



CONSERVATION CHARLOTTE



Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee
Conservation Charlotte is a program of Charlotte County Government

Contact Information

Charlotte County Community Services
Parks & Natural Resources Division
Attn. **Andy Stevens**
25550 Harbor View Road
Port Charlotte, FL 33980
(941) 764-4360

Members

Ruth Bromberg - Chairman
Jack Bateman
Judy Juliano
Clarke Keller
Joan Joy Lunt
John Phillips
Dorothea Zysko

Distribution List

Commissioner Bob Starr, Charlotte County
Roger Baltz, Charlotte County Administrator
Kelly Shoemaker, Charlotte County Assistant Administrator
Andy Stevens, Charlotte County Parks & Natural Resources
Bridget Washburn, Conservancy for Southwest Florida
John Jackson, Director of Community Services
Missy Christie, Charlotte County Parks & Natural Resources
Derek Rooney, Assistant County Attorney
Tina Powell, Charlotte County Parks & Natural Resources
Jason Thompson, Charlotte County Parks & Natural Resources
Phillip Brouse, Charlotte County Parks & Natural Resources

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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February 2, 2010, 3:00- 5:00 PM, Training Room B

25550 Harbor View Road

Port Charlotte, FL 33980

AGENDA

PUBLIC MEETING

- I. Call to order
- II. Introduction of guests
- III. Minutes: November 3, 2009
- IV. Old Business – Peace River Preserve naming goes to the BCC in February.
ESLOC Membership

New Business

- A. Update on Land Management, Prairie Creek Preserve, Deep Creek Property, Thornton Key Preserve, Buck Creek Preserve and Shell Creek Preserve
- B. Consolidation of Natural Resources Staff – Efficiencies Found
- C. Equestrian Trail Development at Prairie Creek Preserve, Jason Thompson, Environmental Specialist
- D. Grant Update and FCT status Tina Powell, Environmental Specialist
- E. Field Trip Opportunities on Conservation Charlotte Preserves
- F. Update on Florida Scrub-Jay Habitat Conservation Plan
- G. Public Comment - 3 minute duration

*Next Meeting: May 4, 2010, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm at
25550 Harbor View Road, Port Charlotte, Training Room B, program TBA.*

Minutes

**Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee
February 2, 2010 - 3:00pm-5:00pm
Training Room B
25550 Harbor View Road
Port Charlotte, FL 33980**

Members Present

Ruth Bromberg
Judy "JJ" Juliano
Clarke Keller
Joan Joy Lunt
John Phillips
Dorothea Zysko

Charlotte County Staff

Andy Stevens, Natural Resources
Derek Rooney, Asst. County Atty.
Hugh Bruz Meade
Al Campitelli

Wildlands Conservation Inc.

Dave Sumpter

Members Excused

Jack Bateman

Call to Order

The **February 2, 2010** meeting of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee was called to order at **3:03 pm** by **Ruth Bromberg**.

John Phillips made motion to approve the minutes for November 3rd, 2009. **Clarke Keller** seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Introduction was made by Dorothea Zysko, new ESLOC member.

Peace River Preserve Naming

Andy Stevens stated Peace River Preserve is at the end of Sandhill Blvd with approximately 450 acres on the Peace River, majority property is tidal marsh; observed a scrub-jay on the property so it is occupied; hopefully goes to the BCC the second meeting of February for approval.

Update on Land Management

Andy Stevens stated has updates on management that has taken place on the properties and will go through each one.

Andy Stevens stated that on Prairie Creek Preserve we have an agreement with the Ryals family to conduct management on the property, maintain fire breaks and they have done so; conducted a

350 acre prescribed burn on the northern portion of the property on January 6th and the property is in really great condition; contracted with Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) for educational tours and have been highly attended; recently some incidents with ATV's on the property, coordinating with the Sheriff's Office and Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) to monitor the property to catch the people; discussed providing guided access to ELOC members if anyone is interested.

Andy Stevens stated on the Deep Creek property a 40 acre piece within the property a prescribed burn was done in doing so allowed to do mechanical treatments next to Heritage Oak subdivision and property is in relatively good condition; some small problems with illegal dumping; Jason Thompson, Environmental Specialist oversees the management is looking at some additional mechanical thinning next to Heritage Oak; there are about 21 lots within the property that are not county owned, there are no roads and most are under water, so develop ability is very low.

Andy Stevens stated on Thornton Key Preserve prior to when we purchased the property the owner went in and bush hogged the Brazilian pepper which isn't a good idea, it spread the seed source throughout the property; worked with some volunteers, Dean Beckstead has given some staff and chipper, gone in and chipped some more Brazilian pepper, basically leaving the Brazilian pepper chips in place and taking off the tops with seed source the best we can; the property is basically tropical upland hammock which is very rare these days; most of the Brazilian pepper is still in tack; Tina Powell, Environmental Specialist is looking at some grants opportunities to treat even more Brazilian pepper; Brazilian pepper will be an ongoing maintenance for some time; dock, bank and trails being utilized by kayakers.

Andy Stevens stated Buck Creek Preserve is 80 plus acres on Buck Creek; received Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant for a little over \$3 million back and a portion of that payment went back to Conservation Charlotte funds; looked at putting some fencing up, a small parking lot and last year developed a small trail which is being heavily used; mechanical treatment was done on 30 acres, roller chopped the pine flatwoods; the eagle has nested, there are two eagles in the nest, should fledge soon and has constant traffic of people viewing the nest; with the mechanical treatment went right up to the 660 foot buffer outlined in the Bald Eagle Management Plan and not able to go beyond that.

Andy Stevens stated on Shell Creek Preserve conducted a 140 acre prescribed burn on the south end of the property, there is a little left along the creek to burn; Natural Resources staff are working on rehabbing the fire breaks so they are existing, created a few new ones and ready to burn now; there are signs for travelers, but this property isn't heavily used; Edison College's environmental club which is headed by Dr. Bill Wilcox would like to do some research projects here and we're working with them on putting this research program in their biology curriculum; a student from University of South Florida came in and her graduate thesis is on the golden mice, she put out some traps, didn't catch any, and would like to come back this year to do again; research opportunities are endless; there's some interest on coming in and doing Aquatic trapping; these preserves really have no baseline data, only gopher tortoises and scrub jay surveys we conducted, so these research opportunities are helpful on collecting data.

Andy Stevens stated Management Plans basically outline management strategies over the next five to ten years with a focal point on how we manage the preserves, without it's a hit and miss especially when you have staff changes and so forth, so if you have an approved Management Plan that's pier reviewed by US Fish & Wildlife (USFWS) and other agencies they have a

booklet and template ready to go to implement procedures.

Dorothea Zysko asked if the Management Plans are available for viewing. **Andy Stevens** stated that we are finalizing a few and possibly could make available on the website.

Andy Stevens stated we just did scrub jay surveys on Prairie Creek Preserve for the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and there are six family groups of Scrub-jays on the property. **Dorothea Zysko** asked if Scrub-jays and Management are taken into consideration. **Andy Stevens** stated yes.

Consolidation of Natural Resources Staff

Andy Stevens stated that there was a direction to consolidation the staff at Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources, they were overseeing the Environmental Parks and basically providing the Land Management they needed, and Natural Resources was providing Land Management for the Preserves, that consolidation took place July 1, 2009; since that time found a lot of efficiencies that have taken place, just us collectively all been in one building and the access to additional equipment.

Equestrian Trail Development at Prairie Creek Preserve

Andy Stevens stated the last meeting there was discussion on some passive recreational opportunities and looked at an equestrian trail for Prairie Creek Preserve, since then we looked at Shell Creek Preserve and Prairie Creek Preserve and give you our preliminary research we found, especially for Prairie Creek Preserve.

Andy Stevens introduced Jason Thompson, Environmental Specialist with Natural Resources. **Jason Thompson**, Environmental Specialist stated that looked at Prairie Creek Preserve and Shell Creek Preserve; Prairie Creek Preserve really would any need for additional investment to move forward, already has a gate structure which limits access, but allows people with horse trailers come in and park, and trail access; Shell Creek Preserve would be a substantial investment; Prairie Creek Preserve about 2 ½ miles of trail, had a site visit with equestrian people, and were enthusiastic, they assured that there would be use out of the trails; few things should think about moving forward, state law is a negative Coggins test, recommended riders stay on designated trails, possible invasive species like hay, suggested keeping at parking area to minimize the opportunity of invasive; possible erosion to trails and will keep an on eye; recommend registrations for horses which at that time we would get a copy of the negative Coggins, some pertinent information like name, contact numbers; no restrooms facilities are essential and we won't put those in to minimize cost, or water needs are not essential at this time. **Clarke Keller** stated suggesting keeping horses and people separated.

Andy Stevens stated we posed those questions, the people were met with were excited just to have a new place to be and also posed the question on the length of the trail, they said 2 ½ miles were fine and this primarily a test.

Dorothea Zysko asked if there were problems with horses utilizing the property could there be a potential of charging fees. **Andy Stevens** stated that ultimately would be a policy decision.

Dorothea Zysko stated when would you look at opening this up. **Andy Stevens** stated trying within the next month or two as a test.

Grant Update and FCT status

Andy Stevens stated collectively we wanted to give an update on grants. **Andy Stevens** introduced Tina Powell, Environmental Specialist with Natural Resources. **Tina Powell**, Environmental Specialist stated want to start with an awarded grant through Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) we received approximately \$14,000.00 to remove almost 13 acres of Brazilian pepper removal at Thornton Key Preserve, hopefully to start that treatment within the next month or so; currently have three pending grant applications submitted, one is with Florida Fish and Wildlife for the Legacy Grant for about \$47,000.00 for scrub for restoration at both Prairie Creek Preserve and Shell Creek Preserve, another awaiting on with USFWS for a Restoration Grant for \$10,000.00 at Shell Creek Preserve and Rotonda Mitigation Area, additional looking at a USFWS Acquisition Grant for a parcel to add on to the Tippecanoe II Mitigation Area; there are some additional upcoming grant opportunities for additional Brazilian pepper removal at Thornton Key Preserve and looking at around \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00 that is through the Five Star Restoration Program; should hear in late spring or early summer between May and June the status.

Tina Powell, Environmental Specialist stated small update on Buck Creek Preserve that essential trail and parking area is completed, at this time we won't be pursuing putting anymore amenities or improvements outside of ongoing Land Management and Florida Community Trust (FCT) is aware that we don't have the funding at this time for the additional amenities. **Judy Juliano** asked if there any problems with that happening. **Tina Powell**, Environmental Specialist stated that is happening all of the state. **Andy Stevens** stated it was a board action last fiscal year and we will put our Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget together for this year and another decision will have to be made, but right now we have no plans to move forward.

Tina Powell, Environmental Specialist stated Florida Community Trust (FCT) is delaying there application cycle this year to see if the Legislature they will receive funding and how much of the funding they will receive, once that is decided we will update and resubmit the FCT Grant for Thornton Key Preserve.

Field Trip Opportunities on Conservation Charlotte Preserves

Andy Stevens stated that field trip opportunities any time you ever want to go out we can go individual and we have staff that can go take you out just to give you a better idea of the preserves.

Update on Florida Scrub-Jay Habitat Conservation Plan

Andy Stevens stated update on the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the scrub jay, we gave the BCC an update recently, our technical advisory Dr. Reed Bowman gave the majority of the updates, basically where we are at is looking at the Reserve Design for the HCP, looks like we are going to have three or four models, and we have a lot more work to do on the Population Liability Analysis which basically says the Reserve Design supports the viability of the species

over 100 years; Dr. Bowman has incredible knowledge of Reserve Designs; update the public as we proceed through the development process and BCC; hope to have a substantial completion come December 2010.

Ruth Bromberg asked are we supposed to elect new chair since we are in a new year. **Andy Stevens** stated no, need a new vice chair and will do the next meeting to replace Gary Mastry.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Lynette Auger