



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Assistant County Administrator /
Department of General Services
Parks and Recreation

Date: September 13, 2022

To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners

Through: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator
Beth Powell, Parks and Recreation Director

From: Wendy Swindell, Conservation Lands Manager

Subject: Updated Draft Environmental Lands Program Guide for the November 2022
Environmental Land Bond Referendum

DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS:

On March 8, 2022, the County Administrator provided the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners (“BOCC”) with a proposed resolution authorizing an Environmental Land Bond Referendum for the November 8, 2022 ballot. Resolution 2022-016 was passed by majority vote. The Resolution calls for a Bond Referendum Election for the issuance of general obligation bonds as follows:

- To acquire and permanently preserve environmentally significant lands to restore the Indian River Lagoon, protect water resources, natural areas, wildlife habitat, drinking water resources, and construct public access improvements related thereto, shall Indian River County be authorized to issue general obligation bonds up to \$50,000,000, maturing within 20 years from each issuance, not exceeding the legal maximum interest rate, payable from ad valorem taxes, with full public disclosure of all spending through annual independent audits?

The Board further directed Staff to update the Environmental Lands Program Guide (ELP Guide) and to return with a proposal for a working group to serve the functions of what was previously known as the Land Acquisition Advisory Committee. A framework for the newly proposed Environmental Land Acquisition Panel structure is presented in the Draft ELP Guide.

Staff has been working to update the ELP Guide with supporters of the referendum, while also researching other Florida environmental lands acquisition programs. Manatee County and Sarasota County are actively engaged in environmental lands acquisition programs. Both counties have acquisition processes that have been successfully implemented and their staff has provided feedback used to assist in the development of the County’s updated Draft ELP Guide.

A summary of the proposed updates to the Draft ELP Guide include the following:

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

- Updated to reflect current content

CHAPTER 1 (PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES & POLICIES)

- Updated definitions to reflect changes in agencies
- Definitions were amended/deleted/added as appropriate
- Modified the objectives to reflect the current resolution
- Updated the management goals

CHAPTER II (RESPONSIBILITIES/RELATIONSHIPS)

- Modified the formal review committee (Land Acquisition Advisory Committee) to a 9-person advisory panel (Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel)
- Outlined and updated the purpose and terms of office

CHAPTER III (ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE PROTECTION METHODS)

- Amended this section to solely include methods of land acquisition. Prior ELG had a description of other processes such as Zoning, Leases, Easement that were deemed unnecessary by Staff in collaboration with the County Attorney

CHAPTER IV (FUNDING/FINANCING)

- Updated the section to include current metrics and funding sources

CHAPTER V (LAND ACQUISITION PROCESSES/PROCEDURES)

- Updated the process to include the review procedures performed by the ELAP and County staff
- Updated the process to include a new, simplified application form
- Updated the evaluation matrix to reflect the resolution, current parameters and priorities
- Updated the section to reflect changing conservation priorities including increased emphasis on biodiversity, sustainability, resiliency, and wildlife corridors
- Modified the evaluation/prioritization process to reflect the conservation priorities in accordance with the resolution
- Removed references to historic/cultural resources as a priority for acquisition
- Modified language to address future land management and public use improvements
- Updated language to reflect the current statutory dialect and to include a “Tiered” system

CHAPTER VI (LAND MANAGEMENT)

- Update the section to reflect the current operations and land management actions of the Conservation Lands Program

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

- Updated the Appendix with the Comprehensive Plan Chapters to reflect the County's 2030 Comp Plan
- Modified Application/Nomination Form
- Modified Evaluation Table
- Newly Structured Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel (ELAP)

This Draft Environmental Lands Program Guide is subject to the review and approval of the Board of County Commissioners. Should the Environmental Lands Bond Referendum be approved by the voters on November 8, 2022, the ELAP will review and comment on the Environmental Lands Program Guide before final presentation to BOCC.

FUNDING

At this time, there are no funding requirements for this item.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners review the attached Draft Environmental Lands Program Guide and provide Staff with their comments and direction.

ATTACHMENT:

Draft Environmental Lands Program Guide with Appendices – updated September 2022

Approved Agenda Item for September 20, 2022