



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

Date: November 1, 2024
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 – Toni Robinson Extension Property

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 March 2024, the Indian River Land Trust acquired the 48-acre Toni Robinson Trail Extension Property along the Indian River Lagoon, which includes over 1,000 feet of natural shoreline. This acquisition connects with nearby conservation lands, forming a nearly 150-acre protected area. The eastern portion of the property features mangrove forests, which are part of a managed mosquito control impoundment, providing essential habitat for wildlife affected by local development. The uplands, once used for citrus farming, have transitioned into woodlands that also support diverse wildlife. The Land Trust is seeking cost-share funding from the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) for approximately 60% of the acquisition costs for the parcel.

DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS:

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 after review and approval by the County Attorney.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Draft Florida Communities Trust Management Guaranty Letter
- Toni Robinson Extension Property Map

DISTRIBUTION:

Ken Grudens, Executive Director – Indian River Land Trust

APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR NOVEMBER 19, 2024