# Environmentally Endangered Lands Program

# Selection and Management Committee Meeting

## March 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes

## Attendance

### SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) MEMBERS

Tamy Dabu, James Burney, Elizabeth Becker, Doug Sphar (Recreation and Education Advisory Committee), Jennifer Thompson, Mark Bush, Mac McLouth (Tourism Development Council Representative), and Oli Johnson.

### ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM STAFF

Mike Knight, Ray Mojica, Steve McGuffey, Evan Hall, Jenny Warner, David DeMeyer, Damien Keene, Brad Manley, and Amy Rivera.

### GUESTS

Ian Eyeington (Florida Inland Navigation District), Freda Posin (Hobe Sound Environmental Consultants) Morgan Chad (Hobe Sound Environmental Consultants), Heather Elko, Catherine Vecchio, Jenna Belamonte, and Monty Montgomery (Procedures Committee).

Protecting and Preserving Biological Diversity

Through Responsible Stewardship of Brevard County’s Natural Resources

## Meeting Minutes

### CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Tamy Dabu called the meeting to order at 9:30.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

## MINUTES

The SMC 2/11/2021 meeting minutes were presented for approval.

### MOTION 1

**Mac McLouth moved to approve the SMC 2/11/2021 minutes as presented.**

**Doug Sphar seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

### ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Mike Knight explained the EEL management plans, the multi-step management plan process including Section 508 compliance, and the internal tracking spread sheet. Doug asked for clarification on 508 compliance and mentioned adding language to Step 14 to indicate Step 15 is not needed if the property is County owned. Liz asked why some of the plans such as Pine Island and Coconut Point are delayed. Mike stated he will speak with staff and provide a summary. David clarified the Sykes Creek Management Plan was sent to the SMC and the next step is the 30-day public review. David confirmed he received comments from Paul Schmalzer. Mike asked about Pine Island. David stated the Pine Island Management Plan is being finalized and is expected to be presented to the SMC in the next month or two; however, it will not be Section 508 compliant.

Mike welcomed the newly appointed SMC members Jim Burney, Jennifer Thompson, and Mark Bush. Mike noted Rio Throm Bonds was appointed as an alternate in the event an SMC Member must step down in the next two years.

Mike explained the 30-Year Report is complete and being reviewed by upper management. He noted the look of the report has changed to make it Section 508 ADA compliant.

### Mike mentioned the EEL Program Treasure Coin Hunt is underway and six of the eight coins have been found. Two coins remain hidden at Grant Flatwoods Sanctuary. Mike shared the next hide locations will be Pine Island and Maritime Hammock. He mentioned the new commemorative coin featuring a scrub-jay has been created and presented one to each committee member.

Mike noted interviews will be conducted next week for the Land Management Specialist for the South Region and the Land Management Tech position for the South Region has been advertised. He added there are two Naturalist positions open in the North and Central Regions.

Lastly, the EEL webpage has been enhanced for Section 508 ADA compliance and for mobile users. Upcoming events such are the Coin Hunt are more clearly visible.

### COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

Doug Sphar mentioned there has not been a REAC meeting since 2020.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

### LAND ACQUISITION REPORT

**Colonial Crossing Donation Request**

Mike summarized the status of the Colonial Crossing Donation. He explained this area was identified by the SMC as a plausible stepping stone for scrub-jays between Dicerandra Scrub Sanctuary, the Titusville Well Field, and Fox Lake. Approximately eighteen months later the owners contacted the EEL program to discuss this donation. The committee discussed the size and characteristics of this parcel. Mike stated this 80-acre parcel is approximately one-quarter scrub. He added this donation requires Brevard County Board of County Commissioners (Board) approval since this parcel is being offered outside of the mitigation process. Mac asked how much management would cost. Mike explained no management is required for this parcel; however, the initial estimate is between $12,000 to $15,000 to restore the scrub habitat. This includes burning, roller chopping, and exotic control. Staff received direction to discontinue moving forward with this donation at this time; however, this parcel is a conservation easement and this donation can be reconsidered at a later time.

### AGENDA ITEM 1

**Committee Responsibilities Overview**

Mike provided an overview of the SMC members responsibilities and their unique duties as outlined in the Board of County Commissioners approved Land Acquisition and Sanctuary Management Manuals. This presentation is available upon request.

### AGENDA ITEM 2

**Species Translocation Request – FIND Gopher Tortoises**

Mike introduced Ian Eyeington the Project Manager for the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND). Ian introduced Freda Posin with Hobe Sound Environmental and explained FIND is seeking permission for Hobe Sound Environmental to perform a carrying capacity analysis to determine the feasibility of a recipient site at the Grant Flatwoods Sanctuary.

Freda Posin provided an overview of the process of determining the population for a long-term recipient site and discussed the benefits of utilizing the 100% survey methodology to determine the current population and carrying capacity verses the 15% survey and extrapolating the data. She noted the data in the presentation is from aerial photography and must be confirmed on the ground. This presentation is available upon request.

Doug Sphar asked how may acres will be surveyed. Ian stated the site is 265 acres. Mike mentioned there is a recipient site in North Buck Lake specifically for tortoises from the Titusville-Cocoa Airport (TICO). He noted this site is low on herbaceous material which indicates the site may not be suitable to maintain herbaceous material.

Mac McLouth inquired about the impact of vegetation on the density of the burrows. Mike stated sunlight is needed for food source. Freda explained 30% ground cover is needed and the canopy has to be fairly open to maintain an adequate food source.

Jim Burney asked about the methodology to determine how many gopher tortoises the parcel can sustain. Freda clarified the vegetation must match Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) requirement. Factors such as desirable soil and vegetation will be input into FFWCC’s formula.

Tamy asked if the study will include current population, mapping, and GIS overlay. Freda responded they will produce maps of exactly what is on the site. Doug Sphar asked the confidence level of the carrying capacity of this site. Mike Knight stated the carrying capacity is unknown and would be determined by this survey. He added this site is being restored, and the tortoises are at the proposed FIND basin site.

Catherine Vecchio asked if the surveyors will look for nests and juvenile tortoises.

Freda stated they do not look for nesting mounds or juveniles; however, when nests are found they are relocated as well.

Mark Bush asked who is responsible for long term monitoring of the site. Mike clarified Brevard County Natural Resources is responsible for monitoring the site and EEL is responsible for management. Ian stated he likes the TICO Airport model and added FIND would provide some funding to help support the management efforts.

Mike asked if the SMC is comfortable with the methodology and want to pursue the carrying capacity study. Jim inquired about the SMC’s responsibility at this point. Mike stated once the results are received, the Committee can review the data and determine if the Program will go forward with this proposal. Jim asked about the cost. Mike clarified there will be no cost for the analysis and the Program will receive some funds for management annually. Jim asked if the site will be FIND specific. Ian confirmed and added ideally this recipient bank will be used for future projects and sites.

### MOTION 2

**Liz Becker motioned to allow Hobe Sound Environmental to perform a 100% survey for gopher tortoises on the 265 acres at the Grant Flatwoods Sanctuary.**

**Mark Bush seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

### AGENDA ITEM 3

**South Beach Region Management Update**

Ray Mojica provided an overview of the South Beach Region and highlighted four sanctuaries and ongoing management such as exotic control and prescribed fires. This presentation is available upon request.

Mark asked if the Program utilizes fire buttons to document the temperature of fires. Ray responded we do not and added this is something we can explore.

Oli inquired about the request to release the rehabilitated orphaned otters. Ray explained the otters were released at the Hub Sea World property because there was not enough time to secure permission to release them on EEL Property. It has been determined, the Program can accommodate this type of request in the future.

Doug asked about drone footage on EEL property and if it could detect canopy density. Ray stated drones are used to monitor oyster beds semi-annually and before and after prescribed fires. Mike added the Program is working on a process to determine pine tree density and identify exotics. Doug asked if there is a commercial application available. Mike responded the Program has a subscription as well as 3 drones and 4 certified pilots. Doug remarked this would be useful for detecting a canopy over urban areas. Ray added this technology is utilized by farmers and the agricultural space.

Mac asked how many acres are included in Hog Point and Hog Point Cove. Ray replied, Hog Point Sanctuary is 20 plus acres and Hog Point Cove Sanctuary is about 20 acres.

Tamy inquired about the oyster netting project. Ray replied he will utilize the drone footage that will be collected next week to determine their progress.

Tamy asked for a status update on exotics and the next management step. Ray responded, staff walks each property several times a year and noted there are big projects which have been managed and the focus is on tracking hotspots. Mike asked Ray to characterize the four sites in terms of overall management goals of the sites. Ray responded all properties are good in terms of exotics and new management grants are expected; however, fire is lacking but is upcoming. Jim asked if the County will match the State grant. Ray stated there is not a match, but the State provides and works with the contractors while the Program oversees the project. Mike added along with the grant the Program has access to the herbicide bank.

### AGENDA ITEM 4

**Recurring meeting date proposal.**

Mark Bush had to leave because of another obligation. Tamy confirmed there is a quorum and noted Lisa Toland is absent because of another obligation. She asked if the SMC would like to establish a recurring date and meet in the morning. The SMC members present discussed and determined the SMC would meet on the 4th Friday of each month at 9:30.

### MOTION 3

**Jennifer Thompson motioned to schedule SMC meeting on the fourth of each month.**

**Liz Becker seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

### NEXT MEETING

June 25th at 9:30.

Tamy asked for public comment and it was noted no hands were raised. She asked about a field trip to the South Beach Region to see the oyster beds. Mike stated staff can poll the SMC for field trip dates. Tamy mentioned the national America the Beautiful campaign and suggested the Program can work collaboratively with this initiative intended to involve locally lead entities in voluntary conservation networks. She stated this may be timely for the 2022 ballot effort. It was noted the national target is to have 30% of land in conservation and Brevard County’s protected lands total 4%.

### MOTION 4

**Jennifer Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Liz Becker seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

### ADJORNED

Meeting adjourned at 12:04.

### ACTION ITEMS

1. Determine Vice-Chair

2. Poll SMC for South Beach field trip

3. Schedule joint meeting