

AGENDA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT TRUST FUND
MAY 13, 2009
Substitute Page

Substitute Item 1 Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan

REQUEST: Consideration of a request to approve (1) the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan; (2) the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve and the Pellicer Creek Aquatic Preserve updated Management Plans; and (3) the expansion of the boundary of the Research Reserve to include the Matanzas State Forest and the 2003 addition to Faver-Dykes State Park.

COUNTY: St. Johns and Flagler

APPLICANT: Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA)

LOCATION: The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTM Research Reserve) is located south of the City of Jacksonville in St. Johns and Flagler counties on the northeast coast of Florida. The GTM Research Reserve is geographically separated by the City of St. Augustine into northern and southern components. The northern component is associated with the Tolomato and Guana River estuaries, and the southern component is associated with the Matanzas River. The northern component contains the GTM Environmental Education Center located at 505 Guana River Road, Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of protected areas established for long-term research, education, and stewardship. The present day GTM Research Reserve was selected for inclusion into the system by a committee of scientists, environmental educators and coastal managers because it met the overall needs of a relatively pristine habitat for scientific research and environmental education opportunities. The selection was supported by citizens and legislators, nominated by the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida, and final designation was made in August 1999. The GTM Research Reserve includes the estuaries comprising the Guana, Tolomato and Matanzas rivers, including the Pellicer Creek and Guana River Marsh aquatic preserves.

Following the designation of the GTM Research Reserve a 21 member management advisory group (MAG) was established. Representation consists of citizens, local government officials, managers of the public lands included in the boundary, private property owners, scientists and environmental educators. This advisory group provides a unique opportunity to enhance cooperative management for the conservation of this ecosystem.

The GTM Research Reserve Management Plan is an update to the plan approved by the Board of Trustees on November 10, 1998. This plan also contains the scope of information previously covered in the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve Management Plan (approved December 17, 1991), the Pellicer Creek Aquatic Preserve Management Plan (approved July 9, 1991), and the Guana River State Park Management Plan (approved March 26, 1999). The inclusive management of these sites as the GTM Research Reserve represents a significant enhancement of the purpose of the property as a platform for research and education.

Substitute Item 1, cont.

Currently included in the boundary of the GTM Research Reserve are numerous conservation areas such as the Guana River Wildlife Management Area, Deep Creek State Forest, Stokes Landing Conservation Area, Fort Matanzas National Monument, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park, Faver-Dykes State Park, Moses Creek Conservation Area, Pellicer Creek Conservation Area, Princess Place Preserve, and the River to Sea Preserve.

This Management Plan also includes the annexation of existing Board of Trustees' lands into the GTM Research Reserve boundary. In 2003 the Board of Trustees acquired 4,166 acres adjacent to the existing Faver-Dykes State Park, to be managed by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks as an addition to the park. Also in 2003, the Board of Trustees acquired 4,699 acres immediately adjacent to the GTM Research Reserve to be managed by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' (DACS) Division of Forestry (DOF) as the Matanzas State Forest. This property is part of a 16,000-acre continuous conservation corridor, and its inclusion in the GTM Research Reserve is compatible with the existing Matanzas State Forest Management Plan and the Memorandum of Agreement between DEP and DACS' DOF. The annexation of these properties into the GTM Research Reserve boundary will not affect the direct management responsibilities or authorizations currently in place.

Species

The diversity of communities present in the 64,487-acre GTM Research Reserve provides habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife. A species list recently compiled for the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve indicates the presence of at least 44 mammal, 358 bird, 41 reptile, 21 amphibian, 303 fish, and 580 plant species. Many more species are expected to occur in the entire GTM Research Reserve. These habitats are essential to many protected species (8 plants and 48 animals). With this plan the GTM Research Reserve will continue to expand its role to facilitate and conduct research and monitoring, stewardship and education strategies designed to enhance our ability to monitor the condition of these species and to conserve their habitats.

Many species of commercial and recreational value are also known to use the GTM Research Reserve's estuaries for all or part of their life cycle. This provides a valuable economic incentive for long-term conservation of the GTM Research Reserve's natural resources. Management strategies, based on the best available scientific information, that conserve and restore natural habitats and support sustainable populations of these species are an important management priority for the GTM Research Reserve.

Cultural Resources

In addition to these natural resources the GTM Research Reserve contains a unique array of cultural resources. This ecosystem has been used by humans for over 5,000 years. Artifacts found in the GTM Research Reserve area range from an arrowhead from the late Archaic (2500-1000 BC) to pottery from the 19th century. There are currently 115 recorded archaeological sites within its boundary. Known sites include a burial mound, numerous shell middens, a Spanish mission, and homestead sites from the British, Second Spanish and Territorial time periods. Cultural resource interpretation and protection is given special consideration in this plan.

Substitute Item 1, cont.

Public Use

The GTM Research Reserve also contains extensive public use amenities directly managed by the reserve staff including an extensive trail system, beaches with parking access and dune boardwalks, the Guana Lake Dam, and an environmental education center that welcomes approximately 20,000 visitors per year including 2,500 students and teachers. Public use of the beaches and trail system is estimated to accommodate an additional 170,000 visitors per year. Based on local community support and public input, this Management Plan's public use strategies emphasize high quality and sustainable natural resource experiences.

Public Involvement

This Management Plan is the result of more than two years of work. The following opportunities for public participation were offered:

- three MAG Meetings on September 13, 2006, January 24, 2007, and May 16, 2007;
- public scoping meetings on November 1 and 2, 2006 to receive input on the issues facing the reserve; and
- formal public meetings on September 26 and 27, 2007 to receive public comment on the Management Plan.

Management Plan Overview

The management challenges affecting the GTM Research Reserve can be categorized within the following topics: Public Use, Habitat and Species Management, Watershed Landuse, Cultural Resource Preservation and Interpretation, and Global Processes. Incompatible public use and lack of a scientifically defined carrying capacity, habitat fragmentation and loss, point and non-point source pollution, protection and interpretation of cultural resources and assessing the impact of global processes are management priorities. These issues can be indirectly or directly linked to increasing population densities accompanied by increasing development, recreation, and economic pressures. These potential impacts to resources can affect the productivity and function of coastal ecosystems, requiring active management to restore and sustain the condition of these resources.

Management Goals

Public Use

Ensure user experiences are sustainable and consistent with natural and cultural resource protection for the benefit of existing and future generations.

Habitat and Species Management

Improve the conservation of natural biodiversity by implementing the principles of adaptive management and ecosystem science.

Watershed Landuse

Reduce the impact of watershed landuse on coastal resources by identifying priority pollutants and encouraging best management practices.

Substitute Item 1, cont.

Cultural Resource Preservation and Interpretation

Enhance understanding, interpretation, and preservation of the GTM Research Reserve's cultural resources.

Global Processes

Serve as a clearinghouse of information concerning global and meteorological processes and as a demonstration site for green building technologies and practices.

Acquisition and Restoration Council Approval

The Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the following Management Plan at its April 3, 2009 meeting.

Comprehensive Plan

A local government comprehensive plan has been adopted, and approved by the Department of Community Affairs, for this area pursuant to section 163.3167, F.S. The GTM Research Reserve Management Plan is consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan according to a letter received from St Johns County.

The Management Plan will be submitted separately.

RECOMMEND APPROVAL

Item 2 TNC Option Agreement/DACS/DOF/Blackwater River State Forest Additions and Inholdings Project/Yellow River Ravines Florida Forever Project

REQUEST: Consideration of an option agreement to acquire three, non-contiguous tracts of land totaling 574.72 acres lying within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Forestry's Blackwater River State Forest Additions and Inholdings project and the Yellow River Ravines Florida Forever project from The Nature Conservancy.

COUNTY: Santa Rosa

APPLICANT: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Forestry (DOF)

LOCATION: Sections 30 and 32, Township 02 North, Range 26 West

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Item 2, cont.

CONSIDERATION: \$1,275,475

<u>PARCEL</u>	<u>ACRES</u>	APPRAISED BY		<u>APPROVED VALUE</u>	<u>SELLER'S PURCHASE PRICE</u>	<u>TRUSTEES' PURCHASE PRICE</u>	<u>OPTION DATE</u>
		<u>(10/07/08)</u> Carroll	<u>(10/02/08)</u> Wright				
Tract 1	401.90	\$1,190,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,190,000			90 days after
Tract 2	118.50	\$ 415,000		\$ 415,000			BOT approval
Tract 3	<u>54.32</u>	<u>\$ 190,000</u>		<u>\$ 190,000</u>			
	574.72	\$1,700,000*		\$1,700,000*	\$1,101,663**	\$1,275,475*** (75%)	

* A bulk sale value of \$1,700,000 was applied to Tracts 1, 2 and 3, thus reducing the cumulative value of \$1,795,000 by 5 percent, or \$95,000.

** Seller purchased the property in March 2002.

*** \$2,219 per acre.

(AGENDA CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Item 2, cont.

STAFF REMARKS: This acquisition was negotiated by DOF under its Florida Forever Additions and Inholdings Program.

Property Description

The Blackwater River State Forest (State Forest) has been identified on the DOF approved Florida Forever Additions and Inholdings project list. Tracts 1, 2 and 3 are inholdings of the State Forest. This property is also located within the Yellow River Ravines Florida Forever project, a substantially complete "A" group project of the Florida Forever Full Fee Project list approved by the Board of Trustees on April 14, 2009. Based on revised acreage taken from surveys, the Yellow River Ravines project now contains 17,045 acres, of which 15,784 acres have been acquired or are under agreement to be acquired. If the Board of Trustees approves this agreement, 1,261 acres, or 7.4 percent of the Yellow River Ravines project, will remain to be acquired.

This acquisition provides many significant benefits to the state: reduces development opportunities within the State Forest, protects valuable forest resources, provides additional public access, results in a cost savings to the prescribed fire management program, enhances the boundary management of the State Forest, and further improves the continuous wildlife corridor through public land from Eglin Air Force Base through the Conecuh State Forest in Alabama.

Mortgages and Liens

All mortgages and liens will be satisfied at the time of closing. On June 22, 1999, the Board of Trustees approved a staff recommendation to delegate to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) the authority to review and evaluate marketability issues as they arise on all chapter 259, F.S., acquisitions and to resolve them appropriately. Therefore, DEP staff will review, evaluate and implement an appropriate resolution for these and any other title issues that arise prior to closing.

Tract 1 is encumbered with a 100-percent royalty interest in the production of oil, gas and minerals in and under the property by James Barry Estes, Sr. and Joyce Estes. The reservation does not include any rights to entry, drill or explore for these interests. In addition, Miller Bluff Road bisects a small portion of the property along the eastern boundary.

Tract 2 is bisected by Pond Road, CSX railroad line, U.S. Highway 90, and Interstate 10. A 1.58-acre conservation easement area is located within the footprint of Tract 2, but is not included in the sale of this property. The conservation easement area is triangular in shape and contains: a 100-foot by 100-foot leased area for a cell tower, a 30-foot-wide easement for ingress and egress purposes from US Highway 90, and a utility easement encompassing 0.05 acre. The Nature Conservancy has agreed to convey the conservation easement to the state, without cost, at or after closing. The conservation easement will be monitored by DOF.

There are no known encumbrances associated with Tract 3.

These encumbrances will not adversely affect DOF management of the property.

Item 2, cont.

Closing Information

A title insurance commitment, a survey, and an environmental site assessment of the property will be provided by DOF prior to closing.

Management

These parcels will be managed by DOF as an addition to the Blackwater River State Forest approved management plan.

Comprehensive Plan

This acquisition is consistent with section 187.201(22), F.S., the Agriculture section of the State Comprehensive plan.

(See Attachment 2, Pages 1-76)

RECOMMEND APPROVAL

Item 3 South Florida Museum and Bishop Planetarium, Inc. Option Agreement/Pillsbury Mound Florida Forever Project/Managing Agency Designation/Management Policy Statement Confirmation

REQUEST: Consideration of (1) an option agreement to acquire .95 acres within the Pillsbury Mound Florida Forever project from South Florida Museum and Bishop Planetarium, Inc.; (2) designation of Manatee County as the managing agency; and (3) confirmation of the management policy statement.

COUNTY: Manatee

LOCATION: Section 24, Township 34 South, Range 16 East

CONSIDERATION: \$145,000

<u>PARCEL</u>	<u>ACRES</u>	APPRAISED BY Catlett <u>(07/01/08)</u>	APPROVED <u>VALUE</u>	SELLER'S PURCHASE <u>PRICE</u>	TRUSTEES' PURCHASE <u>PRICE</u>	OPTION <u>DATE</u>
South Florida Museum	.95	\$170,000	\$170,000	\$ 1*	\$145,000** (85%)	June 30, 2009

* The property was a gift to the Seller and was transferred on July 26, 1974.

** \$152,632 per acre.

STAFF REMARKS: The Pillsbury Mound is a Full Fee "A" group project on the Florida Forever Project List approved by the Board of Trustees on April 14, 2009. The project contains .95 acres, of which no acres have been acquired or are under agreement to be acquired. If the Board of Trustees approves this agreement, the project will be complete.

Item 3, cont.

Project Description

Acquiring the mound would accomplish the following: (1) preserve a significant archeological site; (2) increase the amount of available open space in the urban area; and (3) increase resource educational opportunities. The historical Florida Forever goals, measures, and criteria apply.

Public Use

The Pillsbury Mound archaeological site is located within a residential area. If acquired, Manatee County would provide educational signage but no recreational activities and limited access to the site.

Mortgages and Liens

All mortgages and liens will be satisfied at the time of closing. There is a 50-foot wide access easement running along the eastern property boundary, which runs south to the county maintained road of 21st Avenue NW. On June 22, 1999, the Board of Trustees approved a staff recommendation to delegate to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) the authority to review and evaluate marketability issues as they arise on all chapter 259, F.S., acquisitions and to resolve them appropriately. Therefore, DEP staff will review, evaluate, and implement an appropriate resolution for these and any other title issues that arise prior to closing.

Closing Information

A title insurance commitment, a survey, and an environmental site assessment will be obtained by the Board of Trustees prior to closing.

Management

Pursuant to section 259.032(9)(e), F.S., staff recommends that the Board of Trustees designate Manatee County as the managing agency for this site. The site will be managed as an addition to the current Manatee County cultural and environmental education program.

Section 259.032(9)(e), F.S., requires that the Board of Trustees, concurrent with its approval of the initial acquisition agreement within a project, "evaluate and amend, as appropriate, the management policy statement for the project as provided by section 259.035, F.S., consistent with the purposes for which the lands are acquired." The management policy statement for this project was included in the 2009 Florida Forever Annual Report adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 14, 2009. Staff recommends that the Board of Trustees confirm the management policy statement as follows:

To protect a valuable cultural resource representing the last sand midden of the Weedon Island Culture period of settlement by indigenous peoples in this coastal region. Historical research shows that this cultural artifact is the last remaining mound formation of the Shaw's Point archeological area, of which at least five significant middens were documented prior to their destruction by development activities.

Item 3, cont.

Comprehensive Plan

This acquisition is consistent with section 187.201(9), F.S., the Natural Systems and Recreational Lands section of the State Comprehensive Plan.

(See Attachment 3, Pages 1-24)

RECOMMEND APPROVAL