



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Parks, Recreation & Conservation Department
Conservation Lands Program

Date: December 1, 2023
To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners
Thru: John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Deputy County Administrator
From: Beth Powell, Parks, Recreation & Conservation Director
Subject: Florida Communities Trust Guaranty for Indian River Land Trust – 36 Acre Sebastian Greenway Parcel

BACKGROUND:

The Indian River Land Trust (Land Trust) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect, improve, provide access to, and promote the preservation of waterways, open spaces, and green places in Indian River County. In October 2023, the Indian River Land Trust purchased a 36-acre parcel located on the South Prong of the St. Sebastian River (map attached). The 36-acre parcel contains approximately 22 acres of uplands and 11 acres of forested wetlands with approximately 1,600 linear feet of riverine habitat along the South Prong of the St. Sebastian River. The parcel is located within the St. Sebastian River Greenway just north-west of the County's South Prong Slough Conservation Area. Various parcels are aligned within this corridor in an effort to protect water quality and provide critical habitat protection through this major tributary to the St. Sebastian River/Indian River Lagoon.

DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS:

The 36-acre parcel was once cultivated for citrus production and has since reverted to an oak dominated canopy in the upland areas. The Land Trust is applying for cost-share funding through the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) for a 70% reimbursement for the acquisition cost of the parcel.

FCT requires non-profit organizations who apply for funding to provide a letter from a local government affirming that it will assume management responsibilities/ownership in the event that the non-profit awardee is ever unable to fulfill the management/ownership obligations through an event such as the organization dissolving. The Land Trust has requested this letter of commitment from Indian River County for this parcel.

While the letter of guaranty is not a contractual obligation, and future obligations would be dependent on award by the FCT, there would be an inherent cost associated with the assumption of management and/or contractual obligation should the Land Trust dissolve, or be unable to fulfill its obligations. It is the opinion of staff that the parcel provides a substantial value for the protection of natural resources consistent with environmental protection provided by similar parcels managed within the Conservation Lands Program and any funding needed could be allocated in the Conservation Lands operating/capital budget in the unlikely event the Land Trust defaulted or dissolved.

FUNDING:

There is no direct funding obligation associated with issuing the letter for this grant application. However, should the organization dissolve, or be unable to fulfill its obligations, there would be a direct cost associated with the perpetual management of the parcel through the County's Conservation Lands Program. Any financial obligation assumed by the County, should default occur, would be dependent on the property's condition, any improvements made for public access, and any unfulfilled commitments made in the FCT Grant Agreement/Special Management Conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff respectfully requests that the Board of County Commissioners consider the request made by the Land Trust and, if approved, authorize the Chairman to execute the Management Guaranty letter dated December 12, 2023, after review and approval by the County Attorney.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Draft Florida Communities Trust Management Guaranty Letter
- St. Sebastian Greenway Map

DISTRIBUTION:

Ken Grudens, Executive Director - Indian River Land Trust, Inc.

DECEMBER 12, 2023