



Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Selection and Management Committee Meeting

January 17, 2024, FINAL Meeting Minutes

Attendance

SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) MEMBERS

Doug Sphar (Recreation and Education Advisory Committee), Jim Burney, Liz Becker, Jennifer Thompson, Maryann Civil, Jon Shepherd, Lisa Toland, Jim Swann, and Mark Bush (Zoom) Paul Schmalzer (emeritus member)

ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM STAFF

Mike Knight, Petra Geretz, David DeMeyer, Evan Hall

GUESTS

Vince Lamb, Catherine Vecchio, Dr. Breininger,

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

EEL Program Selection and Management Committee Meeting

January 17, 2024

Approved by SMC on January 15, 2025

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Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Doug Sphar called the meeting to order at 9:34am.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vince Lamb informed the members about an important commission meeting scheduled for February 6th at 5 p.m., where discussions will revolve around conservation land purchases and bond issuance. The presentation, made by Mike under the guidance of the county manager, presents three main options, with Option 3 being the highest at 21 million in bonding for land acquisition. Advocacy efforts for the EEL program are underway, including planned meetings with commissioners to discuss their views and preferences. Vince Lamb anticipates constructive discussions about the benefits of purchasing conservation land, including environmental, community, and economic advantages. Guidelines for respectful participation and diverse perspectives are encouraged, as we eagerly anticipate positive outcomes from this long-awaited opportunity.

Catherine Vecchio expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address the committee, focusing on the upcoming shorebird nesting season. She highlighted Brevard County's ranking in rooftop nesting and advocated for creating migratory nesting areas within local properties. She mentioned the potential revenue opportunity from the birding festival in Merritt Island and inquired about plans for the Thousand Islands, known for nesting spots. She also emphasized the need to protect species like least terns and black skimmers and expressed concern about limited local resources.

Mike Knight provided an update on his efforts to contact the coordinator of the Shorebird Alliance through FWCC.

MINUTES

The SMC October 18, 2023, minutes were presented for approval. The minutes were approved.

MOTION 1

James Burney moved to approve.
Doug Sphar seconded the motion.
Motion carried unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW



Thousand Island Festival

Mike informed the committee that EEL is currently coordinating with the Friends of the Thousand Islands for the Thousand Islands Festival happening on Saturday, March 16th, 2024. This event aims to generate interest in the Thousand Islands area and increase membership in the Friends of Thousand Islands group. EEL participation will involve setting up a booth and a presentation to discuss the EEL Program.

EEL Financial Condition Assessment

Mike mentioned that the County auditor is performing a Financial Condition Assessment on the EEL program at the request of the County Manager. Mike anticipates the final report will be available for discussion at the County Commission meeting on February 6, 2024, when the board discusses EEL Program funding. The discussion revolved around a recently received draft report from auditors, which assessed the program's financial condition. It highlighted the critical need for funding and indicated a projected one-year cash reserve. The EEL program has been conservative in spending, leading to significant cash reserves. However, there's concern about the reserve being depleted by January 2025. The possibility of bonding was discussed. The conversation also touched on upcoming budget cycles, the 20-year referendum cycle, and potential actions by the board to address funding gaps. Additionally, discussions about land acquisition strategies and potential partners like the Conservation Fund were mentioned.

COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

None

AGENDA ITEM 1

County Commission Meeting on EEL Funding

Mike presented an in-depth preview of the upcoming presentation for the County Commission meeting on February 6, 2024. The discussion delved into strategic preparations, particularly focusing on the intricate aspects of land acquisition and program management priorities.

Collaborations with renowned organizations like the Nature Conservancy were also discussed, highlighting the collaborative efforts necessary for successful land acquisition endeavors.



A notable topic of discussion revolved around the absence of a comprehensive plan for wetlands, raising concerns about the potential risks of prioritizing wetland protection without a clear strategic roadmap. The committee discussed the potential implications of prioritization decisions on ecosystem types like scrub habitats.

A significant portion of the dialogue was dedicated to refining the criteria used for identifying and prioritizing acquisitions, particularly concerning wetland and upland out parcels. The committee emphasized the need for clarity and precision in these criteria to ensure transparent and consistent decision-making processes.

Suggestions were made to incorporate referendum history into the presentation, underscoring the importance of historical context in framing discussions.

The committee expressed discomfort with potential shifts in priorities, stressing the importance of flexibility in program framing to avoid discrepancies in messaging to voters.

Committee members emphasized the significance of including land acquisition in bonding options as per voter priorities outlined in previous referendums. The financial intricacies of bonding amounts were thoroughly dissected, with considerations given to historical funding approaches and the challenges of replenishing funds if initial bonding amounts proved insufficient.

MOTION 2

Jennifer Thompson made a motion that the committee recommends the board's minimum support level to approve a bond encompassing option one, two, and three, including operational cost considerations and bonding options.

Maryann Civil second the motion.

Motion passed 8:1

AGENDA ITEM 2

Scrub Jay Translocation Request

A translocation request was discussed, aiming to move Scrub Jays from the Helen and Allan Cruickshank Sanctuary in Rockledge to Malabar Scrub. This request follows a successful translocation conducted approximately a year ago, relocating Jays from Cruickshank to the Grant-Valkaria site. The previous translocation resulted in a notable success, with several Jays becoming breeders at various locations. Due to an overpopulation issue at Cruickshank, the proposal suggests moving a group to Malabar, where optimal habitat and small family groups are present. The potential for success is based on previous positive outcomes at similar sites. Dr. Breigninger was expected to present this proposal but was unable to attend the meeting.



MOTION 2

Lisa Toland made a motion for the approval of the application with two minor amendments. The proposed dates for translocation will be changed from February to December 2023, reflecting 2024, and the date of the SMC meeting will be corrected to reflect a vote of January 17 for the translocation request instead of January 20. I move for approval with these modifications.

Jennifer Thompson seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

April 17, 2024, at 9:30 AM

ADJORNED

SMC meeting adjourned at 11:46 AM

Liz motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The second was not discernable from the recording.

Motion carried.

ACTION ITEMS

None