# Environmentally Endangered Lands ProgramSelection and Management Committee Meeting

## February 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes

## Attendance

### SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) MEMBERS

Tamy Dabu, Jim Burney, Mac McLouth (Tourism Development Council) (TDC), Dr. Mark Bush, Doug Sphar (Recreation and Education Advisory Committee) (REAC), Oli Johnson, Jennifer Thompson, and Kim Zarillo.

### SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) EMERITUS MEMBERS

Dr. Paul Schmalzer and Dr. Tammy Foster attended via Zoom.

### ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM STAFF

Mike Knight and Steve McGuffey attended in-person. Evan Hall, David DeMeyer, Damien Keene, Ray Mojica, Jenny Warner, Nick Eder, and Amy Rivera participated via Zoom.

### GUESTS

Ginger Twigg, Matthew Stinnett, Monty Montgomery (Procedures Committee) (PC), and Drew Thompson attended in-person. A call-in listener, Jason Strobel, jchrulski, Jennifer Hubbard, Maria, Mark Britt, Kristin Lortie, Michael Blinne, Rick Follett (REAC) (PC), Tara Gabor, John Smith, Kay St. Onge, and Richard Kohler participated via Zoom.

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 9:33 a.m.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None

## MINUTES

The SMC January 20, 2022 meeting minutes were presented for approval.
Oli Johnson stated defuse should replace diffuse on page 4, second full paragraph, line 6.

### MOTION 1

**Jennifer Thompson moved to accept the minutes as corrected.**

**Oli Johnson seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

### ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Mike Knight provided an overview of the poll sponsored by the Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition. Jennifer Thompson asked how many people were polled? Mike responded, he asked that question and is waiting for an answer. Jim Burney commented the Nature Conservancy is expected to conduct a poll also. Mike replied he is going to discuss that later in the meeting.

Mike mentioned the Board’s Budget Workshop was held on Thursday, February 17th and the EEL Program gave a short presentation. He added the 30-Year Anniversary Report was available; however, it was not distributed. He added it appears as though four Commissioners are supportive of putting this on the ballot. Mike noted it is important to the Board to determine if there is support for both acquisition and management or just management.

Kim inquired about funding for education. Mike outlined various funding scenarios from a referendum. Dr. Bush suggested the Program determine the cost of management and determine what is left. He suggested explaining to the Board what the Program can do without any additional costs. He explained rates are lowered as property values rise and because of that we do not have enough revenue now with the current rate for long term management. Doug inquired if a hard millage can be used instead of a maximum millage. Mike responded that is being discussed. He added if property values remain high that’s fine; however, if there is a downtrend in the market it becomes a problem.

Dr. Bush commented there seems to be some opposition to acquisition. Mike added the real challenge is the multiple tiny parcels to fill the gaps to make management less expensive and more efficient. Doug mentioned taking these off of the tax rolls. Mike responded that is an insignificant tax revenue for development. Kim remarked the cost of something once it is developed in terms of cost for maintenance of infrastructure and transportation far outweighs on residential, but not commercial or industrial.

Jim Burney asked the EEL contingency plan for revenue and the fallback plan for management. Mike responded there are five scenarios presented to the Board: ballot, ballot with bonds, Parks and Recreation budget, General Fund, or to do nothing. Jim Burney asked about selling land. Mike explained if land is sold, the proceeds must be used for other acquisitions. Doug asked for a rough ratio of how much land is State owned. Mike responded it is a majority. Mike quoted acreage from the presentation presented to the Board. Monty asked if Mike can explain what do not explore future funding means. Mike replied, do nothing and let the Program sunset which he does not feel is an option because of legal obligations.

Mike mentioned Commissioner Tobia commented he is not continuing to advocate to discontinue the SMC. Mike added it is unfortunate Florida Today reported the way they did. Twelve Advisory Committees including the SMC remain on the Commissioner’s spreadsheet, but he made it clear that those twelve were not under consideration any longer. Doug mentioned cost. Kim stated the cost and value associated with professional consultants. Mike agreed. Doug mentioned the amount of time he invests in reviewing management plans.

Jim asked for clarification on the mechanism for the SMC to provide advice to the Board. Mike responded generally the motions made in these meeting for topics that require Board direction. Alternately, a letter may be sent as determined by the SMC.

### COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

Doug noted there has not been a REAC meeting.

### AGENDA ITEM 1

North Region Management Update

Damien provided an update on the North Region including Scottsmoor Flatwoods Sanctuary, North Buck Lake Scrub Sanctuary, Indian River Sanctuary, Indian Mound Station Sanctuary, and South Lake Conservation Area.

Dr. Schmalzer expressed a concern if the TICO Gopher Tortoise recipient site is maintained at less than 30% herbaceous cover, this may make the site not suitable for Scrub-jays. Committee members discussed the TICO Gopher Tortoise recipient site, exotic plants, various exotic plant remedies, feral hogs, strategies to control them, and the cattle lease. Oli commented this is a nice presentation and several others agreed. This presentation is available upon request.

### AGENDA ITEM 2

Malabar Scrub Trail Relocation

Mike provided an update on the status of the Restoration Project at Malabar Scrub Sanctuary (MSS) and outlined the proposed trail relocation. Mike acknowledged Matthew Stinnett and thanked him and the Town of Malabar staff for their cooperation in navigating through this process. Mike mentioned the large number of persons who are disregarding the signs and trespassing in the Malabar Scrub Sanctuary. Mike recognized Jason Stroble and the Brevard Mountain Biking Association (BMBA) for encouraging their members to respect the closure. Steve McGuffey shared some images captured from wildlife cameras that demonstrates vandalism and trespassing. The committee discussed usage, safety, the duration of this closing, and closing the site during previous restoration projects.

Drew Thompson mentioned the Trails and Greenways Committee is planning to build a bypass in Cameron Preserve making this into a circular trail that is completely in the preserve. He added this change will increase safety and allow users a shorter trail that can be utilized for a shorter run or while MSS is closed for restoration. Drew mentioned the impact on persons who cycle to work and asked if there could be an exception for this type of transit. Mike responded, he does not know the answer to that.

Ginger Twigg asked who made the decision to put the fences up. Mike responded the County Commission. She mentioned a trail that was closed by the Commission about a year ago without informing the public. She noted that fence was taken down. She asked what the logic was behind that. Mike responded, he can’t speak to that.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennifer Hubbard stated she greatly appreciates and respects the work the EEL Program has done and continues to do in Brevard County. She shared her concerns including if the restoration does not result in suitable habitat for scrub-jays, impacts to other species, the 1,000-foot barrier, and other negative impacts on residents and visitors. Mike responded we have to work with the varying habitats in MSS. Since there is not a 1,000-foot buffer in MSS we have to maximize all of the habitat we can; however, this is not an argument to do less. He added this restoration is designed to benefit all scrub species.

Mark Britt mentioned the property that is by Country Cove will not be considered for a compromise because of past circumstances. He suggested not dismissing this compromise because of this history. Mike responded this same debate occurred in 2014 and allowed a 25-foot buffer along Malabar West with the understanding if the scrub-jays responded to this restoration we would have to come back an remove the trees. Mike noted the jays have responded and it is time for the Program to come in and remove this curtain. Mike added the potential to save scrub-jays is driving this and we cannot compromise the science for a specific user group or activity type.

Jason Stroble commented the BMBA is trying to keep users out of MSS while the sanctuary is closed; however, he is hoping some sections of MSS can reopen since some trails are not in the area to be restored. He referenced the Population Viability Analysis (PVA) and the 70 percent metric. Jason added if this metric is observed, there is plenty of room for compromise. He noted even if all of the MSS and surrounding areas are 100 percent prime habitat the scrub-jay population will still decline to extinction. He mentioned this restoration will turn the trails into deep sand and make them useless for users. Mike responded, once the permit issue is resolved we will have a better understanding of when MSS will reopen. Mike added we have the best experts in this discipline and are following their lead. He hopes to minimize the deep sand issue; however, deep sand is critical for these species.

Drew Thompson stated they took a look at the various criteria and have an issue with the 1,000-foot buffer. He is advocating to achieve the 70 percent criteria mentioned in the PVA and save trees along the periphery. He added the plan is to have less trees in the middle and retain trees around the border. Mike responded, in order to achieve the 70 percent criteria a much larger landscape is needed since scrub is a dynamic community which grows and needs to be knocked back at regular intervals. To hope to achieve the 70 percent criteria, the Program must manage 100 percent of the available scrub to balance controlled burns and other management activities.

Monty Montgomery commented on the letter sent from the County Attorneys Office to the State and his understanding of the County’s responsibility to adhere to local ordinances. Monty described the habitat he observed at MSS, the barricades, and his belief a majority of the people observe the closure. He added the restoration needs to be done. Mike responded this action was taken because the County believes their rights are being violated by preventing this restoration. He hopes he is granted permission to begin working with Matthew Stinnett towards a resolution.

Matthew Stinnett noted Drew represented the concerns and compromise part of it. He added Mike provided a lot of information regarding if the compromise fits into the science or not.

Mark Britt shared he runs daily and has only seen one person jump the fence. He added putting up these fences is not making the County any friends. Mike agreed.

### MOTION 2

**Mac motioned to approve this trail relocation plan presented today for Malabar Scrub Sanctuary.**

**Doug seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried.**

### NEXT MEETING

March 18, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

### MOTION 3

**Doug moved to adjourn this meeting.**

**Mac seconded this motion.**

**Motion carried.**

### ADJORNED

Meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.