



**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM**

**Department of General Services /
Parks & Recreation Division – Conservation Resources**

Date: December 22, 2020

To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners

Thru: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator
Kevin M. Kirwin, Parks & Recreation Director

From: Beth Powell, Asst. Director Parks & Conservation Resources

Subject: 2020 Conservation Lands Program Update

This informational item has been prepared to provide the Board and the general public with an overview of the current and projected activities for the Conservation Lands Program. It is our goal to maintain effective communication by updating the progress of various projects that have been designed to increase public access and enjoyment of the County's Conservation lands Program.

Parks and Recreation – Conservation Resources staff continue to develop a strategic approach to advancing public access improvements and land management projects within each of the conservation areas. This approach places special emphasis on conservation area management plans that have a commitment to Florida Communities Trust (FCT) to fulfill specific obligations, while at the same time addressing goals and objectives of the Board and the Department with respect to the Capital Improvement Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to physical improvements to the conservation areas, staff has been working through the newly combined Parks & Recreation Division to improve outreach and education. Staff evaluated various companies and options for providing the public with a mobile based app that contains trail data specific to our conservation areas. In October, staff selected Outerspatial to provide these services. GIS and Conservation staff have been working to transfer all necessary data to the company for a live launch expected to occur in late January. With this in mind, and in light of the current social distancing protocols related to COVID-19, staff also sought ways to encourage visitation at our conservation areas. In person education programs are generally the preferred method to introduce conservation areas to new visitors, however, with the need for social distancing measures and reduced group sizes, engagement is limited. Staff looked for alternative ways to engage larger numbers of people and to improve educational information available that encourages the public to visit the conservation area trails and amenities. Staff worked with the Budget Department to utilize CARES Act funding to produce 8 educational videos for this purpose. These videos will be available on a variety of platforms including the County's website, Facebook pages, Channel 27, You Tube, Vimeo,

as well as to be shared with other organizational partners. In addition, conservation staff will be working with recreation staff to schedule live premiers of each video throughout the next several months which will allow the public to engage with staff to ask questions and learn more about the County's conservation lands.

In FY 19/20, two full-time Conservation Lands Technicians were budgeted and hired to assist the Division with the maintenance specific to conservation areas. The two positions have completed necessary deferred maintenance throughout the last year especially as it relates to exotics treatment and maintenance of trails, boardwalks and other amenities.

As far as physical improvements, staff is providing a summary of current work efforts and projects that have been completed since the 2017 in tables shown below. While not entirely comprehensive, these tables provide a good snapshot of projects that have been completed or are in progress.

Conservation Area Status – Projects Completed

Conservation Area	Milestones
Multiple CAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New entry signs installed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captain Forster Hammock Preserve Indian River Lagoon Greenway North Sebastian Conservation Area Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exotics treatment funded through Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission – multiple years – entering maintenance rotation
Ansin Riverfront Conservation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boardwalk & trails complete Perimeter fencing to be installed (early 2021) Transitioning to a 5-year FCT reporting period
Archie Smith Fish House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dock/pier completed – remaining improvements beginning FY21/22
Harmony Oaks Conservation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland boardwalk completed in 2020
Jones' Pier Conservation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jungle Trail signage and brochures completed and installed Fruit Stand reconstructed
North Sebastian Conservation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking lot recently re-surfaced New signage installed Requesting transition to a 5-year FCT reporting period
Oslo Riverfront CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Firebreak funded through Hazard Mitigation Grant Program complete
Round Island South CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland boardwalks installed, trails complete
South Oslo Riverfont CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boardwalks installed, new educational signage installed

Conservation Area Status – Planning & Permitting Phase

Conservation Area	Milestones	Anticipated Timing
Hallstrom Farmstead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site plan underway for parking, trails, pavilions & boardwalk west of Old Dixie Hwy Renovation of buildings & other improvements east of Old Dixie Hwy in FY 22/23 	Construction to be completed for western improvements in late 2021

Lost Tree Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial survey work complete Strategic design meetings underway Conceptual design under development BOCC update planned as part of design process 	Conceptual design to be completed in mid-2021
Sebastian Harbor Preserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trails & boardwalks complete Site plans & permitting complete (parking & pavilions) 	Bidding for parking and picnic improvements in early 2021
South Prong Slough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary survey complete Site plan under development 	Permitting to be complete by late 2021 – construction bidding to follow

Conservation Area Status – Construction Phase

Conservation Area	Milestones	Anticipated Timing
Harmony Oaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland boardwalk completed in 2020 Planning possible kayak launch & limited parking Trail system complete with new boardwalk 	Improvements planned to be completed in FY 21/11
Jones' Pier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland construction is 90% complete – awaiting pump installation & planting Pavilion 80% complete – FPL to relocate power for restroom facilities Cottage to be painted & interior renovated in early 2021 House to be elevated (HMGP Grant received) in mid-2021. Museum layout & exhibit designs underway 	Improvements to be complete in mid-2021
Kroegel Homestead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bids for construction of parking lot, pavilion and trail have been received Planning for reconstructed outbuildings in 2021 Museum design planned for FY21/22 	Parking lot and trail to be opened in mid-2021
Oslo Riverfront	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repaired impoundment overlook under construction New perimeter fencing planned for early 2021 New boardwalks planned for 2021/22 Planning improvements to the ADA loop trail 	Boardwalk & trail improvements to be complete in late 2021/early 2022 (pending design & permitting)
Oyster Bar Marsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of boardwalks 7 trails complete Parking lot construction anticipated to commence in early 2021. 	Site improvements to be completed in mid-2021
Wabasso Scrub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perimeter fencing to be installed in early 2021 Wetland overlook bidding nearing completion Trails complete 	Overlook to be completed in mid-2021