

Supplemental Opposition



Conservation Office
308 North Monroe
Tallahassee, FL 32301

850.222.2473
fl.audubon.org

April 15, 2022

Mara Gambineri, Chair, and Governing Board Members
Florida Communities Trust
3900 Commonwealth Blvd
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Agenda Item # 7, April 20 FCT Agenda - Request for Management Plan Modification to Allow Construction of a Linear Facility, Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area, FCT Project #91-009-P1A

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board Members:

Audubon always recommends a primary strategy of avoidance of conservation lands by highway projects and other linear facilities. We advocate that roads and other linear facilities be routed around conservation lands.

We recognize that a result of the "Linear Facilities Policy" which is codified in various statutes and rules, such as Section 704.06 (11) FS, and in Section 62-818.015 FAC, public transportation corridors such as Osceola Parkway can be considered within conservation lands where there are no reasonable alternatives. This has resulted in projects like the Suncoast Parkway II crossing Withlacoochee State Forest, where the impacts were minimized to the greatest extent possible and then the remaining impacts were offset by replacement lands at a 3:1 ratio. In other places, conservation lands held by counties such as those at issue here may be subject to eminent domain for road development. If eminent domain must be utilized, there is less likelihood that the outcome will result in a well-structured proposal for replacement of the environmental assets lost due to a highway project.

Audubon Florida strongly opposed the former Osceola County Expressway Authority's Proposal to build the Osceola Parkway Extension through the heart of the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area just south of the Orange County Line. This original alignment would have impacted at least 50% of the entire Split Oak tract in both Orange and Osceola Counties, and would have bisected the most viable scrub habitat within Split Oak.

When the Legislature created the Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) subsuming the former Osceola County Expressway Authority, Audubon Florida worked to convince CFX to reconsider the original alignment decision. We are thankful that CFX arrived at a revised alignment that has been pushed to the southwest corner of Split Oak, that now avoids the scrub habitat, impacts less than 10% of the Split Oak WEA, and proposes to compensate for lost acreage with substantial new acreage.

The CFX PDE study evaluated alternatives and selected the current design (Split Oak Minimization Route) as the Preferred Alternative. This study included the evaluation of a route that would avoid any intrusion within the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. This "Avoidance Route" presents at least \$100,000,000 in increased construction and right of way costs compared to the Preferred Alternative (Split Oak Minimization Route). The Avoidance Route also impacts existing and developing neighborhoods.

CFX has proposed to compensate for 60 acres of direct footprint impact and 100 acres of indirect impact (160 acres total) by securing a real estate contract that would convey a total of 1,550 acres of new conservation land to Osceola and Orange Counties, or another appropriate conservation landowner such as DSL. This land is contiguous to the eastern boundary of Split Oak Preserve and would constitute replacement of the 160

impacted acres within Split Oak at a 9.69 to 1 ratio. The lands to be added to the conservation land inventory include properties in Osceola County which currently have land use approval in place for some 3,000,000 square-feet of Office, Industrial, and Commercial development adjacent to the boundary of Split Oak. Extinguishing this adjacent approved development would have significant long term benefits for the management of Split Oak. The 1,550 acres of added conservation land would also establish an improved wildlife corridor between Split Oak and the southern and eastern boundaries of Moss Park and Isle of Pines Preserve.

The 1,550 acres of replacement lands includes approximately 60 acres of scrub habitat now approved by Osceola County for development. The effect of the conveyance of the 1,550 acres into conservation would be to preserve this scrub, and to more than double the acreage of scrub habitat that can be conserved with proper management within the expanded Osceola County portion of Split Oak.

At least 80% of the 1,550 acres to be conveyed to Osceola and Orange Counties for conservation consists of high to moderate quality cypress wetland, longleaf pine forest, scrub, and scrubby pine flatwoods. Within the 1,550 acres, approximately 283 acres, or 18.2%, have been significantly impacted by previous agricultural development. **The disturbed portions of these lands must undergo environmental restoration at the expense of CFX in order to make the compensation land package acceptable.** In addition, both the 1,550 acres of compensation land, and the Split Oak Preserve tract itself are in need of substantial ongoing management funding for continued and expanded prescribed fire, exotic species control, and similar management strategies. **DEP and FWC should determine a budget for what would constitute adequate restoration and long-term management funding to be required from CFX.** Even a \$10 million investment would still represent a savings to CFX over the \$100,000,000 additional cost of the "Avoidance Route."

The standard for your consideration in FCT staff's analysis is whether "the Split Oak project would continue to meet the resource enhancement project purposes."

In addition to the conditions provided by staff in their recommendation, Audubon argues that to meet this test, FCT's approval must also be conditioned on the provision of substantial restoration and management funding by CFX to the managers of Split Oak and the conservation land addition.

Road impacts to conservation lands are not to be taken lightly; it is incumbent on you and other regulators to ensure that deals when they are negotiated compensate the public trust completely. Without substantial restoration and land management funding, this proposal does not yet meet this standard. Your FCT approval should require it.

Finally, we believe it is important to recognize that pressures to build the Osceola Parkway Extension, which has been given priority by the East Central Florida Regional Transportation Task Force, are unlikely to disappear. The opportunity to develop and implement a route for the extension of the Osceola Parkway in a manner that minimizes impacts on Split Oak will not improve over time. Should the 1,550 acres continue on a path toward development, and should other vacant lands in the vicinity of Split Oak continue to build out, future alignments for this road may again, out of necessity, focus upon passage through the heart of Split Oak.

Sincerely,



Julie Wraithmell
Executive Director

Clay Henderson

April 13, 2021

Ms. Mara Gambineri, Chair, Governing Board
Florida Communities Trust
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Re: Split Oak

Dear Chair Gambineri and Board Members,

The agenda item concerning Split Oak has been brought to my attention and I have had the opportunity to review the staff report.

I have a unique perspective on this issue. In 1989, I worked with Jim Murley and Will Abberger on the draft legislation that created the Florida Communities Trust and we shepherded it through the legislature. I later served on the first FCT governing board and participated in drafting the rules for the program. During that time, representatives of Orange County and what was then the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission came to us with an idea. They had identified an outstanding parcel which could be used for upland habitat mitigation and sought advice on how to obtain a grant or loan to acquire this site to establish an upland conservation bank on public property, which was a novel idea at the time. I met with property representatives, county staff, and GFC staff on site and we came up with a plan for moving forward. The details of this plan with its overlapping agreements and restrictions are described in the staff report. The FCT provided a grant and loan, the counties took title to the property, subject to an easement to the GFC. Agreements were established between the parties regarding management and restoration. The FCT approved the overall management plan and recorded deed restrictions on the property.

Many people are deeply troubled that this matter is before you. When property is purchased for conservation there is a fundamental assumption that it will be protected in perpetuity. That is certainly what voters believed when they approved bond authorizations underlying Florida's land conservation programs. In addition, when property is placed in perpetual conservation management as wildlife habitat as mitigation, it is compensation for a loss at some other location. In my experience, release of property dedicated in perpetuity as mitigation, is unprecedented and as a practical matter results in acceleration of habitat loss.

Because of the scale and unprecedented nature of this request, it deserves the highest level of scrutiny by the FCT governing board. There are several issues which should be considered.

First, does the FCT governing board even have the power to release this land? Sec. 380.507(4), Fl. Stat. authorizes the FCT board: "To acquire and dispose of real and personal property or any interest therein when necessary or appropriate to protect the natural environment, provide public access or public recreational facilities, including the Florida National Scenic Trail, preserve

wildlife habitat areas, provide access for managing acquired lands, or otherwise carry out the purposes of this part.” Disposing 160 acres for a new expressway is not within the authorized powers of the FCT board. The proposed action does not “protect the natural environment,” or “preserve wildlife habitat areas.”

Another obstacle in the disposition of this site, is Article X Section 18 of the Florida Constitution which was ratified in 1998. This requires the entity holding title to make a finding that the property is “no longer needed for conservation purposes.” In this instance, the property was acquired with Preservation 2000 funds and subject to a management agreement and conservation easements with state agencies, it is subject to this requirement. Inasmuch as this property was acquired for the perpetual use as wildlife habitat, the board will be hard pressed to find that it is no longer needed for conservation purposes.

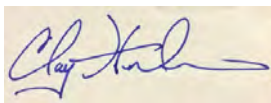
It is my understanding you are being asked to consider this proposal pursuant to your linear facilities rule, 62-818.015, F.A.C. By its own terms, this rule only applies to grants pursuant to Florida Forever. This grant was awarded under the Preservation 2000 program. In any event the rule requires a determination that the proposed amendment “is designed to have a minimal impact to the site.” It is beyond comprehension that a 160 acre impact to the site could be considered “minimal.”

This is even more complicated by the recent Orange County Charter Amendment which creates Sec. 1000.01. entitled. “Split Oak Forest Mitigation Park.” The provision restricts the Orange County Board of County Commissioners from “entering into any new contract or agreement with any other public or private party, which would supersede the restrictions on the use of Split Oak Forest contained in the Interagency Agreement, Grant Award Agreement as amended or any other restrictive covenant running with the land.”

This proposal asks you to set precedent by authorizing a new expressway at the expense of conservation lands intended to be managed as wildlife habitat in perpetuity. The success of Florida’s conservation lands acquisition programs is dependent up the trust of the public who believe the lands will be protected in perpetuity rather than convenient opportunities to fuel Florida’s seemingly limitless growth machine.

The Florida Communities Trust program has been an unqualified success by preserving hundreds of parks, open space, and conservation areas across the state. Many of these grants were matched by local voter approved bond issues by voters who chose to tax themselves to protect these special areas. The FCT has built considerable trust across the state. The board needs to give serious pause as to whether it is willing to surrender conservation lands to further accommodate growth.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Clay Henderson", is written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Clay Henderson

From: [Eskamani, Anna](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wcicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Letter in opposition to Split Oak Forest Request
Date: Sunday, April 17, 2022 10:23:13 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[Save Split Oak Forest.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Dear Florida Communities Trust Governing Board,

I write to respectfully ask that you deny a request made by Orange and Osceola Counties pertaining to a Management Plan Modification that would allow for the construction of a linear facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. The attached letter shares more details, and I am copying local County officials for their awareness too.

With gratitude,

Rep. Eskamani

Representative Anna V. Eskamani
Florida State House District 47
Anna.Eskamani@MyFloridaHouse.gov | 407-376-3609 (cell)
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers



District Office

1507 East Concord Street
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Florida House of Representatives

Representative Anna V. Eskamani

District 47

District Office

1507 E. Concord Street
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407-228-1451

Tallahassee Office

1402 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850-717-5047

Email: Anna.Eskamani@myfloridahouse.gov

April 17, 2022

Dear Florida Communities Trust Governing Board,

I write to respectfully ask that you deny a request made by Orange and Osceola Counties pertaining to a Management Plan Modification that would allow for the construction of a linear facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area.

In November 2020 Orange County residents voted by an overwhelming 86% to protect Split Oak Forest. Local citizens do not approve of their county's continuation of this environmental destruction, and we are requesting that Orange County Commissioners along with our County Mayor revisit this issue versus move it forward.

Split Oak Forest is currently managed to enhance and preserve the habitat of the gopher tortoise, as well as other wildlife and plants. In the 1990s, the Forest was set aside as a mitigation bank for habitat to offset the sea of development that now surrounds it. We are asking you to maintain that promise of protecting Spit Oak Forest and deny the request for Management Plan Modification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna".

Representative Anna V. Eskamani

Florida House of Representatives, District 47

Ways & Means Committee, Democratic Ranking Member
Regulatory Reform Subcommittee, Democratic Ranking Member
Joint Legislative Auditing Committee | Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee
Professions & Public Health Subcommittee

From: [Kent Wimmer](#)
To: [LaSeur, Lois](#)
Cc: [Reeves, Linda](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Defenders of Wildlife's Comments Concerning Proposes Management Plan Modifications by Orange County and Osceola County for Linear Facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area
Date: Sunday, April 17, 2022 1:50:28 PM
Attachments: [FNAI Gopher Tortoise Survey of Split Oak Forest WEA.pdf](#)
[DOW comments to FCT on Split Oak Forest 18April2022.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Dear Ms. LaSeur,

Defenders of Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to provide the attached comments concerning the proposed Management Plan Modifications for the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area by Orange County and Osceola County to allow the construction of a toll highway. Please share these comments with the members of the Florida Community Trust (FCT) and include them as part of the official public record for the April 20, 2022, FCT meeting.

Kent



Kent L. Wimmer, AICP

Senior Representative and Coordinator for the
Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape

[DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE](#)

1294 Avondale Way, Tallahassee, FL 32317-8451

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Visit <https://defenders.org>!



Northwest Florida Office
1294 Avondale Way | Tallahassee, Florida 32317-8451 | tel 850.528.5261
www.defenders.org

April 18, 2022

Florida Communities Trust
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Via email: Lois LaSeur - Senior Assistant General Counsel, Lois.LaSeur@dep.state.fl.us

Field Code Changed

Re: Defenders of Wildlife's Comments Concerning Proposes Management Plan Modifications by Orange County and Osceola County for Linear Facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area

Dear Ms. LaSeur,

Defenders of Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to provide comments concerning the proposed Management Plan Modifications for the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area by Orange County and Osceola County to allow the construction of a toll highway. Please share these comments with the members of the Florida Community Trust (FCT) and include them as part of the official public record for the April 20, 2022, FCT meeting. Founded in 1947, Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) is a national non-profit conservation organization focused solely on wildlife and habitat conservation and the safeguarding of biodiversity. Defenders has more than 124,000 members and supporters in Florida.

Defenders respectfully requests the FCT to reject the Orange County and Osceola County request to modify the management plan for Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area to allow a toll highway/linear facility to cross this mitigation area. The counties manage Split Oak Forest WEA in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) due to the significance of the site's wildlife habitat.

Orange and Osceola counties' 1991 FCT project application stated the purpose of this land acquisition proposal was to create a mitigation park to restore and enhance environmental resources to offset the impacts of encroaching development. The management goal established for Split Oak Forest WEA is to "restore and maintain the habitats critical to the long-term benefit of state and federally listed upland species, particularly the gopher tortoise" (see <https://myfwc.com/recreation/lead/split-oak-forest/history/>). As a condition to accepting management of area in perpetuity, the FWC agreed the project would serve as a wildlife mitigation area for restored uplands and a wetland mitigation area for the restored wetlands.

The proposed highway would destroy publicly restored and protected habitat for a significant number of gopher tortoises. The below map was adapted to show the potentially impacted gopher tortoises and their habitat from a December 2019 Florida Natural Areas Inventory site gopher tortoise inventory (see the attached report). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is evaluating whether to list the gopher tortoise as a Threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Approving the proposed amendment signals to the Service that existing state-owned conservation land in Florida with occupied gopher tortoise habitat cannot be relied upon for long-term protection.

In addition to the direct destruction of occupied gopher tortoise habitat and that of over 360 commensal species, approval of this management plan and the subsequent development of this toll highway would fragment the Split Oak Forest WEA and severely limit the use of prescribed fire as a habitat restoration and management tool across the entire tract even if the toll road

National Headquarters | 1130 17th Street, N.W. | Washington, D.C. 20036-4604 | tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331 | www.defenders.org
Southeast Office | 1 Rankin Avenue, 2nd Floor | Asheville, N.C. 28801 | tel 828.412.0980

is elevated. This would require the managing partners to employ much more expensive and less effective mechanical treatments and chemical treatment of invasive plant species. It is our understanding that FWC as a managing partner and the South Florida Water Management District as easement holder are not parties to and have not approved this proposed management plan change to allow a toll highway to destroy and fragment the southern portion of Split Oak Forest WEA. As FCT staff noted, six additional items remain to be resolved before it would be ripe to make an affirmative decision on this proposal.

Split Oak Forest WEA was acquired to serve as mitigation for destruction of lands for development elsewhere in central Florida. Allowing this amendment to the land management plan would establish a precedence to allow lands protected through Preservation 2000 bond-funding to be transferred and utilized for uses that are inconsistent with the environmental protection objectives for which they were acquired. This action would violate and erode the public's trust and support for the current Florida Forever land protection program and for the concept of offsetting development's impacts through mitigation. If Split Oak Forest is allowed to be fragmented and a significant portion converted to highly incompatible use as a toll highway where there are viable alternative routes, then no state or local land acquired and managed for conservation or protected as mitigation area for habitat destroyed elsewhere would be safe from later conversion to uses that are completely inconsistent for the purposes these lands were conserved.

Please disapprove this proposed management plan amendment for Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. The proposal is not ripe for a decision, and if approved it would allow ill-advised destruction of habitat and lands acquired and restored by the public for protection in perpetuity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kent L. Wimmer, AICP

cc via email:

Linda Reeves, Program Manager FCT, Linda.Reeves@dep.state.fl.us

Rebecca Wood, Rebecca.Wood@FloridaDEP.gov

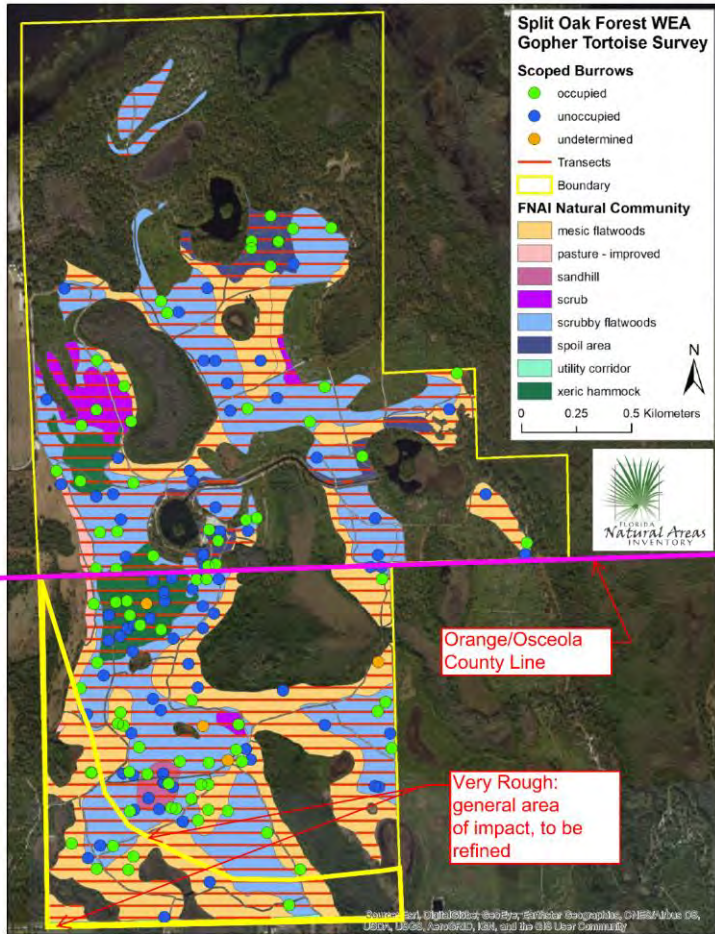


Figure 1: Location of scoped burrows, survey transects, and natural communities/landcover at Split Oak Forest WEA.



GOPHER TORTOISE SURVEY OF SPLIT OAK FOREST WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AREA



Final Report to Florida Fish
and Wildlife Conservation
Commission

December 2019

Florida Natural Areas Inventory
Project # 043816



Cover Photographs:

- top: Flatwoods at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (Derek Dunlop)
- center: Eastern coral snake (*Micrurus fulvius*) at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (Derek Dunlop)
- bottom: Hatchling gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (Derek Dunlop)

Report Prepared by: Rebecca Zeroth

Recommended citation: Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI). 2019. Gopher tortoise survey of Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. Report to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Tallahassee, FL.

Acknowledgments

We thank Dan Sullivan, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), for requesting this survey. We thank David Turner (FWC) for providing access to the survey sites and helping coordinate our field time. Rebecca Zeroth, Katy NeSmith, Samantha Dietz and Derek Dunlop conducted the transect searches and burrow scoping. Amy Knight assisted with summarization of the data and preparation for delivery.

ABSTRACT

Florida Natural Areas Inventory conducted a pilot survey for gopher tortoises at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area on 9-10 October 2019. This report is a follow-up to the pilot survey and describes a full Line Transect Distance Sampling survey, which occurred 21-24 October, 4-7 November, and 12-13 November 2019. A total of 164 burrows were scoped and 81 gopher tortoises were recorded; burrow occupancy was 50.6%. Based on Distance version 7 analyses the estimated total population is 290 tortoises at a density of 0.98 tortoises per ha. Carapace lengths (estimated by width of occupied burrows) ranged from 4.5-34.5 cm, with 1.2% and 15% of observations recorded as hatchlings and juveniles respectively. The sample frame consisted of 296 ha of suitable habitat, primarily mesic flatwoods and scrubby flatwoods. Based on these analyses, this population meets the criteria for a viable gopher tortoise population.

INTRODUCTION

To address concerns regarding survey consistency, Line Transect Distance Sampling (LTDS) recently has been adopted as the preferred monitoring methodology through the Gopher Tortoise Candidate Conservation Agreement team. This method is widely used to estimate population size and density of wildlife species (Buckland et al. 2004) and provides a statistically valid, consistent method to evaluate tortoise populations. Standardized survey results will provide crucial baseline data using a repeatable method with which to compare future survey data, and determine population trends or variation in response to habitat management activities.

The open source software Distance version 7 can be used to create LTDS survey designs and to analyze survey data. ArcGIS software is necessary for managing spatial data related to the survey (e.g., to define the survey area [sample frame], and map transect and tortoise locations). The sample frame is the extent of suitable tortoise habitat on a particular property as determined by soils, vegetation (land cover), and land-use.

A pilot survey is generally conducted prior to the formal survey to determine the sampling intensity needed for the full survey. During the pilot survey, the length of transect surveyed per tortoise observation, called the tortoise encounter rate, is recorded. This value is used to calculate the distance of transect needed to achieve desirable results in the formal survey. There is flexibility in the amount of effort required for a pilot survey and in selecting locations for pilot survey transects, but it is important that the pilot survey captures variation in habitat type, quality, and tortoise distribution within the sample frame.

The full LTDS survey is designed using Distance version 7 and incorporates the sample frame and encounter rate from the pilot survey. The tortoise encounter rate is used to extrapolate the total length (m) of transect necessary to observe at least 60 objects (tortoises) and to derive abundance estimates with reasonable precision. As a general rule, to detect changes in population size over time, sampling should be intensive enough to produce a coefficient of variation (CV) of 15-20%, which is a practical expectation for most monitoring projects. If the CV exceeds 20%, the statistical power, confidence, and ability to detect trends in monitoring data are substantially reduced.

METHODS

LTDS Sampling

Based on the encounter rate of 566 m/tortoise obtained in the pilot survey, the transect distance for the full survey was 58,764 m. This estimate was buffered to allow for some elimination should the habitat be deemed unsuitable for gopher tortoises during the full survey. Distance version 7 was used to generate east/west transects across the site. Transects located within 5 m of a boundary were eliminated to ensure even sampling. The original sample frame was 318 ha and the transects were spaced 55 m apart. Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) scientists traversed these transects using a double observer approach (one observer navigating the transects with a Trimble Geo7 GPS unit and the second observer following closely behind focusing on looking for burrows the first observer missed). All usable burrows (non-collapsed) observed were searched with a burrow scoping camera to determine occupancy. Surveys were conducted on 21-24 October, 4-7 November, and 12-13 November 2019.

At each scoped burrow a data dictionary was used to record additional burrow information. The visual status was recorded as either active (showed signs of recent activity such as tracks, slide, or digging) or inactive. The actual status was recorded as occupied, unoccupied, or undetermined (a burrow was recorded as undetermined if it was unable to be completely scoped; this may be because it curved too sharply, was waterlogged or the scope was not long enough to reach the end). The width of the burrow was measured to the nearest 0.5 cm with calipers inserted 50 cm inside the burrow.

All transect lengths were calculated in ArcMap. For each burrow data point the perpendicular distance from the burrow to the transect center line was calculated using the Near function. Each encounter is a single data point in the input file with two metrics: the length of the transect the burrow was found on and the perpendicular distance from the burrow to the

transect center line. Lengths of transects where no tortoises were observed were also input, but without a perpendicular distance. These data were analyzed using Distance version 7.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

During the full survey, some habitat along the edges was eliminated from the sample frame because of edaphic and hydrological characteristics unsuitable for gopher tortoises or fire exclusion. The edited sample frame was 296 ha. The total distance walked (excluding transects in unsuitable areas) was 53,619.8 m. A total of 164 burrows were scoped: 81 occupied, 79 unoccupied, and 4 undetermined ([Table 1](#); [Figure 1](#)). The occupancy rate was 50.6 percent.

Burrow associates observed included a southern toad (*Anaxyrus terrestris*), crickets, beetles, flies, and a mushroom. Other noteworthy species observed on site outside of burrows included Florida scrub jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). An FNAI drift fence survey of reptiles and amphibians at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (WEA), currently ongoing, is identifying more species of interest.

Damage by feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) was observed in the southwestern portion of the site. Besides causing considerable damage to the habitat because of their rooting behavior, they have been documented to prey on some tortoise species (Taylor and Hellgren 1997). Any reduction in their population would be beneficial to the gopher tortoises.

During the survey FNAI scientists recorded five invasive plant species: Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), natal grass (*Melinis repens*), and cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*). Gopher tortoises can benefit from eradicating these exotic species.

Distance version 7 was used to run a series of models to estimate population size and density using both conventional distance sampling (CDS) and multiple covariate distance sampling (MCDS) with burrow width as a covariate (directions obtained from Smith and Howze 2016). Each model was run twice, once with all burrows and once with occupied burrows only. Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) (Akaike 1974) was used for model selection. If AIC values were within two units, the model with the lowest coefficient of variation (%CV) was selected.

For all burrows (occupied, unoccupied, and undetermined) the best fitting model, selected using AIC, was the CDS Half-normal/Cosine model. The model output estimated that there were 714 burrows within the sample frame at a density of 2.4 burrows (occupancy not accounted for) per ha. The CV (13.77%) provides a 95% confidence interval for the estimate ranging from 545 to 935 burrows ([Table 2](#); [Appendix A](#)).

For occupied burrows only (gopher tortoise observations) the best fitting model, selected using AIC, was the MCDS Half-normal/Cosine model. The model output estimated that there were 290 gopher tortoises within the sample frame at a density of 0.98 gopher tortoises per ha. The CV (14.0%) provides a 95% confidence interval for the estimate ranging from 221 to 382 gopher tortoises ([Table 3](#); [Appendix B](#)).

In assessing population viability for gopher tortoises, it is important to take into account the condition of the available habitat (Tuberville et al. 2009) such as size, continuity, quality, management, and demographics. Split Oak Forest WEA is a small to medium sized site, 716.9 ha, of which 37.5% (296 ha) consisted of a suitable soils type, as well as a suitable natural community for gopher tortoises. The site is completely continuous and no true separation barriers exist within the WEA. A canal goes through part of the site, but gopher tortoises can go around, or cross it along the bridge. There are no paved roads within the site, and vehicle access from the public is restricted. There are also multiple dirt roads and foot paths that do not pose a threat to gopher tortoises. The northwestern boundary is bordered by Eagles Roost, and the northeastern boundary is bordered by Moss Park.

The sample frame consisted of eight natural community/landcover types; mesic flatwoods, pasture – improved, sandhill, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, spoil area, utility corridor, and xeric hammock (burrow occupancy by natural community/landcover type is shown in [Table 4](#)). Mesic flatwoods and scrubby flatwoods, which make up over 80% of the sample frame, are generally best maintained with prescribed fire at intervals of 1-3 years and 3-5 years, respectively (FNAI 2010). Several roller-chopped areas that had not yet been followed by a prescribed burn were observed in the southern section of the site. Roller-chopping can cause disturbances that lead to an increase in non-native plant species (Menges and Gordon 2010). Mechanical treatment to reduce woody midstory, when not followed by prescribed burning, results in an excess fuel load which, in addition to posing a wildfire hazard, can impede the mobility of gopher tortoises. Additionally, when this excess fuel load becomes the dominant ground cover it can have a mulching effect and prevent the growth of herbaceous plants that gopher tortoises, particularly young ones (MacDonald and Mushinsky 1988), depend on.

Among the greatest threats to gopher tortoise populations in Florida are habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. Split Oak Forest WEA is in the potential path for the proposed toll road near Orlando International Airport (Spear 2019). If construction goes directly through the WEA it would function as a separation barrier for gopher tortoises. At the current population size of 290 gopher tortoises creating a separation barrier would effectively divide this population in two, and could result in a reduced viability. Populations with less than 250 gopher tortoises are not considered viable. Another proposed path, in which the toll road would run through 24 ha in the southwest corner, would still negatively impact the gopher

tortoises that reside in that section of mesic and scrubby flatwoods. A toll road would also make prescribed burning of the fire-dependent natural communities more difficult, which could lead to further loss of suitable habitat for gopher tortoises.

The gopher tortoise population had a die-off in the mid 2000's, believed to be caused by Upper Respiratory Tract Disease (URTD). Staff reported walking transects and recording many tortoise carapaces. Two subsequent releases of 55 gopher tortoises (110 total) occurred in 2009 and 2016 (D. Turner, personal communication, 15 November 2019). No signs of disease in the population were observed during this survey, and only two carapaces of deceased gopher tortoises were documented.

A stable gopher tortoise population will have an even sex ratio and mixed demographics (hatchling, juvenile, subadult and adult) to indicate recruitment of younger tortoises into the population. Burrow width was measured at each burrow to help determine the demographic structure of the population. Burrow width is correlated with carapace length and can be used to approximate age classes in gopher tortoises (Alford 1980). Burrow width measurements were converted to approximate carapace length and classified as either hatchling (<5.5 cm), juvenile (5.6-13.5 cm), subadult (13.6-22.0 cm), or adult (>22 cm); results are shown in [Figure 2](#). Hatchlings, juveniles and subadults were found (1.2%, 14.8%, and 14.8% of the population respectively), indicating a healthy level of recruitment into the population. It is possible that the number of smaller burrows is underrepresented; small burrows are more difficult to detect, and smaller tortoises sometimes shelter under vegetation rather than dig burrows (Smith et al. 2009) or commandeer the burrows of larger tortoises. It is also possible that the overall population size may be underrepresented, as surveys immediately following a burn have had significantly higher detection rates (Howze and Smith 2018).

For a gopher tortoise population to be considered viable, it must contain ≥ 250 adult tortoises, a density of no less than 0.4 tortoises/ha (approx. 0.16 tortoises/acre), and ≥ 100 ha (approx. 250 acres) of contiguous suitable gopher tortoise habitat (GTC 2013, 2014). The population should also contain an approximate male-female ratio of 1:1, show evidence of juvenile recruitment into the population, variability in size classes, and the site must not have major constraints to tortoise movement. Based on survey results, this site meets the criteria for a viable population, however the viability is threatened by potential development.

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Table 1. Burrow scoping results during line transect distance sampling (LTDS) surveys at Split Oak Forest WEA.

Sample frame (ha)	Burrows scoped (total)	Occupied burrows	Percent occupied	Undetermined burrows	Percent undetermined
296	164	81	50.6	4	2.4

Table 2. Burrow abundance and density estimates for the 2019 line transect distance sampling survey at Split Oak Forest WEA. Estimates were obtained by analyzing all burrows (occupied, unoccupied, and undetermined) in Distance version 7.

Model	# obs	Effort (m)	AIC	D	D LCL	D UCL	%CV	N	N LCL	N UCL	P
CDS HN Cos 5%	156	53619.87	748.66	2.411	1.842	3.157	13.77	714	545	935	0.483

Model = model selected, # obs = total burrows observed, Effort (m) = total length of transect in meters, AIC = Akaike’s Information Criterion, D= density of burrows, D LCL = 95% lower confidence limit for density, D UCL = 95% upper confidence limit for density, %CV = coefficient of variation, N = number of burrows, N LCL = 95% lower confidence limit for number of burrows, N UCL = 95% upper confidence limit for number of burrows, P = detection probability.

Table 3. Gopher tortoise population and density estimates for the 2019 line transect distance sampling survey at Split Oak Forest WEA. Estimates were obtained by analyzing occupied gopher tortoise burrows in Distance version 7.

Model	# obs	Effort (m)	AIC	D	D LCL	D UCL	%CV	N	N LCL	N UCL	P
MCDS HN Cos 5%	77	53619.87	358.73	0.9803	0.745	1.289	14.0	290	221	382	0.679

Model = model selected, # obs = total burrows observed, Effort (m) = total length of transect in meters, AIC = Akaike’s Information Criterion, D= density of burrows, D LCL = 95% lower confidence limit for density, D UCL = 95% upper confidence limit for density, %CV = coefficient of variation, N = number of burrows, N LCL = 95% lower confidence limit for number of burrows, N UCL = 95% upper confidence limit for number of burrows, P = detection probability.

Table 4. Percent of total burrows, burrow occupancy rate, and area (ha) for each natural community/landcover at Split Oak Forest WEA.

Natural Community	Mesic flatwoods	Pasture-improved	Sandhill	Scrub	Scrubby flatwoods	Spoil area	Xeric hammock
Number of burrows	36	3	8	4	80	15	18
Percent of burrows	21.9	1.8	4.8	2.4	48.8	9.1	10.9
Number occupied	20	2	2	3	36	11	7
Percent occupied	57.1	66.7	25	75	46.2	73.3	41.2
Area (ha)	107.3	3.1	3.3	9.9	139.1	12.9	19.6
Percent of sample frame	36.2	1.05	1.1	3.3	47.01	4.3	6.6

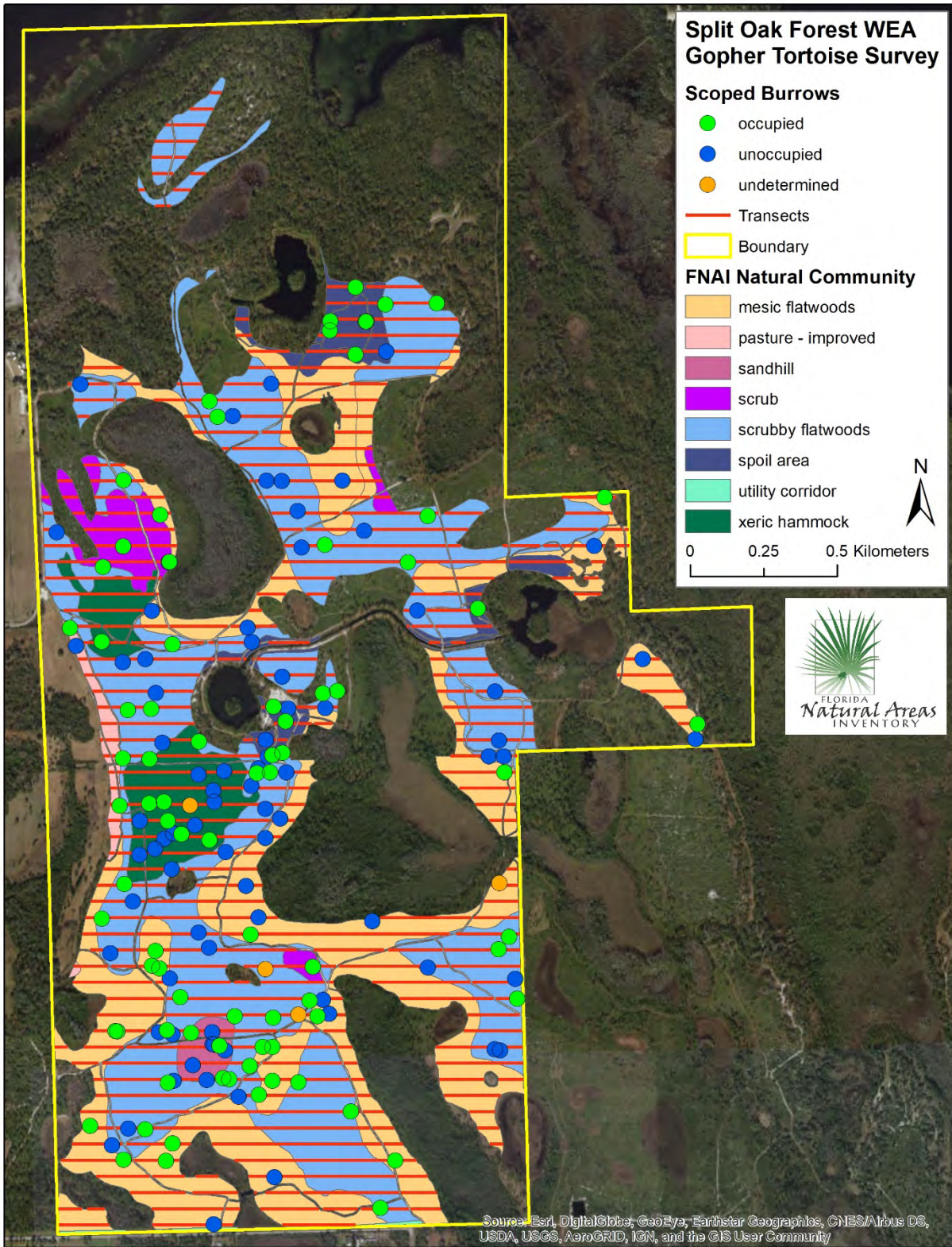


Figure 1: Location of scoped burrows, survey transects, and natural communities/landcover at Split Oak Forest WEA.

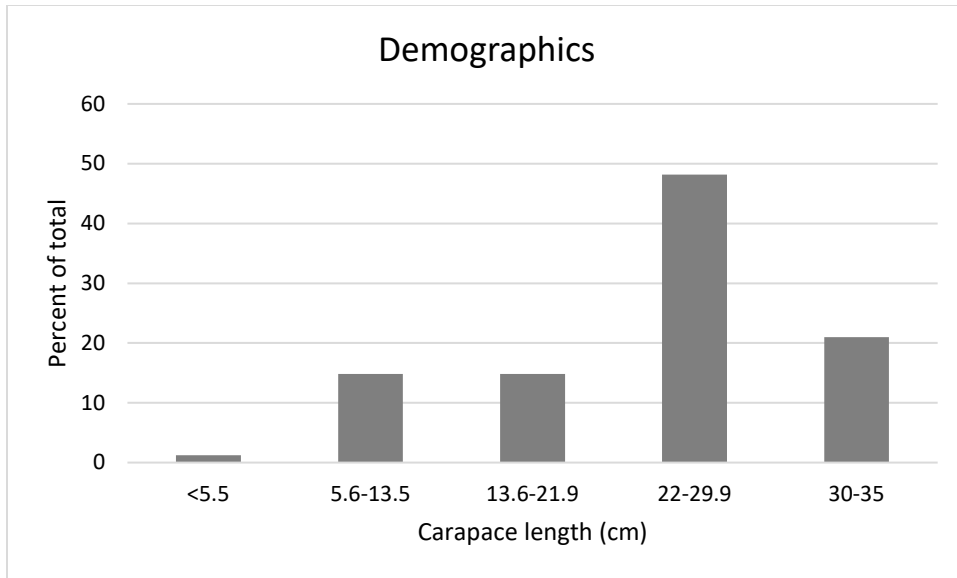


Figure 2: Size and age class distribution (approximate carapace lengths: hatching <5.5 cm, juvenile 5.6-13.5 cm, subadult 13.6-22.0 cm, adult >22 cm; Alford 1980) of occupied gopher tortoise burrows encountered during the LTDS survey at Split Oak Forest WEA.

APPENDIX A: Split Oak Forest WEA all burrows (occupied, unoccupied, and undetermined) Distance version 7 results

Selected model: Conventional Distance Sampling (CDS) Half-normal/Cosine, 5% truncation

Parameter Estimation Specification

Encounter rate for all data combined
Detection probability for all data combined
Density for all data combined

Distances:

Analysis based on exact distances
Width: use measurement/interval endpoint which represents 95.0 percentile.

Estimators:

Estimator 1
Key: Half-normal
Adjustments - Function : Cosines
- Term selection mode : Sequential
- Term selection criterion : Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)
- Distances scaled by : W (right truncation distance)

Estimator selection: Choose estimator with minimum AIC
Estimation functions: constrained to be nearly monotone non-increasing

Variances:

Variance of n: Empirical estimate from sample
(design-derived estimator R2/P2)
Variance of f(0): MLE estimate

Goodness of fit:

Cut points chosen by program

Glossary of terms

Data items:

n - number of observed objects (single or clusters of animals)
L - total length of transect line(s)
k - number of samples
K - point transect effort, typically K=k
T - length of time searched in cue counting
ER - encounter rate (n/L or n/K or n/T)
W - width of line transect or radius of point transect
x(i) - distance to i-th observation
s(i) - cluster size of i-th observation
r-p - probability for regression test
chi-p- probability for chi-square goodness-of-fit test

Parameters or functions of parameters:

m - number of parameters in the model
A(I) - i-th parameter in the estimated probability density function(pdf)
f(0) - 1/u = value of pdf at zero for line transects
u - W*p = ESW, effective detection area for line transects
h(0) - 2*PI/v

v - $\pi \cdot W \cdot W \cdot p$, is the effective detection area for point transects
p - probability of observing an object in defined area
ESW - for line transects, effective strip width = $W \cdot p$
EDR - for point transects, effective detection radius = $W \cdot \sqrt{p}$
rho - for cue counts, the cue rate
DS - estimate of density of clusters
E(S) - estimate of expected value of cluster size
D - estimate of density of animals
N - estimate of number of animals in specified area

Effort : 53619.87
samples : 362
Width : 12.46517
observations: 156

Model 1

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2 / (2 \cdot A(1)^2))$
Results:
Convergence was achieved with 9 function evaluations.
Final Ln(likelihood) value = -375.41166
Akaike information criterion = 752.82330
Bayesian information criterion = 755.87317
AICc = 752.84930
Final parameter values: 6.4022783

Model 2

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2 / (2 \cdot A(1)^2))$
Cosine adjustments of order(s) : 2
Results:
Convergence was achieved with 12 function evaluations.
Final Ln(likelihood) value = -372.32790
Akaike information criterion = 748.65582
Bayesian information criterion = 754.75549
AICc = 748.73425
Final parameter values: 6.6309605 0.28850560

Likelihood ratio test between models 1 and 2
Likelihood ratio test value = 6.1675
Probability of a greater value = 0.013012

*** Model 2 selected over model 1 based on minimum AIC

Model 3

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2 / (2 \cdot A(1)^2))$
Cosine adjustments of order(s): 2, 3
Results:
Convergence was achieved with 12 function evaluations.
Final Ln(likelihood) value = -372.15997
Akaike information criterion = 750.31995
Bayesian information criterion = 759.46954
AICc = 750.47784
Final parameter values: 6.6114124 0.27154472 0.65067981E-01

Likelihood ratio test between models 2 and 3
Likelihood ratio test value = 0.3359
Probability of a greater value = 0.562234

*** Model 2 selected over model 3 based on minimum AIC

Effort : 53619.87
samples : 362
Width : 12.46517

observations: 156

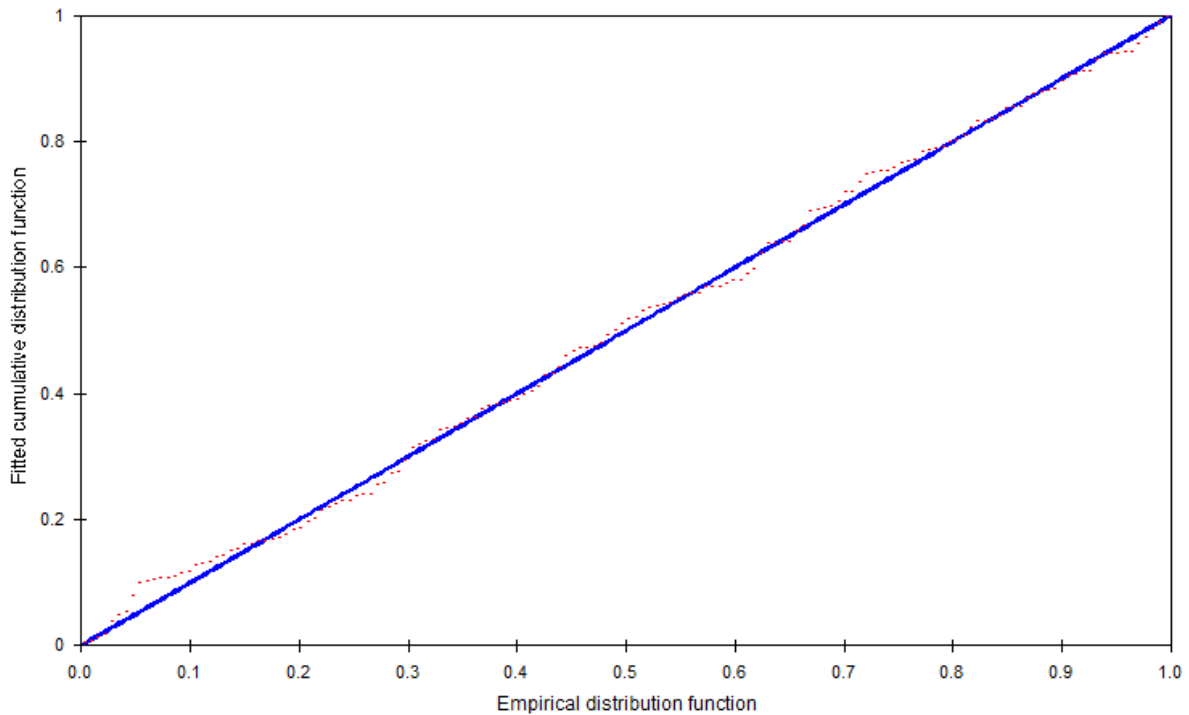
Model

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2/(2*A(1)**2))$
Cosine adjustments of order(s) : 2

Parameter	Point Estimate	Standard Error	Percent Coef. of Variation	95 Percent Confidence Interval	
A(1)	6.631	0.6183			
A(2)	0.2885	0.1134			
f(0)	0.16579	0.16872E-01	10.18	0.13566	0.20260
p	0.48390	0.49245E-01	10.18	0.39598	0.59134
ESW	6.0319	0.61385	10.18	4.9359	7.3712

Sampling Correlation of Estimated Parameters

	A(1)	A(2)
A(1)	1.000	0.173
A(2)	0.173	1.000



Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

D_n = 0.0487 p = 0.8536

Cramer-von Mises family tests

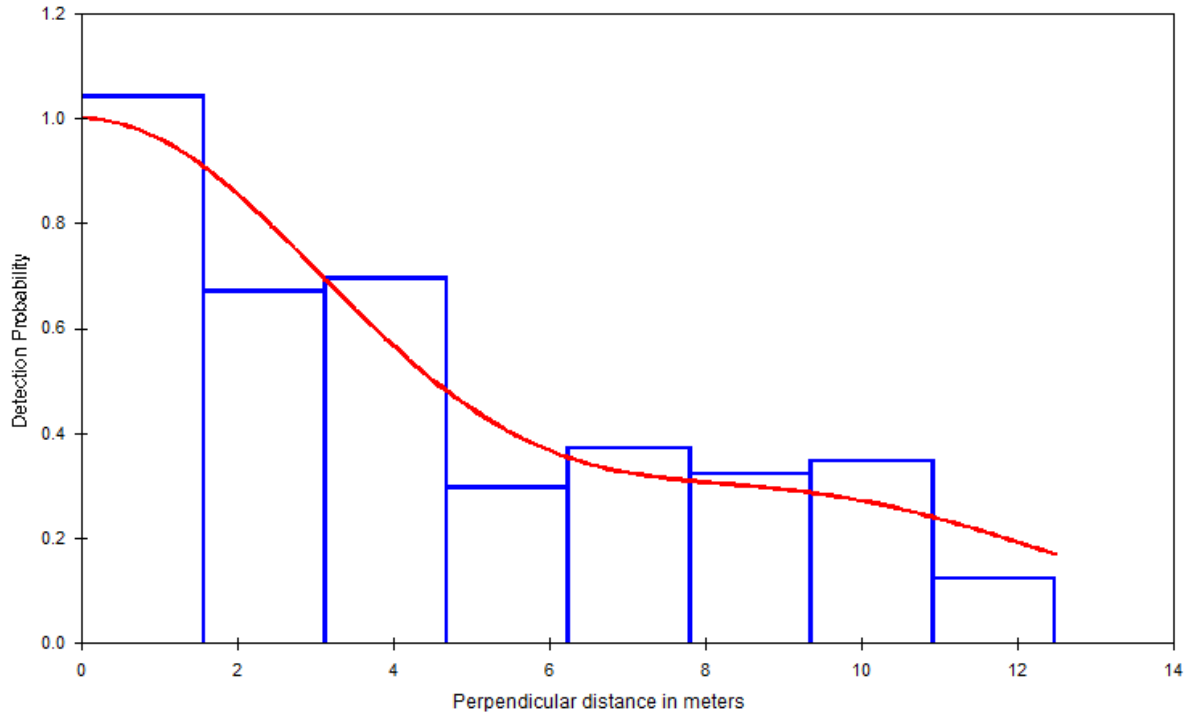
W-sq (uniform weighting) = 0.0295 0.900 < p <= 1.000
Relevant critical values:

W-sq crit(alpha=0.900) = 0.0000

C-sq (cosine weighting) = 0.0224 0.900 < p <= 1.000

Relevant critical values:

C-sq crit(alpha=0.900) = 0.0000

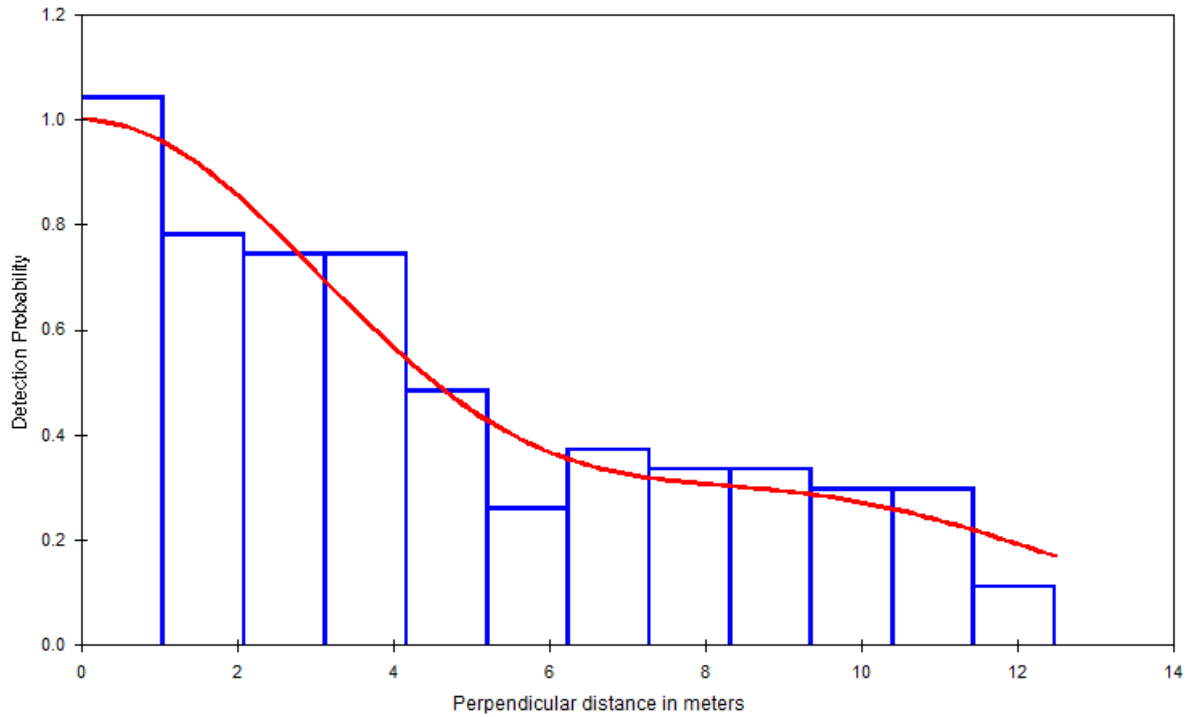


Cell i	Cut Points	Observed Values	Expected Values	Chi-square Values	
1	0.000	1.56	42	39.05	0.223
2	1.56	3.12	27	32.53	0.940
3	3.12	4.67	28	23.51	0.856
4	4.67	6.23	12	16.53	1.239
5	6.23	7.79	15	13.21	0.243
6	7.79	9.35	13	12.06	0.074
7	9.35	10.9	14	10.76	0.974
8	10.9	12.5	5	8.36	1.349

Total Chi-square value = 5.8995 Degrees of Freedom = 5.00

Probability of a greater chi-square value, P = 0.31613

The program has limited capability for pooling. The user should judge the necessity for pooling and if necessary, do pooling by hand.

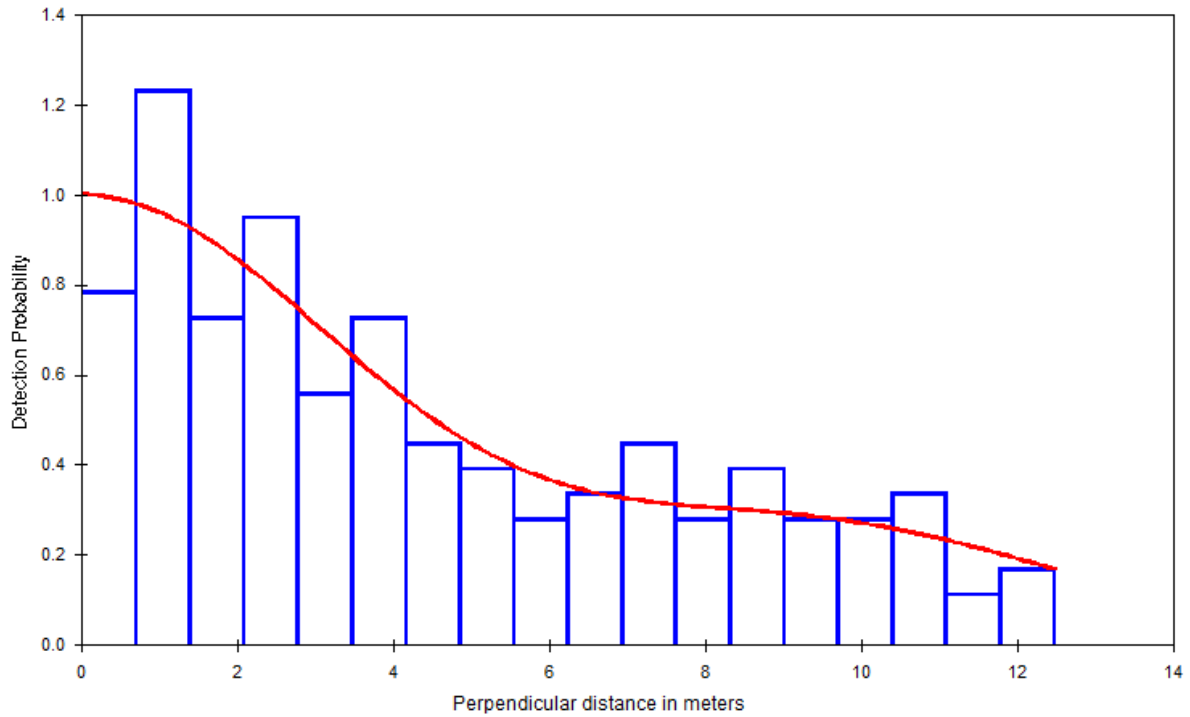


Cell i	Cut Points		Observed Values	Expected Values	Chi-square Values
1	0.000	1.04	28	26.49	0.086
2	1.04	2.08	21	24.36	0.462
3	2.08	3.12	20	20.73	0.026
4	3.12	4.16	20	16.62	0.686
5	4.16	5.19	13	12.99	0.000
6	5.19	6.23	7	10.43	1.125
7	6.23	7.27	10	8.99	0.114
8	7.27	8.31	9	8.33	0.053
9	8.31	9.35	9	7.94	0.141
10	9.35	10.4	8	7.39	0.051
11	10.4	11.4	8	6.48	0.359
12	11.4	12.5	3	5.26	0.969

Total Chi-square value = 4.0725 Degrees of Freedom = 9.00

Probability of a greater chi-square value, P = 0.90657

The program has limited capability for pooling. The user should judge the necessity for pooling and if necessary, do pooling by hand.



Cell i	Cut Points	Observed Values	Expected Values	Chi-square Values	
1	0.000	0.693	14	17.80	0.810
2	0.693	1.39	22	17.14	1.380
3	1.39	2.08	13	15.91	0.532
4	2.08	2.77	17	14.28	0.520
5	2.77	3.46	10	12.45	0.481
6	3.46	4.16	13	10.63	0.528
7	4.16	4.85	8	9.01	0.112
8	4.85	5.54	7	7.69	0.061
9	5.54	6.23	5	6.72	0.442
10	6.23	6.93	6	6.09	0.001
11	6.93	7.62	8	5.72	0.907
12	7.62	8.31	5	5.51	0.047
13	8.31	9.00	7	5.34	0.515
14	9.00	9.70	5	5.14	0.004
15	9.70	10.4	5	4.85	0.005
16	10.4	11.1	6	4.44	0.547
17	11.1	11.8	2	3.93	0.950
18	11.8	12.5	3	3.36	0.038

 Total Chi-square value = 7.8806 Degrees of Freedom = 15.00

Probability of a greater chi-square value, P = 0.92848

The program has limited capability for pooling. The user should judge the necessity for pooling and if necessary, do pooling by hand.

Effort : 53619.87
 # samples : 362
 Width : 12.46517
 # observations: 156

Model 2

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^{**2}/(2*A(1)**2))$
 Cosine adjustments of order(s) : 2

Parameter	Point Estimate	Standard Error	Percent Coef. of Variation	95% Percent Confidence Interval	
D	2.4117	0.33199	13.77	1.8422	3.1572
N	714.00	98.290	13.77	545.00	935.00

Measurement Units

Density: Numbers/hectares
 ESW: meters

Component Percentages of Var(D)

Detection probability : 54.7
 Encounter rate : 45.3

	Estimate	%CV	df	95% Confidence Interval	
n	156.00				
k	362.00				
L	53620.				
n/L	0.29094E-02	9.27	361.00	0.24255E-02	0.34898E-02
Left	0.0000				
Width	12.465				

	Estimate	%CV	df	95% Confidence Interval	
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Half-normal/Cosine

m	2.0000				
LnL	-372.33				
AIC	748.66				
AICc	748.73				
BIC	754.76				
Chi-p	0.92848				
f(0)	0.16579	10.18	154.00	0.13566	0.20260
p	0.48390	10.18	154.00	0.39598	0.59134
ESW	6.0319	10.18	154.00	4.9359	7.3712

	Estimate	%CV	df	95% Confidence Interval	
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Half-normal/Cosine

D	2.4117	13.77	398.55	1.8422	3.1572
N	714.00	13.77	398.55	545.00	935.00

APPENDIX B: Split Oak Forest WEA occupied burrows (gopher tortoises observations)

Distance software 7 results

Selected model: Multiple covariate Distance Sampling (MCDS), Half-normal/Cosine, 5% truncation, with burrow width as a covariate

Parameter Estimation Specification

Encounter rate for all data combined
Detection probability for all data combined
Density for all data combined

Distances:

Analysis based on exact distances
Width: use measurement/interval endpoint which represents 95.0 percentile.

Estimators:

Estimator 1
Key: Half-normal
No adjustment terms

Covariates: DIAMETER

Estimator selection: Choose estimator with minimum AIC
Estimation functions: not constrained to be monotone

Variances:

Variance of n: Empirical estimate from sample
(design-derived estimator R2/P2)
Variance of f(0): MLE estimate

Goodness of fit:

Cut points chosen by program

Glossary of terms

Data items:

n - number of observed objects (single or clusters of animals)
L - total length of transect line(s)
k - number of samples
K - point transect effort, typically K=k
T - length of time searched in cue counting
ER - encounter rate (n/L or n/K or n/T)
W - width of line transect or radius of point transect
x(i) - distance to i-th observation
s(i) - cluster size of i-th observation
r-p - probability for regression test
chi-p- probability for chi-square goodness-of-fit test

Parameters or functions of parameters:

m - number of parameters in the model
A(I) - i-th parameter in the estimated probability density function(pdf)
f(0) - 1/u = value of pdf at zero for line transects
u - W*p = ESW, effective detection area for line transects
h(0) - 2*PI/v

v - $\pi \cdot W \cdot W \cdot p$, is the effective detection area for point transects
 p - probability of observing an object in defined area
 ESW - for line transects, effective strip width = $W \cdot p$
 EDR - for point transects, effective detection radius = $W \cdot \sqrt{p}$
 rho - for cue counts, the cue rate
 DS - estimate of density of clusters
 E(S) - estimate of expected value of cluster size
 D - estimate of density of animals
 N - estimate of number of animals in specified area

Effort : 53619.87
 # samples : 362
 Width : 10.77783
 # observations: 77

Model

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2 / (2 \cdot s^2))$

$s = A(1) \cdot \text{Exp}(\text{fcn}(A(2)))$

Parameter A(1) is the intercept of the scale parameter s.

Parameter A(2) is the coefficient of covariate DIAMETER.

A(1) bounds = (0.10778 , 0.10000E+07)

Iter	LN(likelihood)	Parameter Values	
1	-179.097	5.13889	0.000000
2	-177.715	5.13684	0.506301E-02
3	-177.419	4.48579	0.126204E-01
4	-177.374	4.06317	0.174291E-01
5	-177.367	3.93894	0.191605E-01
6	-177.366	3.88800	0.198600E-01
7	-177.365	3.87126	0.201036E-01
8	-177.365	3.86470	0.201958E-01
9	-177.365	3.86252	0.202277E-01
10	-177.365	3.86168	0.202396E-01
11	-177.365	3.86139	0.202438E-01
12	-177.365	3.86129	0.202453E-01

Results:

Convergence was achieved with 12 function evaluations.

Final Ln(likelihood) value = -177.36535

Akaike information criterion = 358.73071

Bayesian information criterion = 363.41830

AICc = 358.89288

Effort : 53619.87
 # samples : 362
 Width : 10.77783
 # observations: 77

Model

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2 / (2 \cdot s^2))$

$s = A(1) \cdot \text{Exp}(\text{fcn}(A(2)))$

Parameter A(1) is the intercept of the scale parameter s.

Parameter A(2) is the coefficient of covariate DIAMETER.

Parameter	Point Estimate	Standard Error	Percent Coef. of Variation	95 Percent Confidence Interval	
A(1)	3.861	1.595			
A(2)	0.2025E-01	0.2172E-01			
f(0)	0.13653	0.94339E-02	6.91	0.11899	0.15665

p	0.67958	0.46957E-01	6.91	0.59228	0.77974
ESW	7.3244	0.50609	6.91	6.3835	8.4039

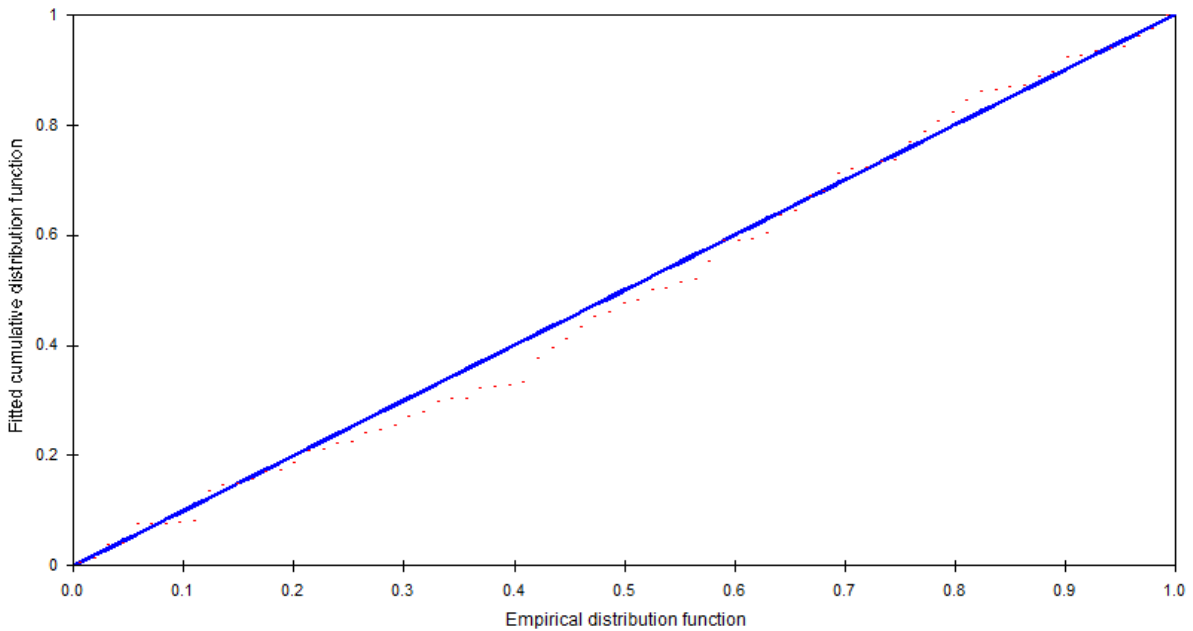
Sampling Correlation of Estimated Parameters

	A(1)	A(2)
A(1)	1.000	-0.955
A(2)	-0.955	1.000

Distribution of estimated detection probabilities given covariates, p(z)

p(z)	Number	Proportion
0.0-0.1	0	0.0000
0.1-0.2	0	0.0000
0.2-0.3	0	0.0000
0.3-0.4	0	0.0000
0.4-0.5	1	0.0130
0.5-0.6	12	0.1558
0.6-0.7	17	0.2208
0.7-0.8	47	0.6104
0.8-0.9	0	0.0000
0.9-1.0	0	0.0000

Smallest value of p(z): 0.4910



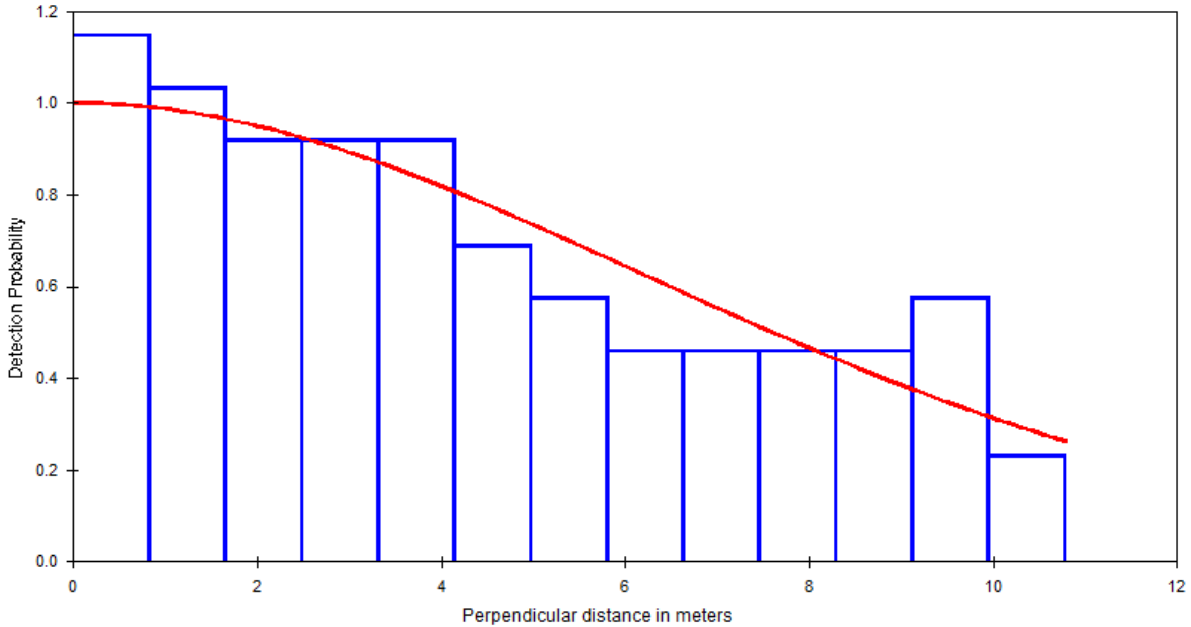
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

D_n = 0.0827 p = 0.6675

Cramer-von Mises family tests

W-sq (uniform weighting) = 0.0530 0.800 < p <= 0.900
 Relevant critical values:
 W-sq crit(alpha=0.900) = 0.0462
 W-sq crit(alpha=0.800) = 0.0624

C-sq (cosine weighting) = 0.0398 0.700 < p <= 0.800
 Relevant critical values:
 C-sq crit(alpha=0.800) = 0.0393
 C-sq crit(alpha=0.700) = 0.0501



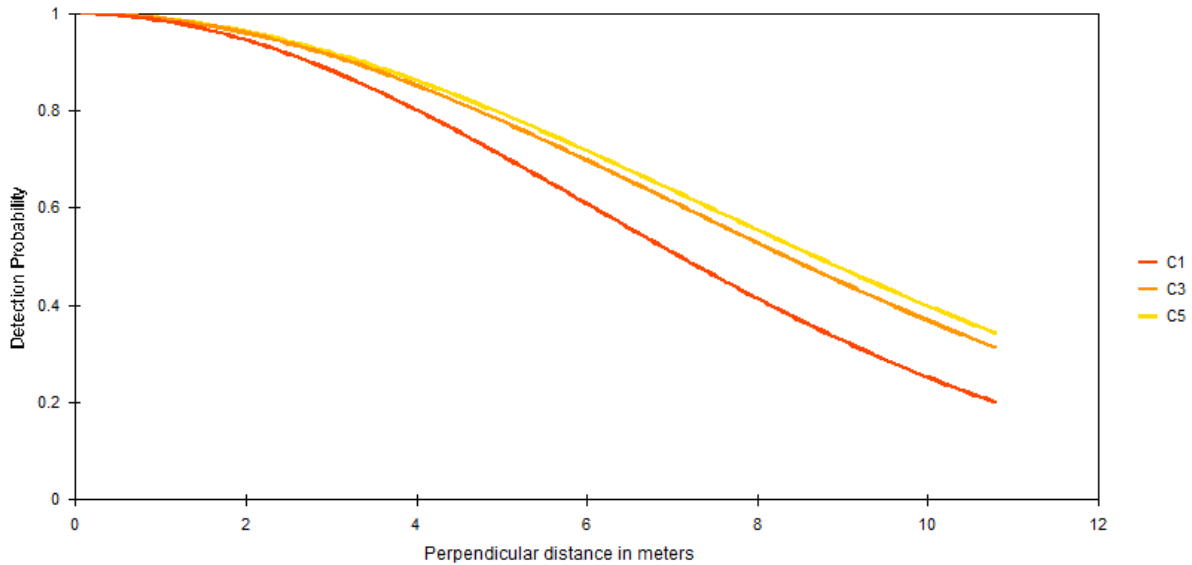
Cell i	Cut Points	Observed Values	Expected Values	Chi-square Values
1	0.000	0.829	10	8.69
2	0.829	1.66	9	8.54
3	1.66	2.49	8	8.25
4	2.49	3.32	8	7.84
5	3.32	4.15	8	7.33
6	4.15	4.97	6	6.74
7	4.97	5.80	5	6.10
8	5.80	6.63	4	5.45
9	6.63	7.46	4	4.79
10	7.46	8.29	4	4.16
11	8.29	9.12	4	3.57
12	9.12	9.95	5	3.02
13	9.95	10.8	2	2.53

Total Chi-square value = 2.5555 Degrees of Freedom = 10.00

Probability of a greater chi-square value, P = 0.99004

The program has limited capability for pooling. The user should judge the necessity for pooling and if necessary, do pooling by hand.

DIAMETER=22,,30,,32.



Effort : 53619.87
 # samples : 362
 Width : 10.77783
 # observations: 77

Model

Half-normal key, $k(y) = \text{Exp}(-y^2/(2*s^2))$

$s = A(1) * \text{Exp}(\text{fcn}(A(2)))$

Parameter A(1) is the intercept of the scale parameter s.

Parameter A(2) is the coefficient of covariate DIAMETER.

Parameter	Point Estimate	Standard Error	Percent Coef. of Variation	95% Confidence Interval	Percent Confidence Interval
f(0)	0.13653	0.94339E-02	6.91	0.11899	0.15665
p	0.67958	0.46957E-01	6.91	0.59228	0.77974
ESW	7.3244	0.50609	6.91	6.3835	8.4039
n/L	0.14360E-02	0.17484E-03	12.18	0.11313E-02	0.18229E-02
D	0.98031	0.13724	14.00	0.74549	1.2891
N	290.00	40.598	14.00	221.00	382.00

Measurement Units

Density: Numbers/hectares
 ESW: meters

Component Percentages of Var(D)

Detection probability : 24.4
 Encounter rate : 75.6

	Estimate	%CV	df	95% Confidence Interval
n	77.000			
k	362.00			
L	53620.			

n/L	0.14360E-02	12.18	361.00	0.11313E-02	0.18229E-02
Left	0.0000				
Width	10.778				

	Estimate	%CV	df	95% Confidence Interval	

Half-normal/Cosine					
m	2.0000				
LnL	-177.37				
AIC	358.73				
AICc	358.89				
BIC	363.42				
f(0)	0.13653	6.91	75.00	0.11899	0.15665
p	0.67958	6.91	75.00	0.59228	0.77974
ESW	7.3244	6.91	75.00	6.3835	8.4039

	Estimate	%CV	df	95% Confidence Interval	

Half-normal/Cosine					
D	0.98031	14.00	420.85	0.74549	1.2891
N	290.00	14.00	420.85	221.00	382.00

From: [Maria Bolton-Joubert](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wci.comunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Cc: [Maria Bolton-Joubert](#)
Subject: 4/20 MTG --- Comments on Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area --proposed modifications application by Orange & Osceola Counties For Linear Facility.
Date: Thursday, April 14, 2022 9:36:20 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good day.

Ms Mara Gambineri, Chair, Governing Board
Florida Communities Trust
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550
Tallahassee, FL 32399- 3000

RE: SPLIT OAK

Dear Chair Gambineri and Board Members,

Please do not allow a road through Split Oak Forest WEA.

We are losing habitat left and right -- especially in Central FL. We are pushing our wildlife into streets and are losing them daily. This isn't hyperbole, this is reality.

Ask any local wildlife rehabber -- ask the community. More roads, more dead wildlife. Especially when roads are placed through wooded areas, adjacent to bodies of water etc.

Split Oak Forest WEA is a beautiful natural area and I would hope that future generations, and children like our son, will be able to find hiking trails and enjoy the natural beauty in Split Oak, that is REAL Florida. Which we are losing daily. All over our state.

We cannot allow for more construction here. We cannot allow for more concrete and to further more air pollution.

Carbon sequestration is important, and studies show that older growth and mature trees sequester more carbon than new growth. Why it's important to PRESERVE and keep intact, older trees.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/how-old-trees-help-climate-1.4252888>

We need to preserve this wildlife area. I do not want more roadkill. I do not want more air pollution. We do not need this to happen here in this Forest.

WE MUST protect public lands and wild spaces.

So many endemic plants and animals are under threat -- being wiped out daily in Florida. Folks aren't looking at the bigger picture, nor to the future.

I beg of you to do what is right here.

I cannot be in Tallahassee because we reside in Orlando and I'm the stay at home parent of our busy four year old -- Tallahassee is unfortunately too far of a drive.

I do hope to call in on the 20th though, as I have already signed up to do so.

This is a very important issue and also sets a precedence here.

Thank you for caring about the future of natural Florida and for the voiceless wildlife and natural spaces,

Thank you,
Maria Bolton-Joubert
Resident of Orange County

From: [Lynn Miller](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: DO NOT LET THE DEVELOPERS PLOW THROUGH SPLIT OAKS, Please
Date: Thursday, April 14, 2022 11:17:00 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Lynn Miller

Ocala

From: [Florida Communities Trust](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Reeves, Linda](#); [McMahon, William](#)
Subject: FW: Please do not allow developers to pave over Split Oaks Forest
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:44:54 AM

From: Lynn Miller <lynniemiller@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2022 11:20 AM
To: Florida Communities Trust <FloridaCommunitiesTrust@dep.state.fl.us>
Subject: Please do not allow developers to pave over Split Oaks Forest

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

From: [Bentley, Terry](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Gaskin, Carla](#)
Subject: FW: Save Split Oak Forest.
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 11:04:20 AM

FYI

From: Ginger Goepper <gingerjgoepper@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 10:01 AM
To: Bentley, Terry <Terry.Bentley@FloridaDEP.gov>; Gregory.Jones@floridadep.gov; Denys, Deborah <Deborah.Denys@FloridaDEP.gov>; Mingo, Frank <Frank.Mingo@FloridaDEP.gov>; Noah.Valenstein@floridadep.gov
Cc: Reeves, Linda <Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov>
Subject: Save Split Oak Forest.

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

b.c.c. conservationists, lawyers, reporters
c.c. Linda Reeves

Greetings Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members Bentley, Jones, Denys, Mingo, and Valenstein:

Please do not approve a Central Florida toll road highway to destroy 60 acres of the Split Oak Forest which has NOT been declared surplus by the state. (The 1998 constitutional amendment bars governments from getting rid of conservation land unless the land has been classified as no longer worth conserving.)* Your Florida Communities Trust Governing Board gave Osceola and Orange counties \$6.3 million from OUR taxpayers' Preservation 2000 fund to preserve the Split Oak Forest, not destroy it. In return, there was a signed agreement for the forest to be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The two counties were supposed to "manage for the quality and productivity of the site's xeric plant communities" and "increase public awareness of the importance of protecting and managing listed species population."* Those goals were to "maintain, increase, and ensure the abundance and distribution of state listed [protected] wildlife within the project site" and "provide recreational uses that are compatible with the protection and maintenance of listed wildlife populations, the retention of naturally occurring vegetative associations, and protection of sensitive natural area resources."* Please remember the endangered Florida Scrub Blue Jay struggles to carve out an existence in this Split Oak Forest.

If Split Oak Forest is not protected by you next Wednesday, then our entire Sunshine State is in dire risk. Folks who care more about their own wallets than wildlife will destroy all of Florida if you let them. That is who your decision on Wednesday the 20th determines the fate of our entire state. Please say "No" to this horribly destructive proposal.

Respectfully submitted-

Mrs. Ginger Goepper, Floridian to the core

*source credit: "Plan for new Central Florida toll road would split Split Oak Forest, a treasured park" - recent column by Craig Pittman in "Florida Phoenix"

From: [Reeves, Linda](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak Forest Linear Facility Hearing
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 11:03:57 AM

fyi

Linda D. Reeves, FCCM
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
OMC Manager, Land and Recreation Grants
Mailing: 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS# 585
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Physical: Carr Building, Room
Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov
Office: 850.245.2702

From: Sherry Williams <qeqivah@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 17, 2022 9:06 AM
To: Wood, Rebecca <Rebecca.Wood@FloridaDEP.gov>
Cc: Reeves, Linda <Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov>; Ventry, Rita <Rita.Ventry@FloridaDEP.gov>; DeHaven, Callie <Callie.Dehaven@FloridaDEP.gov>; eric.sutton@myfwc.com; undefined@hello@friendsofsplitoak.org
Subject: Split Oak Forest Linear Facility Hearing

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

On Easter morning, I just heard about the hearing on April 20, 2022 to consider the construction of an expressway through portions of Split Oak Forest. Although I am late in entering the game, I hope that this letter can be presented at the hearing in opposition to the proposed item. And perhaps I can offer a different perspective from the numerous correspondence that FCT has already received in opposition.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Sherry Williams (also known as Sherry Williams-Hooper back in the 90's). I was the Orange County staff person responsible for Orange County's conservation land acquisition program from its beginnings in the early 90's to 1999. I am the staff person who wrote the original FCT application for Split Oak Forest and coordinated with staff from Orange County, Osceola County, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, FCT, and South Florida Water Management District in the preparation of this complex project application. I presented the FCT application to the Orange County and Osceola County Commissioners and gained their enthusiastic approval for submission of the Split Oak Forest application to FCT, all under the leadership of then County Chairman Linda W. Chapin.

Split Oak Forest made history back then. We were the first joint project of two Counties for conservation land acquisition, with two state agencies joining in (FCT and FWC). We were the

first to use the FCT's matching loan program which was paid back in record time. We were the first gopher tortoise relocation and mitigation program under FCT and we were the first wetlands mitigation bank under the FCT. We were the state-wide example of how County governments and State agencies could work together to preserve conservation lands and solve common conservation problems. The citizens and their government representatives were very proud of what they had accomplished with every right to be so.

Split Oak Forest became very popular with tourists and residents enjoying its scenic beauty and its location adjacent to Orange County's Moss Park greatly aided public access to this regional area. Recently, Orange County citizens reemphasized their support for Split Oak Forest with their 80% approval of the amendment to the County's charter that prohibits Orange County from modifying its interagency agreements and easements for Split Oak Forest for any other purposes other than conservation and preservation.

I could go on about the regional and state-wide conservation, recreational and historical importance of Split Oak Forest. The FCT Governing Board has a difficult decision to make for the best interests of all Florida citizens. Should Split Oak Forest remain a shining example of what can be accomplished through the efforts of local, regional and state governments working towards a common goal of preserving significant habitat for the future and benefit of Florida citizens? Or should Split Oak Forest become the example of how the combined efforts of many people to preserve a piece of Florida can so easily be overturned and forgotten?

I am retired now and living in Tennessee. It was hard to leave my native Florida but I had a great sense of accomplishment knowing that some lands were preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of all its citizens. Please don't allow those precious lands to be taken away from them and used for anything else other than preservation and conservation.

Sincerely,

Sherry E. Williams
196 Carter Hollow Lane
Gainesboro, TN 38562
(931)268-7290

From: [Reeves, Linda](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (FCT Project #91-009-P1A)
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 3:47:42 PM

fyi

Linda D. Reeves, FCCM
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
OMC Manager, Land and Recreation Grants
Mailing: 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS# 585
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Physical: Carr Building, Room
Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov
Office: 850.245.2702

From: Bob Stein <bobstein0523@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 18, 2022 11:47 AM
To: Gambineri, Mara <Mara.Gambineri@FloridaDEP.gov>
Cc: Reeves, Linda <Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov>; Ron DeSantis <GovernorRon.DeSantis@eog.myflorida.com>
Subject: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (FCT Project #91-009-P1A)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I understand that the fate of Split Oak Forest WEA will be decided by the FCT Governing Board at the Quarterly Meeting on February 16, 2022. Following the regulatory, legal, and political opinions of the experts, I must say that I cannot fathom why the use of this land for anything other than conservation mitigation is even be considered. I won't attempt to sway you with their points as I don't doubt that they are much better qualified to do so than I am. I will speak to you though as a resident homeowner in the City of Saint Cloud, located in Osceola County.

Split Oak Forest WEA was pledged to be protected conservation land for us to enjoy forever. Over the years, I've spent many days there enjoying nature and the beauty of God's green earth. It is food for the soul in today's hectic world. It belongs to the people.

I urge you to reject any request to alter the promises made to preserve and protect this land for our enjoyment.

- The land was given to us with a promise to protect it forever.
- Orange County citizens recently overwhelmingly reaffirmed their desire to keep the protections of Split Oak Forest WEA in place.
- Had Osceola County citizens been afforded the opportunity to vote on it, I can tell you it would have had the same results.
- Traffic is congested, however, extending Osceola Parkway through Split Oak Forest WEA to new housing subdivisions will only increase the congestion, not decrease it.
- If it is determined that the Osceola Parkway must be extended for some public good, there is an alternative albeit more expensive route that could be used where homes and Split Oak Forest WEA could remain protected.

Please protect our lands for us and for the animals that depend upon it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Stein, III
4707 Mesa Verde Dr
Saint Cloud, FL 34769

From: [Bright, Angie](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Reeves, Linda](#)
Cc: [Bibby, Bill](#); [McMahon, William](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:40:21 AM

FYI...

~Angela Bright

From: Marg Chauvin <margchauvin@live.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 7:42 AM
To: Bright, Angie <Angie.Bright@dep.state.fl.us>
Subject: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Ms Bright,

I trust you value Florida, our lands and wildlife. We the citizens of Florida own the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. It is ours to protect. So I urge you to protect and save it from any and all development. We don't need a road passing through a wildlife sanctuary and destroying our precious remaining wild Florida.

Thank you,
Marg

Marg Chauvin
Citra, FL
Retired Florida Educator
Active Volunteer
561-308-0118
margchauvin@live.com

Never give up. Never give in.
Never become hostile... Hate is too big a burden to bear.
John Lewis

From: [Bentley, Terry](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Gaskin, Carla](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak Forest
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 11:04:03 AM

From: Cindy Stiles <stiles123@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 10:32 AM

To: Bentley, Terry <Terry.Bentley@FloridaDEP.gov>; Gregory.Jones@floridadep.gov; Denys, Deborah <Deborah.Denys@FloridaDEP.gov>; Mingo, Frank <Frank.Mingo@FloridaDEP.gov>; Noah.Valenstein@floridadep.gov; Reeves, Linda <Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov>

Subject: Split Oak Forest

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Greetings Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members Bentley, Jones, Denys, Mingo, and Valenstein:

Please do not approve a Central Florida toll road highway to destroy 60 acres of the Split Oak Forest which has NOT been declared surplus by the state. (The 1998 constitutional amendment bars governments from getting rid of conservation land unless the land has been classified as no longer worth conserving.) Your Florida Communities Trust Governing Board gave Osceola and Orange counties \$6.3 million from OUR taxpayers' Preservation 2000 fund to preserve the Split Oak Forest, not destroy it. In return, there was a signed agreement for the forest to be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The two counties were supposed to "manage for the quality and productivity of the site's xeric plant communities" and "increase public awareness of the importance of protecting and managing listed species population."* Those goals were to "maintain, increase, and ensure the abundance and distribution of state listed [protected] wildlife within the project site" and "provide recreational uses that are compatible with the protection and maintenance of listed wildlife populations, the retention of naturally occurring vegetative associations, and protection of sensitive natural area resources."* Please remember the endangered Florida Scrub Blue Jay struggles to carve out an existence in this Split Oak Forest.

If Split Oak Forest is not protected by you next Wednesday, then our entire Sunshine State is in dire risk. Folks who care more about their own wallets than wildlife will destroy all of Florida if you let them. That is who your decision on Wednesday the 20th determines the fate of our entire state. Please say "No" to this horribly destructive proposal.

Respectfully submitted-

Cindy Stiles

Pinellas County, Florida Native

From: [Bibby, Bill](#)
To: [Reeves, Linda](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak Preserve
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 8:02:42 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Good Morning:

Another email for the Board re., Split Oak. To whom should I forward?

Thank you.



Bill Bibby, FCCM
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of State Lands/Florida Communities Trust
Planner IV
Bill.Bibby@FloridaDEP.gov
FloridaCommunitiesTrust@FloridaDEP.gov
Office: 850-245-2783

From: Susan Long <semhts@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 12:35 PM
To: Bibby, Bill <Bill.Bibby@FloridaDEP.gov>
Subject: Split Oak Preserve

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

It amazes me that your board is even considering destroying the Split Oak Preserve by running a multiple lane toll road through the middle of it. There are few to no other places like the Split Oak preserve. Over time Florida has destroyed wetlands, re-routed rivers, allowed large lakes to be ruined, and beautiful, unique places like Split Oak Preserve. Please let's not do that any more. The split oak preserve is unique and cannot be recreated with some random land that a developer has offered to donate.

I ask you as a Hillsborough County Planner and representative, please do not ruin the Spit Oak Preserve. Vote no on Agenda Item #7 on April 20, 2022.

Sincerely,

Susan W. Long, Ph.D.
921 E. Broad St.
Tampa, FL 33604
813-857-4830
susan@swlong.com

From: [Bright, Angie](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Reeves, Linda](#)
Cc: [Bibby, Bill](#); [McMahon, William](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak proposed road
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:35:54 AM

FYI...

~Angela Bright

From: Mark Hays <hays486@brighthouse.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 1:40 PM
To: Bright, Angie <Angie.Bright@dep.state.fl.us>
Subject: Split Oak proposed road

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Stop the Road project! Due what right

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [Gaskin, Carla](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Fwd: Split Oak Forest
Date: Friday, April 15, 2022 2:58:58 PM

Please include the email below in the supplemental comment packet. Thanks!

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ernie <enywein@yahoo.com>
Date: April 15, 2022 at 2:54:22 PM EDT
To: "Hunter, Annie" <Annie.Hunter@floridadep.gov>, "Gaskin, Carla" <Carla.Gaskin@floridadep.gov>, "Chapman, Joseph" <Joseph.Chapman@floridadep.gov>
Cc: "Gambineri, Mara" <Mara.Gambineri@floridadep.gov>, "Bentley, Terry" <Terry.Bentley@floridadep.gov>
Subject: Re: Split Oak Forest

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Hi All,

I'm forwarding my message below after receiving out of office messages from the others.

Thank you very much,

Ernie Winn
Bradenton and former Orlando resident and visitor to Split Oak Forest

On Friday, April 15, 2022, 01:34:17 PM EDT, Ernie <enywein@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Terry,

I'm sending my message below to you after receiving an out of office message from Mara.

Thank you,

Ernie Winn

On Friday, April 15, 2022, 01:29:41 PM EDT, Ernie <enywein@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Chair Gambineri,

Please do what's right and do not allow a road through Split Oak Forest WEA.

Split Oak Forest WEA is a beautiful natural area that was supposedly preserved.

If Split Oak is not protected, then nowhere in Florida is protected. If toll roads win here, they will win everywhere.

This is a very important issue and also sets a precedence here.

Thank you,

Ernie Winn

Bradenton

former resident of Orlando

From: elizabeth.johnson
To: Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov
Cc: Heather@rondesantis.com; Mingo.Frank; Jones.Greg; Wood.Rebecca; DeHaven.Callie; Denys.Deborah; Gambineri.Mara; gregjones@wcicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov
Subject: Memo Re. FCT Project #91-009-P1A SPLIT OAK FOREST
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:12:04 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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April 18, 2022

ATTENTION: Florida Communities Trust Governing Board
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

RE: FCT Project #91-009-P1A SPLIT OAK FOREST WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AREA (SOFWEA) MODIFICATION OF DEED RESTRICTIONS

I am writing to urge the FCT Governing Board to NOT APPROVE Orange and Osceola Counties' request for a linear facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area, FCT Project #91-009-P1A.

Pursuant to the Florida Administrative Code, this project could be presented to the FCT as a request for a linear facility or a land exchange. The language written in the December 17, 2019 Orange County Board of Commissioners Discussion Agenda concerning Split Oak Forest/Osceola County Parkway Extension and the corresponding Orange County Resolution 2019-M-50 specifically indicate to the public that the petition made to the Florida Communities Trust ("FCT") would involve a land exchange where 1550 acres of land would be placed into conservation. Further, the Orange County BOCC was instructed by the FCT to file its petition pursuant to F.A.C. 62-818.016 "Consideration of Recipient's Request for Land Exchanges."

A plain reading of F.A.C. 62-818.016(2) indicates that this Board, with a 5-2 vote, did not obtain the requisite number of votes on December 17, 2019 to submit a petition to FCT as a Land Exchange. The Supreme Court of Florida has stated, "that which may not be done directly may not be done indirectly." However, that is precisely what is happening here.

The Central Florida Expressway Authority's proposition to place land into conservation constitutes a de facto land exchange. The language in Orange County Resolution 2019-M-50 constitutes a de facto land exchange. Just because the Central Florida Expressway Authority does not call it a land exchange does not change the fact

that it is one. It is interesting that Orange County Resolution 2019-M-50 states that the petition would be pursuant to F.A.C. 62-818.015 "Consideration of Recipient's Request for Linear Facilities," which suggests that there was either a misunderstanding of the law, this quid pro quo was used merely to garner support for a controversial and unwanted road, or this in an attempt to avoid the requirements set forth in F.A.C. 62-818.016 (Land Exchange Request). F.A.C. 62-818.016 exists specifically for cases like this to ensure that conservation areas maintain their quality and the land isn't slowly fragmented rendering the conservation area useless.

This entire deal was portrayed to the public as a land exchange. Public support or opposition for this project relied heavily on the representation that 1550 acres would be placed into conservation in exchange for the linear facility pursuant to the standards set forth in F.A.C. 62-818.016. It is entirely possible that public and commissioner support for the Osceola Parkway Extension may change in light of the fact that the FCT petition would not involve a land exchange pursuant to the specific terms of the F.A.C.

Despite the aforementioned concerns, there are several legal hurdles going forward that I believe hold legal weight. First, Art. X, § 18, Fla. Const. states that conservation land held by an entity of the state may be disposed of "only if the members of the governing board of the entity holding title determine the property is no longer needed for conservation purposes..." Second, the Orange County constituents overwhelmingly voted in November 2020 to amend the Orange County Charter to protect Split Oak Forest by "restricting the Board of County Commissioners' ability to amend, modify, or revoke the current restrictions and covenants" concerning Split Oak Forest.

In conclusion, I believe this Board may set a dangerous precedent if this project is approved. Conservation covenants ought to run with the land forever. Please deny this request for a linear facility through Split Oak because approving it will set precedent that conservation areas are not safe from development despite promises and contracts that exist to protect them

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Johnson, Esq.
Attorney at Law
407-288-2702

From: [Omyra Pearson](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wci.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Please protect Split Oak Forest
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 11:08:40 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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I'm writing to ask that you please protect Split Oak Forest! Residents have already spoken on this by voting in support of protecting Split Oak. We ask that you please respect that vote. We must protect our precious lands.

Article on the voting: <https://www.mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2020/11/04/orange-county-overwhelmingly-votes-to-protect-split-oak-forest>

Sincerely,
Omyra Pearson
FL Resident

From: [Kathy Brandt](#)
To: Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#)
Subject: please stop the destruction of our beautiful state
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 8:48:32 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Hello,

I am very concerned about the state of our State, as are many voters. 86% of the voters elected the charter amendment to protect Split Oak Forest. But, it seems that the people in government are, once again, deciding not to listen to people.

Please stop this toll road project.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Brandt

From: [Rachel Tybor](#)
To: [Heather@rondesantis.com](#); [Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov](#); [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); [gregjones@wci.comunities.com](#); [elindblad@sccf.org](#); [noahvalenstein@gmail.com](#); [Eric.sutton@myfwc.com](#); [Thomas.eason@myfwc.com](#); [Emily.norton@myfwc.gov](#); [District1@ocfl.net](#); [District2@ocfl.net](#); [District3@ocfl.net](#); [District4@ocfl.net](#); [District5@ocfl.net](#); [District6@ocfl.net](#); [Mayor@ocfl.net](#); [valerie@friendsofsplitoak.org](#)
Subject: Please, PROTECT SPLIT OAK FOREST!!
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 6:22:22 PM
Attachments: [protect split oak.jpg](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Dear Public and Elected Officials,

Your job is to represent your constituents and communities. The people have spoken, and we will continue to speak and watch how you act or do not act to represent us.

"ORANGE COUNTY, Fla. — Orange County residents turned out to vote in favor of protecting Split Oak Forest from development, and they did so by a landslide.

About 86% of Orange County residents voted to protect Split Oak, higher than any other conservation measure passed this election. "

(<https://www.mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2020/11/04/orange-county-overwhelmingly-votes-to-protect-split-oak-forest>)

My family moved to Central Florida specifically for the beautiful climate and forests that we have here, unlike anywhere else on this planet. Once they are gone, they are gone forever. Please do the right thing and build a road that goes AROUND, rather than through, Split Oak Forest and/or invest more in transit and rail to minimize pressure on our roadways through these precious ecosystems.

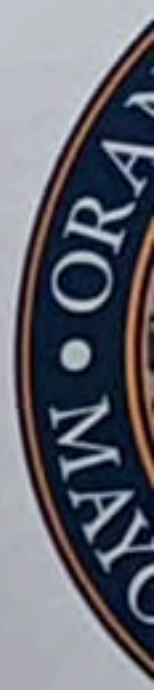
With gratitude,

Rachel Tybor, CPM, LM and family
Apopka, FL



PROTECT
SPLIT
OAK FOREST

PROTECT
SPLIT OAK



From: [Blayre Nyitray](#)
To: heather@rondesantis.com; lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); deobrah.denys@floridadep.gov; [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; eric.sutton@myfwc.com; thomas.eason@myfwc.com; emily.norton@myfwc.com; district1@ocfl.net; district2@ocfl.net; district3@ocfl.net; district4@ocfl.net; district5@ocfl.net; district6@ocfl.net; mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Protect Split Oak Forest - No Toll Road
Date: Friday, April 15, 2022 1:27:16 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Our tax dollars were used to protect Split Oak Forest. 86% of voters elected the charter amendment to protect this forest. We DO NOT want a toll road going through Split Oak Forest.

From: [Ruth Hamberg](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wci.comunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov
Subject: Protect Split Oak Forest
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 10:07:33 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I am a resident of Orange County. Split Oak Forest is an item on your meeting agenda for April 20. Split Oak – a natural gem full of beauty - was purchased with public funds to be preserved in perpetuity. Even though a majority of Orange County residents support protection of natural lands, a toll expressway is proposed to split apart Split Oak Forest. I am writing to strongly oppose the road destroying Split Oak Forest. The toll road will lead to more environmental destruction, pollution and more sprawl. I am asking the Commission to not permit this toll expressway to move forward.

Respectfully Yours,

Ruth Hamberg

Orlando

This e-mail and attached files are confidential and are exclusively for the addressed person(s). If you are not the intended receiver, please ignore and destroy immediately. Unauthorized use of this communication is prohibited.

From: [Karen Willey](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Bright, Angie](#); [Ventry, Rita](#); [Reeves, Linda](#); [Craig Pittman](#)
Subject: Save Split Oak Forest
Date: Thursday, April 14, 2022 9:21:33 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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To the Florida Communities Trust:

I am leaving. I am moving away from Florida after 50 years. This is a perfect example of the mess created by development that I am escaping.

The voters, 86% of them, said yes to saving the forest.

This is not surplus land, it is a Preserve.

[Dictionary.com](#): preserve [pri-zurv], to keep safe from harm or injury; protect or spare.

The Florida Communities Trust is the last hope of this forest. Which, by the way, is storing huge amounts of carbon to combat climate change.

Here are 3 of many reasons to save these trees.

- One mature tree provides enough oxygen for 10 people to breathe for an entire year.
- By the process of Respiration, trees filter water. Polluted rain is respired (breathed out) as pure water.
- Trees direct rainwater into the ground to fill the aquifer. The Floridan aquifer is drinking water for 70% of Floridians.

I implore the Florida Communities Trust to stop this road through the Split Oak Forest. It is not in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Karen A. Willey
Climate Change Communications
Training teams how to talk about climate change - aligned with your mission
KarenWildFL@gmail.com 941-704-4325 cell

I speak for the snail. I speak of underneathedness, and the welcome of mosses...

Ask me what I know of longing and I will speak of distances

between meadows of night-blooming flowers. I will speak the impossible hope of the firefly.

~ Camille T. Dungy

From: [Cristina Glynn](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wci.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Save Split Oak!!!
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 2:00:18 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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86% of voters elected the charter amendment to protect the Split Oak Forest in perpetuity. Does that mean nothing?

From: [Danielle Hipworth](#)
To: "[Heather@rondesantis.com](#)"; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); "[gregjones@wcicommunities.com](#)"; "[elindblad@sccf.org](#)"; "[noahvalenstein@gmail.com](#)"; "[Eric.sutton@myfwc.com](#)"; "[Thomas.eason@myfwc.com](#)"; "[District1@ocfl.net](#)"; "[District2@ocfl.net](#)"; "[District3@ocfl.net](#)"; "[District4@ocfl.net](#)"; "[District5@ocfl.net](#)"; "[District6@ocfl.net](#)"; "[Mayor@ocfl.net](#)"
Subject: split oak forest needs to stay protected
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 11:09:26 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

86% of voters elected the charter amendment to protect the Split Oak Forest . You are going against the will of the people when you try to undo this charter amendment.

Please stop and do the right thing - the will of the people must be heeded. That's how democracy works. Please protect our environment!

Thank you
D. Hipworth

From: [Marg Chauvin](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area
Date: Friday, April 15, 2022 7:39:11 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Ms Wood,

I trust you value Florida, our lands and wildlife. We the citizens of Florida own the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. It is ours to protect. So I urge you to protect and save it from any and all development. We don't need a road passing through a wildlife sanctuary and destroying our precious remaining wild Florida.

Thank you,
Marg

Marg Chauvin
Citra, FL
Retired Florida Educator
Active Volunteer
561-308-0118
margchauvin@live.com

Never give up. Never give in.
Never become hostile... Hate is too big a burden to bear.
John Lewis

From: [Bob Berger](#)
Subject: Split Oak Forest
Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2022 12:15:43 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Good afternoon,

I grew up in Gainesville, then spent 30 years in Texas. Now I am a retired OCPS educator who enjoys natural Florida and life here in the central part of the state. Native habitat can not be replaced, please do what you can, follow the voters wishes and preserve the Split Oak Forest.

Thank you,

Robert Berger

895 Cranes Court
Maitland, FL 32751

956.451.0629

From: [Tammy Crew](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Forest
Date: Friday, April 15, 2022 7:03:27 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

> Dear Ms Wood,

> As a life long resident of Florida I'm really angry my tax dollars have been wasted supporting this wonderful area for all of us to enjoy especially the gopher tortoises, Only to have these valuable acres paved over for developers. These tortoises are a keystone species supporting hundreds of other species at this location. How can you approve of wiping out this valuable acreage. Please do not allow few private developers to pave over what Many Floridians and endangered wildlife have enjoyed for many years. The value is immeasurable in dollars.

> Thank you

> Tammy Crew

From: [Paul Crotty](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 4:05:07 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I DO NOT support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If you allow this road to go through it will set a preserdent and it wont be long before they will need another road then another. Split Oar was never intended to be cut up with roads or anything else. the people have spoken and you need to honor there vote and the original intentions previously set forth.

Sincerely,
Paul Crotty
14025 mastwood Way
Orlando, FL 32832

From: [Holly Biltz-Realtor](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wcicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Split Oak
Date: Thursday, April 14, 2022 2:02:18 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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PLEASE PROTECT OUR FOREST, "Split Oak"

Holly A. Biltz
Realtor®
17 Years Serving Central Florida
Charles Rutenberg Realty
407-970-3267
License # SL3148090

National Association of Realtors
Osceola Association of Realtors

Like me on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HollysFLHomes>

Visit my website to search for your new home:
<http://hollyshomes.mfr.mlsmatrix.com/>

Follow me on Twitter @[HollyRealtor1](#)
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/hollybiltz.realtor/>
LINKEDIN <https://www.linkedin.com/in/holly-biltz-03b8ba88>

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photo



Holly A Biltz

Realtor, Charles Rutenberg Realty

p:407-970-3267 | e:FLHomesbyHolly@outlook.com |
w:<http://hollyshomes.mfr.mlsmatrix.com/> | a: 631 S Orlando Ave Ste
200, Orlando, FL 32789



Get your own  email signature

From: tross41@cfl.rr.com
To: "MARA."
Cc: [LaSeur, Lois](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Reeves, Linda](#)
Subject: Split Oaks Conservation lands
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:44:29 AM
Attachments: [Split oak letter.docx](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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See attached.

You can't tell who is swimming in the nude until the tide goes out. – Winston Churchill

Split oak letter

Ms. Mara Gambineri, Chair, Governing Board

Florida Communities Trust

Department of Environmental Protection

3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Dear Chair Gambineri and Trust Members,

In 1992, Orange and Osceola Counties applied to the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) for a grant to purchase a tract of land in the eastern part of both counties to set up a conservation area to provide habitat for certain endangered species, including the gopher tortoise, and also to serve as a mitigation bank for developers, creating Split Oak Forest. Both counties also stated making this land conservation land was consistent with their plans for future growth.

FCT approved the grant and required the counties to impose perpetual conservation easements on the Split Oak Forest property. The property has been developed into high quality conservation land.

In 1998, a provision was added to the Florida Constitution by citizen initiative prohibiting "disposal" of conservation land unless they no longer have conservation value.

It would seem this Constitutional provision should freeze status of such lands until a public hearing fact based determination of non viability is made. It is unclear who has to make this determination. Clearly the Constitutional provision requires evidence which is very persuasive ,with the burden of proof on proponent of non viability. Since both counties made a covenant of perpetual conservation ,it would seem both of these parties are conflicted from this decision. The FCT made an acquisition loan for the purchase of the lands,and should insist upon adherence to the original promises and Constitutional compliance.I understand disposal of these lands has been discussed using an exchange for other lands . In that scenario,an exchange of deeds involves a process which as I understand requires a super majority vote by both County Commissions.I have been told one of the counties did not get that type of majority . TO get around the super majority requirement it has been suggested instead of deeds a use of perpetual easements . I do not know if these facts are accurate. If so,a perpetual easement is virtually the same as a deed,and hope that our public servants would not sacrifice the public interest and trust to the use of gimmicks and deceit.

Tom Ross

From: [Brittany A. Powell](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Save Split Oak Forest
Date: Thursday, April 14, 2022 3:33:03 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Please no toll roads through this beautiful wildlife and wetland mitigation area. Please. The Central Florida Expressway Authority should not be able to touch this land. Florida is quickly, and I mean quickly-running out of natural space. What is done cannot be undone-if we start destroying our preserves we are on the final road to the end. This will set a horrible precedent for the rest of natural areas in Florida. They cannot be given up this easily. We need clean water supplies, we need critical habitat for wildlife, we need peaceful space away from development.

The offer to provide 1,500 acres of mitigation for the use of the mitigation land will just come under attack the next time they need more land.

Brittany A. Powell, Esquire
Law Offices of Charles E. McKeon, P.A.
707 N. Franklin Street, 9th Floor
Tampa, Florida 33602
p (813) 318-3030 x 101
f (813) 318-9127

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From: [Becky JS](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wci.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; [Commissioner Christine Moore](#); District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Split Oak Forest
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 2:03:59 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good afternoon,

I am emailing to ask that you preserve Split Oak Forest. This native Florida space should not be subject to development or traversed by any new highways. Floridians value natural spaces and this forest was set aside for preservation. It should not be re-zoned or otherwise changed to allow for development.

Sincerely,

Becky Schaff
beckyschaff@gmail.com
352.434.4683 (text only)

From: [Jenn Benner](#)
Subject: 4/20 MTG Comments on Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area - proposed modifications application by Orange & Osceola Counties For Linear Facility.
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 6:16:13 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good evening,

My name is Jennifer Benner. I'm a registered voter and resident of Orange County. I'm writing to respectfully request that you please keep the promise to protect Split Oak Forest.

Despite 86% of Orange County residents voting to PROTECT Split Oak Forest, both Orange & Osceola county officials have continued to move forward with requesting a Management Plan Modification that would allow for the construction of a linear facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. I ask that you please maintain the promise of protecting Split Oak Forest and deny the request for a Management Plan Modification.

Split Oak Forest is currently managed to enhance and preserve the habitat of native wildlife and plants. Endangered keystone species like the gopher tortoise, Florida scrub jay, and sand hill cranes all call Split Oak home. This road will kill many animals and damage vital ecosystems that sequester carbon from the air and purify our water systems. In the 1990s, the Forest was set aside as a mitigation bank for habitat to offset the sea of development that now surrounds it. We need to protect it not build roads through it.

We the people of Orange County do not approve of the continued destruction of our local environment. I ask the our County Commissioners and Mayor Demings please revisit and reject the Management Plan Modification. Please protect Split Oak Forest as was voted upon by your constituents!

WE MUST protect public lands and wild spaces.

So many endemic plants, animals, and habitats are under daily threat. Folks aren't looking at the bigger picture, nor to the future.

I beg of you to do what is right here.

I cannot be in Tallahassee because I reside and work full time in Orlando. Tallahassee is unfortunately too far of a drive.

Thank you for caring about the future of Florida and for the voiceless wildlife and natural spaces.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Benner
Resident of Orange County

From: mlellabrooklyn@aol.com
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; [LaSeur, Lois](#); [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wccommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Do NOT allow CFX to place this road through any part of Split Oak Forest.
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 3:48:04 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Split Oak and the trust (pun intended) of communities is in the hands of FCT.

We have spoken, you have heard us countless times. Even those who are in favor of this minimum impact CFX route are not really in favor of this toll road. If you are listening then you know that.

Will FCT do what it was formed to do, a trust to assist communities manage growth, or will FCT just be another rubber stamp for growth that has no regards for any preservation of Florida in lieu of more growth.

The Mormons can build the city of 500,000 and preserve Florida at the same time. After all the Mormon faith wants to save the planet. If they pray about it they will find the solution, the middle ground. Unless of course that was never their intent and they are not really Mormons.

If the answer by FCT is to save Split Oak then they are who they say they are.

IF not then at least we will finally know that FCT is just like everyone else.

Mike Lella 2423 Regent Way Kissimmee, Florida 407 319 3942

From: [Becca Cozad](#)
To: [LaSeur, Lois](#); [Ventry, Rita](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Reeves, Linda](#)
Cc: [Elliott, Matt](#)
Subject: FCT Governing Board Meeting Agenda Item #7 - Letter from Gopher Tortoise Council
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 2:15:10 PM
Attachments: [Split Oak letter_GTCsigned.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

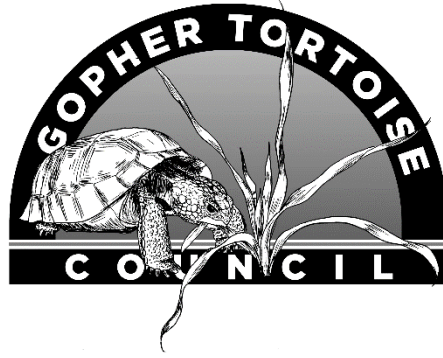
This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

On behalf of the Gopher Tortoise Council, I would like to submit the attached letter regarding Agenda Item #7 for the FCT Governing Board Meeting tomorrow (Request for Modifications to Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area Management Plan).

We appreciate the opportunity to submit our view on this topic and ask that our letter be provided to the FCT Board for the April 20, 2022 Meeting.

Best,
Becca

Becca Cozad, MSc
Research Biologist, Nokuse
Co-Chair, Gopher Tortoise Council
racozad@gmail.com / 281.330.5551



April 19, 2022

Ms. Mara Gambineri, Chair of FCT Governing Board
and Governing Board Members
c/o Lois LaSeur - Senior Assistant General Counsel
by email: Lois.LaSeur@dep.state.fl.us

Florida Communities Trust (FCT)
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Re: Agenda Item #7, FCT Governing Board Meeting on April 20, 2022
Request for Modifications to Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area Management Plan

Dear Florida Communities Trust Governing Board members,

The Gopher Tortoise Council was formed in 1978 by a group of southeastern biologists and other citizens concerned with the decline of the gopher tortoise and their associated habitats. The goals of the Council are: (1) to offer professional advice for management, conservation, and protection of gopher tortoises; (2) to encourage the study of the life history, ecology, behavior, physiology, and management of gopher tortoises and other upland species; (3) to conduct active public information and conservation education programs; (4) to seek effective protection of the gopher tortoise and other upland species throughout the southeastern United States. **The Gopher Tortoise Council is deliberately judicious in providing comments or positions on specific issues of land development**, as we believe it is critical that this organization maintain its credibility as rooted in science-based conservation and advocacy through liaising with a diversity of stakeholders.

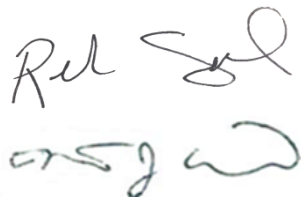
However, we are expressing our strongest opposition to the request from Orange and Osceola Counties for a modification plan to allow for construction of a linear facility through Split Oak Forest Wildlife Environmental Area. We ask that the FCT Board vote to “**Not approve**” item 7 as proposed. This development request is a significant threat to conservation successes at Split Oak Forest and is also a grave threat to the state’s numerous conservation successes. There is no *bona fide* conservation rationale for this proposal. Our concern that this project threatens conservation successes is based on numerous lines of independent evidence.

First, a recent Florida Natural Areas Inventory survey (FNAI Project #043816, 2019) documented the presence of a viable population of gopher tortoises on this site. Viable populations are those most likely to persist into the future, and maintenance of gopher tortoise populations in the Florida peninsula remains a great conservation challenge for the state. As evidenced by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's own series of executive orders (EO 21-27, EO 22-06), the state of Florida is facing an unsustainable burden to develop private lands. Up to this point, Split Oak Forest has been a model of how conservation can (and must) work on public lands. While Split Oak Forest contains a healthy and viable population of gopher tortoises, it has also been the focus of intensive state sponsored conservation efforts to maintain this tortoise population, including several conservation easements held by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and other agencies. The development at this site will compromise the viability of this population, not only affecting the tortoise population itself, but also damaging the taxpayer efforts and violating the public trust that has been committed to conserving this site. There are 1,550 acres of donation lands that the counties will receive as currently proposed and contingent upon approval of this linear corridor project – and these lands are principally located in wetlands that cannot support tortoises, suggesting a near complete loss of tortoise acreage.

Second, many of the tortoises at Split Oak Forest were moved there as the result of mitigation from development sites elsewhere in the peninsula. The fundamental need and assumption of mitigation for development is that mitigation sites are maintained in perpetuity to ease the burden of development on natural ecosystems. If mitigation sites are not protected from development (such as is being proposed at Split Oak Forest), then there is no assurance that current conservation planning has a chance to succeed. If this mitigation site is compromised in favor of development, it will establish one of the most dangerous precedents for conservation, particularly for gopher tortoises, since the Gopher Tortoise Council's founding.

We respectfully ask that the FCT reject this proposal outright, because it will irreparably damage the integrity of one of the most important and sensitive natural areas remaining in the Florida peninsula and set a precedent of prioritizing development over the protection of established conservation land.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The top signature is 'Rebecca Cozad' and the bottom signature is 'Matt Elliott'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Cozad and Matt Elliott

Co-Chairs, Gopher Tortoise Council

On behalf of the Gopher Tortoise Council Executive Committee

From: [Ventry, Rita](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: April 20, 2022 FCT meeting -split Oak agenda item - by Luis R. Santiago
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:48:43 PM

FYI

From: cobra1sant@aol.com <cobra1sant@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 3:41 PM
To: Ventry, Rita <Rita.Ventry@FloridaDEP.gov>
Cc: valerie@friendsofsplitoak.org
Subject: April 20, 2022 FCT meeting -split Oak agenda item - by Luis R. Santiago

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Hi Ms. Ventry,

I am a resident in Osceola County at 4907 Parkview Dr., St. Cloud, FL 34771 and I also have a property in Orange County at 13840 Timberbrooke Dr., #102, Orlando FL 32824. I understand that you represent both of these counties in the FCT Board.

During your upcoming FCT meeting on April 20, 2022, the agenda includes a discussion of the Split Oak Wildlife Environmental Area, better known as Split Oak Forest. Developers, mainly Tavistock and both counties' representatives are threatening the forest pushing for the removal of the protections granted **in perpetuity** to this forest as a natural habitat for all kinds of wildlife that includes mature trees endangered animal species and all types of wildlife that consider the forest, home. This forest is currently maintained by FWC for the successful survival of these species and enjoyed by visitors on a daily basis by the use of the marked trails. The visitors include free guided tours by professionals familiar with the forest assets and its protections, as well as by families and other groups. It would create a tremendous negative impact on people of all ages if the forest was split. I always look at the forest as our NY Central Park where visitors have a chance to admire and enjoy nature as it was meant to be.

Obviously, for their profit and alleged progress, the developers and the county officials are pushing for the Osceola Expressway road extension cutting through and effectively destroying the forest and its inhabitants, flora and fauna alike. This is mainly the result of uncontrolled development by building through their own properties and turning all of the Lake Nona area into a commercial/residential area not leaving any land for the construction of the road that would benefit their own Sunbridge development and now want to build through the forest actually destroying it. **This should not be allowed under any circumstances as the forest is a protected area.** Currently there are two access areas under construction, one through Cyrils Dr. off of Narcoossee Rd. in Osceola County where a new traffic light and widened lanes are being built and an interchange off of SR 528 in Orange County, which already has both East bound and West bound ramps. These would provide plenty of access for their future developments.

Please do not allow the destruction of the Split Oak Forest. This is where I take my grandchildren and adult sons and daughter, where we not only take hikes always visiting the Split Oak's namesake tree, but also do picnics observing other families and visitors observing, Gopher tortoises and their burrows, the bat colonies, and the many varied birds, all enjoying the mature oaks canopies. This is a safe family friendly oasis in the middle of the city that should not be destroyed.

Respectfully,

Luis R. Santiago, Irma Strubbe, Cindy Santiago, Samuel Santiago, Luis Santiago, Jr., Linda Nguyen, Jason Santiago, Jessica Santiago, Brennen deGraaff, Caitlin deGraaff, Alejandro Santiago, Alessandra Santiago, Emma Santiago, Dani Santiago, Bennett Santiago, Lucas Santiago and Levi Santiago

From: [DeHaven, Callie](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: Preservation of Split-Oak Forest
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 5:14:28 PM

From: Roger Cunningham <cunningham.rogerd@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:47 PM
To: DeHaven, Callie <Callie.Dehaven@FloridaDEP.gov>
Subject: Preservation of Split-Oak Forest

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Ms. Dehaven,

I am writing to urge you to take whatever action you can to save Split-Oak Forest from being chopped up by the proposed extension of the Osceola Parkway. Preservation of this natural area is both extremely important and extremely popular, as evidenced by the overwhelming approval of a referendum last year in Orange County to save it from this extension.

Putting this road through the Forest will serve the narrow interests of a few wealthy developers, but thwarts the will of tens of thousands of Orange County voters who voted as recently as November of 2020 to protect Split-Oak Forest from this road project. I'm sure voters will remember those who ignore the resounding message the 86% approval of the amendment to save Split-Oak Forest garnered.

Regards,

Roger D. Cunningham
405 Vista Oak Dr, Longwood, FL 32779

From: [Ventry, Rita](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: Proposed toll road extension
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:56:41 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Gail Ladd <gkladd48@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2022 8:58 AM
To: Ventry, Rita <Rita.Ventry@FloridaDEP.gov>
Subject: Proposed toll road extension

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Ms Ventry,

We wish to express our extreme dismay that the toll road extension is being considered through the Split Oak Preserve! We urge you to use your influence or let us know who to contact on the Florida Communities Trust commission before their vote next week. A preserve needs to be protected, not chopped through in the name of mitigation. Florida is being paved over. We don't need another Preserve to be threatened for any reason! This Preserve is used by many to escape the congestion now caused by roads built to accommodate all the theme parks. If Split Oak Preserve is split, what will stop more preserves to be paved?

Thank you,

Gail and Scott Ladd

Concerned Florida citizens for preserving what's left of our state's environment.

Sent from my iPad

From: [Ventry, Rita](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FW: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:56:02 PM

From: Marg Chauvin <margchauvin@live.com>
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 7:40 AM
To: Ventry, Rita <Rita.Ventry@FloridaDEP.gov>
Subject: Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Ms Ventry,

I trust you value Florida, our lands and wildlife. We the citizens of Florida own the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area. It is ours to protect. So I urge you to protect and save it from any and all development. We don't need a road passing through a wildlife sanctuary and destroying our precious remaining wild Florida.

Thank you,
Marg

Marg Chauvin
Citra, FL
Retired Florida Educator
Active Volunteer
561-308-0118
margchauvin@live.com

**Never give up. Never give in.
Never become hostile... Hate is too big a burden to bear.
John Lewis**

From: [Roger Cunningham](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Preservation of Split-Oak Forest
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:46:29 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Ms. Wood,

I am writing to urge you to take whatever action you can to save Split-Oak Forest from being chopped up by the proposed extension of the Osceola Parkway. Preservation of this natural area is both extremely important and extremely popular, as evidenced by the overwhelming approval of a referendum last year in Orange County to save it from this extension.

Putting this road through the Forest will serve the narrow interests of a few wealthy developers, but thwarts the will of tens of thousands of Orange County voters who voted as recently as November of 2020 to protect Split-Oak Forest from this road project. I'm sure voters will remember those who ignore the resounding message the 86% approval of the amendment to save Split-Oak Forest garnered.

Regards,

Roger D. Cunningham
405 Vista Oak Dr, Longwood, FL 32779

From: [Randi Cunningham](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Preserve
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 3:44:15 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good Afternoon-

It is breaking my heart and blowing my mind that the the extension of the Osceola Parkway into the beautiful serene Split Oaks PRESERVE is continuing to move forward despite the overwhelming outcry from the county's residents (evidenced in the 2020 ballot initiative) and the preserve's legal protected status.

I ask you to please listen to the organization Friends of Split Oak and instead implement their proposed alternate plan.

Go take a hike at the Split Oaks reserve - I am sure will agree.

Randi Cunningham
405 Vista Dr
Longwood 32779

From: [Keith Morlock](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Strongly Oppose Split Oak "Linear" route approval
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 2:41:58 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I strongly oppose any loss of protection for the Split Oak Wildlife and Environmental Area. This area (and other environmental areas) need to be protected in perpetuity as was the intention when they were set up. The proposed six lane toll road through the wildlife area, that could be routed through other areas (albeit at higher cost that I am sure developers can afford), does not serve the needs of the existing residents who have lived here for many years nor the wildlife that was moved to Spilt Oak to be protected (i.e. Gopher Tortoises). Even though the toll road is only on one side of the preserve it will bring high levels of noise and pollution throughout the remaining Split Oak area effectively ending the oasis of peace that this board created long ago. This linear feature (i.e. Toll Road) can be routed on other land. People can easily pick up and move, the animals and plants in Split Oak cannot. This board wisely approved the purchase of this land 30 some years ago and should stand by that decision today. Our future generations will thank you for preserving a small slice of the "real" Florida.

I live less than a mile from the Split Oak area and run and hike through it several times a week. It is a beautiful, peaceful area that deserves your support and protection.

Sincerely,

Keith Morlock
13912 E. Lale Mary Jane Road
Orlando, FL 32832
kmm@xmission.com
801-558-9547

From: llbk101@aol.com
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wcicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: April 20 meeting agenda item - Split Oak
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 5:28:02 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Hello,

I am writing today to encourage Florida Communities Trust members to vote against the management plan modification to Split Oak Forest WEA that would put a road through land clearly **designated to be protected for perpetuity**. In addition to the protection already put in place, the voters in Orange County overwhelmingly voted to support keeping the property intact. The Split Oak Charter Amendment should be keeping this property protected from development.

Ramifications of this decision can have an affect on other natural areas in the state. The decision must be made to protect natural areas **already under protection**. If not, how many other protected areas may be destroyed permanently for development? Once a natural area is destroyed, the unique habitat, with its diverse, endemic species, is forever changed.

Again, this modification goes against the original intent for the property, as set up as a mitigation bank decades ago. Home to endangered/threatened, endemic species like the gopher tortoise and scrub jay, the site – **the whole site** – is necessary to support these unique species.

Please do not approve this modification to the property and allow it to continue serving as originally intended – and as 86% of Orange County voters want it to be.

Thank you,
L.Kimble

From: [Rachel Deming](#)
To: [LaSeur, Lois](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Reeves, Linda](#)
Subject: FCT Hearing April 20 - Split Oak proposal
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 6:45:34 PM
Attachments: [RED FCT Split Oak Letter 4.18.22 Final with signature.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I am not sure my previous attempt to send you my letter made it anywhere!

Please distribute the attached letter to the FCT Board for consideration in connection with the Split Oak hearing.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely, Rachel E. Deming

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Rachel Deming <racheledeming@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 18, 2022 at 5:12 PM
Subject: linda.reeves@floridadep.gov; rebecca.wood@floridadep.gov
To: <lois.laseur@floridadep.gov>

Please distribute the attached letter to the FCT Board for consideration in connection with the Split Oak hearing.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely, Rachel E. Deming

Rachel E. Deming
4449 Beach Boulevard
Orlando, FL 32803
racheledeming@gmail.com
April 18, 2022

BY EMAIL

Governing Board
Florida Communities Trust
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000
c/o Lois La Seur, Lois.LaSeur@floridadep.gov

Re: Requests of Orange and Osceola Counties' Request for Modification of Split Oak Forest Agreement

Honorable Board Members:

As a lawyer, law professor and Orange County resident,¹ I oppose this application.

The applicants have presented you with a proposal that asks you to approve changes to the current agreement requiring the Split Oak Forest to be preserved for conservation in perpetuity. Approving this request will require you to make two key determinations: first, whether the proposal falls outside of the constitutional prohibition against disposal of conservation land; and second, whether their proposal can be approved when it does not meet the requirements for an exchange of conservation lands.

The applicants have made your evaluation difficult by calling the transfer of land for a permanent expressway an "easement," to avoid the constitutional prohibition against disposal of conservation lands, and by requesting you to consider this as an application for a linear facility, without consideration of the integrated deal contingency for an exchange of conservation lands. Careful consideration of these two issues requires denial of their application.

Finally, if you decide to proceed with consideration of the proposal, it is clear that the application you received has significant gaps that your staff identified as needing to be resolved before FCT can sign any agreements. The information filling those gaps should be subject to public comment before any final decision is made and therefore any decision at this stage is premature.

Constitutional Prohibition Against Disposal of Conservation Lands

Our state constitution prohibits disposing of conservation land with one narrow exception which no one argues applies here. The words in Article X, Section 18, relevant to this application, are "The fee

¹ I am a member of the Florida, Michigan and New York bars and represented major global corporations for over 25 years. For the past 12 years, I have been a law school professor, first at my alma mater the University of Michigan and since 2013 as a professor of law at the Dwayne O. Andreas School of Law at Barry University in Orlando. This letter is written solely in my personal capacity and does not represent the position of Barry University on this matter.

interest in real property . . . designated for natural resources conservation . . . may be disposed of only if . . . the property is no longer needed for conservation purposes.” The term “disposed of” is not limited to a title transfer; it includes a transfer of control of conservation land.²

The Osceola County resolution approving this request refers to the creation of an “easement” for a 60-acre expressway. The only plausible explanation for calling the transfer an “easement” is to do an end-run around our Constitution.³ This conclusion is further supported by applicants’ failure to make the “easement” document available before both counties voted to make this request and its absence from the material given to FCT staff to review.⁴ There is no basis for finding that the proposed transaction is anything other than a transfer of control of conservation land, and thus prohibited by our Constitution.

The Application Does Not Meet the Exchange of Conservation Land Requirements

Both county resolutions include a contingency for the acquisition of the additional conservation land and the placement of that property into conservation.⁵ Therefore, this is not merely a request for a linear facility; it includes a land exchange. However, the counties are requesting you to overlook the exchange aspect because the Orange County Board of County Commissioners’ resolution approving this scheme did not have the votes needed for a land exchange.⁶ There is no basis for ignoring the land exchange component of this transaction and it should be denied for failure to meet the requirements of FAC 62-818.016.

This proposed land exchange is further impermissible because:

1. The counties are not getting title to the exchange land, therefore not allowed under the regulations.
2. At least some of the property to be transferred is contaminated and the current owners are requiring a release for all current and future claims related to the disclosed area as well as any other contamination found on the property. The known contamination was caused by cattle dips and these former dip sites are known to have excess amounts of arsenic that need to be cleaned up. It is completely wrong to give count contaminated property as having any value for conservation. In fact, that land has a negative value.
3. Some suggestions have been floated that the developers will pay for the management of the land, but these statements are nothing more than suggestions. The transfer documents in the record do not provide for that. As stated above, it is the reverse: whoever ends up

² The term is not defined in the Florida Constitution. Following the interpretation rules established by the Florida Supreme Court, courts look to dictionaries for guidance. Both the standard Merriam-Webster and Black’s Law Dictionaries define “disposal” as a transfer of control. *See Dispose Of*, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://perma.cc/DD5Q-UWZH> (disposal includes transfer of control); *see also Disposition*, Black’s Law Dictionary (10th ed. 2014) (“The act of transferring something to another’s care or possession, esp. by deed or will; the relinquishing of property”).

³ The Florida Department of Transportation’s Design Manual states, “Fee simple is the strongest interest available to the Department and is sought for most permanent highway activities.” FDOT Design Manual, Topic #625-000-002 (Jan. 1, 2022).

⁴ Noted as not yet provided to FCT in the Staff Report.

⁵ Orange County Resolution 2019-M-50 ¶13; Osceola County Resolution 19-203R ¶13.

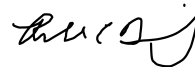
⁶ FAC 62-818.016(2)(a) requires approval by at least ¾ of its members. The Orange County approval was 5-2, which is below the 75% threshold.

with title to this property will incur a significant amount of costs to investigate and remediate the property before it can even be considered for use as conservation land. In fact, some or all of this property currently has entitlements for industrial and commercial use, which indicates that it is not clean enough for residential use.

One final observation: the counties should never have asked this Board to consider their applications when those applications have so many deficiencies of information. The number and importance of items identified by the Staff Report that still need to be brought into the sunshine before a decision can be made are significant and asking you to give an approval on such little information is a disservice to the FCT.

I respectfully request this Board to deny the applications from Orange and Osceola Counties to put a major expressway through Split Oak Forest. Your statutory role is to be the champion of conservation lands; your decision on this proposal will be your legacy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel E. Deming".

Rachel E. Deming

Cc: Wood, Rebecca <Rebecca.Wood@floridadep.gov>
Reeves, Linda <Linda.Reeves@floridadep.gov>

From: [Eugene Stoccardo](#)
To: [Gambineri, Mara](#)
Cc: [Reeves, Linda](#); [Ventry, Rita](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); eric.sutton@myfwc.com; emily.norton@myfwc.com; thomas.eason@myfwc.com
Subject: FCTGB meeting April 20, 2022 - Agenda item 7 VOTE NO - Opposed to Split Oak modification to allow a highway through it!
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 8:50:15 AM
Attachments: [FTC - 2022 April 20 Split Oak Forest.docx](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Thank you for the time to read this letter of opposition.

Sincerely

Eugene Stoccardo

Orlando

Eugene Stoccardo
331 Roswell Ave
Orlando, FL. 32803

Subject: Objection to the Request for Management Plan Modifications Split Oak Forest

To the Members of the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board;

I took the oath of Office when I joined the U.S. Civil service April 10, 1989.

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will **support and defend the Constitution** of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic;” ...

Later 2019 I took the Oath of Office for Florida When I became a member of 2020 Orange County Charter Review Committee.

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, **protect and defend the Constitution** and Government of the **United States** and of the **State of Florida**”.

I say this because as a civil servant at NASA, I served under 6 US presidents - 30 years, Discussions over lunches; what we thought of our duties as officials in service of our country. We all agreed our duty was to **support and defend the Constitution** not the leader at the time.

Why do I bring this up? Simply as members of the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board you took the same oath as myself. I never revoke that responsibility when I retired 2019. I still honor the oath. I know it sounds hokey, but over the history our county 1,300,000+ people have died in wars defending that oath. I take it very seriously! I hope you do to.

You all were appoint by a political official – governor of Florida but you took an oath to support the US and Florida Constitution. Wednesday 20th the board in is considering Agenda item 7: Consider Orange and Osceola Counties Request for Management Plan Modification to Allow for the Construction of a Linear Facility, Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area, FCT Project #91-009-P1A.

This property was purchased with monies from the county, state 1994 for mitigation of Gopher Tortoise and Florida Scrubjay. The land over the last 25+ years has been manager very successfully by FWC, improving habitat for these T&E species, and many other species using land management techniques especially aggressive *burn management* program.

Background; I've had decades of bird/plants surveys thru out Florida private and public agencies. Currently I'm volunteer with Florida Forest Service (FFS), surveying for over 3 year 15-17 Scrubjay territories. Scrubjays are fire depended specie. Historically I've burned my own land

with the help FFS, currently as a volunteer in the SF, I support burns, by observing weather, road conditions. The biggest issue in my private and public burn experiences; is avoidance of impacting roads. If Spilt Oak was to have a “Linear Facility” aka 4-6 lane highway. This will destroy the ability to fire maintenance the habits needed for Florida Scrubjay and Gopher Tortoises.

Article X section 18 clearly states Disposition **of conservation lands**. ... shall be managed for the benefit of the citizens of this state and may be *disposed* of only if the members of the governing board of the entity holding title determine the property is *no longer needed for conservation purposes* and only upon a vote of two-thirds of the governing board.

Members of the board; In NO way is this land ***NOT PERFORMING IT ORIGINAL INTENTION***; as a mitigation land purchase for preservation and expansion of Florida Scrubjay and Groper Tortoise. It’s doing great! A road through it will destroy the reason the land was brought for!

Please vote NO to a road! Support Split Oak to exist as is!

Sincerely

Eugene Stoccardo

PS As a CRC board member I strongly supported Question 2 in the 2020 General election – Charter amendment to protect Split Oak, Orange County voters; Resoundingly passed with 86.4% 503,801 to protect Split Oak! We must respect the will of the people.

From: [Bentley, Terry](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Gaskin, Carla](#)
Subject: FW: Opposed to toll road through Split Oak Forest
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 7:26:45 AM

FYI

From: Cynthia Haller <cyninfl@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 18, 2022 9:45 PM
To: Bentley, Terry <Terry.Bentley@FloridaDEP.gov>; gregory.jones@floridadep.gov; Denys, Deborah <Deborah.Denys@FloridaDEP.gov>; Mingo, Frank <Frank.Mingo@FloridaDEP.gov>; noah.valenstein@floridadep.gov; Reeves, Linda <Linda.Reeves@FloridaDEP.gov>
Subject: Opposed to toll road through Split Oak Forest

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I cannot stress how betrayed I am over learning that Split Oak Forest may be in jeopardy. Please I implore you to not allow a Central FL toll road to destroy any part of Split Oak Forest. This land is protected and supposed to be managed by the FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The endangered FL Scrub Blue Jay exists on this land.

You are employees of the Dept of Environmental Protection. Please protect this forest.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Haller
Advocate for smart development in Seminole County

From: [Skylar Mann](#)
To: [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [District1@ocfl.net](#); [District2@ocfl.net](#); [District3@ocfl.net](#); [District4@ocfl.net](#); [District5@ocfl.net](#); [District6@ocfl.net](#); [Elindblad@sccf.org](#); [Emily.norton@myfwc.gov](#); [Eric.sutton@myfwc.com](#); [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Gregjones@wcicommunities.com](#); [LaSeur, Lois](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); [Mayor@ocfl.net](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Thomas.eason@myfwc.com](#); [heather@rondesantis.com](#); [noahvalenstein@gmail.com](#)
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 11:00:50 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

To whom it may concern,

I would like to state my support for protecting Split Oak Forest. It is so close to my heart and absolutely teeming with wildlife; from gopher tortoises, bobcats, raccoons, deer, armadillos, snakes, rabbits, turkeys, owls, bats, insects, frogs, etc the list goes on! It's one of the few places the animals have left in this area. I am begging you- please do not destroy it. Myself and so many others have such amazing memories here. I have seen first hand all the animals I listed above in this trail and so much more. You're not just demolishing any piece of land. You are destroying a home, a safe haven for all the animals that live there and also a place where people can come to experience nature and better their mental health. You would also be destroying a huge piece of my heart. So I kindly ask that you reconsider.. we can drive around it.

Thank you,
Skylar Mann

From: [Kathy Sessions](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Osceola Parkway Extension
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 8:55:14 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I am writing to encourage you to oppose the Osceola Parkway Extension route through Split Oak Forest. Please keep this promise. We cannot continue to break promises when it comes to preserving wildlife areas in the state of Florida. Bad decisions and greed are ruining our natural resources and killing off species that only exist HERE! Please say no!

Split Oak Forest was used as a wetland mitigation bank, it was protected and restored to give developers the right to destroy habitat and endangered species elsewhere. It has been properly cared for and houses native plant and animal species. **It also is part of a crucial wildlife corridor for the state. How can anyone think of betraying the public trust and starting the ball rolling on what is sure to be a development onslaught of ruinous proportions?**

Development is ruining the state of Florida everywhere I go. It is heartbreaking to see a sea of roofs and solar panels where there were once acres of pastureland dotted with cattle. Huge swaths of trees have been plowed down and burned where there were once cool green spaces that housed all types of birds, animals and plants. My own town (Oviedo) is unrecognizable, and citizens fight tooth and nail to preserve what little rural areas we have left. It's time to turn the tide and protect the spaces that have already been purchased and approved as green spaces. We can't keep changing the rules and chipping away at these spaces. There will be nothing left! Also, the plan that goes through privately owned property in the area is the one desired by the property owners themselves. They also want to preserve the forest and would rather get out than live next to that road and all of the noise and disruption that comes with it.

Just yesterday I saw a report on Channel 9 saying our water resources will be insufficient for the population in 20 years. That's just around the corner and everyone should be concerned about that NOW!

Please vote NO! Please do the right thing and do it for the citizens who live here and want to preserve our natural resources. 86% of Orange county voters voted to preserve Split Oak Forest. How could any committee go ahead and devastate the forest after a vote like that?

Sincerely,
Katherine Sessions
2057 Wembley Place
Oviedo, FL 32765

From: [M & N Panzke](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Planned Routes through Split Oak Forest in Orange County
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 12:24:41 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Ms. Wood,

We're writing because we understand that the voices of more than half a million voters (86% of people who cast a vote) are being ignored. We suppose that the will of 500,000 people don't mean much in a state of 20 million and one would think that the state Constitution would matter, but again, not so much, the Constitution is also being ignored by the county and the state regarding the Split Oak Forest.

As a citizens of Florida and registered and active voters, these actions are troublesome. Local activists tell us that the only option is to ask that you stick to the Minimization Route that was agreed to a few years ago. And so, we're asking for that consideration. Thank you.

Marshall & Nancy Panzke
14419 Bella Lane
Orlando, FL 32832

PS - If you haven't read this, I hope you do: [Orlando Sentinel Editorial - April 17](#)

From: [David Magness](#)
To: [Heather@rondesantis.com](#); [Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov](#); [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); [gregjones@wcicommunities.com](#); [elindblad@sccf.org](#); [noahvalenstein@gmail.com](#); [Eric.sutton@myfwc.com](#); [Thomas.eason@myfwc.com](#); [Emily.norton@myfwc.gov](#); [District1@ocfl.net](#); [District2@ocfl.net](#); [District3@ocfl.net](#); [District4@ocfl.net](#); [District5@ocfl.net](#); [District6@ocfl.net](#); [Mayor@ocfl.net](#)
Subject: Please protect Split Oak Forest
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 7:59:49 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Esteemed officials,

My name is David Magness and I am a family physician in the Orlando area. One of my favorite relaxing hobbies is to go hiking. Having a beautiful natural environment to escape from the stressors of life is something that I recommend to all of my patients. Furthermore, I have two young children that I am trying to teach them about the amazing things one can learn from their natural environment.

Split Oak is the closest natural Florida environment to my house and I am proud that the taxes that I pay in Orange County go to help keep this native land looking beautiful. It is imperative that natural lands stay as they were meant to be and also free and available to the public. With so much necessary development in the area which is good for the economy, it is important that protected lands stay protected for generations to come.

I urge your support of maintaining this land as protected and without any further encroachment.

Thank you,
David Magness, DO, MBA, FACOFP

From: [Sabrina Shear](#)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; [LaSeur, Lois](#); [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); Gregjones@wvicommunities.com; Elinblad@sccf.org; Noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: PROTECT SPLIT OAK
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 11:00:32 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

please please do not tear down Split Oak Forest for another toll road!

Florida is Florida because it remains a sanctuary for nature!

Adding yet another toll road or road in general through such beautiful untouched land would prompt more infrastructure which we do NOT need.

We are moving closer and closer to becoming overly built which will cause Florida to lose its charm.

We don't need to make it easier for all the people moving here from their own failed states.

They're just going to destroy this sanctuary like they did their own!!

PROTECT SPLIT OAK

sincerely,

Sabrina Shear

From: felecia_bryant
To: valerie@friendsofsplitoak.org; Heather@rondesantis.com; [LaSeur, Lois](mailto:LaSeur,Lois); Mingo, Frank; Jones, Greg; Wood, Rebecca; DeHaven, Callie; Denys, Deborah; Gambineri, Mara; gregjones@wccommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: SAVE SPLIT OAK !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 12:14:50 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Attn: Florida Communities Trust

Dear entrusted Voter Representatives,

Split Oak Forest is still under threat despite the Split Oak Charter Amendment passing by 86% in Orange County in November 2020.

The land was meant to be preserved FOREVER and has been voted on to be preserved by current citizens. This land is critical habitat for native wildlife and plants and adds quality of life value to the Central Florida area.

PLEASE PLEASE honor your fiduciary to the VOTERS and stop the CFX's Osceola Parkway Extension from harming Split Oak.

Have a Peaceful Day!

Gratefully,

Felecia Bryant
@felecia_takingroot
941.961.3259
Taking Root Wellness llc

From: m.jane.pollack
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; Lois.laseur@dep.state.fl.gov; [Mingo, Frank](#); [Jones, Greg](#); [Wood, Rebecca](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Denys, Deborah](#); [Gambineri, Mara](#); gregjones@wci.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov; District1@ocfl.net; District2@ocfl.net; District3@ocfl.net; District4@ocfl.net; District5@ocfl.net; District6@ocfl.net; Mayor@ocfl.net
Subject: Save Split Oak Forest
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 1:07:01 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Hello,

My name is Jane and I'm a born and raised Floridian. I'm writing to voice my **opposition to the Osceola Parkway Extension being built through the Split Oak forest.**

Despite the reality of the Split Oak Charter Amendment and the 86% of folks in Orange that voted to further protect Split Oak in face of the threat of the Central Florida Expressway Authority's Osceola Parkway Extension being put through the forest, Orange County (and Osceola, of course) are seeking approval of the road and **ignoring the democratic decisions made by voters. This is an unacceptable breach of democracy.**

We urge the FCT to make the right decision and protect the Split Oak Forest forever.

We cannot afford the loss of this precious ecosystem. The entire state is watching and the public will hold officials accountable to decisions that have already been voted upon. Please make the right decision to protect the precious resource that is Split Oak Forest.

Thank you,
Jane Pollack

From: [Sharon Robbins](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Suzanne Arnold](#); [Bruce Johnson](#)
Subject: SOFWEA
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 9:35:07 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

“SPLIT OAK FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL AREA was set aside specifically for the beleaguered Gopher Tortoise to be preserved in perpetuity. The decision made must be based on what is best for our keystone species. After much consternation, the minimalist route is the best option if the road must be built. History will judge us.”

Sharon Robbins
Lake Mary Jane Alliance Conservation Chair
12636 Lake Mary Jane Road
Orlando, Florida 32832
407-376-4930

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Eugene Kelly](#)
To: [Gambineri, Mara](#)
Cc: [Wood, Rebecca](#); [LaSeur, Lois](#); [GovernorRon.DeSantis@eog.myflorida.com](#); [Eric.Sutton@myfwc.com](#); [DeHaven, Callie](#); [Reeves, Linda](#); ["Bonnie Basham"](#)
Subject: Split Oak Comments Submitted by Florida Native Plant Society
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 8:31:49 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[SplitOakForestComment_ToFCT_FNPS_04182022.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Chair Gambineri:

I am submitting the attached letter on behalf of the President of the Florida Native Plant Society. It represents our concerns regarding a request the FCT Board will review on Wednesday to amend the management plan and grant award agreement for Split Oak. It is our hope that you will deny the request.

Eugene Kelly, Policy and Legislation Chair

Florida Native Plant Society Board of Directors

Visit the Florida Native Plant Society at <https://www.fnps.org/>



Purchase a License Plate voucher: <https://www.fnps.org/support/license>



FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Po Box 278
Melbourne, FL 32902-0278

April 18, 2022

Ms Mara Gambineri, Chair
Florida Communities Trust Governing Board
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 550
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

SUBJECT: Opposition to Proposed Extension of Osceola Parkway Through Split Oak WEA

Dear Ms Gambineri:

The Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) has long been an advocate for the protection of natural spaces through public acquisition and thoughtful long-term stewardship. We recognize it as the single most effective approach for conserving nature and advancing our mission to preserve, conserve and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. As such, we oppose the proposed extension of the Osceola Parkway through the Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area (Split Oak) and ask that you deny the request to modify the current management plan and Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant award agreement in order to accommodate the proposal.

Split Oak is a shining example of the success that can be achieved when a protected natural area has enjoyed expert resource management for 25+ years. The natural values of Split Oak have been well documented and have made it a magnet for public use and enjoyment. Through regular applications of prescribed fire, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has restored or enhanced habitat for a long list of species, including many that are imperiled or declining. The presence of the federally listed scrub-jay, which is confined to mid-successional oak scrub and scrubby flatwoods, is a testament to the success of FWC's management. So is the presence of giant orchid, hooded pitcher plant, many-flowered grass-pink and pine lily. Like the scrub-jay, these state-listed plant species have declined to the point of imperilment due largely to the combination of long-term fire suppression and development pressures that have relegated their upland habitats to the status of "under-represented natural communities" within Florida's network of conservation lands. We must strive to protect more such areas, rather than sacrifice those already protected in the name of accommodating development.

It is widely understood that the presence of nearby highways severely constrains the ability of land managers to use prescribed fire as a management tool. Given the configuration of the property and the heavy concentration of fire-maintained upland habitats, smoke management concerns would preclude continued prescribed burning across the much of Split Oak and result

in profound and permanent impacts to the resident flora and fauna. As such, it is misleading to refer to the Osceola Parkway extension as simply a “linear facility” in this context, as if analogous to a utility line. The impacts of a utility line can be largely confined to the footprint of the facility. The impacts to Split Oak would extend far beyond the estimated 60-acre footprint and erode FWC’s ability to uphold one of the primary objectives of this FCT project – to properly manage Split Oak’s xeric habitats.

It is also disconcerting that as a mitigation bank intended to compensate for development-related impacts, Split Oak could now be subjected to impacts that would necessitate mitigation and compromise the successful mitigation that has already been achieved there. Mitigation to compensate for the environmental impacts of development has been the subject of long and contentious debate. Proponents can point to a handful of examples where it has successfully preserved or restored wetland function and/or habitat values, while opponents can cite many more cases where it has failed. It is a perverse irony that such a shining example of successful mitigation could be compromised to accommodate a highway.

Like FNPS, Floridians have long stood in support of land conservation. That support was expressed clearly in 2014 when 75 percent of voters approved the Water and Land Conservation Amendment, aka Amendment 1, in order to fund such programs as FCT. And again, more specific to the protection of Split Oak, when 86 percent of Orange County voters approved a charter amendment to deny use of Split Oak for the Osceola Parkway Extension. This devout and continuing support could be eroded irreparably if the public officials entrusted with implementing the will of the people instead acquiesce to narrow and short-term interests that view publicly owned conservation land as simply the “path of least resistance” to achieving their ends.

FNPS opposes any route for the Osceola Parkway Extension that would traverse any portion of Split Oak or otherwise limit the future ability of land managers to continue using prescribed fire to maintain the preserve’s natural resources and recreational values. We ask the FCT Governing Board to stand in defense of the resources protected at Split Oak, and to honor the clear direction provided by the people, by denying the request to modify the management plan and grant award agreement for this valuable natural area.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BB', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bonnie Basham, President
Florida Native Plant Society

cc: Governor Ron DeSantis
Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director
Lois LaSeur, Senior Assistant General Counsel
Callie Dehaven, FDEP Division of State Lands
Linda Reeves, FCT Program Manager

From: [Korey Engel](mailto:Korey.Engel@myfwc.com)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; [LaSeur, Lois](mailto:LaSeur,Lois); Mingo, Frank; Jones, Greg; Wood, Rebecca; DeHaven, Callie; Denys, Deborah; Gambineri, Mara; gregjones@wcicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov
Subject: Split Oak Forest
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:30:30 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good evening,

I am writing in the hopes that you will respect the will of Orange County VOTERS, by not allowing our County Commission to override our vote in order to destroy Split Oak Forest by building the CFX extension of the Osceola Parkway in or around this remaining piece of pristine wilderness. In November 2020, in a year where Republican and Democratic voters were bitterly divided, over 80% of voters opted to PROTECT Split Oak Forest from future development in order to protect wildlife species and outdoor recreation opportunities. As someone who has enjoyed the beauty of Split Oak Forest on so many occasions, it is appalling to me that our County Commission would ignore our votes and seek to use the State of Florida to override our voice and allow a construction project to move forward in such an environmentally sensitive area which has been boxed in on all sides by the massive growth of Lake Nona in Orange County, as well as growth in Osceola County.

Thank you,
Korey Engel
1638 Prospect Ave
Orlando, FL 32814

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Korey Engel** <koreypengel@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 18, 2022 at 10:14 PM
Subject: Split Oak Forest
To: <District1@ocfl.net>, <District2@ocfl.net>, <District3@ocfl.net>, <District4@ocfl.net>, <District5@ocfl.net>, <District6@ocfl.net>, <Mayor@ocfl.net>

Mayor Demings and Orange County Commissioners,

My name is Korey Engel, and I reside at 1638 Prospect Ave, Orlando, FL 32814. I am writing to you to express my profound shock and disappointment that the Orange County Commission is seeking to circumvent the will of voters as expressed in the November 2020 charter amendment to protect Split Oak Forest. As you are well aware, that issue passed with well over 80% voting in favor to protect Split Oak Forest. In today's political climate where you could not get 80% of people to agree that the sky is blue, it is appalling that this body would seek to use the state of Florida, via the Florida Communities Trust Board to express support for a toll road (CFX Osceola Parkway extension) to be built in or around this pristine piece of wilderness which provides protection for so many species of threatened wildlife and plantlife, as well as outdoor recreation opportunities for many Orange County citizens and visitors. With the massive growth of Lake Nona pressing up against all sides of Split Oak, it is more important than ever to preserve it rather than opening it up to further development. Orange

County residents and taxpayers deserve real leadership on the issues of transportation, and management of the population growth we are experiencing. Ignoring the will of voters, and destroying our last pieces of natural habitat is not the answer. If you are familiar with historian Robert Caro's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Power Broker*, then you know that for decades, it has been established that you cannot pave your way out of growth and transportation related issues. Taking this path risks destroying neighborhoods, communities, and the environment, while having little to no positive effect on the congestion issue. The citizens and taxpayers of Orange County deserve real, multifaceted solutions to solve our transportation and development problems, that do not sacrifice our last remaining vestiges of natural land.

I would also add that if you are making decisions regarding Split Oak Forest without having ever personally visited, please do so. If you walk away without understanding what your constituents are feeling with regard to the potential loss of this natural treasure, you should reconsider whether you truly have a commitment to public service, or instead are trying to service the needs of developers and corporate interests.

Thank you,
Korey Engel

From: [Korey Engel](mailto:korey.engel@myfwc.com)
To: Heather@rondesantis.com; [LaSeur, Lois](mailto:LaSeur,Lois); Mingo, Frank; Jones, Greg; Wood, Rebecca; DeHaven, Callie; Denys, Deborah; Gambineri, Mara; gregjones@wcicommunities.com; elindblad@sccf.org; noahvalenstein@gmail.com; Eric.sutton@myfwc.com; Thomas.eason@myfwc.com; Emily.norton@myfwc.gov
Subject: Split Oak Forest
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:30:30 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Thank you,
Korey Engel
1638 Prospect Ave
Orlando, FL 32814

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Korey Engel** <koreypengel@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 18, 2022 at 10:14 PM
Subject: Split Oak Forest
To: <District1@ocfl.net>, <District2@ocfl.net>, <District3@ocfl.net>, <District4@ocfl.net>, <District5@ocfl.net>, <District6@ocfl.net>, <Mayor@ocfl.net>

Mayor Demings and Orange County Commissioners,

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County residents and taxpayers deserve real leadership on the issues of transportation, and management of the population growth we are experiencing. Ignoring the will of voters, and destroying our last pieces of natural habitat is not the answer. If you are familiar with historian Robert Caro's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Power Broker*, then you know that for decades, it has been established that you cannot pave your way out of growth and transportation related issues. Taking this path risks destroying neighborhoods, communities, and the environment, while having little to no positive effect on the congestion issue. The citizens and taxpayers of Orange County deserve real, multifaceted solutions to solve our transportation and development problems, that do not sacrifice our last remaining vestiges of natural land.

I would also add that if you are making decisions regarding Split Oak Forest without having ever personally visited, please do so. If you walk away without understanding what your constituents are feeling with regard to the potential loss of this natural treasure, you should reconsider whether you truly have a commitment to public service, or instead are trying to service the needs of developers and corporate interests.

Thank you,
Korey Engel

From: [Robert](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); SuzArnold@mindspring.com
Subject: Split Oak
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 9:36:33 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,
Colleen Bonham
Robert Soucy
14004 Marine Dr
Orland Florida 32832

Sent from my I Phone

Supplemental Support

From: [Andrew Cole](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Letter Submission for FTC Meeting 4/22/2022
Date: Friday, April 15, 2022 3:15:57 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[Oceola Parkway Extension - Florida Communities Trust.pdf](#)
Importance: High

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Rebecca,

I am requesting the attached letter be submitted into the record for the April 22, 2022 Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Meeting. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Andrew Cole
President/CEO



East Orlando Chamber of Commerce
407-277-5951 | Andrew@eocc.org
EOCC Trustees





12301 Lake Underhill Rd., Ste. 245, Orlando, FL 32828 • (P) 407- 277-5951 • www.EOCC.org

April 15, 2022

Florida Communities Trust Governing Board
DEP Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Florida Communities Trust Governing Board:

On behalf of the East Orlando Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to encourage the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support the decisions of the Orange and Osceola Board of County Commissioners to approve the extension of the Osceola Parkway. Our Advocacy Advisory Council and Board of Directors voted overwhelmingly to support the project with the hope that this roadway will extend east to I-95 or an appropriate thoroughfare in the future. This expansion would positively impact the growth of commerce and new residences in Central Florida, affecting our Chamber's region which encompasses over 440 square miles of Orange County.

The Osceola Parkway Extension has been identified as a need in several local, long-range masterplans to help connect residents and visitors in the region and to reduce congestion on existing roadways. This future east-west connection is included in the long-range transportation plan of the Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) and included in the implementation of the Governor's Taskforce's recommendations for East Central Florida.

With the region's continued growth, adding 1,500 people per week, the ability to extend improved mobility is a necessity to reduce increasing congestion on our existing roadways. Developing this east-west route prior to additional development avoids obstacles for a successful multi-modal corridor. The extension to I-95 would provide a connection to the coast creating an additional disaster and hurricane evacuation route and access to more commerce. This extension also offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to designate significant additional land to Split Oak Forest, adding 1,550 acres for preservation and conservation in perpetuity. It creates an expansion of conservation areas 25 times greater than the acreage of the Osceola Parkway Extension's impact of Split Oak Forest. This means significantly more land will be conserved and protected for future generations, including wildlife and native plants.

It is for these reasons; we respectfully ask the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support the approval of the Osceola Parkway Extension by the Orange and Osceola Counties and to carry this crucial transportation project forward.

Thank you for your service and commitment to Florida.

Sincerely,

Andrew Cole
President/CEO
East Orlando Chamber of Commerce

Trustee Members



From: [Manford Judy](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 3:52:55 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,

Manford Judy
14053 Marine Ct
Orlando FL 32832

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Indy Little](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [LMJ Alliance](#); [Dawn Little](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 3:56:43 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,

Paul E. "Indy" Little
13953 Lamont Dr, Orlando, FL 32832

"Indy" Paul Little



Leadership Development Specialist - HR Team
cell = (612) 432-1208

paul.indy.little@cru.org



Qualified Facilitator
Harmony | Analytical | Deliberative | Consistency | Responsibility



Apprentice Facilitator



PI Practitioner

From: [Todd Wilcox](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Leslie O'Shaughnessy \(Leslie@LeslieRules.com\)](#); [Angel de la Portilla](#); [Dana Loncar](#)
Subject: Business Force support of the Osceola Parkway extension.
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 3:05:39 PM
Attachments: [Business Force Osceola Pkwy ltr of support.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Good afternoon Ms. Wood,

My name is Todd Wilcox and I am the Chairman of Business Force, a political action committee representing constituent board members' support for candidate and issue advocacy on behalf of business friendly public policy in Central Florida.

I am writing to encourage the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support Orange and Osceola Counties' decision to approve the Osceola Parkway Extension resulting in 1,550 new acres of conservation land in Split Oak Forest. To that end, please find attached a letter of support from Business Force urging support and approval of the decisions by the Orange and Osceola Board of County Commissioners to approve the extension of the Osceola Parkway.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or feedback.

Best regards,

Todd Wilcox
Chairman
Business Force



April 18, 2022

Florida Communities Trust Governing Board
DEP Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Florida Communities Trust Governing Board:

On behalf of BusinessForce, I am writing to encourage the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support Orange and Osceola Counties' decision to approve the Osceola Parkway Extension resulting in 1,550 new acres of conservation land in Split Oak Forest.

The decision by both County Boards of Commissioners to approve this essential regional roadway in 2019 was a major win for our region following years of extensive public involvement from residents, community groups, local and state officials, and other stakeholders. This approval provides our region with the rare opportunity to create a critical east-west connection prior to development, while enhancing and protecting our natural environment and animal species.

The Osceola Parkway Extension has been planned since 2005 and was identified as a need in several long-range and master plans to help connect residents and visitors in the region and reduce congestion.

Florida continues to lead the nation in growth with Central Florida adding 1,500 people each week. With rapid growth, the ability to improve mobility within the region presents a rare opportunity to establish a critical route before continued development creates obstacles for a successful multi-modal corridor.

This extension also offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to designate significant additional lands to Split Oak Forest for preservation in perpetuity. The added 1,550 acres will create new, contiguous wildlife corridors resulting in a massive regional greenway home to thousands of animal species, protecting vital ecosystems, indigenous and endangered species. There are also dedicated funds to restore and maintain the new conservation lands including improved public access to Split Oak Forest and the Florida Scenic Trail for everyone to enjoy.

It is for these reasons that we respectfully ask the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support the approval of the Osceola Parkway Extension by Orange and Osceola Counties and continue to carry this essential project forward. Thank you for your service and commitment to Florida.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd Wilcox", is written over the word "Signed,". The signature is fluid and cursive, extending to the right.

Todd Wilcox
Chairman
BusinessForce, Central Florida

From: [Mary Loffredo](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); [LMJ Alliance](#)
Subject: SPLIT OAK
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:10:30 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,

LOFFREDO RESIDENCE
12278 GRAY BIRCH CIRCLE
ORLANDO, FL 32832

From: [Nancy Tobin](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 4:35:48 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,
Nancy tobin
13146 Lake Mary Jane Rd

--

Nancy Tobin

A decorative graphic consisting of a horizontal line with a central flourish that resembles a stylized 'N' or a similar character, flanked by wavy lines.

From: [Rachael Kobb](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: FCT Support Letter - Orlando Economic Partnership
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 11:25:37 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[FCT Support Letter Orlando Economic Partnership.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Hi Rebecca,

Please see the letter attached for submission.

Thank you,

Rachael



Rachael Kobb
VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS

M / 610.639.0183

orlando.org

We have moved.

Mailing address | 200 S. Orange Avenue, **Ste. 200**, Orlando, FL 32801
Temp. in-person address | 200 S. Orange Avenue, **Ste. 500**, Orlando, FL 32801

April 18, 2022

Florida Communities Trust Governing Board
DEP Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Board Members,



On behalf of the Orlando Economic Partnership (Partnership), I am writing to encourage the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support Orange and Osceola Counties' decision to approve the Osceola Parkway Extension resulting in 1,550 new acres of conservation land in Split Oak Forest. The Partnership's Orlando Transportation 2030 includes seven recommendations for the region, including to improve east-west connectivity. One of the corridors specifically outline in this recommendation is to connect Orlando International Airport/Lake Nona and Brevard County.

The decision by both County Boards of Commissioners to approve this essential regional roadway in 2019 was a major win for our region following years of extensive public involvement from residents, community groups, local and state officials, and other stakeholders. This approval provides our region with the rare opportunity to create a critical east-west connection prior to development, while enhancing and protecting our natural environment and animal species.

The Osceola Parkway Extension has been planned since 2005 and was identified as a need in several long-range and master plans to help connect residents and visitors in the region and reduce congestion.

Florida continues to lead the nation in growth with Central Florida adding 1,500 people each week. With rapid growth, the ability to improve mobility within the region presents a rare opportunity to establish a critical route before continued development creates obstacles for a successful multi-modal corridor.

This extension also offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to designate significant additional lands to Split Oak Forest for preservation in perpetuity. The added 1,550 acres will create new, contiguous wildlife corridors resulting in a massive regional greenway home to thousands of animal species, protecting vital ecosystems, indigenous and endangered species. There are also dedicated funds to restore and maintain the new conservation lands including improved public access to Split Oak Forest and the Florida Scenic Trail for everyone to enjoy.

It is for these reasons that we respectfully ask the Florida Communities Trust Governing Board Members to support the approval of the Osceola Parkway Extension by Orange and Osceola Counties and continue to carry this essential project forward.

Thank you for your service and commitment to Florida.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Giuliani". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "T" and "G".

Tim Giuliani
President & CEO
Orlando Economic Partnership

From: [Michelle Andrews](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Minimalize route
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 1:30:03 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,

Name Andrew Nicholls

Address 12421 Lake Mary Jane Road, Orlando, Florida. 32832

Regards

Michelle Andrews
Office Manager
ma@orlandospfx.com

Office: (407) 648-1867

Cell: (407) 791-6140

**We have recently moved should you have problems contacting us, please call me on (321)247-5252 and leave a message, I will call you back after close of business.

From: suzarnold@mindspring.com
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Minimization Route - LMJA Details of Support for item 7
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 11:56:22 AM
Attachments: [FTC Letter April 19 2022.pdf](#)
[Corridor map from SOFWEA 2016-2026 LMJA Request.pdf](#)
[LMJA Map of Minimization Route Improvements Dec 17 2019.pdf](#)
Importance: High

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Ms. Wood,

I hope you will include these graphics in the agenda and documents for the board to review. Thank you!

Dear FCT Board,

The Lake Mary Jane Alliance has been involved with the controversial road through Split Oak for years.

Please read the attached letter and graphics from the Lake Mary Jane Alliance stating our support for the minimization route - as long as there are plans to address our **4 remaining concerns**.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Arnold

Lake Mary Jane Alliance

Communications Chairperson

13306 Lake Mary Jane Rd.

Orlando, FL 32832

407-719-6885



April 19, 2022

Dear Florida Community Trust Board Members:

As Communications Chairperson of the Lake Mary Jane Alliance (LMJA), I am writing to support the Minimization Route if a road is going to be put in Split Oak Forest, pending 4 concerns are resolved.

The LMJA is a large and active grassroots group in Southeast Orange County made up of approximately 600 property owners in the neighborhoods of the Lake Mary Jane Rural Settlement, plus hundreds of residents throughout the Lake Nona Communities. Our mission and continuing critical interest is protection of the area's rural lifestyle, the health of our lakes, the viability of our water supplies, the preservation of our wildlife corridors and our still relatively pristine environment, and avoiding any locally caused impacts on the broader Central Florida region. The LMJA formed in 2006 and was successful in finding a win/win solution to stop a development and instead get these 465 acres of environmentally sensitive land purchased for by GREENPlace as part of the wildlife corridor that connects to Moss Park and Split Oak. That land is now known as the Isle of Pines Preserve and could also be impacted by development if surrounding lands are developed instead of buffered with conservation lands.

When anyone mentions putting a road through a conservation area – no one wants to support it. The LMJA has been opposed to this for years demanding what our stickers say, “Don’t Split Split Oak”. This is an incredibly important environmental area created for Gopher Tortoise relocation and home to Scrub Jays along with other important species and plants. Our organization does understand the need for linear usage such as power lines and even an occasional road through large areas of land that must be crossed, but what makes this so controversial is that there are ways to go around this, but it impacts existing communities which we do not agree with. We also understand that the cost is substantially greater (although that is not our concern.)

Unfortunately, we all believe this road is coming, so our efforts have been to lessen the impacts. The original plan by the Osceola Expressway Authority was horrible. It cut the forest in half and was thankfully opposed by Orange County. Our organization has worked with CFX for years to help push the road to the corner of Split Oak to reduce the impacted acreage and increase compensation lands to create more connectivity to existing preservation lands.

The Minimization route that we feel is a win/win solution that was created by representatives from EPD, FWC, Central Florida Sierra Club, Orange Audubon, Friends of Split Oak, Lake Mary Jane Alliance, Orange and Osceola Counties, Tavistock, Deseret and CFX. After months of negotiations, all members of the group except Friends of Split Oak, agreed that this was the best alternative. (The Friends of Split Oak website does not even show this alternative route to their members.) This route has the tightest curve in the lower left corner of Split Oak impacting 160+ acres, but in exchange adds 1550 acres of additional conservation land. These lands include 582 acres that were part of the Osceola NE Sector Plan that will help buffer Split Oak, Moss Park and Isle of Pines Preserves, then it adds another 968 acres to Orange County stopping development of land adjacent to Isle of Pines Preserve and Roberts Island slough. These additional lands are supposed to get significant uplift through restoration and maintenance. The group also worked to move the wells and water treatment plant for the NE Sector Plan off land that is prime Scrub Jay habitat next to Split Oak and Moss Park. **We have 4 remaining concerns that we would ask the FTC to make part of their approvals:**

- 1) Make sure there is a plan for **adequate funding for both restoration of the 1550 acres as well as maintenance funding** for these lands and for Split Oak impacts.
- 2) **Controlled burns must continue.** Split Oak is going to face challenges of controlled burns near the roadway so there will need to be other types of burns and better management of the land that will be impacted near the road.

- 3) **Do not allow this roadway to be widened in the future.** Build only once.
- 4) **Require other lands be donated for significant Wildlife Corridors.** (not tiny strips of land, but real crossings with safe passages that animals of all sizes can use. We need more connectivity to other preservation lands to the north and south. (see attached maps.)

These 4 items were discussed in our group sessions, and generally agreed to, but there have not been definite plans in place – so we want this as a requirement of approval.

If it is decided that a road will be allowed to go through Split Oak, then with the above requests in place, the Lake Mary Jane Alliance supports the Minimization Route.

Sincerely,
Suzanne Arnold
Lake Mary Jane Alliance
Communication Chairperson
13306 Lake Mary Jane Rd
Orlando, FL 32832
407-719-6885



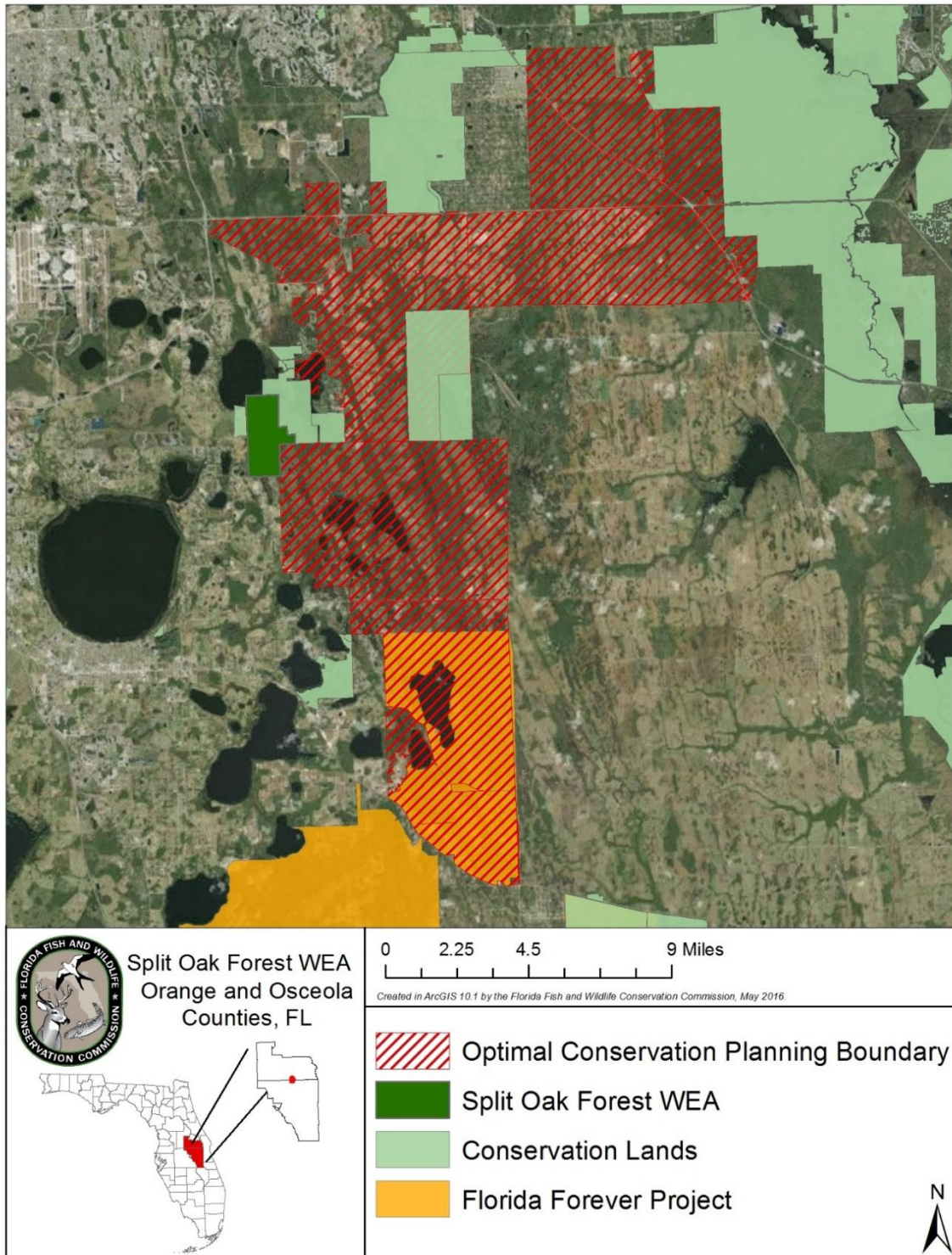
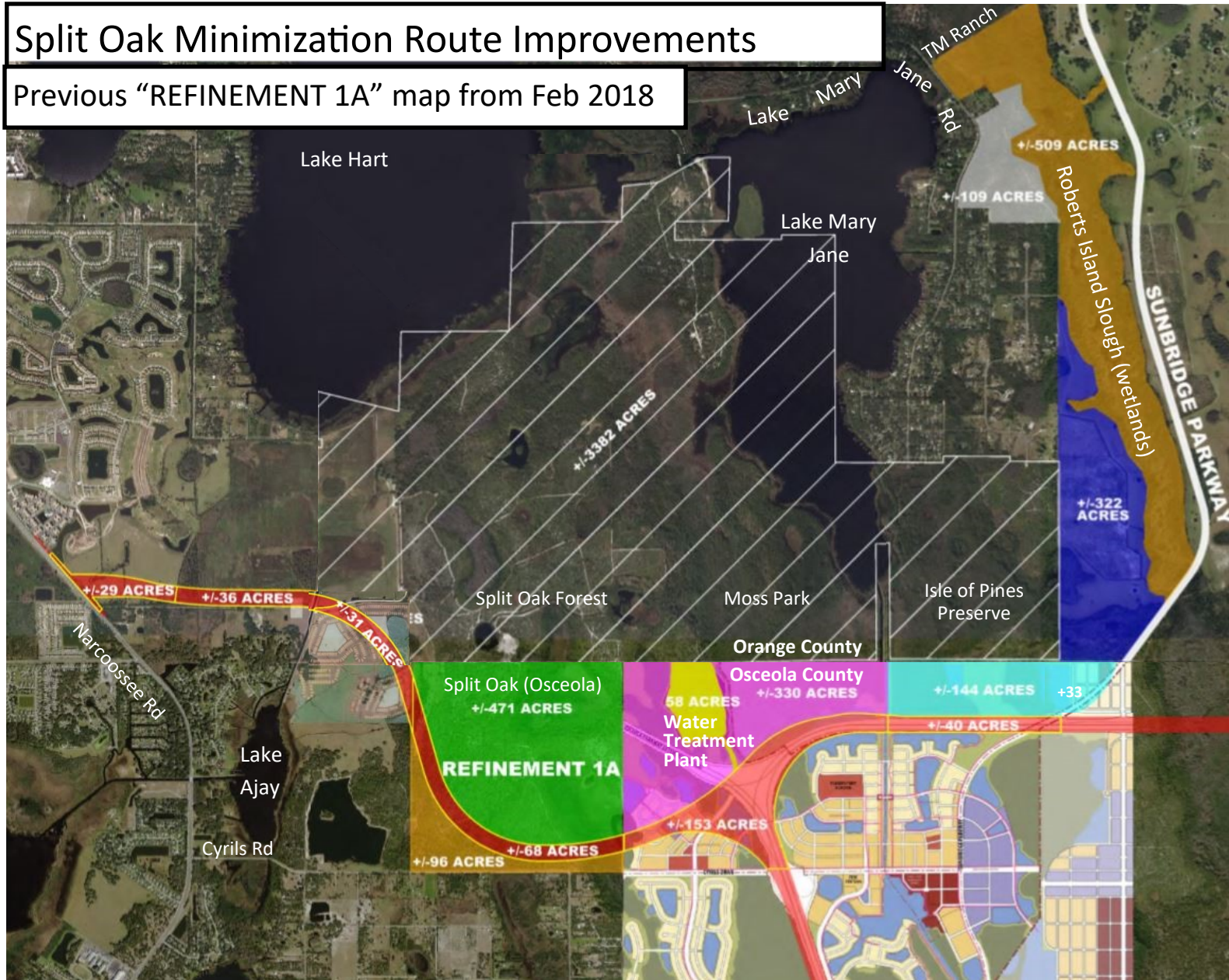


Figure 11. SOFWEA - Optimal Conservation Planning Boundary

Split Oak Minimization Route Improvements

Previous "REFINEMENT 1A" map from Feb 2018



Osceola Pkwy Extension

Split Oak Minimization

Improvements since Feb 2018

- 1) Total Compensation lands up to 1550 acres
- 2) All compensation lands in Osceola and Orange County will be donated or purchased (No Mitigation Credits)
- 3) MOVED Water Treatment Plant and Wells out of conservation compensation land and away from Split Oak! Previously planned on prime Scrub Jay uplands adjacent to Split Oak. (the only confirmed Scrub Jay community in all of Orange and Osceola County.)
- 4) No Eastern extension - only connection to Sunbridge Pkwy
- 5) **After route is approved:** Fully fund Restoration and Maintenance of additional conservation lands.
- 6) **Still working towards:** Significant Wildlife Corridors with uplands & wetlands to connect these additional lands to other nearby conservation areas in Orange and Osceola.

The Lake Mary Jane Alliance has been working on this project for the past 3 years and tries to look at the bigger picture. Although we would prefer NO Road, we feel that is unrealistic. **So if it is determined that the Osceola Parkway Extension will proceed, then the Split Oak Minimization route is best.** This route offers the minimum impact of about 160 acres of Split Oak (60 for the actual road) while avoiding surrounding homes & development. This also adds 1550 acres of land that buffers Split Oak, Moss Park, Isle of Pines Preserve, Roberts Island Slough and multiple communities.

The Alternative route was more expensive, directly impacted several communities, and had no additional buffer/conservation lands. Unless protected, Osceola could go forward with development on the potential buffer lands that were already approved for 337,000 SF of industrial, 27,000 SF of commercial, 573,000 SF of office, and 40,000 SF of civic use.

From: [Shirley A. Munson](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Suzanne Arnold](#)
Subject: Split Oak Minimization Route support
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 5:56:16 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

My husband and I believe the best option, if the road must go through, is the Split Oak Minimization Route.

Thank you for your attention.

We are 30 year residents of Live Oak Estates and we love the rural atmosphere and wildlife in our area.

Shirley and Duane Munson
12041 Gray Birch Circle
Orlando, Florida 32832

From: sutton57@pm.me
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 11:54:45 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I prefer not to have a new road at all and to just send the Yankees clogging our roads back where they came from. But if a road must go through, then the Split Oak Minimization Route is the best option.

Sincerely,
Ron Sutton
Orlando, FL

From: [Andy](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: SuzArnold@mindspring.com
Subject: Split oak minimization route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 7:16:13 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route

Email to: Rebecca.Wood@FloridaDEP.gov

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,

Tanya & Andrew Nicholls

12421 lk Mary Jane rd

Orlando fl

32832

Andy Nicholls

407 421 2168 cell

407 648 1867 office & fax

From: [Robert Hoppenfeld](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); [Suzanne Arnold](#)
Subject: Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 11:48:51 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

While I do not support any road through Split Oak, if a road must go through, then the Split Oak Minimization Route is the best option.

Sincerely,

Robert Hoppenfeld
13608 Lake Mary Jane Rd
Orlando, FL 32832

Re: ITEM 7: Consider Orange and Osceola Counties Request for Management Plan
Modification to Allow for the Construction of a Linear Facility, Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area, FCT Project #91-009-P1A

From: [Bruce Johnson](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Split Oak Preserve
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 7:04:13 PM
Attachments: [FCT Apr 2022.docx](#)

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Please see my letter attached.
Colonel Bruce W. Johnson, USAF Ret
President
The Lake Mary Jane Alliance

Sent from my iPhone



April 18, 2022

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board Members:

As President of the Lake Mary Jane Alliance (LMJA), I am writing to support the Minimization Route for Split Oak Forrest.

The LMJA formed in 2006 and is a large and active grassroots group in Southeast Orange County made up of approximately 600 property owners in the neighborhoods of the Lake Mary Jane Rural Settlement.

Although we have never been a supporter of any road going through conservation lands, we all believe this road is coming. As originally planned – the road cut through the center of Split Oak making it extremely destructive and difficult to proceed with prescribed burns that are critical for the health of the forest. We strongly opposed this and have been heavily involved in the Split Oak negotiation process for many years, and believe we came to an acceptable plan. The original plan has been altered to significantly lower the impacts and a compensation package has been put forth. So if a road must go through Split Oak, the Minimization Route that has the tightest curve in the lower left corner of Split Oak impacting 160+ acres. In exchange this adds 1550 acres of additional and important conservation land that will get significant uplift through restoration and maintenance.

Sincerely,

Bruce Johnson

Bruce Johnson, Colonel USAF Retired
Lake Mary Jane Alliance President
12216 Gray Birch Circle Orlando, FL 32832
407-616-1612

From: [Robert](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#); SuzArnold@mindspring.com
Subject: Split Oak
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 9:36:33 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,
Colleen Bonham
Robert Soucy
14004 Marine Dr
Orland Florida 32832

Sent from my I Phone

From: [Jerry Cuevas](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 6:02:19 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.
Sincerely,

Jerry Cuevas
12973 S Lake Mary Jane rd
Orlando Florida 32832
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Starley Gensman](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 6:52:14 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,
Starley Gensman
14320 Bella Lane
Orlando, FL 32832

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Brian Neeley](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 8:53:29 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,
Brian Neeley
13915 Arbor Glen Ct
Orlando, FL 32832

From: [Cathy QUIMBY](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: suzarnold@mindspring.com
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 6:30:26 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.
Sincerely,

Cathy And Joseph Quimby
13965 Lamont dr
Orlando, FI 32832

From: [Chris Weber](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 6:48:15 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,
I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. After considering all the options, I feel this route is the best choice.

Sincerely,
Chris Weber
14142 Winterset Dr
Orlando, FL 32832

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Pamela Dawes](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Susanne Arnold](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 5:03:26 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

Please support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, this is the best option for preserving the local area.

Sincerely,
Pamela Dawes
13332 Lake Mary Jane Rd
Orlando FL 32832

From: [Robert](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 5:08:59 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then I feel this is the best option.

Sincerely,

Robert Veal
13127 Lake Mary Jane Rd
Orlando, FL 32832

From: [Sherrie Haire](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for Split Oak minimization route
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 12:58:47 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Florida Communities Trust Board,

I support the Split Oak minimization Route, if a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Sincerely,
Sherrie Haire
13119 Devonshire Road
Orlando, Fl. 32832

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Bruce Johnson](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Suzanne Arnold](#); [Sharon Robbins](#)
Subject: Support for the Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 6:45:33 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I support the Split Oak Minimization Route as the only allowable taking of the land, which was to be held in "perpetuity." If the road must thru Split Oak, this is the only acceptable option.

Colonel Bruce W. Johnson, USAF Ret.
President, the Lake Mary Jane Alliance
12216 Gray Birch Circle
Orlando, FL 32832
407-381-9122
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Bob Sayer](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support for the Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 10:24:14 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Dear Rebecca,

We formerly lived in Live Oak Estates and now live in Split Oak Estates. We love the beauty of the Split Oak Forest and want to see as much of it preserved as possible while understanding the need for this road construction project because of the incredible surge of people moving to this area.

While the population continues to grow in the Orlando area and housing and commercial construction is going on all around us, we implore you to save as much green space as possible and to protect the wildlife by approving the Split Oak Minimization Route for this road.

I have two brothers who live in the Fort Lauderdale area, and it's a "concrete jungle" down there - miles and miles and miles of fully developed land with little green space. Please, we do not want to see Orlando end up like that!

Respectfully,

Robert & Deborah Sayer

Sent from my iPhone

From: [sheila wolfson](#)
To: [Wood, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Support Of Split Oak Minimization Route
Date: Monday, April 18, 2022 9:39:32 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

This email originated outside of DEP. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Florida Communities Trust Board

We support the Split Oak Minimization Route. If a road must go through, then this is the best option.

Thank You

Sheila and Al Wolfson

14308 Bella Lane

Orlando FL 32832

Sent from [Outlook](#)