



Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Selection and Management Committee Meeting

July 21, 2023 9:30am-12:30pm. Meeting Minutes FINAL

Attendance

SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) MEMBERS

James Burney, Jennifer Thompson, Doug Sphar Maryann Civil, Lisa Toland, and Jon Shepherd.

SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) EMERITUS MEMBERS

Paul Schmalzer.

ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM STAFF

Mike Knight, Petra Geretz.

GUESTS

Vince Lamb



Protecting and Preserving Biological Diversity
Through Responsible Stewardship of Brevard County's Natural Resources

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Doug Sphar called the meeting to order at 9:44 am.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vince Lamb gave an overview of the informal EEL supporters group activities. The group played a big role of getting the EEL referendum on the ballot and then running the political action committee to let the public know why they should vote for renewal of the EEL Program referendum.

The EEL Program referendum was passed in November 2022 with more than 70% voter support. Vince informed the SMC committee members that although the EEL Program referendum passed with overwhelming public support. EEL supporters must take more actions in order to get the commissioners to implement the referendum. The group had a couple of meetings in the early part of this year to discuss how they might be able to increase support from the commissioners. Vince mentioned the Pine Island stormwater project as an example and partnering with the Water management district to acquire lands that benefit the St. Johns River. Vince mentioned Brevard County wetlands and talked about why he thinks wetlands should be on the list of protected lands and thinks that including wetlands in proposed conservation would help to get the commissioners vote to approve bonding. Jim Burney asked what the SMC members can do for the commissioners to move forward with the bonding? Vince answered that he cannot advise the SMC members and is only here to inform them of the Actions his group is taking. Paul Schmalzer reminded the members that there is lot of land in existing project boundaries, particularly the mega parcel sites that are very important for protecting biodiversity in the Brevard County. Jennifer Thompson asked if commissioners were looking for restoration of the water quality or restoration of the habitat and making sure that the habitat population is safe? Vince answered that both water quality and habitat restoration go together and the properties that the EEL Program would acquire would serve the purpose of protecting the lagoon and supporting biodiversity.



Doug Sphar commented that the committee should be open to both not only habitat restoration properties but also properties around the lagoon. Lisa Toland commented that the major public support of the EEL Program bond referendum is not enough to get the bonding, therefore she thinks it's a good idea to investigate partnering with St. John River Water District which could be beneficial for the EEL Program.

Maryann Civil suggested that EEL Program should have a list of potential lands and then go to the commissioners for vote. Mike mentioned that we do have a matrix of potential lands in place. Paul Schmalzer commented that what we found with the 2000 referendum was that if the commission didn't assess the maximum millage that was permitted under the referendum, then it created an underfunding for the EEL Program because it was impossible to raise the millage after that. He concluded if the commission is not going to approve the maximum bonding, then the EEL Program is going to be stuck in continual state of underfunding the program.

Maryann Civil asked if it would be appropriate to write something in some public publication like Florida Today to inform the public about the referendum? She added that the public voted to approve it in overwhelming numbers, and they might think it is done but they might not understand that the bonding needs to be approved by the board of commissioners.

MINUTES

The SMC April 21, 2023, minutes were presented for any additional comments or input from the members. There were no additional comments or input, therefore the minutes will be presented at the next meeting for the final approval.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Mike informed the committee members that at the April 21st SMC meeting, staff was requested to prepare a list of bullet points related to EEL funding and bonding that could be used by committee members who initiate discussions with commissioners. Mike said the staff is not able to prepare this document but is happy to answer any questions committee members may have related to these topics.

Mike mentioned that there was a bond validation hearing and on May 31st, 2023, a Final Judgement was issued regarding the validation of the EEL bond referendum. The judgement found that the referendum and related bonding was approved in compliance with the law. The referendum was advertised through multiple public channels and was publicly available and in substantial compliance with the law requirements.

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Mike mentioned that the staff evaluated the potential for shorebird nesting locations on the EEL Program managed lands. However, the program does not have large open areas that are suitable for shorebird nesting beyond what already exists on the beach dunes. Some locations along fire control lines may be suitable for nesting but most EEL managed lands are heavily vegetated. Three Least Terns were recently seen at Jordan Scrub, but it is unlikely that adequate nesting habitat exists at this site.

Mike gave an update on Cruickshank Scrub Jay translocation. He mentioned 15 birds (four families) were moved in February from the Cruickshank Sanctuary in Rockledge to the Grant/Valkaria scrub area. At least six birds from this group have migrated to Jordan Scrub and Micco Scrub and have formed three new breeding pairs.

Mike also gave an update on Malabar Scrub restoration. Mike mentioned that on May 1st the County Commission and the Malabar Town Council held a joint public conflict resolution meeting related to the Malabar Scrub Restoration plan. At the meeting Mike provided a presentation to review the trail relocation proposal and included more details regarding the locations of trees along the site perimeter that were not planned for removal. The Town Council agreed to end its opposition to the restoration work on the condition that the site would be immediately opened back up for public use. The Town also agreed to waive any requirements for permits and tree removal fees to the County. The barricades were removed by EEL staff following the meeting resolution and an Interlocal Agreement has been executed by each party to memorialize the resolution of the conflict. Restoration work has started and is expected to take 6-12 months to complete all aspects of the work.

COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

Doug Sphar informed the committee of an upcoming REAC committee and is looking forward to the meeting.

LAND ACQUISITION REPORT

Mike talked about potential mitigation with Valkaria Airport. It is about 53 acres, and it would be a beneficial addition to the program. As of right now there are only preliminary discussions. Maryann Civil asked if the Valkaria Airport is owned by the County? Mike answered it is but there are some easements by FAA and there would have to be permission to move the land into conservation by the FAA.



AGENDA ITEM 1

Mike Knight gave a presentation related to concerns expressed by the Save Our Lagoon Committee regarding glyphosate impacts to the Indian River Lagoon. Mike expressed concerns that any potential ban on the use of glyphosate would have extensive negative repercussions on the Program's management of exotic species in both upland and wetland communities.

NEXT MEETING

September 6, 2023, at 9:30 am

ADJOURNED

Doug Sphar adjourned the meeting at 12:15 pm.

ACTION ITEMS

None