden aster, west Indian manatee, roseate spoonbill, eastern indigo snake and gopher tortoise. Ms. Leasure noted the comments from the FWC would be incorporated into the management plan, including gopher tortoise monitoring and surveys as funding allows. Cultural resource goals include protection, supporting research coordination and educational programs with partners. Ms. Leasure noted there were no full-time rangers since 2011 and in September 2021 the County dedicated one ranger for safety, security and public use. The preserve is managed for resource-based recreational activities and features a three-mile paddling trail, fishing, three miles of hiking trails, boardwalk and observation tower. Resource management goals include the salt marsh restoration pilot project, increasing frequency of prescribed fire and mechanical thinning as necessary. The County intends to maintain their partnership with the Alliance for Weedon Island Archaeological Research and Education (AWIARE) for protection of cultural resources.

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

Item 7: Consider a Management Plan for Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan.

Discussion: Dr. Nicholas Parr, Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Liaison, presented the management plan. Dr. Parr noted he has co-management responsibilities for the FKNMS in addition to overseeing two aquatic preserves. Established in 1972, Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve covers 6,700 acres and is 80% seagrass beds. The preserve is co-managed with Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park and FKNMS, although all the uplands are managed by the state park and other agency partners. During the public scoping meeting several issues were incorporated into the draft management plan addressing, water quality, wildlife and habitat protection, public awareness and public access. In addition, public comments on the draft plan will also be addressed including testing for heavy metals in sediment adjacent to the road, water quality monitoring, stormwater management with the Village of Islamorada, seagrass monitoring, Ashbey-Horseshoe Key rookery and iguana control, marine debris removal and prevention, public awareness signage and partnering with ecotourism operators for public awareness and education.

Ms. Peppers commented that she initially had questions but found the presentation was thorough. Dr. Eason expressed his appreciation for addressing the comments from the public and incorporating changes as appropriate.

Mr. Gerry Ward, Key West and Riviera Beach, commented on a letter he submitted to the Council. He indicated that most of his comments were addressed but he was still skeptical and commented on the notice for the management plan and communicating with operators. Mr. Ward indicated concerns with management for the preserve considering the flat budget and doesn't feel enough progress is being made. He asked that his five issues be addressed, and administrative management be changed.

Dr. Eason asked that the managing agency continue to engage with stakeholders. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: Ms. Peppers made the motion to approve the management plan update with Dr. Palmer seconding. ARC approved the item unanimously.

Item 8: Consider an amendment to the Florida Caverns State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3619).

DSL Staff Recommendation: Approve the management plan amendment.

Discussion: Mr. Preston Early, Division of Recreation and Parks, presented the management plan amendment. On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael destroyed infrastructure, the old growth canopy and natural communities park wide. The management plan amendment accounts for the recovery response and future development changes resulting from the catastrophic damage and flood level changes due to the hurricane. Acquired in 1935, the park consists of 1,449 acres in Jackson County and includes dry and submerged caverns. Post Hurricane Michael flood-levels have increased causing the park to relocate visitor use facilities to higher locations that are more accessible. The former golf course tracts will be redeveloped with a new campground, mountain bike trail and enhanced interpretation opportunities. Improvements to viewsheds and park entrance will also be included. Debris removal in the Chipola River was accomplished to retain and protect fish habitats and allow safe passage for paddlers. Around Blue Hole spring, the campground will be reconfigured along with restoration activities. The optimum boundary will be updated to include the remaining 2.34 acres of Bumnose Glade which abuts the western boundary of the park.

Chair Gambineri acknowledged Preston's first time presenting to ARC. Dr. Palmer asked about the longleaf/wiregrass restoration on the golf course. The attempt was largely not successful due to the elevation and soil type, the location was more likely a red oak hickory subset of the upland mixed area. There were no further comments.

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

Recess: Chair Gambineri called for a recess to address a technical issue at 9:50 a.m. Chair Gambineri resumed the meeting at 9:55 a.m. and established a quorum by roll call with seven members present.

FLORIDA FOREVER

Item 9: Take Public Testimony on the Florida Forever 2022 Cycle 2 Proposals.

Discussion: Dr. Nicholas Alvarez, landowner, presented the CNC Ranch project proposal. The ranch has been a family owned cattle operation since 1993 with over 3,500 acres including improved pasture, wetlands and oak hammocks near Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. Dr. Alvarez noted development pressure to the west.

Mr. Travis Halley, landowner, presented the Double G. Legacy project proposal. The property is in Sumter County covering 3,000 acres and has had a cattle and hay operation since 1998. The property includes Battle Slough where the Battle of Wahoo Swamp was fought. Artifacts have been found on the property which includes wetlands providing abundant wildlife habitat. The property is in six tax parcels with 700 acres proposed for the project and another 853 acres potentially to be added.

Mr. Jeremiah Thompson, SVN Saunders Ralston Danzler Real Estate, presented the Gardner Marsh project proposal on behalf of his team including Dustin Calderon, Haley Bronson, David Bennett and Dean Saunders. The Osceola County property includes 6,000 acres and lies between Lake Hatchineha and Lake Kissimmee. The family has owned property and managed cattle in the area since 1867. The property includes wetlands, pine flatwoods, prairie and scrub habitat with cypress domes and is noted for high biodiversity including deer, gopher tortoise, sandhill cranes and bald eagles. The proposal

would expand existing conservation areas within the Florida Wildlife Corridor and provide water quality and quantity benefits.

Mr. Adam Bass, Conservation Florida, presented the Gilchrist Club project proposal in Gilchrist County. Covering over 23,000 acres near Trenton, the one owner property is managed for membership-based outdoor recreation and hunting. The large property falls within three watersheds, Wacasassa River headwaters, Suwannee River and the Santa Fe River. Over 9,000 acres are in coniferous tree plantations and 11,000 acres of wetlands. The property provides suitable habitat for diverse wildlife including the black bear, gopher tortoise, fox squirrel, wild turkey, quail and deer. Restoration activities in the flatwoods and timber management protects an extensive network of wetlands. The proposal connects to the North Wacasassa Flats project along the northern boundary and is in Priority 4 of the FEGN.

Mr. Keith Fountain, Keith Fountain Law, presented the Goodno Ranch project proposal on behalf of the property owner Dewayne House. The property is located within the panther dispersal zone and Florida Wildlife Corridor. The owner has three other properties included in the Caloosahatchee Ecoscape project. The property includes 1,185 acres in Glades County and 1.8 miles of frontage along the Caloosahatchee River. Managed for cattle grazing, the property includes a mosaic of pasture and freshwater marshes. Mr. Fountain mentioned the southwest portion may be a good candidate for marsh restoration.

Mr. Keith Fountain and Mr. Rick Dantzer, representing 14 owners of 15 properties, presented the Heartland Wildlife Corridor project proposal. The properties are all located along the west side of the Lake Wales Ridge and lie just north of the NRCS WRP area and south of Highland Hammock State Park. Land uses include cattle grazing, forage crops, row crops, silviculture, sod, citrus, hunting and outdoor recreation. Habitats include oak hammock, mesic flatwoods, prairies, freshwater marshes and ponds and forested wetlands. The ranches do have a lot of pasture on them but also have natural areas that make them more compatible with Florida Forever and the wildlife corridor.

Ms. Julie Morris, National Wildlife Refuge Association and the Florida Conservation Group, presented the Keen Ranch project proposal. The 952-acre property managed as a cow/calf operation by the family since the 1920's is in DeSoto County along Horse Creek. A tributary of the Peace River, Horse Creek is the largest tributary providing 15% of the flow. The property is critical to establishing a corridor in the Peace River watershed connecting hydrologically important lands to the Myakka watershed. The property is surrounded on three sides by permitted and existing phosphate mines.

Ms. Julie Morris presented the Natural Bridge Timberlands project proposal in Jefferson and Leon counties. The 5,746-acre property is adjacent to the Natural Bridge Historic Battlefield State Park and Plank Road State Park with the St. Marks River within one mile. The property fills in the wildlife corridor extending from Aucilla WMA to the Apalachicola National Forest protecting habitat for wide-ranging species like the Florida black bear, red-cockaded woodpecker and eastern indigo snake. The property includes habitat for the rare coastal plains pogonia with over 3,000 acres of pinelands in high recharge areas and mixed hardwoods and swamps draining into the St. Marks River. A conservation easement on the property would protect and enhance the integrity of the adjacent managed lands, resilience and adaptation to climate change including sea level rise.

Mr. Peter Kleinhenz, Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy, presented the Rosewood-Avalon project proposal. The 3,680-acre property in Jefferson County is adjacent to the Asa May house "Rosewood" listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was previously managed as part of the May property. Almost half of the property is natural areas and wetlands with the fire-maintained uplands planted in loblolly pine. One hundred percent of the property falls within the Wacissa Springs

Group Priority Focus Area (PFA). Habitats include upland hardwood forests, sinkhole ponds, bottomland forest, slope forest and basin marsh. Species on the property are diverse and include the loggerhead musk turtle, Bachman's sparrow, king's hairstreak, tulip poplar and rough green snake. The property connects the Aucilla Corridor project and other conservation easements and provides water quality benefits and scenic views over 10 miles of public roads surrounding the property.

Mr. Douglas Hattaway, Trust for Public Lands, presented the Wolfe Creek Forest Addition II project proposal. This proposal complements the previous Wolfe Creek Forest Addition project approved in 2021. The primary purpose of the project is longleaf pine restoration, wildlife habitat protection, protection of waterways and buffering military uses at NAS Whiting Field. The properties are within the newly created Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape and FEGN Priority 1. There is development pressure on the properties as some lands are currently on the market. The Florida Forest Service has committed to be the managing agency for these properties proposed for fee simple acquisition and has submitted the properties to the Forest Legacy program.

Ms. Allen noted two letters in support of the proposals were provided to the council, one from the Sierra Club for Double G Legacy, Heartland Wildlife Corridor and Keen Ranch, the other from the Defenders of Wildlife.

Mr. Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife, spoke in favor of all ten proposals and specifically for the projects within the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape, Wolfe Creek Forest Addition II, Natural Bridge Timberlands and Rosewood-Avalon proposals.

Mr. Beau Turner, Rosewood-Avalon landowner, on behalf of the Turner family spoke of their commitment to stewardship and conserving land and restoring habitats across the United States. Placing a conservation easement on the property will ensure that it will stay intact in the face of expanding development in the area.

There were no further comments.

ARC Action: No action required.

Item 10: Vote on whether the CNC Ranch, Double G Legacy, Gardner Marsh, Gilchrist Club Wacasassa River, Goodno Ranch, Heartland Wildlife Corridor, Keen Ranch, Natural Bridge Timberlands, Rosewood-Avalon and Wolfe Creek Forest Addition II 2022 Cycle 2 Florida Forever proposals will proceed through the project evaluation process for potential addition to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List.

DSL Staff Recommendation: Vote on the proposals.

Discussion: Dr. Eason noted the impressive slate of proposals and wanted to let folks know that he is excited about all the properties. There were no further comments.

ARC Action: ARC voted unanimously by seven votes for the CNC Ranch, Double G Legacy, Gardner Marsh, Gilchrist Club Wacasassa River, Goodno Ranch, Heartland Wildlife Corridor, Keen Ranch, Natural Bridge Timberlands, and Rosewood-Avalon proposals to initiate a full review. Ms. Peppers recused herself from the vote on the Wolfe Creek Forest Addition II and ARC approved the proposal by a vote of six members to initiate a full review.

CLOSING COMMENTS

ARC Announcements: Chair Gambineri announced upcoming meetings for the Florida Communities Trust on August 10, 2022, and the next scheduled ARC meeting on August 12, 2022, in Tallahassee. There were no further comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.