

**ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS (EEL) PROGRAM  
RECREATION AND EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
October 8, 2009  
Attendance List**

***RECREATION AND EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS***

Bob Champaigne  
Thomas Dunkerton  
Jim Durocher  
Murray Hann  
Jim Heath  
Mark Nathan  
Beverly Pinyerd  
Ayn Samuelson  
Doug Sphar

***SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS***

Barbara Meyer, Brevard County, Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Program Coordinator  
Paul Schmalzer, Selection and Management Committee

***EEL PROGRAM STAFF***

Brad Manley  
Michael Wielenga

***GUESTS***

None

**ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS PROGRAM  
RECREATION AND EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**October 8, 2009  
Meeting Minutes**

***CALL TO ORDER:***

Murray Hann, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

***PUBLIC COMMENT:***

None.

***Additional Discussion***

Jim Durocher requested an update regarding the plans for the Pioneer Trail on Merritt Island, which the REAC committee had visited in May.

Barbara Meyer stated the trail has been fully funded with stimulus money and that it is anticipated construction will begin in January 2010. She provided clarification that the funding has come from Transportation, and it will not provide amenities for canoe/kayaking enhancements, but it is expected that Parks and Recreation Department staff will be applying for grants to support canoe/kayaking activity in the future. She also confirmed that the main parking and trail head will be located at Kings Park; there will be limited parking with a small trail head off Hall Road; and that staff is working with the design engineers to ensure that future plans for canoe/kayaking activity are taken into consideration as the design and construction moves forward.

***MINUTES:***

Murray asked for comments to the May 14, 2009 REAC minutes. No comments or questions were received.

***MOTION ONE***

**Doug Sphar moved to approve the May 14, 2009 minutes as presented**

**Mark Nathan seconded the motion.**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

***ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW:***

Brad Manley, EEL Program Volunteer and Public Access Coordinator, provided information on recent events at several EEL Program Sanctuaries:

***Thousand Islands Conservation Area, Cocoa Beach***

Staff has been working on the removal of invasive, exotic Australian pine and Brazilian pepper trees at 4<sup>th</sup> Street and on the Crawford parcel as part of the restoration project. In addition, with the assistance of volunteers, over a hundred native plants have been planted at each of these locations. The City of Cocoa Beach is assisting with arrangements for watering the new plantings.

### Additional Discussion

Jim Durocher stated that citizens are forming a "Friends of the Thousand Islands" support group and that he will be one of the original board members.

A concern was received regarding pet litter at the 4<sup>th</sup> Street site. Staff is reviewing options.

### Sams House, Pine Island Conservation Area, Merritt Island

The group reviewed a photographic history on the restoration effort at the Sams House which will become the Management and Education Center for the EEL Program's Central Region. A smaller historic building, which is one of the oldest buildings in Brevard County, is also being restored at this site. Additional information on the archaeological dig at the Sams homestead site which was coordinated by Tom Penders, a local archaeologist, and Scott Taylor, the EEL Program's Central Region Land Manager was also provided.

### Events Calendars

- Enchanted Forest Sanctuary
  - Deadheaders group work on butterfly gardens
  - Stories for children
  - Junior bird watching
  - Friends of Enchanted Forest
  - Lunch Learning Programs
  - Oyster Mats
  - Music
  - Photography
  - Forest Festival scheduled for November 7<sup>th</sup>
- Barrier Island Center
  - Beach clean ups
  - Energy conservation programs
  - Art projects from items which can be recycled
  - Films

### Florida Native Plant Hikes – Lead by Paul Schmalzer

- Salt Lake Sanctuary
- Dicerandra Scrub Sanctuary

### Windover Archaeological Site Update

The State of Florida is considering purchase of the Windover burial pond archaeological site in Titusville and has asked the EEL Program to consider management of the site. EEL Program staff are working with site neighbors to ensure their concerns regarding possible EEL Program management of the site are taken into consideration during this process.

### Additional Discussion

Murray requested that the REAC Committee be provided with information on land management and restoration activities so that they could have a better understanding of the long term benefits. He expressed his feeling that if citizens could become educated in this

regard, it would help them understand the over all process and realize that the land would recover, as he was beginning to understand.

Brad confirmed that the EEL Program has on-going programs to help provide citizens with information on Prescribed Fire and other land management activities.

Paul Schmalzer explained that in long unburned areas, scrub oaks can become large trees instead of shrubs and they become fire resistant and will not top kill. He explained that habitat quality for the Florida Scrub-Jays and other scrub dependent species begins to decline when the shrubs exceed more than about 2 meters and the herb layer that some scrub species depends on gets shaded out by the larger oaks. The open sandy patches characteristic of scrub habitat disappear in overgrown areas. In long unburned scrub, the fuel load must also be reduced in order to have a safe controlled burn, so some of the larger trees and underbrush is sometimes removed mechanically, before a site is burned. Paul stated his understanding that a site which has received mechanical reduction, or one which received mechanical reduction and is then burned, can appear very severe at first, and he agreed that educating the public on these topics is very beneficial. He also confirmed that although some sites require mechanical treatment before a controlled burn, additional mechanical reduction is not generally required because the future controlled burns will reduce vegetation sufficiently. In addition, scrub plants have part of their biomass underground and it is their nature to recover quickly after frequent fires, which were a part of the Florida landscape before the state became developed and natural fires were suppressed.

Brad stated that if the group was interested in additional information, staff could do a presentation on the topic.

Bob Champaigne suggested consideration of a field trip.

Barbara Meyer expressed her support of education on the benefits of prescribed fire.

Ayn Samuelson suggested consideration of storyboards in the kiosks when a site was going to receive mechanical reduction and prescribed fire.

Brad confirmed that information of this type is located at the Enchanted Forest in Titusville, and the Cruickshank Sanctuary in Rockledge.

Murray asked for clarification of the restoration plans for the Malabar Scrub Sanctuary West property and stated that he and other trail advocates use that site on an almost daily basis. He stated advance notice to trail users for any planned management activity there would be beneficial.

Additional information will be provided in the future.

#### **AGENDA ITEMS:**

##### **Indian Mound Station Sanctuary (IMSS) – Revised Public Access Plan**

Michael Wielenga, the North Region's Assistant Land Manager provided an overview of the revised Public Access Plan for the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary:

- North Region has 9 sanctuaries, including the Category I Enchanted Forest Sanctuary which includes the North Region's Management and Education Center.

- Eight of the nine sanctuaries are open to the public. The exception is the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary where EEL Program staff members are currently in the process of securing the Indian burial mound to protect it from further looting and vandalism. The site is also currently undergoing land management activities as part of a scrub habitat restoration project.
- The IMSS is comprised of approximately 85 acres of varying habitats, and includes a large amount of very overgrown scrub. The site is divided into 16 burn units. As a comparison the 2,500± acre Fox Lake Sanctuary is divided into 17 burn units. The high number of burn units for the IMSS is required due to the urban interface and the sanctuary's close proximity to both I-95 and US 1.
- The REAC Committee reviewed information on the IMSS in October of 2006. At that time, the Committee moved to support a delay of consideration of a Public Access Plan until restoration of the mound and sanctuary habitat could be completed.
- Previous plans to expand the footprint of the IMSS to provide a location for a parking area and a trail connection to Holder Park have not come to fruition. As a result, it is anticipated that a small parking area will be designated off Parrish Road, once the site is open to the public. It is possible that the site could be expanded some time in the future, if it remains undeveloped, but at the present time, other properties with stronger conservation value are higher up on the SMC's acquisition priority listing due to funding restraints.
- A public stakeholder's meeting was held for the IMSS in September 2009. The location of a trail which would have run close to neighboring homes has been moved as result of input provided by citizens at that meeting and staff is working on ways to increase the notification of neighborhood citizens prior to the implementation of land management activities.
- Photos from the 1943 aerials indicate the IMSS site historically included a great deal of sugar sand.
- There are plans to utilize native vegetation to assist in the protection of the mound.
- Additional steps in the Management Plan Approval process include 30 day public review, approval by SMC, approval by BOCC, and approval by State (for any property where the State provides partnership funding). This site is within the Brevard Coastal Scrub Ecosystem Project footprint, and may be eligible for 50% partnership funding some time in the future, if the State receives additional Florida Forever funding.
- Goals for this site include guided hikes, site security, invasive exotic plant removal, and trash removal after prescribed fire.

General discussion ensued throughout the presentation. The following items were noted:

- Murray Hann expressed concerns regarding the plan for all trails to be located on firebreaks for this sanctuary.

- Clarification was provided that fire lines are required in order to burn a site safely and that fire lines which need to be disked to mineral soil (instead of being mowed) do become unusable for a time after they are disked.
- Paul Schmalzer stated that he is aware of hikers who frequently use firebreaks as trails without complaint.
- Murray expressed concerns regarding fire line maintenance activity which has occurred in the past at the Malabar Scrub Sanctuary.
- Murray expressed concern that at some sanctuaries, fire breaks were wider than he felt they needed to be.
- Murray provided clarification that some of the previous Public Access Plan presentations to the REAC Committee included information on trails, but not for firebreaks.
- Murray suggested consideration of instructing personnel using heavy equipment to maintain the fire lines to leave a 3 foot undisturbed barrier which could be used as a trail on one side of all fire breaks.
- Doug Sphar requested consideration of providing information on planned trails and planned fire breaks as an overlay when the REAC committee reviews future public access plans.
- Brad agreed to research this request.
- Barbara Meyer stated her opinion that walking a sugar sand trail in the heat was unbearable and that trails placed on fire lines were doomed to fail.
- Jim Durocher expressed his feeling that the main reason he would want to hike a sugar sand trail in the hot summer months would be because it lead to another area which was more enjoyable to hike.
- Beverly Pinyerd stated she had just returned from visiting Africa and if you want to go there to see the plants and animals, you have to accept the natural setting.
- Clarification was provided that the primary purpose of an EEL Program sanctuary is the protection of biodiversity and that biodiversity, and safety, have a higher priority than passive recreation.
- Murray suggested consideration of a motion which requested that the Land Manager and the Fire Boss consider a plan that, to the largest extent feasible within the guidelines of the EEL Program, separated the trail and fire break systems.
- Ayn Samuelson expressed her support for Murray's statement.
- Mark Nathan reminded the group that Florida landscapes used to burn frequently, as a result of lightning, but that urban development has brought on fire suppression and he spoke of the benefits of prescribed fire to natural habitats.

- Mark Nathan agreed that a shaded trail is more pleasant to hike during the hot summer months.
- Barbara Meyer said that she is familiar with the manner in which the Mother's Day wildfires affected south Brevard County and that she knows that when a natural area has received prescribed burns, the surrounding neighborhoods are safer.
- Murray expressed concern regarding the unexpected change to natural areas if citizens are not aware that restoration efforts are planned for a site.
- Clarification was provided that staff is currently working on ways to increase the information regarding planned management activities to the public.
- Paul Schmalzer reminded the group of the additional impact that would result on the small site if a trail system was created in addition to the 16 fire units.
- Murray suggested consideration of running the fire lines on an X Y axis across the site.
- Clarification was provided that fire lines need to be placed according to the habitat boundaries and other natural lines.
- Clarification was provided that there are no plans for biking at this site.
- Michael Wielenga explained that the South Lake Conservation Area (SLCA) is approximately a mile and a half from the IMSS. He stated that SLCA contains trails that are maintained with a mower and hiking opportunities are available there.
- Doug Sphar reminded the group that monitoring for the trail system would be an adaptive process.

#### **MOTION TWO**

- **Jim Durocher moved to revisit the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary Public Access Plan, with conservation being the primary goal, and to ask staff to have the Fire Manager and the Land Manager meet to see if they could come up with some better ideas for the trails.**
  - **Ayn Samuelson seconded the motion.**
  - **Four members voted to support the motion. Five members voted in opposition. The motion failed.**

#### **MOTION THREE**

- **Bob Champaigne moved to accept the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary Public Access Plan as presented by Staff.**
  - **Beverly Pinyerd seconded the motion.**
  - **The motion carried with a majority of members voting to support the Plan.**
- Brad Manley stated that staff's intent was to receive input on the proposed plan and that it was apparent there were outstanding issues which needed to be addressed.
- Mark Nathan stated he felt that receiving additional information on the benefits of prescribed fire and habitat restoration would be very helpful.

- Murray asked if there were any other committee member comments. No additional comments were received.
- Brad stated that staff would schedule additional discussion on the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary Public Access Plan.

***NEXT MEETING:***

To be determined.

***ADJOURNED:***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

***SUMMARY OF MEETING MOTIONS:***

- **Motion to approve the May 14, 2009 minutes as presented.**
  - Motion passed.
- **Motion to revisit the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary Public Access Plan, with conservation being the primary goal, and to ask staff to have the Fire Manager and the Land Manager meet to see if they could come up with some better ideas for the trails.**
  - Motion failed.
- **Motion to approve the Indian Mound Station Sanctuary Public Access Plan as presented by staff.**
  - Motion carried with a majority of members voting to support the Plan.