



**ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS PROGRAM**  
**Capron Ridge Sanctuary**  
**Public Access Plan Review Public Meeting**  
**February 4, 2009**  
**Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Brad Manley, EEL Program Volunteer and Public Access Coordinator welcomed the group at 6:05 PM.

**PRESENTATION:**

**Brad gave a brief overview presentation regarding the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program:**

- Established in 1990 by Brevard County voter approved Public Referendum.
- Continued in 2004 by Brevard County voter approval of a second Referendum.
- Mission Statement: *Protecting and Preserving Biodiversity Through Responsible Stewardship of Brevard County's Natural Resources.*
- Willing-Seller Program
  - Property can only be purchased from people who want to sell their land.
  - The EEL Program does not control or restrict private land rights; or condemn land.
- Approximately 23,000 acres in conservation within the EEL Program.
- Land is frequently acquired with funding partners. This increases funding capacity.
- Some of the EEL Program land management tools include: prescribed fire, control of invasive exotic species, and native plantings.
- Prescribed fire maintains the health of upland habitats and their species. It also reduces the danger of wildfires.
- The EEL Program provides access to the sanctuary network through passive recreation opportunities including: hiking, nature observation, fishing, biking, canoeing and kayaking, and picnic areas. A few of these activities are more appropriate for some sanctuaries than they are for others.
- The current EEL Program brochure advertises recreational opportunities at 12 of the EEL Program's Sanctuaries.
- The Capron Ridge Sanctuary will provide some public access, but is generally expected to be visited mainly by nearby property owners.

**Scott Taylor, Land Manager for the EEL Program's Central Region provided information on the proposed public access plan:**

- This sanctuary is located in Viera, approximately 1 mile west of US1, just south of the Viera Florida Scrub-Jay Mitigation Tract.
- The Sanctuary consists of two tracts, which total approximately 20 acres.

- The area is part of a landscape that was formerly a large, open, scrub area and it will be managed as scrub habitat in order to provide appropriate landscape for the Florida Scrub-Jays (Federally listed as Threatened), gopher tortoises (State listed as Threatened), and Scrub Lizards, all of which have been documented on site.
- It is hoped that this Sanctuary's proximity to other lands under conservation will assist its ability to function as a healthy scrub habitat.
- Two State-listed plants are present on-site, nodding pinweed and large-flowered rosemary.
- The sanctuary is within an urban area, which makes land management somewhat more challenging. As a result, the removal of some of the overgrown vegetation may be achieved with mechanical vegetation reduction, prior to the implementation of prescribed fire.
- Funding to assist with the management of the property was received by the EEL Program, as part of the requirements of the donation.
- Management Needs
  - Optimal scrub habitat contains few larger oak and pine trees and includes open sandy areas.
  - Prescribed fire planned for 6 - 12 year intervals.
  - North parcel burned in October of 2006.
  - South parcel currently needs management, including vegetation reduction and prescribed fire.
  - Removal of trash and invasive, exotic species will also be part of the land management process.
  - There has been very little vandalism on this site.
- Public Access Plan
  - One hiking trail, approximately one-half mile long and based on an existing pathway created by previous ATV use.
  - Pedestrian walkway – no bikes or motorized vehicles.
  - Hikers will be permitted on fire breaks.
  - Information kiosk.
  - Minimal Trail signage.
  - No plans for on site parking.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- A question was received as to whether or not the EEL Program might be able to purchase the undeveloped land near the Capron Ridge Sanctuary.
 

Clarification was provided that the entire general area had been considered for acquisition in the past, without success, but that there has been a shift in priorities towards the few large remaining tracts of land with the highest overall conservation value.
- A question was received related to the possible posting of information that Florida Scrub-Jay feeding is illegal.
 

Consideration will be given to including information on Scrub-Jays in the kiosk.

- A question was received regarding possible negative impacts from public access by citizens outside the general area.  
Clarification was provided that if a sanctuary neighbor has a concern of this nature, they should contact the EEL Program.
- Additional information was requested regarding the ownership of the property along Holiday Springs Blvd. and the overlook that is located near a small depression marsh.  
Clarification was provided that this is not EEL Program property. Staff will research this item.
- A question was received regarding whether or not a resident should do any trimming if they felt sanctuary habitat was encroaching on their property.  
Clarification was provided that if a resident felt that the sanctuary habitat was encroaching on their property, they should contact the EEL Program so staff can evaluate and take appropriate action.
- A question was received regarding management of the Viera Conservation area.  
Clarification was provided that it is possible that the Viera Conservation area was currently managed by the Viera CDD, but that it was possible that the land might be donated to the EEL Program.
- A question was received regarding whether the EEL Program should accept management responsibility for land that is already covered with a conservation easement.  
Clarification was provided that the EEL Program's Selection and Management Committee, which is made up of experts in the field of conservation, have indicated they felt that the EEL Program was equipped to manage the land with greater emphasis on protection of the scrub habitat. Additional clarification was provided that the property in the Viera CDD was also previously considered appropriate for acquisition by the SMC early in the Program's history, but acquisition had not been successful, so even if the EEL Program was accepting the responsibility for managing the land, it was land that the Program had been highly interested in acquiring previously, and if it was donated, at least the Program had not needed to expend acquisition funds to acquire it.
- A question was received regarding whether or not a resident could step off the trail to pick up trash within Sanctuary boundaries.  
Clarification was provided that help with trash pick up is greatly appreciated. Staff requested that citizens should stay on the trails as much as possible. If citizens should notice large amount of trash, they should contact the EEL Program for assistance.
- A request for clarification was received regarding whom citizens should contact if they felt that a wild animal on this sanctuary could be considered a nuisance.  
Staff explained that in this case citizens either contact either the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or the EEL Program.

Brad thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their interest in the Capron Ridge Sanctuary.

**ADJOURNED:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM.