



**ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM
SELECTION & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SMC)
PROCEDURES COMMITTEE (PC)**

**May 28, 2009
Attendance List**

SELECTION & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dave Breininger
Ross Hinkle
Paul Schmalzer
Kim Zarillo

PROCEDURES COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rocky Randels
Diane Stees
Amy Tidd
Kim Zarillo

EEL PROGRAM STAFF

Jenny Ashbury
Sandy Carnival
Laura Clark
Xavier De Seguin des Hons
Mike Knight
Brad Manley
Ray Mojica
Katrina Morrell
Chris O'Hara
Dean Vanderbleek

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Keith Fountain
Anne Mayer

GUESTS

Jack Lembeck, Brevard County Historical Commission, Friends of Ulumay
Vince Lamb, citizen
Owen Hugnes, citizen
Susan Gosselin, Brevard County Natural Resources Management Office

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

*May 28, 2009
Approved January 8, 2010*



**ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM
SELECTION & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SMC)
PROCEDURES COMMITTEE (PC)**

**May 28, 2009
Meeting Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER:

Rocky Randels, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:12 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

MINUTES:

The February 27, 2008 minutes were presented for approval. Rocky asked for comments to the draft February minutes. Clarification was provided that no other SMC/PC meeting minutes are incomplete.

Paul Schmalzer stated that he thought it would be beneficial to insert commas after the words "Report", and "meeting" in the second paragraph of the information on the first page relating to his comments on the draft annual report.

Rocky asked if there were any other comments or questions. No additional comments or questions were received.

MOTION ONE:

Ross Hinkle moved to approve the February 27, 2008 minutes as amended.

Amy Tidd seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

ELECTIONS OF OFFICERS – PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Additional Discussion

It was noted that Priscilla Griffith, Diane Stees, Kim Zarillo, and Rocky Randels have served on the Procedures Committee since it was established.

EEL PROGRAM REPORTS

Procedures Committee Overview, Rocky Randels, Chair

The Procedures Committee, established in 1989, was the first EEL Program Citizen Advisory Committee. They studied the Volusia County Land Acquisition Plan for the purchase of environmentally endangered lands and wrote a version for Brevard County. The original Land Acquisition Manual (LAM) was approved by the Board of County Commissioners in 1990. The manual received 2 revisions in 1997 and was reprinted in May 1997. There was also a small revision to the manual in January of 2006 regarding general information updates and minor changes to the appraisal process.

Rocky mentioned that Mike would be providing additional information later in the meeting regarding a request from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to clarify the LAM's documentation for the sale of land as a result of the recent sale of the TICO Sanctuary 52 acres property.

Ross Hinkle, SMC Chairman, commented that the sale of the TICO property was done under friendly circumstances with a primary purpose of enhancing conservation. He stated that the purpose of the LAM was to establish a mechanism where lands are recommended for acquisition by the SMC, based on

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science, and then the Board has the authority to approve or deny a recommended purchase. He added that if there were any changes to the LAM with regard to sale of property, it was his opinion that any consideration of land sale should be tied to the same decision process.

Paul Schmalzer stated that the language may not be as explicit as it is with acquisition, but there is language in the LAM at this time which covers the sale of land, and it notes the requirement for SMC recommendation before land can be sold.

Ross stated he agreed, he just wanted to be sure it was kept that way.

Clarification was provided that any significant change to the Land Acquisition Manual will require approval from the Procedures Committee, and the Selection and Management Committee. before being submitted to the Board for final approval.

Selection & Management Committee Overview, Dr. Ross Hinkle, Chair

Ross explained Ron Hight has retired from the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and that he has also resigned from the Selection and Management Committee. A letter from the SMC is being prepared thanking Ron for his service on the Committee.

Staff will be submitting an Agenda Report to the Board in the near future to request permission to advertise the opening on the SMC. Clarification was provided that qualifications for SMC committee members are outlined in the LAM.

Ross also stated he wanted to thank The Nature Conservancy for their successful completion of several large acquisitions recently and he indicated his feeling that without the specific expertise of the TNC group, the acquisitions would not have been possible. He stated that he felt, from a conservation perspective, this year the EEL Program has made some of the most important acquisitions in the history of the Program. He stated that the reason the SMC volunteer with the Program is because of the importance of the Program's mission, and he stated that the EEL Program has become a model for the State and across the Country.

Acquisition Report, The Nature Conservancy

Keith Fountain from The Nature Conservancy reviewed TNC's report for October 1, 2007 – September 20, 2008 (FY 07/08). He mentioned that folks should feel free to ask if there were any questions during the presentation. Highlights of the presentation include:

- Overview
 - Thirteen tracts either appraised or actively negotiated
 - Contracts signed for ten tracts containing 4,512 acres
 - One contract not exercised (inholding in Malabar, back in negotiations)
 - Nine transactions closed, for a total of 4, 511 acres protected
- Closings
 - Sykes Creek/Johnson – 99 acres
 - NIRL/ Gaizo – 19 acres
 - Rockledge/Schopke-Barge – 12 acres
 - Road frontage addition to Helen and Allan Cruickshank Sanctuary
 - Grissom/Veronica Estates – 206 acres
 - Fox Lake/Hunter's Brooke – 2,358 acres
 - Largest acquisition (acres) in EEL Program history
 - Purchased at significant discount
 - Negotiated donation and development rights restriction on neighboring property
 - Boyd & DiChristopher – 295 acres
 - 2 of the largest remaining Sykes Creek in-holdings south of SR 528
 - Ag Ventures/Scottsmoor Partners – 1,522 acres

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- Approved PUD
- County received \$1 million grant as part of this acquisition
- TNC acquired 129 acres for \$1.94 million and donated the property to the EEL Program
- This acquisition is important as part of the St. Johns River to Indian River Lagoon corridor.
- Megaparcels Projects
 - Thirty acres either acquired or under contract
 - Contracts for the purchase of six acres
 - Thirteen transactions closed, for a total of twenty-four acres acquired
 - South Megaparcels % Acquired
 - Ten Mile Ridge – 34%
 - South Babcock – 50%
 - Micco Expansion - 60%
 - Val/Micco – 31%
 - Valkaria – 57%
 - Grissom Parkway Megaparcels – 48% of site acquired
- Challenges
 - Limited EEL Program funds
 - Authority for additional \$15 million
 - Creation of additional EEL Program procedures
 - Florida Forever Program funding uncertainty
 - Brevard Coastal Scrub Ecosystem – not a “Super 21” project

Additional Discussion

Ross commented that the Ag Ventures/Scottsmoor acquisitions had been extremely complicated. He said that at one time there had been a lot of discussion in the County about why we stood behind The Nature Conservancy as a contractor to do land purchases, but that it would have been very difficult to complete this kind of a purchase without the specific expertise held by TNC. He also spoke of the coordination of the USFWS grant, and TNC’s donation of 129 acres of property as part of this acquisition.

Keith stated that there had been a great team effort between TNC and EEL Program staff during the last year’s acquisition efforts.

Dave Breininger mentioned that it was important to thank the members of the public who have supported the Program in many ways, including attendance at BOCC meetings in support of acquisitions.

Clarification was provided that partnership funding has not been available from the State. During a recent re-evaluation of the State’s funding priorities, the Brevard Coastal Scrub Ecosystem was not included in the “Top 21”, but the North Indian River Lagoon was included in the “Top 21” group. The “Top 21” group is considered to be the highest priority projects from the State’s “A” list, but it is an unofficial ranking. The Brevard Coastal Scrub Ecosystem currently has an “A” ranking.

Amy Tidd requested clarification on the possibility of bonding the remaining \$15 million from the second referendum.

Mike explained that it has been pursued in the past, without success.

Amy asked if it could be pursued again.

Staff will provide additional information on the possibility of bonding the remaining amount from the second referendum in the future.

Clarification was provided that the Florida Forever Program is not funded for the upcoming fiscal year.

Paul commented that the Program has started to look for additional partnership funding, as in the NOAA Funded CELP Grant Program, and he mentioned the recent \$900,000 partnership with the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station for scrub acquisitions which meet the requirements of both the EEL Program and the Air Force mitigation guidelines.

Clarification was provided that it will be difficult to manage properties in the Megaparcels area until boundaries can be rounded out, and that this process will be more challenging as a result of the cutback in available partnership funding from the State. State guidelines regarding possible exchange of parcels have not yet been clarified.

Chris O'Hara explained that the Florida Division of Forestry and Brevard County Fire and Rescue staff have approached the EEL Program regarding possible assistance in doing prescribed fires in the Megaparcels area.

Paul commented that prescribed burning was a lot more cost effective than fighting wildfires.

EEL Program Annual Report, Mike Knight

Mike Knight, EEL Program Manager, provided information on the EEL Program's history and events from Fiscal Year 2007-2008.

- EEL Program formed by citizen approval of ad valorem tax referendums
 - 1990: Up to \$55 million, 20 years, sunsets in 2011
 - 2004: Up to \$60 million, 20 years, sunsets in 2025
- Mission: *"Protecting and preserving biological diversity through responsible stewardship of Brevard County's Natural Resources"*
- Acquisition FY 07/08
 - 4,667 acres acquired through purchase, or donation
 - \$4,085,614 in acquisition partnership funding / acquisition grants
- Management FY 07/08
 - Mother's Day fires
 - Management Plans
 - EEL Program fire lines reach 81 miles
 - Completion of 5,000 acre Gopher tortoise burrow survey
 - 9,778 EEL Program staff land management hours
 - \$479,454 grant funds
- Passive Recreation and Education FY 07/08
 - 43,000 Visitors
 - 3 miles of new trails, total now approaching 40 miles throughout Sanctuary network
 - Barrier Island Sanctuary Management and Education Center Grand Opening
 - First Summer Camp
 - Pine Island Conservation Area Management and Education Center Underway
 - Sams House Phase 2
- Administrative FY 07/08
 - Audit close out relative to Clerk's concerns
 - EEL Program requested independent audit of Clerk's concerns. The audit is currently closed.
 - Revision to Brevard County AO-37
 - Time tracking and management cost data are now being collected
- Financial Overview
- Upcoming Committee Tasks
 - Land Acquisition Manual – Review of Land Sale Procedures

Additional Discussion

Mike stated staff was open to feedback on the Annual Report if anyone had questions or comments.

Staff Reports

Education Report

Katrina Morrell, Education Coordinator, provided an overview of information from FY 07-08. Highlights include:

- Attendance
 - Barrier Island Center Grand Opening, May 10, 2008: 700 attendees
 - Outreach Overview
 - Center Walk-ins: 18,598
 - Center Program: 2,237
 - Guided Hikes: 420 people
 - Study Trips: 2,691 people
 - Tours: 680
 - Training: 164
 - Room Use: 285
 - Non-Center Programs: 1,463
 - Non-Center Festivals: 16,082
 - Turtle Walks-BIC: 692
 - Summer Camps-BIC: 42
 - Cart Tours-EF: 47
- Barrier Island Sanctuary, Pine Island Sanctuary, Enchanted Forest Sanctuary Brochures
- EEL Program now in charge of EEL Web Site
- Interpretation
 - North Region Interpretive Plan
 - South Beaches Trail Signs
 - Katrina is now a Certified Interpretive Planner.

Additional Discussion

Ross stated he thought the EEL Program's presentation should be delivered to the new School Board members, and the Economic Development folks, because when businesses are looking for places to relocate, they look for that type of information.

Amy mentioned that students who were working on Bright Futures Scholarships would make good volunteers.

Katrina thanked Ross and Amy for their information, and she also explained that the EEL Program is working with the School District on a 5-year service learning grant proposal.

North Region

Xavier De Seguin des Hons, North Region Land Manager provided an overview of recent events in his area including:

- Enchanted Forest Sanctuary (EFS)
 - New boundary fences and fire lines (total acres now 462)
 - Removal of invasive, exotic plant and animal species
 - New hands-on exhibits
 - EFS map update
 - New curricula implemented and guides trained
 - Nature Stories

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- Volunteer Interpretive Program
- Outreach Programs and Newsletters
- Birding hikes, butterfly survey
- Enchanted Forest is now part of the Great Florida Birding Trail
- Earth Day, Forest Festival
- Trash removal (1.6 tons)
- Map update
- Dicerandra Scrub Sanctuary
 - Prescribed Fire
 - Removal of invasive, exotic plant species
 - Florida Scrub-Jays banded
- South Lake Conservation Area
 - Parking lot installed
 - Timbering, mechanical reduction of fuel loads, and fire line installation completed
 - Prescribed fire
 - Florida Scrub-Jay Translocation and Monitoring
 - Curtis's Milkweed and Large-Flower Rosemary monitoring
 - Trash removal (7 tons)
- North Buck Lake Sanctuary (NBLSS)
 - NBLSS west fuel load reduced using US Fish and Wildlife Service grant funding
 - Timbering completed
 - Plant and Bird Survey completed
 - Illegal access and hunting continues, but law enforcement activity has been beneficial in reducing these activities.
 - Management Plan in Public Review phase
- Indian Mound Station Sanctuary
 - Land clearing permit secured
 - Management plan draft in progress
 - Indian Mound Restoration plan – Tom Penders assisting
 - Mechanical reduction of fuel loads ready to start
 - Fencing has reduced the amount of illegal ATV activity
 - Efforts to protect the Mound continue
 - Trash removal (1 ton)
- Fox Lake Sanctuary
 - Interim Management Plan approved by SMC. Working on Management Plan.
 - Wildfire/Prescribed Fire
 - Land clearing permit secured
 - Scrub-Jays banded
 - *Lygodium* (invasive exotic plant) free Sanctuary
- Indian River Sanctuary
 - Interim Management Plan approved by SMC
 - US Fish and Wildlife Service grant secured to help with restoration
 - It is anticipated mitigation funding will also be used to help with restoration costs
- Scottsmoor Property
 - Interim Management Plan in draft status
 - Land Clearing Permit
 - 2.5 miles of Fireline Installed
 - Prescribed Fire
 - Fence Repairs
 - Invasive exotic plant and animal removal

- Scrub-Jay monitoring
- Trash removal (5 tons)

Additional Discussion

Paul commented that the transformation at the South Lake Conservation area was dramatic.

Dave Breininger stated that the first translocation effort for Florida Scrub-Jays in Brevard County was done at the South Lake Conservation Area and one of the reasons it has been successful is because of the great effort by Xavier and the EEL Program North Region Staff to get the site ready to accept the new Jays.

Central Region

Mike provided information on the Central Region for FY 07/08, as Scott Taylor, the Land Manager, was unable to attend the meeting. Highlights included:

- 4 Sanctuaries in the EEL Program's Central Region during FY 07/08
 - Pine Island Conservation Area
 - Kabboord Wildlife Sanctuary
 - Helen and Alan Cruickshank Sanctuary
 - Thousand Islands Conservation Area
- Focus Areas
 - Habitat management
 - Exotic plants
 - Complete Bureau of Invasive Plant Management (BIPM) grant at PICA
 - New Department of Environmental Protection/BIPM grants obtained
 - \$197,000 – PICA
 - \$223,000 – Kings Park / Kabboord
 - Listed species
 - Florida Scrub-Jays. Population increase at Cruickshank Sanctuary. Now approximately 25 birds on site (previously none).
 - Rx fire and vegetation treatment
 - 1 Prescribed Fire at Cruickshank, 1 unit/chopped/burned
 - Public Access
 - PICA: New parking area/canoe launch and new hiking trail in south flatwoods
 - Cruickshank: New parking area/trailhead
 - Management Plans
 - Capron Ridge Sanctuary: interim plan complete/approved
 - Kabboord Sanctuary: final approval
 - Johnson Property: Interim Plan approved by SMC
 - Boyd/DiChristopher Property: Interim Plan approved by SMC
 - Thousand Islands Conservation Area: in progress
 - Center development and volunteer efforts
 - Sams House: Construction/renovation plans complete. Contractor selected.
 - Archaeological dig complete. Many thousands of volunteer hours. Tom Penders, a professional archaeologist, has received the Jefferson Award for his four year volunteer effort at the Pine Island Conservation Area.
 - PICA geological investigation complete. We now have 50,000 years of history on this site.

Additional Discussion

There are concerns that people are feeding the Jays that have relocated to the Cruickshank Sanctuary. Staff is considering options to address this.

Diane Stees mentioned that she had the privilege of working with Helen Cruickshank on the Audubon Society's Board before Helen passed away, and she stated that she felt Helen would have been very pleased with what is happening at the Sanctuary.

South Region

Chris O'Hara, South Region Land Manger, provided information on recent events in the South Region:

- Grant funding for control of invasive, exotic plants
 - 348 acres
 - Retreatment from previous projects on all sites in region
 - Now in maintenance phase for exotics on properties acquired at this time
 - Grant Amount \$179,000
- Volunteer Events
 - Jordan Scrub Sanctuary – 2 events, 2 tons of trash removed
 - Southwest Middle School – built a bridge
 - Science and Technology Student Association
- Micco Culvert
 - Two Culverts,
 - One installed by contractor
 - One installed by staff, saving \$10,000
- Wetland Restoration
 - Backfill ditch
 - Funded by off site mitigation
- Wildfires
 - EEL Program properties in the South Region which had recently received Prescribed Fire, were instrumental in stopping the spread of wildfire in several areas.
 - Wildfire Mitigation Team had planned to burn several units within Malabar Scrub Sanctuary West
 - Drought conditions led to change in plans
 - Disked areas treated during last year's work
 - Over 13,000 acres burned in the South Region's general area
 - 2,185 EEL Program acres burned (parts of Jordan, Micco, and Grant Flatwoods Sanctuaries)
 - Over 10 miles of plow lines in EEL Program lands when fighting the wildfires
 - Staff rented 3 yard front-end loader
 - 1 month of work with loader, Supertrack, and tractor to reduce impact of plow lines
- Malabar Scrub Sanctuary Management Plan
 - Approved by Board of County Commissioners on March 24, 2009
 - Next step to send to Acquisition and Restoration Council in Tallahassee
 - Thanks to everyone involved

South Beach Region

Ray Mojica, South Beach Region Land Manager provided information on recent events in that region.

Highlights include:

- Barrier Island Center Grand Opening May 10, 2008.
- Boardwalks were installed to connect the facility with an existing trail, and with the existing Bonsteel Park.
- Barrier Island Center brochure completed
- The Center offers a wide variety of programming to help involve the community in this facility
 - Eco-explorer summer camp
 - Family fun days

- Astronomers on deck
- Guided canoe/kayak tours
- Fishing Chicks (surf fishing for women)
- Guided Hikes once or twice each month
- Native plant workshops
- Arts and Crafts
- Release of satellite tagged sea turtle, which was tracked on the internet
- Volunteer Day February 8, 2009 – 120 participants
- Annual volunteer dinner
- Turtle Walks
- Visitation at BIC 5/10/2008 – 3/25/2009 = 23,845. In line with expectations
- Visitation to date – nearly 30,000, which is in line with expectations
- Update on Management Plan progress
- Gopher tortoise surveys
- Staff has initiated site walk through surveys to document trash, encroachment, vandalism, dumping, exotics and other action items for staff.
- Invasive, exotic, Ambrosia Beetle carries a fungus which has been lethal to Red Bay trees (canopy species). As beetle bores into tree, the fungus kills the tree. There are no known countermeasures. Staff is collecting seeds with the hope of replanting after the disease runs its course.
- Maritime Hammock Sanctuary
 - Opened new section of Maritime Hammock Sanctuary Trail, which runs through the storm water restoration project. Massive planting. Now thriving wetlands, except for the area which was vandalized by people in trucks who broke into the sanctuary and ran their vehicles through the wetlands. Corrective measures being taken to ensure site is protected.
 - People walking their dogs along the trail is a concern. No pets sign is posted.
 - Caretaker / maintenance facility completed. Facility rebuilt using funds from FEMA.

Public Use and Volunteer Activities

Brad Manley, Public Access and Volunteer Coordinator provided an informative review:

- REAC Activities
 - Public Access Plans Reviewed
 - Crane Creek Sanctuary
 - Malabar Scrub Sanctuary
 - North Buck Lake Sanctuary
 - Capron Ridge Sanctuary
 - East Cost Regional Trail
 - North Merritt Island Pioneer Trail
 - Facility Use Guidelines
 - Field Trips
- Public Access Enhancements
 - Parking Areas: South Lake Conservation Area and Cruickshank Sanctuary
 - Footbridges: Maritime Hammock, Malabar Scrub Sanctuaries
 - New trail sections: Maritime Hammock, Malabar Scrub Sanctuaries, South Lake Conservation Area.
 - New Walkthrough: Maritime Hammock, North Buck Lake Sanctuaries
 - New kiosks and signs: South Lake, Maritime Hammock, Cruickshank, Grant Flatwoods Sanctuaries
 - New kayak launch: Barrier Island Center

- Volunteer
 - 2007-2008 Hours
 - Volunteers – 264
 - Volunteer hours – 7,005.5
 - Value - \$154,144
 - Volunteer Committees
 - Selection and Management Committee
 - Procedures Committee
 - Recreation and Education Advisory Committee
 - Friends Groups: Friends of Enchanted Forest, Caribbean Conservation Corps, Friends of Ulumay, Friends of Thousand Islands
 - Partners: Keep Brevard Beautiful, Homeowners Associations, U.S. Coast Guard, Boy Scouts, Brevard Public Schools, Geocachers
- EEL Program Trail Days
 - Oct/Nov 2008: South Lake, Cruickshank, Malabar Scrub, and Coconut Point Sanctuaries
 - May/June 2009: Maritime Hammock, Malabar Scrub, Cruickshank, Scottsmoor Sanctuaries

Prescribed Fire

Dean Vanderbleek, EEL Program Fire Manager explained that most of his information had been covered in the regional presentations. He spoke about general weather conditions and cooperative efforts the EEL Program has been developing with other land management groups regarding support for prescribed fires in Brevard County.

Additional Discussion

Ross thanked everyone for the informative presentations. He stated that he wished everyone in the County could receive the information and he stated his opinion that there was no doubt about the success of the Program.

Mike explained that staff is compiling 2 minute “mini-documentaries” on the EEL Program which will be run as public service announcements by Space Coast TV. The committees will have an opportunity to review the presentations when they are complete.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

NEXT MEETING:

To be determined.

ADJOURNED:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

SUMMARY

OF MEETING MOTIONS:

- Motion to approve the February 27, 2008 SMC/PC meeting minutes as amended.