



MINUTES – August 13, 2024

ENVIRONMENTAL LAND ACQUISITION PANEL (ELAP)

Minutes of the
Environmental Land Acquisition Panel
Indian River County Administration Complex,
Building A, Commission Chambers
1801 27th Street, Vero Beach, FL
5:30 PM Tuesday, August 13, 2024

9 members/6 for quorum

1. Call to Order

Chair Peter O'Bryan called the August 13, 2024, meeting of the Environmental Land Acquisition Panel (ELAP) to order at 5:30 PM.

A full recording of this meeting is available in the office of the Board of County Commissioners.

2. Roll Call

Members Present:

Sammy McGee	District 1 Appointee
Janice Broda	District 2 Appointee
Daniel Bott	District 3 Appointee
Peter O'Bryan	District 4 Appointee
James Connaughton	District 5 Appointee (by remote conference call)
Jeff Beal	Natural Resources Representative
Heather Stapleton	Natural Resources Representative
Roland DeBlois	Planning or Engineering Representative

Members Absent:

John Orcutt	Real Estate or Finance Representative
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Others Present:

Joseph Earman	Commissioner, BCC Liaison
Wendy Swindell	Conservation Lands Manager
Beth Powell	Director - Parks, Recreation & Conservation
Susan Prado	Deputy County Attorney
Maura Stokes	BCC Recording Secretary
Billi Wagner	Public
C. Swindell	Public
Mark Baker	Osprey
Ken Grudens	Indian River Land Trust
Brandon Creagan	IRC Current Development
Michael Hill	IRC Planning CD

Minimum Quorum requirements were met.

3. Approval of Minutes:

a. June 18, 2024 – Regular Meeting

ON MOTION made by Janice Broda and SECONDED by Daniel Bott, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the Minutes of the June 18, 2024 meeting as presented.

The motion PASSED unanimously.

b. July 16, 2024 – Regular Meeting

ON MOTION made by Daniel Bott and SECONDED by Janice Broda, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the Minutes of the July 16, 2024 meeting as amended for clerical corrections.

The motion PASSED unanimously

4. New Parcel Application(s) Review

Minimum Criteria Qualification

Any parcel submitted for consideration by the ELAP must first meet at least one of the following minimum criteria conditions to be considered for further review by the ELAP:

- A) The property supports at least 5 acres of one or more native vegetative community types.*
- B) The property supports less than 5 acres of native vegetative community but is part of a larger contiguous tract of native vegetative communities (over 5 acres is size).*
- C) The property supports listed rare and imperiled species (flora or fauna), regardless of parcel size.*
- D) The property has altered ecosystems with reasonable potential for restoration, and the property is within a designated corridor, greenway or blueway, regardless of property size.*

Prequalification of Submitted Property Applications:

Wendy Swindell noted that there were four new parcel nominations. See items #37-41 of the master spreadsheet which is attached hereto and incorporated herein as “Schedule A”. Staff has not had a chance to review them in detail.

- #37 Fort Drum 150 Ranch Easement
- #38 Atlantic Blvd Residence Property
- #40 Blue Cypress Flatwoods Easement
- #41 Bent Pine Golf Club Property

Wendy would like to table discussion on these properties until the next meeting to allow staff to review and input to hub for minimum criteria qualification.

Wendy Swindell noted that environmental reports have been completed for the following properties:

#14 Padgett Branch Easement 2 Property
#28 Osprey Estates Property
#31 Covey Ranch Easement;
#33 Kanner Farms West Property

Wendy further advised that the full environmental reports are available on the hub.

5. Discussion Items:

a. Comments from Staff

Updates were provided on the distribution of seller letters and the progress of contacting various parties regarding the project, with concerns raised about outdated realtor information. Water and Air continues to generate reports which are available on the hub; and, they have improved the turnaround timeframes.

b. Bond Consultant Matters

The bond consultant has been asked to give a weekly update to staff including who has responded to letters. Wendy will provide the panel an update from the bond consultant at the next meeting.

c. Comments from the Chair

The deadline for more applications is approaching at the end of August.

Homework Exercise: The panel conducted a trial evaluation and “ranking” exercise for the Padgett Branch Easement 2 Property to better understand and prepare for the ranking process. Each ranking had a fair amount of discussion.

At the conclusion of the exercise, it was suggested that the County Attorney’s office prepare a presentation for the next meeting to delve deeper into the easement process, addressing the confusion between purchasing land and purchasing an easement. Panel members requested that future reports clearly indicate whether properties are being scored as fee simple or easement, facilitating clearer discussions.

There was a further discussion and explanation by Beth Powell, Director – Parks, Recreation & Conservation, regarding the rationale for ranking easements separate from the fee simple parcels due to the difference in the review process of each criteria.

Scores were given for various criteria, with the highest being ten for natural communities, potential habitat, and corridors and greenways. There was a discussion about whether the evaluation should consider easement purchases versus outright public purchases. There was discussion about the scoring sheet’s layout suggesting the addition of space for personal comments to improve notetaking.

A concern about the level of restoration and enhancement required for the property in relation to other easements, indicating that the report did not provide sufficient clarity on this matter. A caution was raised regarding wetland mitigation, highlighting that including such provisions in conservation easements could prevent access to certain federal funds for restoration programs.

Several members expressed a need for more educational resources regarding easements, particularly conservation easements, indicating a gap in understanding that needs to be addressed.

The discussions among the panel members, staff and the public were very productive and gave the panel a better understanding of the ranking process.

d. *Comments from the Commissioner*

Commissioner Earman inquired if the panel liked the use of the Chambers vs. B1-501. The panel unanimously agreed that they prefer the roundtable meeting format in B1-501.

e. *Other*

6. Public Comment: None.

7. Next Meeting: The next meeting of ELAP will be held
September 17, 2024 at 5:30 PM in Building B, Room B1-501

8. Adjournment: Chair Peter O'Bryan adjourned the meeting at 6:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Maura Stokes

A copy of the full meeting recording is kept on file in the office of the Board of County Commissioners.

Please see "Schedule A" attached hereto and incorporated herein.

Schedule A - Minutes of August 13, 2024									
Environmental Bond Parcel Nomination Summary									
Nomination Number	Project Name	Acres	# of Parcels	Dormant Natural Communities	Min. Criteria	Application Verification ²	Env. Assessment Assigned	Env. Assessment Status	Comments
April 2024 Meeting									
1	Louisiana Ave Property	4.65	6	Mixed hardwood/low intensity urban	Y	Staff	Staff	In progress	5/7/2024 Environmental survey conducted by staff
2	Jungle Trail Island Club Manor Property	19.36	1	Shrubs and brushland	Y	Staff	TBD	-	Met at least 1 minimum criteria per ELAP
3	Jungle Trail Fischer Property	3.65	1	Freshwater wetlands	Y	Staff	TBD	-	Met at least 1 minimum criteria per ELAP
4	Kelly Rd Property 2	190.43	9	Pine Flatwoods	Y	Consultant	TBD	-	Met at least 1 minimum criteria per ELAP
8	Fellsmere ROED Property	3,406.75	9	Xeric Scrub, Scrubby Flatwoods, Freshwater Forested Wetlands,	Y	Consultant	TBD	-	Met at least 1 minimum criteria per ELAP
9	Roseland Scrub Property	16.43	1	Scrub/Xeric Hammock	Y	Consultant	TBD	-	Met at least 1 minimum criteria per ELAP
10	River Preserve Property	30.28	2	Salt marsh, mixed hardwoods	Y	Staff	TBD	-	Met at least 1 minimum criteria per ELAP
May 2024 Meeting									
11	Jungle Trail Skiscim Property	0.5	1	Existing residence	Y	Staff	TBD		Parcel is contiguous with the IRL
13	Jungle Trail Windsor Property	47.27	2	Coastal strand, mixed hardwoods, oceanfront, cleared land	Y	Consultant	TBD		Adjacent to PINWR Buffer (County owned)
14	Padgett Branch Easement 2 Property	1,094	1	Pine Flatwoods, basin swamp, freshwater marsh	Y	Consultant	Consultant	Complete	Within Florida Wildlife Corridor
15	Hale Grove Property	18.37	2	Mixed wetland hardwoods and abandoned citrus	Y	Consultant	TBD		>5 acres of native vegetative communities
16	Hale Grove Storefront Property	4.9	3	Prior parking area	Y	Consultant	TBD		
17	93rd Lane Riverfront Property	4.4	1	Mangrove swamp and man-made ponds	Y	Consultant	TBD		Hale Grove Property parcel that it contiguous with IRL.
18	Durrance Place Property	13.08	2	Mixed hardwoods and freshwater forested wetlands	Y	Consultant	TBD		>5 acres of native vegetative communities
19	Riverside Village Property	1.23	1	Disturbed upland hardwood forest	Y	Consultant	TBD		Continuity of native vegetation from adjacent parcels is unknown
20	Durrance Corner Property	1.37	1	Freshwater forested wetlands	Y	Consultant	TBD		Continuity of native vegetation from adjacent parcels is unknown
21	Hernandez Trail Property	38.8	2	Pine Flatwoods	Y	Consultant	TBD		>5 acres of native vegetative communities
22	Winter Beach 69th St Property	59.45	9	Disturbed mixed hardwoods and abandoned citrus	Y	Consultant	TBD		Parcel is >5acres, however evaluation of native vegetation communities needs to be assessed
23	Winter Beach Buescher Property	3.59	1	Mangrove	Y	TBD	TBD		<5acres, however is part of larger tract of native vegetative communities
24	Winter Beach 73rd St Property	35.68	2	Mangrove impoundment and mixed hardwood upland	Y	Consultant	TBD		Parcel is contiguous with IRL
25	Foster Rd Property	15.58	1	Scrub and mixed hardwoods	Y	Consultant	TBD		>5acres of native vegetative communities
26	Bridge Tender Site Addition	3.84	2	Estuarine wetlands	Y	Staff	TBD		Adjacent to IRL and County owned property
27	Hobart Scrub Property	155.53	5	Degraded sandpine scrub	Y	Consultant	TBD		>5 acres of native vegetative communities; gopher tortoise burrows visible from road
28	Osprey Estates Property	12.72	3	Estuarine wetlands	Y	Consultant	Consultant	Complete	Adjacent to private conservation land to the south
29	Beachside Lane Property	6.26	1	Estuarine wetlands	Y	Staff	Staff	Not started	Adjacent to Oyster Bar Marsh Conservation Area
30	Indian River Shores Point Property	1.08	1	Estuarine wetlands	Y	Staff	TBD		<5 acres, however adjacent to Lost Tree Conservation Area and the IRL
31	Covey Ranch Easement	390.26	1	Pasture, freshwater forested wetlands, wet flatwoods	Y	Consultant	Consultant	Complete	Within Florida Wildlife Corridor
June 2024 Meeting									
32	LGR Ranch Easement	1,328.57	5	Pasture, freshwater forested wetlands, wet flatwoods, hydric hammocks	Y	Consultant	TBD		Within Florida Wildlife Corridor
33	Kanner Farms West Property	228.82	1	Pasture, freshwater forested wetlands, mixed scrub-shrub wetland	Y	Consultant	Consultant	Complete	Within Florida Wildlife Corridor
34	66th Ave Pasture Property	48.52	1	Sod farm	Y	TBD	TBD		>5 acres but native vegetation and imperiled wildlife needs to be assessed
35	Sebastian Riverview Property	5.39	3	Urban open land, estuarine wetlands, shrub and brushland	Y	Staff	Staff	Not started	>5 acres and adjacent to IRL; nomination amended by owner.
36	Bent Pine Golf Club Property	93.65	2	Urban open pine, dry flatwoods	Y	Consultant	Consultant	In progress	>5 acres of native vegetation; potential scrub-jay habitat
August 2024 Meeting									
37	Fort Drum 150 Ranch Easement	148.65	1	Pasture, freshwater forested wetlands, mixed scrub-shrub wetland	Y		Consultant	In progress	Within Florida Wildlife Corridor
38	Atlantic Blvd. Residence Property	11.8	2	Mixed harwood conifers	TBD		TBD		Residence and 10 acres
40	Blue Cypress Flatwoods Easement	150.57	2	Pasture, freshwater forested wetlands, wet flatwoods, hydric hammocks	Y		TBD		Within Florida Wildlife Corridor
41	FLARES Groves Easement	30.37	2	Citrus groves	TBD		TBD		The Florida Research Center and adjacent citrus groves.