



A Report Presented to the
Board of County Commissioners

on
February 18, 2015

from the
Real Estate & Facilities Services Department
and the
Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department

Regarding the
Possible inclusion of Hillsborough County
conservation land acquisitions into the
State Conservation Land Acquisition Plan

Sign-Off Approvals	
Department Director	Date
Management and Budget – Approved as to Financial Impact Accuracy	Date
County Attorney – Approved as to Legal Sufficiency	Date
Assistant County Administrator	Date

- Consent Section – Informational purposes only. *(No discussion anticipated)*
- Consent Section – Board requested report. *(No discussion anticipated)*
- Staff Reports Section

Insert File

Note: Staff reports scheduled for the Consent or Staff Report sections may not contain any recommendations

**POSSIBLE INCLUSION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITIONS INTO THE
STATE CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION PLAN**

At the December 3, 2014 meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, staff was directed to provide a report on the possible inclusion/nomination of proposed conservation land acquisitions through the Jan K. Platt Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection (ELAP) Program into the State Conservation Land Acquisition Plan for the Florida Forever Program. Staff has researched this matter and this summary report is to provide staff's findings.

The ELAP Program has submitted projects to the Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) Program under Preservation 2000 (the predecessor to the Florida Forever Program). Several ELAP Program projects have been selected and joint-funded through the program; these include Balm Boyette Scrub Preserve, Golden Aster Scrub, Cockroach Bay Islands, and Alderman's Ford Preserve. However, subsequent applications by the County have been unsuccessful because they have not aligned as well with the objectives of the CARL Program / Florida Forever Program, which targets large pristine tracts (more than several thousand acres) as well as projects with unique characteristics and/or imperiled habitats (springs, islands, scrub, special geological features).

Based on these criteria, the ELAP Program has two properties with the potential to qualify for Florida Forever if the owners are willing to consider a transaction to preserve their property (the Florida Forever application requires that the owner acknowledges the application or that they have been contacted). Both properties are high priorities in the ELAP Program, as they complete large corridors of preserved habitat. If one of these County sites were to qualify, given the current backlog of Florida Forever projects, it is unclear whether it would be competitive with other projects on the Florida Forever list and rank high enough for funding.

As with funding from any State conservation program, a key factor is the availability of matching funds. While it is possible for a local government to submit a site to Florida Forever without a commitment to provide matching or partial funding, this lack of participation from the County will make it even more difficult for a project to rank high enough to be funded. Historically, the County has provided joint funding for any Preservation 2000 or Florida Forever project. If the County were to proceed with an application that included a commitment for joint funding, an additional bond issue would be needed. Currently \$3.5-million is remaining of the \$59-million in bond proceeds issued in 2009 from the \$200 million authorized by the 2008 referendum.

One variable that may affect this in the future is how the State Legislature allocates funding from Amendment One. Staff will continue to monitor the actions by the Legislature, as well as provide recommendations and information to the legislative liaison and administration. Depending upon appropriations, staff will pursue funding that is viable for ELAP Program projects. In anticipation that the Florida Forever Program will have additional funding, staff will initiate actions to submit an application, provided that the owner(s) do not object to having their property in the Florida Forever Program.