



Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Selection and Management Committee Meeting

October 18, 2023, Meeting Minutes Final

Attendance

SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT (SMC) MEMBERS

Jason Miller, Kim Zarillo, Maryann Civil, Jennifer Thompson, Doug Sphar Jon Shepherd, Liz Becker, Lisa Toland, Jim Swann, Jim Burney, Paul Schmalzer (Emeritus Member)

ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM STAFF

Mike Knight, Petra Geretz.

GUESTS

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

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Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Jason Miller called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MINUTES

None

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Mike Knight mentioned the issue of state reimbursements for land acquisitions. The Nature Conservancy was the contractor for land acquisition until 2011, and after 2007, Florida Forever funding decreased. The committee had acquired lands, expecting reimbursement from the state. However, recent communication with the state revealed a change in policy, stating that past acquisitions are no longer eligible for reimbursement. The committee discussed whether to pursue this matter further or seek the advice of the county attorney. Some members expressed concern about potential consequences, both politically and in future land acquisitions.

A question was asked about the status of the bonding. Mike said there have been discussions about a potential BOCC workshop, and a meeting with the county manager is scheduled for the 26th to further discuss the idea.

Mike Knight gave a Malabar Scrub restoration update. The Malabar scrub project has made significant progress, particularly on the Malabar East site. Mike said he will give more details during the Malabar management plan discussion, accompanied by a map illustrating the status. The project has faced challenges with heavy equipment issues. Despite these challenges, there has been rapid progress made on the project. The upcoming spring growth season was highlighted, emphasizing the need for timely recovery efforts.

Mike Knight noted a vacancy on the SMC due to prolonged absence by Mac McLouth, resulting in a replacement. Mike plans to initiate an agenda item for the board's consideration, outlining the recruitment and appointment process to fill the vacancy. Clarification was sought on whether the absent members participating via phone are considered present. While acknowledged as present, a quorum of in-person members is a requirement to carry out any business.

Mike Knight also advised new committee members to check their emails for correspondence from James Shives regarding access to the EEL Mapper. Assistance is



available from James or the Mike Knight in case of any access issues due to being outside the county network.

COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

Doug Sphar mentioned the Recreation Education Advisory Committee is considering a shift in meeting scheduling to specific dates, canceling if unnecessary, aiming to address challenges with daytime meetings.

LAND ACQUISITION REPORT

Mike Knight talked about the Parish Property in Titusville. This property is being offered for sale and is within the Florida Forever Blueway project. The St. Johns River Water Management District is interested in acquiring it, with the condition that the EEL program becomes the primary manager. The committee has historic authority from the BOCC to manage this property if acquired. The potential involvement of the Save our Lagoon program for stormwater purposes was discussed, and the committee is open to managing the property. The overall acreage is approximately 16-18 acres, with the main hammock area being around 12-13 acres. The management cost to the county, excluding stormwater considerations, is expected to be minimal. The committee discussed the potential cleanup and stormwater use for a portion of the property. Questions were raised about soil composition, historical heavy metal issues, and the possibility of public use, such as a boardwalk. The committee was informed but not required to provide an opinion at this stage.

AGENDA ITEM 1

Malabar Scrub Conservation Area Management Plan

Mike reviewed the management plan development process, emphasizing the 16-step procedure for creating or updating plans. The focus was on state-owned lands, specifically the Malabar Scrub Sanctuary and Jordan Scrub, whose plans were overdue for updates. Due to a conflict with Malabar Scrub, the process was delayed, but now they are combining plans into one for the Malabar Scrub Conservation Area.

Geographical details of the Malabar Scrub area, Jordan Scrub, and related parcels were presented. Discussions about the Cameron Preserve, electric vehicles on trails, and updates on management plans for Malabar East and West and Jordan Scrub were covered.

Significant attention was given to the scrub jay habitat restoration efforts, and potential territory expansions. The committee discussed trail modifications, enforcement of motorized vehicle prohibitions, and challenges posed by faster e-bikes on trails.



Updates on restoration work, eagle nest management, and observations of increased bird species in Jordan Scrub were shared.

Maps and burn plans for Malabar and Jordan were discussed, including changes in burn units. The presentation concluded with an overview of modifications to the plans, the consolidation of the Malabar and Jordan management plans, trail alignments, rule clarifications, and updates on land acquisitions.

Overall, the program aims to streamline the management plans, address ecological concerns, and communicate effectively with stakeholders.

During the discussion, Lisa Toland mentioned she received positive feedback on the committee's work, with praise for the phenomenal job done. A suggestion was made to consider changing the holistic name of the plan from "Malabar Scrub" to something like "South Brevard Scrub" to better reflect the region it covers.

Mike Knight expressed openness to the suggestion, mentioning their initial plan to combine it into the "South Coastal Scrub Plan." However, since the current plans were due for updates, they decided to merge them. Mike emphasized that they are not fixed on the name and are open to alternative ideas. He encouraged further comments and feedback from the committee.

No additional comments or questions were raised during the discussion, and the timeline for the distribution of the updated plan to committee members was estimated to be around 3 to 4 months.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Thousand Island Shorebird habitat

The discussion focused on the potential conversion of certain lands into shorebird nesting habitat in the Thousand Islands area. The committee revisited the Thousand Islands management plan, which mentioned the possibility of suitable shorebird nesting sites with selective restoration. The discussion highlighted the challenges, including the historic spoil on the islands and the presence of mangroves.

Mike Knight presented historical images of North Crawford Island, showcasing changes after the removal of Australian pine trees. Concerns were raised about potential conflicts and the need to restrict public access during nesting seasons. Mike emphasized the need for expert input from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to evaluate the suitability of these sites for shorebirds.

Different areas, including West Crawford Island, North Crawford, South Crawford, and the ramp road parcel, were discussed in terms of their current vegetation and potential

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as shorebird habitats. Mike acknowledged the challenges of maintaining open areas for nesting and expressed the need for ongoing management efforts, potentially involving herbicide use.

Mike Knight raised questions about the adaptability of shorebirds to interior island habitats and mentioned ongoing efforts to gather expert opinions. The committee also explored the possibility of utilizing sites already used for spoil deposition for shorebird habitat creation.

Members discussed potential conflicts, including the impact on existing habitats, community expectations, and the need for ongoing maintenance. The committee expressed interest in considering other county-owned sites, like the landfill, for potential shorebird habitat creation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

NEXT MEETING

January 17, 2024, 9:30am – 11:30am

ADJOURNED

Jason Miller asked if there is a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:10am.

MOTION 1

Doug Sphar moved to adjourn the meeting.

Jon Shepherd second the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.