



**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA**  
**AGENDA ITEM**  
**Parks, Recreation & Conservation**  
**Conservation Division**

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**Date:** November 28, 2023  
**To:** The Honorable Board of County Commissioners  
**Thru:** John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator  
Michael C. Zito, Deputy County Administrator  
Beth Powell, Parks, Recreation & Conservation Director  
**From:** Wendy Swindell, Conservation Lands Manager  
**Subject:** Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel Recommendations for  
Finalization of the Draft Environmental Lands Program Guide

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**BACKGROUND:**

On March 8, 2022, the County Administrator provided the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) 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 BCC 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. On September 20, 2022, the BCC approved the Draft ELP Guide. Chapter II of the approved ELP Guide outlined the composition of the proposed review committee, to be referred to as the Environmental Land Acquisition Panel (ELAP). Between March and June of 2023, members of the ELAP were nominated and approved by the BCC.

**DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS:**

The nine-member ELAP convened for its initial meeting on August 15, 2023. During this meeting, the ELAP nominated and approved Peter O'Bryan as the Chairman, and Roland DeBlois as the Vice Chairman. Meetings were held on September 19, 2023, and October 17, 2023, to review the Draft ELP Guide and provide recommendations to the BCC on its content and revisions recommended (revision documents attached).

In order to better organize the information and provide clarity, staff has made minor changes to the sequence of the content in the ELP Guide and added minor content to provide document clarity and organization. These minor changes have been made subsequent to the October 17, 2023, ELAP meeting, and include the following:

- Added Table of Contents
- Moved Definitions to a new Glossary section for ease of reference
- Added Acronyms to the Glossary section
- Formatted Appendices list for ease of reference

**A summary of the ELAP recommendation to the ELP Guide include the following:**

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Added to the document based on the ELAP recommended changes to the ELP Guide

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- No changes proposed

#### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

- No changes proposed

#### **CHAPTER I (PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES & POLICIES)**

- Added a definition for the “Acquisition Consultant”
- Definitions were moved to the Glossary in the Appendices section

#### **CHAPTER II (RESPONSIBILITIES/RELATIONSHIPES)**

- No changes proposed

#### **CHAPTER III (ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE PROTECTION METHODS)**

- Clarified “Purchase” definition (Page 13)

#### **CHAPTER IV (FUNDING /FINANCING)**

- Updated the introductory paragraph to include current conservation estimates (Page 15)
- Added an introductory statement to the “Federal, State & Joint Acquisition Program” section (Page 15)
- Added additional grant opportunities under the “Federal Funding” section (Pages 15-16)
- Added additional grant opportunities and clarified existing descriptions under the “State Funding” section (Pages 16-19)

#### **CHAPTER V (LAND ACQUISITION PROCESSES/PROCEDURES)**

- Amended Chart #1 to add “approximately” (Page 23)
- Provided more background on County Outreach (Page 25)
- Changed “exotic” to “invasives” (for entire document)
- Deleted “planning” within Phase 5 (Page 34)
- Clarified the routing of Project Proposals (Page 35)

#### **CHAPTER VI (LAND MANAGEMENT)**

- No other changes beyond replacement of “exotics” to “invasives”

## APPENDICES

- *Appendix A – Glossary: Acronyms, Definitions and Terms was added*
- **Environmental Land Acquisition Parcel Nomination Form:** *Added a reference to “Appendix B,” and updated to include current email address*
- **County Resolution No.:** *Added a reference to “Appendix C.” No other changes*
- **I.R.C. Comprehensive Plan Policy Excerpts:** *Added a reference to “Appendix D.” No other changes*
- **ELAP Evaluation/Prioritization Matrix:** *The matrix is now referenced as “Appendix E.”*

*Under Qualitative Considerations the ELAP provides the following recommended changes to the Weighing Units on the Matrix:*

- The Natural Community Evaluation Factor was recommended to remain a “15”
- The Potential Habitat Evaluation factor was recommended to be changed from a “15” to a “10”
- The Corridors & Greenways Evaluation Factor was recommended to be changed from a “10” to a “15”
- The Landscape Evaluation Factor was recommended to remain a “10”
- The Recreational & Educational Evaluation Factor was recommended to be changed from an “8” to a “10”

*Under Property Acquisition Considerations the ELAP provides the following recommended changes to the Weighing Units on the Matrix:*

- The Property Need vs. Alternatives Evaluation Factor was recommended to be changed from a “12” to an “8”
  - The Vulnerability Evaluation Factor was recommended to remain an “8”
  - The Land Management Evaluation Factor was recommended to remain a “10”
  - The Cooperative Acquisition/Grant Potential Evaluation Factor was recommended to be changed from a “6” to an “8”
  - Favorable Market Conditions was recommended to remain a “6”
- **Minimum Criteria for ELAP Property Review:** *This section is now referenced as “Appendix F.” Changes recommended by the ELAP include: (1) The acronym “ELAP” was added to the introductory paragraph; (2) Item “c” was amended to clarify listed species designations; and (3) the term “adjacent” was replaced with “within” on Item “d.”*

## **FUNDING:**

No funding is required for the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel recommendations for finalization of the Draft ELP Guide.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff respectfully recommends that the Board of County Commissioners review the proposed recommendations from the ELAP for the ELP Guide and provide staff with their comments and direction for finalization of the document.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Clean Copy of the changes to the ELP Guide based on recommendations from the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel
- Track Change Version of changes to the ELP Guide based on recommendations from the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel (available for review online or at the Commission Office)

**APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR DECEMBER 12, 2023**