



# Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Selection and Management Committee Meeting

July 17, 2024, FINAL Meeting Minutes

## Attendance

### SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) MEMBERS

Jason Miller, Lisa Toland, Maryann Civil, Curt Smith, Rick Follet, James Burney, Liz Becker, Paul Schmalzer (Emeritus member), Kim Zarillo

### ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM STAFF

Mike Knight

### GUESTS

Catherine Vecchio

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

EEL Program Selection and Management Committee Meeting

July 17, 2024

Approved by SMC on January 15, 2025

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## Meeting Minutes

### CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Jason Miller called the meeting to order at 9:38am.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

### MINUTES

None to approve. The April 17, 2024 Joint Meeting minutes will be presented at the next meeting.

### ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

#### **EEL Administrative Secretary**

Mike informed the committee that Petra resigned, and a new person will hopefully be hired shortly.

#### **Proposed lands benefit to the Indian River Lagoon and St. Johns River**

Mike said the County Commission has requested staff to bring back to the Board a methodology for determining how each property that is proposed for acquisition benefits the Indian River Lagoon and/or St. Johns River. Mike said he has been working with the Natural Resources Management Office to come up with a logical way to evaluate this in addition to the normal evaluation process. We anticipate the process would not change. A landowner application would still come before the SMC to determine its priority. If the parcel ended up under contract and the SMC approved it moving forward to the Board for consideration, it would include some sort of determination of benefit to these two waterways.

#### **EEL Acquisition Funding**

Mike informed the members that the Board has approved bonding for 6.2 million, 3 million for land acquisition and 3.2 million for public use improvements to existing sites and capital equipment. Mike said we can't really move forward on the acquisition side until we know whether or not we are still going to continue our partnership with the state of Florida to get matching funds from Florida forever. We have always been under the assumption that that's what we're going to do, because most of our sites are in Florida forever projects, but I've been asked to go back to the board and confirm that is what they want to do. We already have permission from the board to do an RFP for an acquisition contractor, to do the acquisition work like we always have but we need to know what we're putting in the required qualifications section such as whether or not



someone has to have background experience dealing with the state on matching funds through Florida forever. The agenda item will be asking for two things 1. Direction on the matching funding, and 2. Acceptance of our procedure for determining waterway benefit for parcels proposed for acquisition.

#### MOTION 1

**Lisa Toland moved to approve that the committee endorses continuing to work with the State Florida Forever Program for matching acquisition funding.**

**Maryanne Civil seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

#### COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

None

#### AGENDA ITEM 1

##### **Shorebird Nesting**

Mike stated this has been sort of hanging out there for a while. Catherine came to us back some time ago. We had a conversation about converting scrub habitat for shorebird nesting, and then it evolved into a discussion about 1000 Islands because we had some language in the 1000 Islands management plan when it was first developed that said some of the islands might be appropriate for shorebird nesting. So, we wanted to give this a fair shake and take a step back, despite everything that's happened at the 1000 Islands as far as restoration and see if this makes sense in any way. So, my approach to this was to reach out to FWCC and we toured the islands with them. We now have their input and we have put together a presentation.

Mike reviewed the multi-phase restoration of the islands that was required under the management plan and the significant amount of time and financial resources it took to complete the work which needs to be taken into consideration if any plan is proposed to undo the work, remove replanted vegetation, and revise the goals for the islands.

One of the concerns expressed by FWCC is the existing mangrove perimeter of the island which would have to be maintained at a lower height or it would likely limit the space available for nesting since the birds prefer to nest in the open and not near higher trees or vegetation. This would be an expensive ongoing maintenance cost and would require permitting. Predators such as racoons and crows would also be a likely problem that would be very difficult to control. The loss of nesting locations largely stems from



the recent loss of gravel rooftops on larger commercial buildings that have transitioned to vinyl roof systems.

If the program decided to pursue clearing the restored area for nesting, it would likely require a significant public process and management plan revision that would get complicated and likely contentious due to the long history related to approving the current restoration plan. Any consideration of pursuing the idea would require significant stakeholder involvement.

Some concerns were expressed by members related to the use of herbicides to control vegetation and the potential for secondary impacts on seagrass in the adjacent waterways around the islands.

Mike said the estimated initial restoration costs would likely be between \$40,000 and \$50,000 with an ongoing annual maintenance cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Prior to implementing a plan for this, it would be important to determine if the city would be a willing partner with some of the islands they manage north of Minuteman Causeway.

Discussion continued regarding how many acres are required to support a certain number of nests. Mike said staff could look into this question in more detail. The idea of exploring raised nesting platforms was suggested and Mike said staff could explore that idea as well.

## **MOTION 2**

**Lisa Toland made a motion to have staff do additional research on the options, costs, etc. and coordinate with the Shorebird Alliance to see if they can host a stakeholder meeting that includes the city to better gauge the level of interest in the idea. Staff can bring back the results at a future meeting for the committee to consider.**

**Jim Burney seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 2**

**Renaming of the Barrier Island Sanctuary**



Mike stated the friends of Archie Carr Refuge approached EEL about renaming the Barrier Island Sanctuary after Doc Earhart. A new exhibit was recently installed at the Barrier Island Center that tells Doc's story and about the sea turtle research in this area. The proposal is to rename the Sanctuary property only and not change the name of the center. Staff is supportive of the idea due to the fact that Doc was involved with the program for many years and was also the most recent caretaker of the Maritime Hammock Sanctuary.

The county process for naming a property after a person involves it first being reviewed by the appropriate advisory committee and then moving that recommendation to the County Commission for final approval.

The committee discussed Doc's contributions to sea turtle research and the creation of the Archie Carr Wildlife Refuge and the related costs associated with changing the name of the property. Mike noted that the sign needs to be replaced anyway so no significant additional cost would be incurred. Brochures would be revised when the current supply runs out.

### **MOTION 3**

**Jim Burney made a motion to support the renaming of the Barrier Island Sanctuary.**

**Curt Smith seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

### **AGENDA ITEM 3**

#### **Waterway net positive benefit analysis**

Mike stated that at a recent county commission meeting, Commissioner Tobia proposed that if lands are going to come back to the board for consideration, they need to be able to know, how is it that that particular property is going to benefit the lagoon or the St John's River. Commissioner Tobia felt the Save Our lagoon program does a good job in evaluating projects based on nitrogen and phosphorus removal from the lagoon, so he thought using some similar kind of metric would be good. As a result of that comment, staff was directed to come back to the Board with a methodology for consideration. Mike said he has had several meetings with the Natural Resources Management Office to talk about what might be a good approach here and what data is already out there and available to us. Those discussions have resulted in the documents you have today titled EEL Net Positive Benefit Property Analysis Draft, and Environmentally



Endangered Lands SWIL and Future Land Use Analysis. This methodology seems to be the most logical way to evaluate the net positive benefit.

The methodology looks at an existing piece of land in its current undeveloped state and says that this much nitrogen and phosphorus is offloaded from that property in its current state to the lagoon annually. The same property is then compared in its developed state, according to the parcel's current future land use designation. This comparison will show the increase of nitrogen and phosphorus offloaded to the Indian River if the property was to become developed based on its current land use designation.

This information would be included in the EEL Conservation Value Matrix that the committee uses to determine acquisition priorities and general conservation value scoring. It is assumed that the acquisition process would remain the same with this just being an additional piece of information for the Board to consider when they are reviewing any sales contract that comes before them for approval.

Mike stated that he has sent the draft documents to the Parks Director for review but has not yet received any input. The goal today is for the committee to see the documents and offer any additional input they feel is necessary. A formal approval by the committee is not needed at this time.

Mike was asked if a formal determination had been made by the Board that the 3 million for land acquisition had to be exclusively used for wetland properties. Mike said he was not aware that determination had been made and that it was his understanding that upland parcels were in play since most were out parcels in existing lands and that upland parcels in most cases would show a greater benefit to the lagoon than wetland parcels.

The committee felt the methodology, at least conceptually, seemed to make sense. Staff will update the committee on what happens next.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

October 16, 2024, at 9:30 AM

#### **ADJORNED**

**SMC meeting adjourned at 12:30 PM**