

ITEM 5:

Annual Land Management Review Team findings and the Land Management Uniform Accounting Council 2022 Annual and Biennial Reports.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

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

ANNUAL LAND MANAGEMENT REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS

Properties were selected from a database of BOT lands based on property size, management plan due dates, managing agency, previous land management reviews, and geographic location. Regional review team members were selected in accordance with the requirements of the legislation to include one representative from each of the following entities: county or local community in which the parcel is located, DEP Division of Recreation and Parks, Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, DEP district office, a private land manager, local Soil and Water Conservation District board of supervisors or Water Management District (WMD), and 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 WMD to integrate management reviews where WMD lands are adjacent to BOT lands and when the BOT has joint ownership of parcels with a WMD.

Twenty-eight reviews were conducted during Fiscal Year 2021-22, involving more than 658,000 acres of managed lands. Reports of the review team findings were provided to the managing agency and the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC). The management activities are scored on a range of one to five. Applying the criteria that a score of 3.5 and up 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 considered excellent on 27 of the sites visited, and considered adequate on one of the sites.
- Prescribed fire scope: Prescribed burning is considered an appropriate management tool on 27 of the 28 sites reviewed. On three sites, over 30% of the fire dependent lands had been treated according to prescription. On 23 sites, over 60% of the fire dependent lands had been treated according to prescription. On one site, less than 30% of the fire dependent lands had been treated according to prescription. One site had no fire dependent lands.

- Prescribed fire frequency: On 26 of the 27 sites requiring prescribed fire, the teams found the burn frequency adequate or excellent. On one site, the teams found the burn frequency to be inadequate.
- Fire quality: On 26 of the 27 sites where prescribed fire has been implemented, the teams found fire quality to be excellent. On one site, the teams found fire quality to be inadequate.
- Invasive species control: Control of non-native, invasive species was a management issue on all lands reviewed. Control and maintenance measures were excellent on 27 of the sites reviewed.
- Surface water quality: Lands that have significant hydrological resources should be monitored to ensure protection. Seventeen sites had plans that adequately covered testing for degradation of surface waters. Ten sites had no surface water testing needs.
- Groundwater quality: Sixteen sites had adequate monitoring for groundwater quality and quantity. Eleven sites had no groundwater monitoring needs.
- Species protection: Twenty-seven sites were found to be excellent in actual management practices to protect listed plants and animals on site. The plans were deemed adequate or excellent to ensure protection on 28 sites.
- Law enforcement: On 27 sites, law enforcement was adequate or excellent to protect the resources, and one site demonstrated a need for improvements in law enforcement.
- Public education and outreach: Twenty-seven sites demonstrated adequate or excellent public education and outreach programs.
- In instances where overall management was deemed adequate or excellent, specific areas meriting improvement were noted by the teams and can be found in the individual reports. The review teams observed many examples of management meriting special mention:
 - At Twin Rivers State Forest in Hamilton and Madison counties, the review team commended FFS for working quickly to establish longleaf pines in harvested areas to start the restoration process and introduce prescribed fire to the Damascus and Hardee Springs tract.
 - At Oscar Scherer State Park in Sarasota County, the review team commended the Florida Park Service (FPS) staff for the prescribed fire program and high level of maintenance of area being burned, fire return intervals and quality of burns.
 - At Suwannee Ridge Wildlife and Environmental Area in Hamilton County, the review team commended FWC staff on increasing the amount of prescribed fire in this cycle and integrating prescribed fire into the overall sandhill restoration strategy.
 - At St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve in Gulf County, the review team commended buffer preserve staff for their recovery efforts after Hurricane Michael: restoring the facility, removing marine debris, and restoring access.

- At Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve in Volusia County, the review team commended Volusia County staff for the efforts made on scrub restoration using roller chopping and prescribed burns.

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 three sites the teams found that staffing levels were less than adequate to protect the resources, while on 24 sites the staffing levels were adequate or excellent.
 - Funding Levels: On 26 sites the teams found funding levels were adequate or excellent for proper management of resources, while on two sites funding levels were less than what the review team thought was needed for proper management.
 - Equipment: On 28 sites the team found adequate or excellent equipment to properly manage the property.

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 BOT, and the managing agency must report to the BOT its reasons for managing the lands as it has.

All properties were found to be managed for purposes compatible with conservation, preservation, or recreation; and actual management practices, including public access, which was 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.

LAND MANAGEMENT UNIFORM ACCOUNTING COUNCIL 2022 ANNUAL AND BIENNIAL REPORTS

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 subcategories for grouping management activities, which is attached as an addendum to this report. Although the individual management activities vary between agencies, they can usually be grouped within this structure. The annual report contains a summary of FY 2021-22 expenditures per agency, grouped according to the established categories and subcategories. It also includes an introduction for each agency outlining their mission and primary goals for state land 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 ARC and DSL for inclusion with the Annual Land Management Review Team findings.

All three reports are available on the DSL website at: <https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/land-stewardship>

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Accept (1) the Annual Land Management Review Team Findings, and (2) the LMUAC 2022 Annual and Biennial Reports for submittal to the BOT.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

None required