

**THE MARTIN COUNTY**

**Environmental Lands Oversight Committee  
Manual**



## Introduction General Overview

The Martin County Environmental Lands Oversight Committee Manual (ELOCM) contains the policies, standards, and procedures relating to environmentally significant land acquisition activities. The ELOC will receive and review proposals for purchase and make specific land acquisition recommendations. Appendix A illustrates the review process for any properties that are nominated for acquisition. The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has the final authority as identified in Ordinance #1221 to establish land acquisition policies, procedures, priorities, standards and criteria. A copy of the ordinance is included as Appendix B.

### THE ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MANUAL

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this ELOCM is to assist the ELOC by outlining the procedures necessary to review and provide recommendations on acquisition proposals.

#### SCOPE

Land acquisition review can be initiated by receipt of a Project Proposal Nomination Form (Appendix C). In addition, a review can be initiated with the identification of a need to meet conservation objectives related to one of the four (4) project areas designated in Ordinance #1221. Appendix D includes the evaluation matrix and a description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate and score all proposals that have been nominated for acquisition. A description of the conservation needs of each project area is included in the section below. All lands acquired under the Half Cent Sales Tax Program must be voluntarily offered for sale by the property owner. For purposes of this process, the role of the ELOC terminates when a recommendation has been made to the BOCC.

#### DEFINITIONS

Definitions of commonly encountered terms are provided to aid in performance of the duties required of the ELOC (Appendix G).

## LAND ACQUISITION PROJECT AREAS

All acquisitions must fall within the footprint of one of four (4) acquisition zones to be eligible for this program. These acquisition zones include Indian River Lagoon South, Pal Mar, Loxa-Lucie and Blueways. A map of the acquisition zones has been included as Appendix E. The following is a description of each of those four zones.

- A. **Indian River Lagoon South (IRL South).** This footprint is one that has been identified by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) to help attenuate damaging stormwater flows into the St. Lucie Waterway and Estuary. The project relies on reservoirs, stormwater treatment areas (STA's) and shallow storage to accomplish those goals. In 2001, approximately 42,000-acres (known as the Allapattah Complex) were identified in the IRL South Feasibility Study for land acquisition to complete the shallow storage necessary for the project. Significant acquisitions have occurred over the past 24 years, but there are still roughly 25,000-acres identified as potential acquisitions within the IRL South footprint. These additional lands were identified to provide shallow storage and capture damaging runoff from the C-44 basin. A significant portion of the identified lands fall within the State Designated Florida Wildlife Corridor. The remaining areas include a mixture of pine flatwoods, large slough systems and ranch lands.
- B. **Pal Mar.** The primary goal of this acquisition zone is to protect some of the highest quality wetland systems in Martin County and the western tributary to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Pal Mar gets its name because the zone straddles the line between Martin County and Palm Beach County. The acquisition area is west of The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, north of Indiantown Road, and south of SE Kanner Hwy. The project area is located near the John C. and Mariana Jones Hungryland Wildlife and Environmental Area and J. W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area. The area also represents an important link in a greenway system that spans from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Okeechobee. Much of this area has been identified as a priority

for State acquisition through the Florida Forever Program. Most of the potential acquisitions are in an area known as Palm Beach Heights, a 9,000-acre area west of SW Pratt Whitney Road of small lot sized (0.25-1-acre) publicly and privately owned lands.

- C. **Loxa-Lucie.** This zone includes a mosaic of high-quality wetlands and pine forests in eastern Martin County extending between the South Fork of the St. Lucie River and Kitching Creek, an important tributary to the NW Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The footprint includes areas west of SE Federal Hwy, east of I-95 and south of Cove Road. The primary goals of this project area is to create a greenway system connecting Atlantic Ridge State Park and Jonathan Dickinson State Park, and to protect the high quality pine forests and wetland systems within this area. Much of this area has been identified as a priority for State acquisition through the Florida Forever Program and is within the Optimum Boundary of both State Parks. Approximately 10,000-acres of land has been identified for potential acquisition within Loxa-Lucie.
  
- D. **Blueways Program.** The purpose of this zone is to protect waterways by providing natural buffers and to create passive recreational access opportunities. These areas tend to support a high level of rare and endangered species habitat. Many of the areas are also in flood zones so the project will help provide coastal resiliency. Potential acquisitions in this zone include properties adjoining the St. Lucie River and Estuary, the IRL and the Atlantic Ocean. Although past acquisition programs have managed to acquire the bulk of the properties in this zone, there are still 400-acres that have been identified for potential acquisition.

## POLICY

Martin County will acquire and manage lands or assist in acquisition and management of lands by other governmental entities which are consistent with the intent of Ordinance #1221, and the open space/conservation and recreation goals, policies and objectives in the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

## RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Oversight Committee shall operate under the ELOC Rules of procedure that are contained in Appendix F.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Officials listed below are responsible for the functions indicated:

### A. Martin County Commission

1. Approves land acquisition policies, procedures and priorities.
2. Approves standards and criteria for land acquisition.
3. Approves or denies land acquisition recommendations submitted by the ELOC.
4. Authorizes expenditures of funds for carrying out this program.
5. Authorizes all bond issues, both public and private, for carrying out the purchase of land.
6. Determines what Martin County organizations will be represented on the ELOC, and approves individuals nominated by those organizations.

### B. Environmental Lands Oversight Committee (ELOC)

1. The Oversight Committee shall evaluate the features of each proposal and rank the projects using the Nomination Form, the Project Ranking Form, the Environmental Assessment, and any other relevant information as provided by the Project Proposal Information Form.
2. The Oversight Committee shall create a Priority Recommendation List for submission to the BOCC for review and approval.

C. Staff

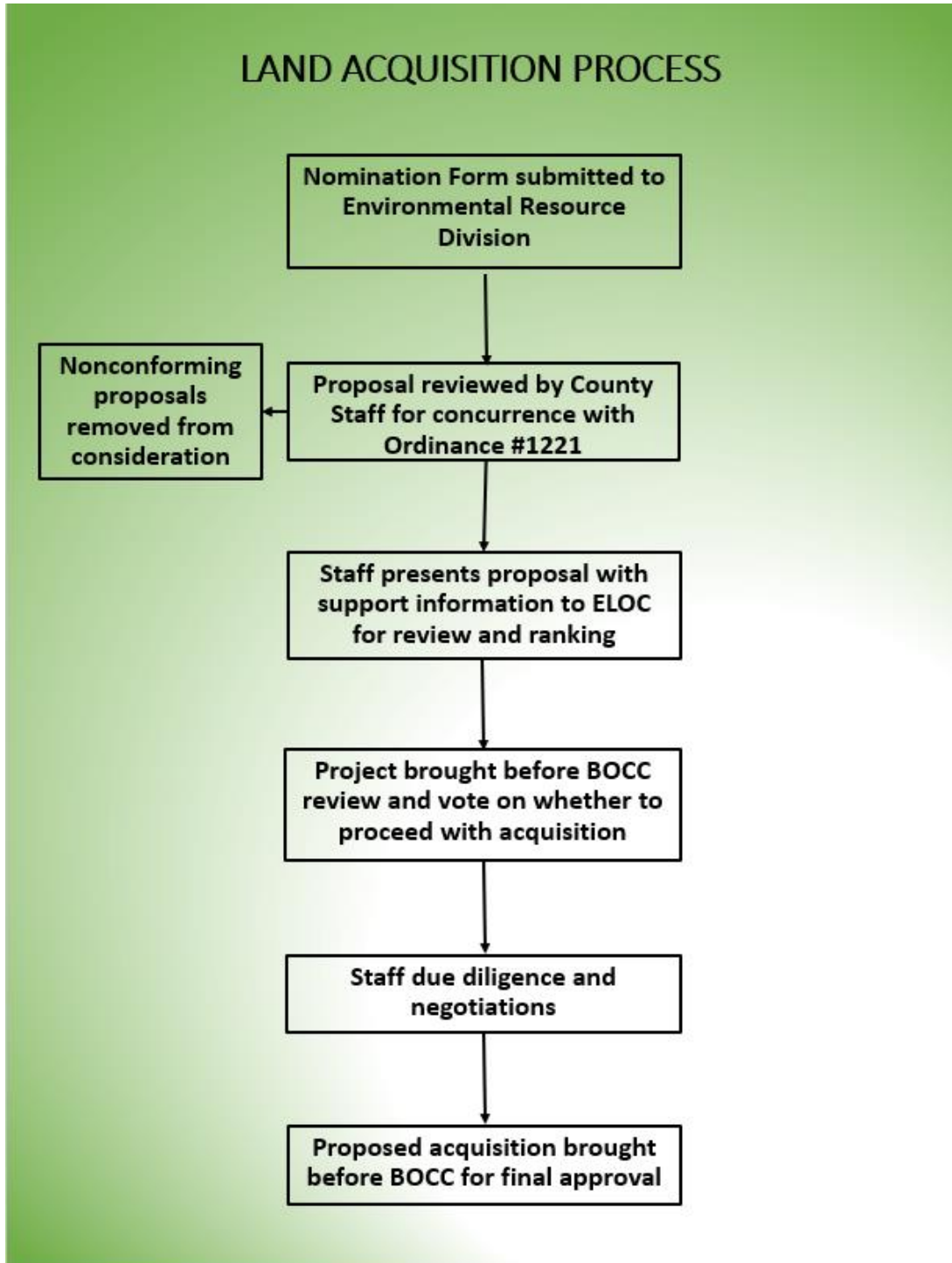
1. Facilitate the application process for the ELOC and present nominations to the BOCC for selection of members.
2. Solicit proposals from willing landowners. Receive all Project Proposal Information Forms and evaluate for policy and procedural compliance.
3. Due diligence for submitted properties.
4. Oversee review process for submitted proposals for the ELOC, facilitate site inspections, solicit comments, prepare agendas, record minutes and facilitate project rankings.
5. Coordinate negotiations with owners of property under consideration for acquisition. Negotiations may entail direct contact with landowners and/or coordination with partner cost-share agency staff and other land acquisition entities, as applicable.
6. Develop purchase contracts; present negotiation status to the ELOC and the BOCC.
7. Prepare Priority recommendation list memorandum for County Commission consideration following recommendation by the ELOC.
8. Draft management plan for approval by the Commission once properties have been acquired, if applicable.

PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

1. Proposals may be submitted by any person, or group of persons, who may be, or may not be, a landowner of record. However, a willing seller or willingness to engage in a conservation easement letter is required for consideration by the ELOC.
2. Proposals shall be submitted to the Martin County Public Works Department/Environmental Resource Division office at the following address: 2401 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart, FL 34996, or by email to [Landacquisition@martin.fl.us](mailto:Landacquisition@martin.fl.us).

3. Proposals shall be submitted on the application form provided. Submittal of any pertinent information not requested in the application is encouraged.
4. All properties proposed for purchase must be wholly within Martin County.

APPENDIX A  
Flowchart of Land Acquisition Process





# APPENDIX B

## Ordinance 1221



BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

ORDINANCE NUMBER 1221

AN ORDINANCE CALLING FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO LEVY A ONE-HALF CENT (1/2%) LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE SALES SURTAX; PROVIDING FOR THE DURATION OF THE SURTAX; APPROVING THE LEVY OF SUCH SURTAX; PROVIDING FOR THE USE OF THE PROCEEDS OF SUCH LEVY IF APPROVED AT SUCH REFERENDUM; AUTHORIZATION, DIRECTION AND REFERENDUM PROCEDURE; AND PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTING PROVISIONS, SEVERABILITY, APPLICABILITY, FILING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA (the "County"):

**SECTION 1. AUTHORITY FOR THIS ORDINANCE.** This ordinance is enacted pursuant to Section 212.055(2), Section 101.161(1), Florida Statutes, and other applicable provisions of law.

**SECTION 2. APPROVAL OF LEVY OF SURTAX.** Subject to voter approval as hereinafter set forth, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners, as the governing board of Martin County, Florida, hereby approves the levy of a one-half cent (1/2%) Local Government Infrastructure Surtax pursuant to Section 212.055(2), Florida Statutes (the "Surtax") for a period of 10 years from the effective date of January 1, 2025, through and including December 31, 2034.

**SECTION 3. SURTAX REFERENDUM.** A referendum of the qualified electors residing in the area of the County is hereby called to be held on November 5, 2024, to determine whether or not the levy of the Surtax shall be approved by such qualified electors. All qualified electors residing in the area of the County shall be entitled and permitted to vote in such referendum.

**SECTION 4. NOTICE OF SURTAX REFERENDUM.** As required by law, notice of the Surtax referendum in substantially the form attached hereto as Exhibit "A" shall be published in Treasure Coast Newspapers or other newspaper publishing and of general circulation in the area of the county, at least twice, once in the fifth week and once in the third week prior to the week in which the referendum is to be held. This ordinance shall be published in full as part of the notice of such surtax referendum.

**SECTION 5. OFFICIAL BALLOT.** The form of the ballot to be used in the Surtax referendum shall be in substantially the following form:

NOVEMBER 5, 2024  
OFFICIAL BALLOT  
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

LANDS TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY, NATURAL AREAS AND WILDLIFE HABITAT  
ONE-HALF PERCENT SALES SURTAX

SHALL MARTIN COUNTY PROTECT ITS WATER QUALITY AND UNIQUE CHARACTER BY ACQUIRING CRITICAL NATURAL LANDS IN MARTIN COUNTY WITHIN THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON SOUTH, PAL-MAR, LOXAHATCHEE AND ST. LUCIE HEADWATERS, BLUEWAYS AREAS AND PROVIDE MUNICIPAL

**INFRASTRUCTURE ALLOWED BY LAW, BY LEVYING A ONE-HALF PERCENT (0.5%) COUNTY SALES TAX FOR 10 YEARS STARTING JANUARY 1, 2025 WITH ANNUAL AUDIT AND CITIZEN OVERSIGHT.**

\_\_\_\_\_ FOR the one-half percent sales tax

\_\_\_\_\_ AGAINST the one-half percent sales tax

**SECTION 6. USE OF REVENUES BY THE COUNTY AND THE MUNICIPALITIES IN THE COUNTY.**

(1) County Use. The County hereby commits to use all of the County's share of the proceeds of the Surtax, if the Surtax is approved by a majority of the voters voting in the referendum, as follows:

- a. To acquire, by fee simple interest, environmentally significant land for the purposes of: preserving, conserving, and restoring the St. Lucie River, the Indian River Lagoon, Pal-Mar, the Loxahatchee and St. Lucie River headwaters, thereby protecting water sources, preserving natural areas and beaches, providing open space, protecting wildlife habitat and water storage/recharge areas. Land acquisition and preservation using the County's share of the Surtax proceeds shall be limited to the properties known or identified within the Pal-Mar Water Control District, the Natural Lands Component of the Indian River Lagoon South Project of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Loxahatchee and St. Lucie Headwaters and Blueways Areas within Martin County.
- b. To acquire perpetual interests in lands through conservation easements in environmentally significant land for the purposes of: preserving, conserving, and restoring the St. Lucie River, the Indian River Lagoon, Pal-Mar, the Loxahatchee and St. Lucie River headwaters, thereby protecting water sources, preserving natural areas and beaches, providing open space, protecting wildlife habitat and water storage/recharge areas. Land acquisition and preservation using the County's share of the Surtax proceeds shall be limited to the properties known or identified within the Pal-Mar Water Control District, the Natural Lands Component of the Indian River Lagoon South Project of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Loxahatchee and St. Lucie Headwaters and Blueways Areas within Martin County.

Conservation easements acquired under this program shall be perpetual and irrevocable, pursuant to Section 704.06, Florida Statutes, and shall prohibit future development or more intense use of the property such that the land is predominantly in a natural, scenic, open agricultural, or wooded condition and provide means for enforcement.

- c. Up to 5% of the purchase price of any land acquired under 6(1)a through 6(1)b may be used to remove exotics and restore the conservation values of the acquired land.
- d. Proceeds from the Surtax may be used to service new bond indebtedness incurred for the purposes listed in 6(1)a through 6(1)b. Bonding, if utilized, will be limited to 80% of the total forecasted receipts.
- e. All land acquisitions by the County under Section 6(1)a through 6(1)b shall be in Martin County and will be for properties voluntarily offered for sale by the property owner. All land acquisitions shall be made in accordance with Florida law.



- f. During the term of the surtax levy, the County shall annually post on its website the portion of the annual independent audit required by Section 218.39(1)(a), Fla. Stat. which examines expenditures of the surtax revenue.
- g. The County will attempt, when available, to obtain matching funds from the federal government, the State of Florida, or any agency, district, branch, or commission for the purposes described in 6(1)a through 6(1)b.
- h. The Sales Surtax revenues shall only be utilized for the activities outlined in 6(1)a through 6(1)d.
- i. Acquisitions funded by the Surtax shall be subject to approval by a majority vote of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners as required by Florida Law.
- j. The County shall establish by resolution an Environmental Lands Oversight Committee ("ELOC") which shall provide citizen oversight and conduct and coordinate any necessary studies to determine appropriate lands to acquire from the funding provided by the Surtax. The ELOC shall make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The ELOC shall consist of 9 Martin County registered voters from each of the following categories:
  - Four (4) members shall be appointed from dedicated environmental organizations with missions focused on education, research, preserving, restoring, acquiring and protecting the public's local water quality, the natural environment and to enhancing and restoring local ecosystems.
  - Three (3) members shall be appointed with one member representing each of the following: an organization with a mission focused on fiscal oversight of government budgets and spending; an organization with mission focused on the real estate industry; and an organization with a mission focused on responsible business growth and economic development.
  - Two (2) members shall be appointed from organizations with a mission focused on educating, promoting and protecting the interests of agricultural farmers and ranchers.



- (2) Municipality uses. State law provides that municipalities are to receive a share of the Surtax revenues in accordance with the terms of any Interlocal agreement entered into between the Martin County Board of County Commissioners as the governing body of Martin County, Florida and the governing bodies of the municipalities representing a majority of Martin County's municipal population or, in the absence of an interlocal agreement, in accordance with the state revenue sharing formula. Municipalities may only spend their share of the Surtax revenues to finance, plan, and construct infrastructure and to acquire land for public recreation, conservation, or protection of natural resources, in accordance with Section 212.055(2), Florida Statutes.

**SECTION 7. AUTHORIZATION, DIRECTION AND REFERENDUM PROCEDURE.** The Supervisor of Elections for Martin County, Florida, is authorized and directed to place the referendum question on the ballot for the November 5, 2024 General Election. The referendum shall be held and conducted in the manner prescribed by law. The results shall be canvassed by the Martin County Canvassing Board as soon as practicable. The Supervisor of Elections shall prepare and file results of such referendum and shall deliver the same to the Martin County Board of County Commissioners as the governing body of Martin

County, Florida. Such results shall show the number of qualified electors who voted in said referendum and the number of votes cast respectively for and against the sales tax surcharge.

**SECTION 8. REFERENDUM RESULTS.** If a majority of the votes cast at such referendum in respect to the Surtax shall be Yes "For the One-Half Percent Sales Tax", such Surtax shall be approved and the Surtax shall thereupon be levied from and including January 1, 2025 and shall continue in full force and effect through and including December 31, 2034.

**SECTION 9. AUTHORIZING NECESSARY ACTION.** The County hereby authorizes the proper officials to do all things deemed necessary in connection with the holding of the referendum and the levy of the Surtax, if approved, to the extent provided by law and in this Ordinance.

**SECTION 10. CONFLICTING PROVISIONS; REPEALING CLAUSE.** Special acts of the Florida Legislature applicable only to unincorporated areas of Martin County, County ordinances and County resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict with this Ordinance are hereby superseded by this Ordinance to the extent of such conflict.

**SECTION 11. SEVERABILITY.** If any word, phrase, clause, sentence or paragraph of this Ordinance is for any reason held or declared to be unconstitutional, inoperative or void, such holding shall not affect the remaining portions of this ordinance. If this Ordinance or any provision thereof shall be held to be inapplicable to any person, property or circumstances, such holding shall not affect its applicability to any other person, property or circumstances.

**SECTION 12. APPLICABILITY OF ORDINANCE.** This Ordinance shall be applicable throughout Martin County's jurisdiction.

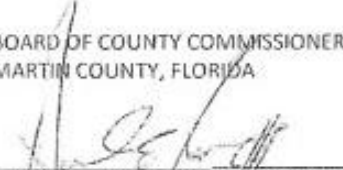
**SECTION 13. FILING WITH DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE.** The Clerk be and hereby is directed forthwith to send a certified copy of this ordinance to the Bureau of Administrative Code, Department of State and to the Department of Revenue.

**SECTION 14. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Department of State.

**SECTION 15. FILING WITH THE FLORIDA OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY.** The County Attorney is directed forthwith to provide a certified copy of this Ordinance to the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 9TH DAY OF APRIL, 2024.

ATTEST:  
  
CAROLYN TIMMANN, CLERK OF THE  
CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA  
  
HAROLD E. JENKINS II, CHAIRMAN



APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL  
SUFFICIENCY:

*Sarah W. Woods*

SARAH W. WOODS, COUNTY ATTORNEY

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STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF MARTIN

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE  
FOREGOING 5 PAGE(S) IS A TRUE  
AND CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL  
DOCUMENT AS FILED IN THIS OFFICE.

CAROLYN TIMMANN, CLERK

BY: *Carolyn Timmann* D.C.

DATE: 4/17/2024



# APPENDIX C



## ENVIRONMENTAL LAND ACQUISITION PARCEL NOMINATION FORM

Martin County Board of County Commissioners Resolution# 1221 authorized a Bond Referendum to be placed on the November 5, 2024 ballot. The resulting Environmental Bond Referendum approved by the voters was established with the goal to acquire lands to protect environmentally sensitive lands within the IRL South, Pal Mar, Loxa-Lucie and Blueways project areas.

### NOMINATING PARTY CONTACT INFORMATION

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Party Submitting: \_\_\_\_\_  
Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### OWNER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parcel ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

The criteria described in the Resolution outlines the focus of the land acquisition objectives. Please describe the property's value in terms of protection of water resources, the Indian River Lagoon, Natural Areas, wildlife habitat, and drinking water resources. Provide additional attachments as needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a description of notable features, existing improvements, structures, and opportunities for public access. Provide additional attachments as needed.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate the type of acquisition anticipated (e.g. fee simple, conservation easement, donation, etc.), and provide any additional information on the value of the property for acquisition.

\_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a map showing the location and boundary of the property. Photographs and any additional information are optional. This form, together with all submitted information accompanying the form, will be reviewed by County staff to determine if the criteria for natural resource value has been demonstrated. If criteria are met and the property owner is willing to donate, sell or provide a conservation easement for the property, additional information will be required.

Questions? Contact the Environmental Resources Division at (772) 220-7114.  
Please return the completed form and additional information to  
[Landacquisition@martin.fl.us](mailto:Landacquisition@martin.fl.us), or to the attention of: Michael Yustin, Martin County  
2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL 34996.

**APPENDIX D  
ELOC Project Ranking Form**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	
	<b>RELATION TO CERP PROJECT</b>	<b>GREENWAY CORRIDOR</b>	<b>POTENTIAL FUNDING PARTNERS</b>	<b>HABITAT QUALITY</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>RARE OR LISTED SPECIES OR HABITATS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST PER ACRE</b>	<b>RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</b>	<b>WATERWAYS OR SHORELINES PROTECTION</b>	
<b>Project Score</b>											
<b>Weighting Unit</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>Weighted Score</b>											<b>/100</b>

**Criteria #1 – Contribution to a Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project (CERP):** There are two active CERP projects in Martin County, the IRL South and the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP). Both projects include a land acquisition component. Acquiring land for these CERP Projects will help to improve water quality, attenuate damaging storm water flows and help to restore both the St. Lucie River and the Loxahatchee River systems. Most of these improvements will provide shallow storage features using existing wetlands within Martin County. In addition, there is a strong possibility of the County finding matching fund partners and entities willing to manage any properties that are acquired through this program.

**Criteria #2 – Contribution to a "Greenway":** Lands that are near other Conservation Lands that are protected for conservation provide connectivity for wildlife and are of higher value (in most cases) than isolated, inaccessible, and fragmented natural areas. In evaluating this criterion, thought must be given to potential user species. For example, a small "island" of xeric scrub may contribute to a series of xeric scrub islands in the region that are valuable habitat for scrub jays, due to their flight capabilities and living habits. Conversely, a species with an expansive home range requires larger, interconnected tracts to meet all their life history needs. Another important factor to consider is the size of the parcel. Larger parcels have more conservation value than smaller pieces that are surrounded by more impacted habitats. This criterion also considers whether the land contributes to conservation priorities identified in the "Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment," which is a database of information used to track the progress of protecting natural resources through land acquisition. Additionally, the lands that would provide a link to the Florida Wildlife Corridor, or to a "greenway" as recognized by the County or the State of Florida should receive consideration for their ability to link valuable resources.

This criterion concerns the relationships between the site and related elements of the landscape. The Florida Natural Area Inventory (FNAI) provides descriptions for the connectivity of properties:

- C1. Directly contiguous with large areas of protected natural habitat without significant barriers to dispersal along extensive boundaries or very large in and of itself. A critical link in a major natural corridor system.
- C2. Not broadly joined to large areas of natural habitat that are currently protected, but close to or connected by significant existing or potentially restorable habitat corridors.



- C3. Isolated from natural habitats of significant size by marginal habitats (such as some agricultural environments). Narrow connecting corridors.
- C4. Isolated from natural habitats by significant expanse or non-functional habitat or some other barrier to dispersal. No significant connecting corridors.

**Criteria #3 – Matching Fund Partners:** Lands that fall with a CERP boundary, are within the boundary of a state level acquisition zone (i.e., Florida Forever or State Park Optimum Boundary) have a higher potential to receive matching fund dollars to support acquisition and make the County funding go further. The Ordinance language itself requires that the County seek outside funding to support the acquisition program. For that reason, higher scores will be given to proposed properties that have cost sharing or if there is a high probability of finding outside funding partners.

**Category #4 – Habitat Quality:** Most of the properties that are nominated for acquisition have been impacted in some ways. Some properties may be well maintained with the conservation values remaining intact; in some instances, this could mean that despite never having intensive land usage, the properties are impacted by invasive plant species or lack of fire. Others might be more significantly impacted with drainage systems or intensive agriculture. This can affect management and long-term maintenance costs and can limit the value of the property for wildlife. Areas that are relatively pristine, with fewer impacts and higher habitat quality should receive higher scores than areas that have been significantly modified by humans.

Below is an index of the site’s ecological quality and includes concepts such as species richness, and ecosystems integrity.

- H1. Excellent quality. Current and past management practices have maintained site quality. The typical complement of species characteristic of the ecosystem is present and thriving. Minimal restoration is needed.
- H2. Good quality. Current and past management practices have basically maintained the typical complement of species; however, some habitat degradation is evident. Many of the natural complement of species are present, but species requiring undisturbed systems are likely to be

absent. Minor restoration is needed (e.g., small burrow pits, small, cleared areas, needs controlled burning but not major work).

- H3. Fair quality. Current and past management practices have altered the nature and quality of communities present. Many of the natural complement of species are present, but most species indicative of high-quality habitats are absent. At least most of the site is restorable. However, it may contain significant areas that need major restoration.
- H4. Poor quality. Seriously degraded. Low species and community diversity.

**Criteria #5 – Management Considerations:** Although there is some similarity to the habitat quality, there can be wide differences in the cost to restore and manage properties with extensive agriculture and high levels of impacts are more costly and difficult to restore and maintain. In addition, smaller properties with higher levels of surrounding private development can be more difficult to maintain and restore. This is especially true with more intensive surrounding land uses. Therefore, it is more difficult to manage a property that is surrounded by intense development than a cattle ranch or surrounding conservation areas. Another area of concern is the edge to area ratio. Smaller linear properties have less area versus the portions of the property that are near other land uses. These other land uses may make it more difficult to institute a prescribed fire program, provide a seed source for invasive plants and create more opportunities for illegal vehicular access. The following are some metrics to evaluate when ranking properties:

- M1. Larger properties that are surrounded by other public lands or areas under conservation easement. They tend to be well buffered from most external impacts and contain minimal problems related to neighboring land use and trespass. Needed management can be conducted with minimal impact on neighbors or the site itself. Fire management is possible and relatively easy.
- M2. Reasonably well buffered from most external impacts. Neighboring land uses may pose constraints on fire management, but not eliminate it or make it inordinately expensive. Some trespass problems anticipated.
- M3. Not adequately buffered. Can be maintained but innovative maintenance methods or expensive techniques will be needed. The site may need significant exotic species control.

- M4. Too small and/or degraded maintenance or reestablishment of normal ecosystem processes. Highly vulnerable to external impacts.

### **Criteria #6 – Rare/Listed Habitats or Species**

This criterion will look at factors including the rarity of the habitat and the plant/animal species that are present on the property. In many instances a rarity of a species is tied to the rarity/quality of a habitat. An example would be Federally Endangered scrub jays are heavily dependent on rare and well-maintained scrub habitat. The following are evaluation tools that will look at the both the rarity of the habitat and of the species present on nominated properties. Both factors should be weighed in determining the score for this criterion.

Natural Communities: Martin County has a wide variety of rare plant communities many of which are located near coastal regions. A County priority is to identify, acquire and protect those natural communities that are inadequately represented on protected lands, or represent the best examples of Natural Communities with precedence given to the most endangered or the rarest. The following will be used to evaluate the rarity of a particular habitat:

- R1. Rare community type. Extraordinary example of a natural community. Diverse array of superb habitats; at least one of them scarce. Extensive old growth. This Metric will utilize the same system that the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) uses to evaluate the rarity of habitats. This may include those ranked Globally (G1/G2) or within Florida (S1 or S2). These areas may serve as an important breeding, resting or feeding area. This site is significant not just for the County, but at the state, national, or regional level.
- R2. Examples of natural communities with high diversity of native species. Habitat types well represented statewide, but scarce in Martin County. These plant communities receive a G2/S2 or G3/S2 ranking. Unusual geological features or unusual species diversity. May have some old growth, but no large tracts of “living museum” rarity.
- R3. Community types still represented by extensive acreage in the County. Areas receive a ranking of G3/S3 or G4/S3. No major geological features or unusual diversity. No outstanding examples of natural communities.

- R4. Common community types in early successional or weedy condition. Habitat types widespread through the County.

The following is a list of rare or critically important habitats that are found in Martin County. Any evaluation should consider the percentage or overall acreage of each rare community type:

- A. Forested Xeric Uplands (Sand Pine Scrub, Scrubby Flatwoods)
- B. Non-forested Xeric Uplands (Oak/Palmetto Scrub, Coastal Strand)
- C. Hammock (Tropical Hardwood Hammock)
- D. Forested Freshwater Wetland (Hardwood Swamp, Bay Swamp)
- E. Forested Saltwater Wetland (Mangrove Swamp)
- F. Black Water Stream
- G. Mineral Based Marine/Estuarine (Exposed Limestone Cap Rock, Near-shore Rock Outcroppings)
- H. Faunal Based Marine/Estuarine (Sabillarid Worm Reef, Coral Reef, Oyster Bars)
- I. Floral Based Marine/Estuarine (Sea Grass Beds, Algal Beds)

Fish and Wildlife: Another County priority is to acquire lands that are critical to the survival of endangered and threatened animals, represent significant colonial bird nesting sites, or are necessary to maintain the County's native animal species diversity. In terms of listed wildlife species judgement should be used based on the type of species that are present. Federally or State Endangered Species should be given priority over Threatened.

Listed Plant and Animal Species:

- A. Listed Endangered Species
- B. Listed Threatened Species
- C. Species of Special Concern

Using a ranking system developed by NatureServe and the Natural Heritage Program Network, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory assigns two ranks for each species to indicate their conservation status. The global rank is based on an element's worldwide status; the state rank is based on the status of the element in Florida. Element ranks are based on many factors, the most important ones being estimated number of Element Occurrences (EOs), estimated abundance (number of individuals

for species; area for natural communities), geographic range, estimated number of adequately protected EOs, relative threat of destruction, and ecological fragility.

- G1/S1: Critically imperiled Globally/in Florida because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or less than 1000 individuals) or because of extreme vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- G2/S2: Imperiled Globally/in Florida because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or less than 3000 individuals) or because of vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- G3/S3: Either very rare and local Globally/in Florida (21-100 occurrences or less than 10,000 individuals) or found locally in a restricted range or vulnerable to extinction from other factors.
- G4/S4: Apparently secure Globally/in Florida (may be rare in parts of range).
- G5/S5: Demonstrably secure Globally/in Florida.

**Criteria #7 – Cost Per Acre:** This will be based on estimated value as determined by the cost of other similar properties in the area. This category should also consider the number of owners and the degree that the owner expresses a willingness to sell, because both can increase costs. Another factor to consider is whether the acquisition price is below market value and represents a bargain.

**Criteria #8 – Recreational Opportunities:** This criterion will consider the value of a property to provide public access facilities. For instance, properties that are almost entirely wetland in nature have less recreational opportunities than one that includes sufficient uplands to provide access facilities and trail systems. In addition, some weight should be given to proposed acquisitions that connect to a regional trail network. This can include Blueway systems like the FDEP State Designated Paddling Trail, Ocean to Lake Trail System, Jupiter Indiantown Grade or the East Coast Greenway. Here are some example recreational opportunities that can be considered in ranking projects:

- A. Hiking
- B. Picnicking

- C. Outdoor Swimming
- D. Horseback Riding
- E. Hunting
- F. Fishing
- G. Camping
- H. Non-motorized water use
- I. Nature Study

**Criteria #9 – Development Potential:** The threat of conversion of environmentally sensitive lands is an important factor since the conservation values of those properties will be lost forever. The location of a property, its configuration, and existing natural resources should be evaluated to assess whether there is a high likelihood that the lands could be converted to residential, commercial or if the property has natural characteristics agricultural uses. Properties in or adjacent to the urban services area should score more highly than properties with little development potential. When comparing two equally significant resource properties, the property with the most immediate threat of development should be given a higher priority. Additionally, existing regulatory restrictions must be considered in the evaluation process. These regulatory processes would include zoning restrictions that may be in place, as well as other measures such as costly mitigation measures that would be required if a project site were to be developed or otherwise converted.

**Criteria #10 – Waterway and Shoreline Protection:** Martin County places a high priority on protecting shorelines and coastal waterways. For instance, the County has a Shoreline Protection Zone that prevents development within 50-75 feet of wetlands and County waterways. The County also prioritizes acquisition (more than 50 feet) for buffers along the special Waters category of Outstanding Florida Water rivers and lakes. These buffers provide opportunities to attenuate damaging stormwater flow and protect County estuary environments. Water access is also critical due to its economic value to Martin County.

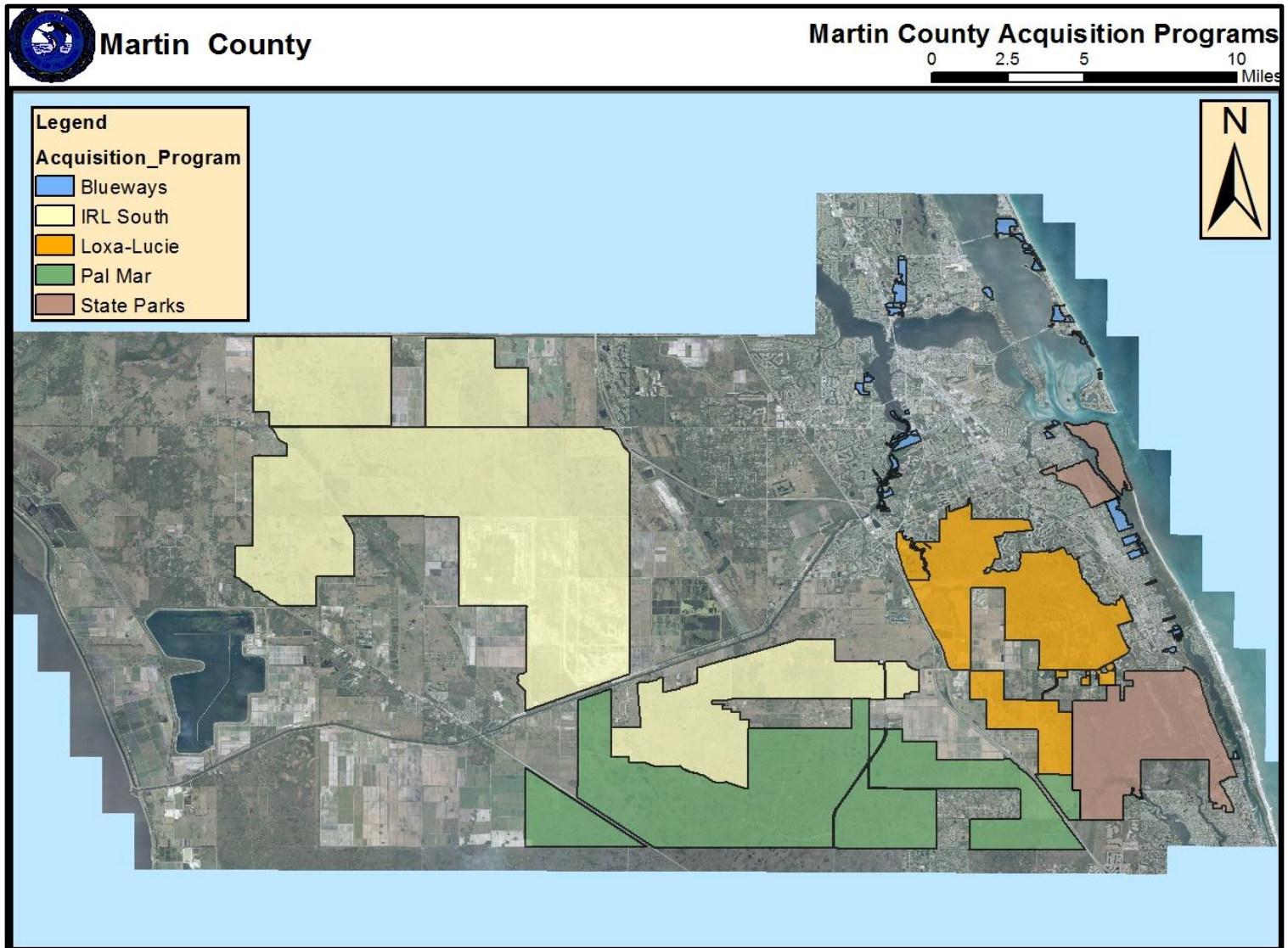
The goal of this criteria will be to acquire parcels on barrier islands, peninsulas and seashores to conserve their significant natural, recreational, and aesthetic attributes, acquire upland and wetland buffers to protect significant commercial and recreational saltwater fisheries designated as State Aquatic Preserves, National Estuarine or Marine Sanctuaries, Areas of Critical State Concern, Special Water category of Outstanding Florida Water, or Department of Environmental Regulation Class I and II Waters.

Water Resources: Another factor to consider is the importance of a parcel to maintaining water quality in either a natural stream system, recharge area or estuarine environment.

- W1. Site is important for maintenance of water quality in a major stream system, recharge area or estuarine environment. Alteration of the site will degrade that environment. The site contains a major portion of the drainage system for the feature in need of protection, forms a broad buffer between the aquatic feature and an incompatible land use, or acts significantly to purify water entering the aquatic environment.
- W2. Site is of moderate importance for maintenance of water quality in a major stream system, recharge area or estuarine environment. The site acts to buffer the aquatic environment from some incompatible land use but does not otherwise contribute to water quality.
- W3. Site is of relatively low importance for maintenance of water quality in the aquatic environment.
- W4. Site may be contributing to the degradation of the aquatic environment.

# APPENDIX E

## Maps of Acquisition Zones

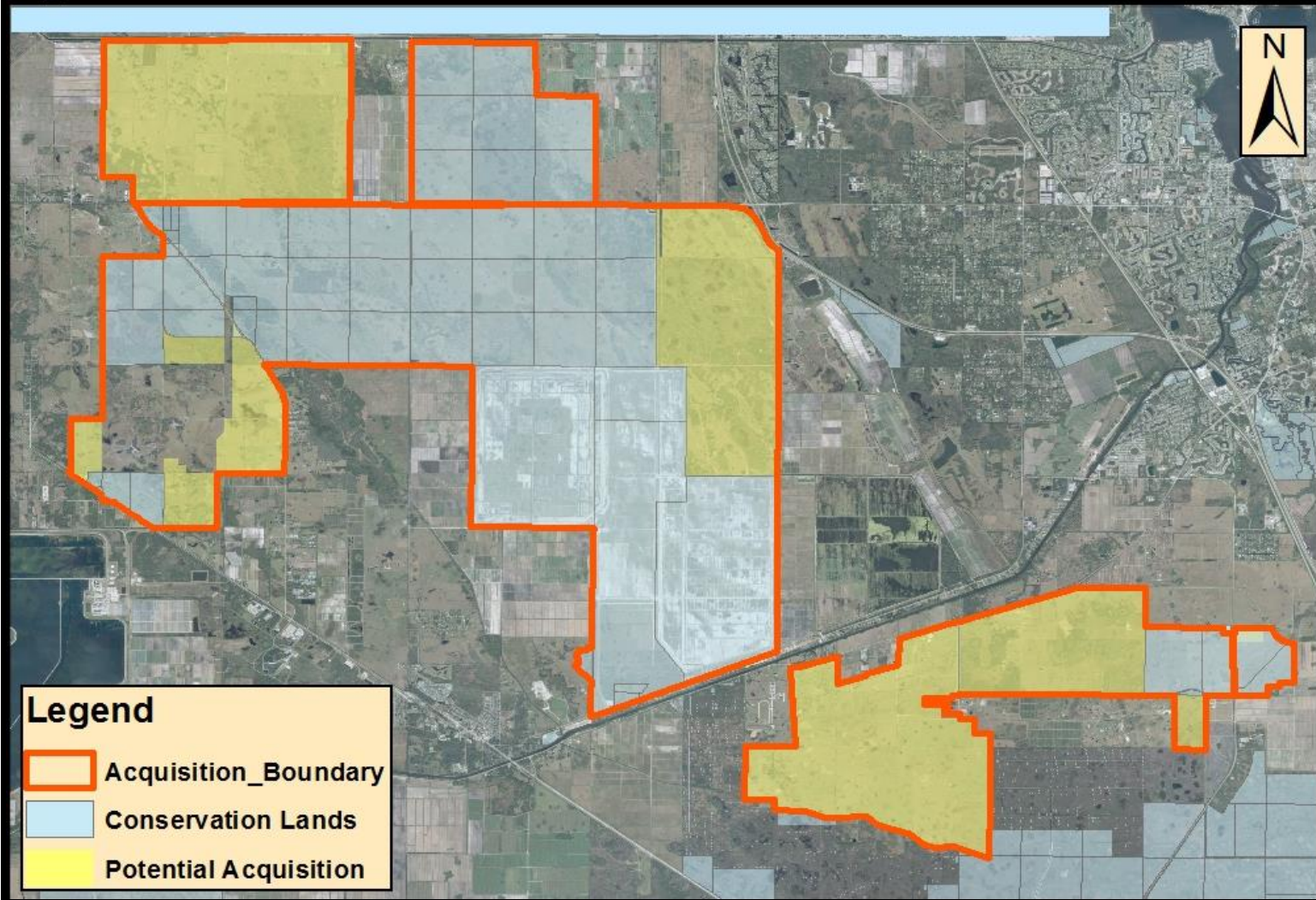
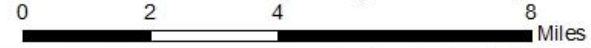









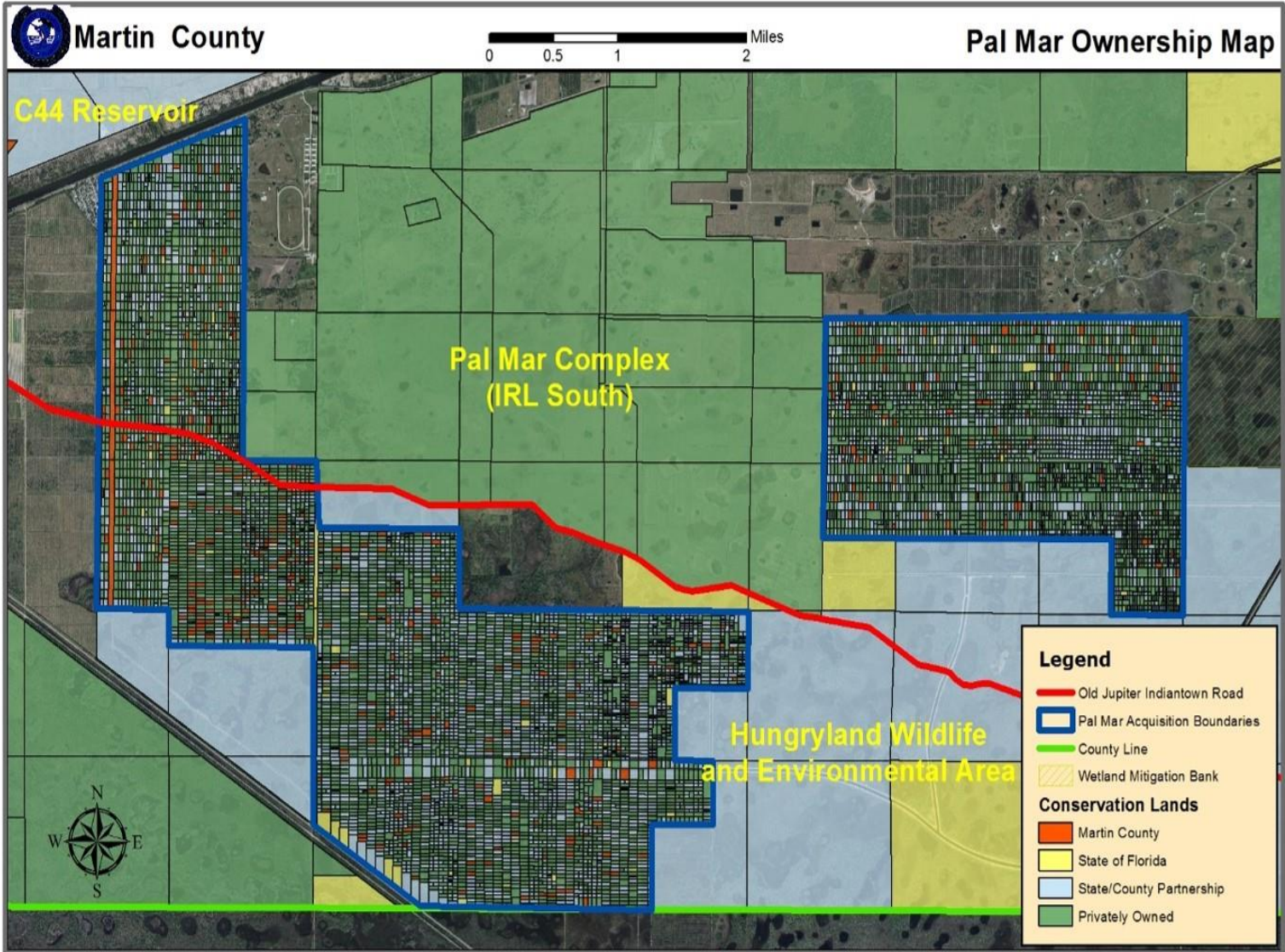
Martin County

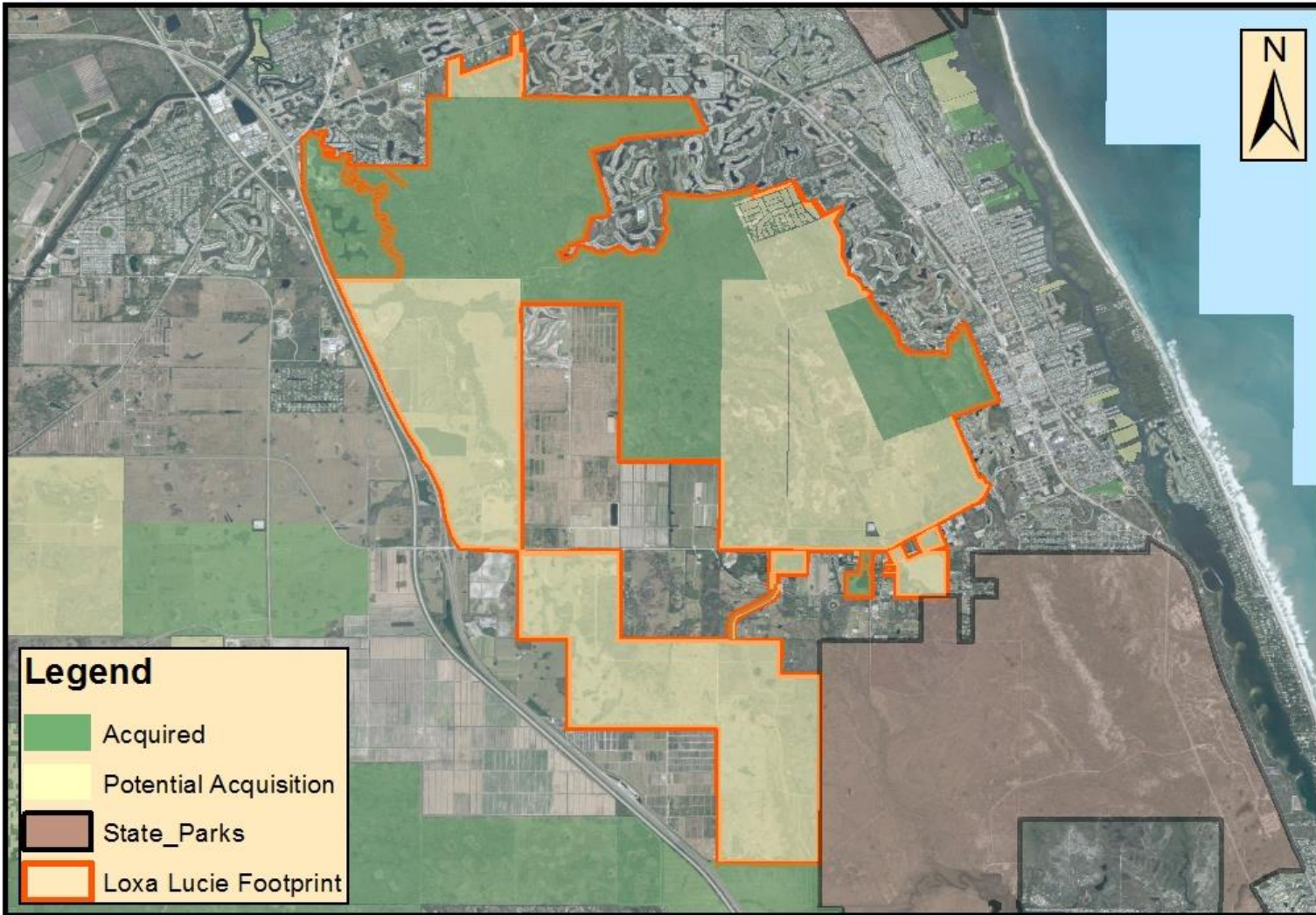
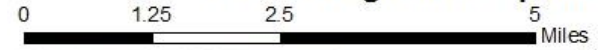
IRL South Program Footprint



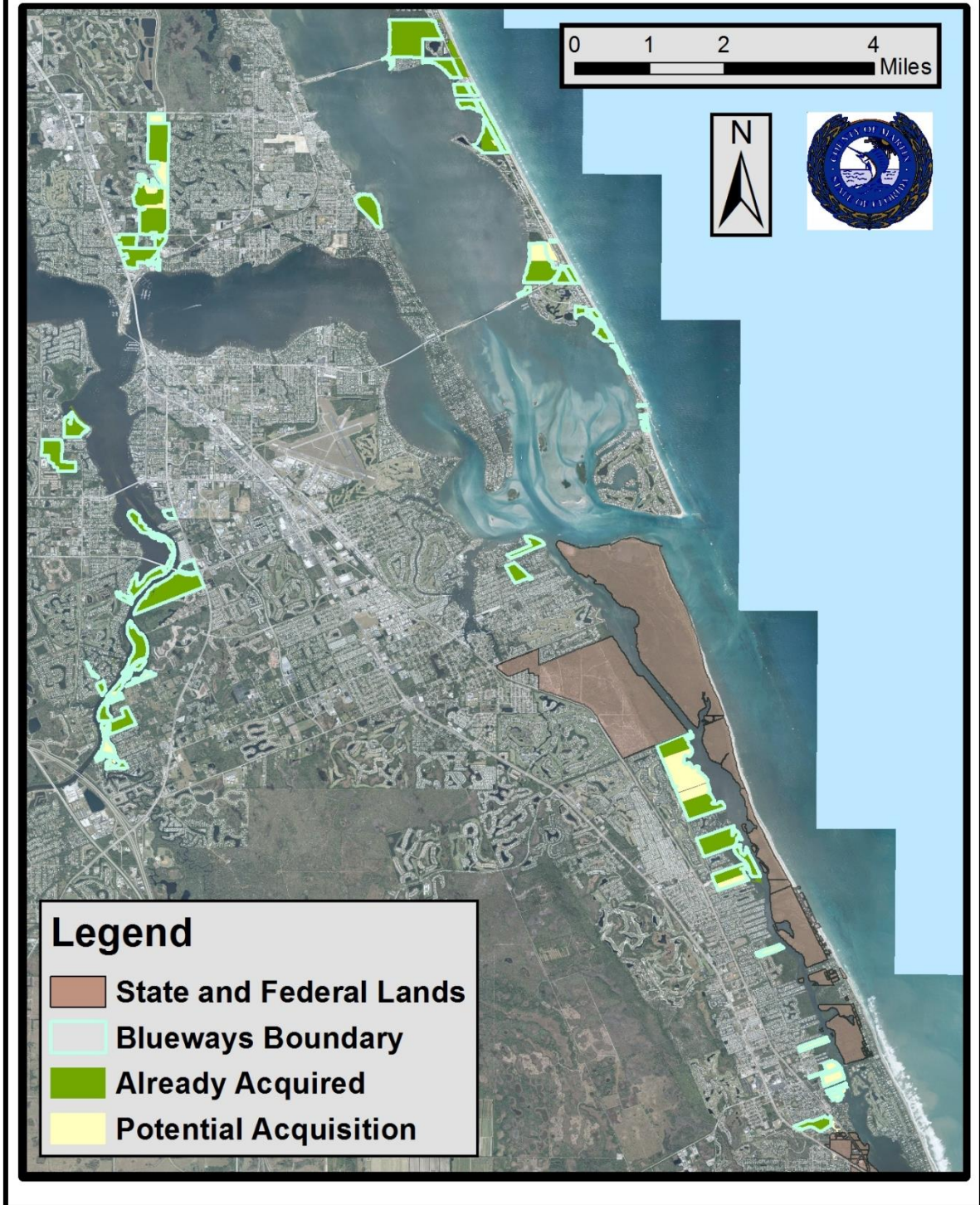
**Legend**

-  Acquisition\_Boundary
-  Conservation Lands
-  Potential Acquisition





# Blueways Acquisition Area



## **APPENDIX F**

### **Environmental Lands Oversight Committee Bylaws**

#### **ARTICLE I. – Name**

The name of this organization shall be the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee (ELOC). This committee is required by Ordinance 1221 and was established by Resolution 25-2.14 and shall hereinafter be referred to as the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee.

#### **ARTICLE II. – Purpose**

The purpose and objective of the ELOC is:

- A. To provide citizen oversight of all expenditures and acquisitions utilizing the one-half cent local government sales tax in accordance with Ordinance 1221.
- B. To conduct and coordinate any necessary studies to determine appropriate lands to acquire utilizing the one-half cent sales tax proceeds.
- C. To provide recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners regarding land acquisitions utilizing the one-half cent sales tax proceeds.

#### **ARTICLE III. – Membership**

Section 1. The membership of the ELOC shall consist of nine (9) members who are Martin County registered voters from each of the following categories:

- A. Four (4) members shall be appointed from each of the following dedicated environmental organizations with mission focused on education, research, preserving, restoring, acquiring and protecting the public’s local water quality, the natural environment and to enhance and restore local ecosystems:
  - (1) Martin County Forever
  - (2) The Everglades Foundation
  - (3) Rivers Coalition
  - (4) Audubon of Martin County
- B. Three (3) members shall be appointed with one member represented from each of the following:
  - (1) An organization with a mission focused on fiscal oversight of government budgets and spending: Martin County Taxpayers Association.
  - (2) An organization with a mission focused on the real estate industry: Martin County Realtors Association.
  - (3) An organization with a mission focused on responsible business growth and economic development: Economic Council of Martin County.

C. Two (2) members shall be appointed with one member represented from each of the following organizations, with a mission focused on educating, promoting and protecting the interests of agricultural farmers and ranchers:

(1) Martin County Farm Bureau Inc.

(2) University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Science Extension  
Martin County's 4H Youth Development Program.

Section 2. The term of each member shall be determined at the time of their appointment. At the initial appointment to the ELOC, the terms of office of the members shall be for 4 years, except that four of the members first appointed shall serve terms of 2 years from the date of their appointments, and five members shall serve terms of 4 years from the date of their appointments. A vacancy occurring during a term shall be filled for the unexpired term. Each member shall hold office until his or her successor has been appointed.

Section 3. All members must receive training in Florida Sunshine law, Public Records law, Conflicts of Interest and Ethics law.

#### **ARTICLE IV. – Meetings**

Section 1. The regular meeting of the membership of the ELOC shall be held quarterly. The Chairman or County staff may call special meetings of the ELOC.

Section 2. Notice of the time, place, and purpose of all regular meetings and special meetings of the Council shall be emailed to each member of the ELOC not less than five (5) days before such meetings.

Section 3. Five members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business at any regular or special meeting of the ELOC.

Section 4. All official records of the ELOC, including minutes, resolutions adopted and all other documents, shall be maintained by Martin County in accordance with Chapter 119, Fla. Stat.

Section 5. All meetings shall comply with the requirements of Section 286.011, Fla. Stat. (Florida's Sunshine Law)

Section 6. All members shall attend at least 75% of the ELOC's meetings annually. Non-compliance with this section shall cause the Chair to review circumstances for non-attendance and such member may be replaced. Excuses for absences, in writing, shall be accepted at the discretion of the Chair.

**ARTICLE V. – Officers**

Section 1. The ELOC shall elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from its membership.

Section 2. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall serve a term of two years from the date of election.

**ARTICLE VI. – Duties of the Officers.**

Section 1. The Chair’s duties shall include:

- A. To preside at meetings of the membership.
- B. To decide questions of order.

Section 2. Vice-Chair.

In the absence of the Chair, or in the event of the Chair’s inability or refusal to act, or if the office be vacant, the Vice-Chair shall perform all the duties of the Chair, and when so acting shall have all the powers and be subject to all the restrictions of the Chair.

**ARTICLE VII. – Amendments**

These By-laws may be amended by the Martin County Board of County Commissioners.

## APPENDIX G

### Definitions

- A. **Environmental Assessment:** A compilation of facts, data and information which will support a recommendation by the ELOC to the County Commission for a land acquisition decision. The environmental assessments will focus on categories spelled out in the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee Project Ranking Form.
  
- B. **County Commission Approval Memorandum:** A document presented to the BOCC based on a recommendation for acquisition vote by the ELOC. The memorandum will include recommendations and prioritize properties for the BOCC to consider for acquisition. This could include a property where another agency would be the primary acquisition agent/managing agency and the County would act as a funding partner. Conversely for County led projects, the Memorandum may recommend matching fund acquisition from private partners, Federal programs or Federal, State and local agencies.
  
- C. **Management Plan:** A document that lays out the long-term management of any environmentally sensitive lands that are acquired through County funds. The plan includes descriptions of the natural characteristics for a property. In addition, the document provides guidance for the maintenance, protection and restoration of natural communities, and development of public access amenities of properties that are acquired.
  
- D. **County Commission Approval:** Resolution of the Board of County Commissioners shall constitute the authority to proceed with a land acquisition action.
  
- E. **Land Acquisition:** The attainment of fee simple title to land. This can be accomplished by direct purchase, exchange, and/or transfer between Federal, State and Local agencies, including individuals, partnerships and corporations and acceptance of donations.
  
- F. **Conservation Easement:** A perpetual and irrevocable legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that



restricts the future use of a property to protect its natural resources. The easement is recorded with the property's deed and remains in place even if the land changes ownership. Pursuant to Section 704.06, Florida Statutes, Conservation Easements provide a right or interest in real property which is appropriate to retaining land or water areas predominantly in their natural, scenic, open, agricultural, or wooded condition; retaining such areas as suitable habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife; retaining the structural integrity or physical appearance of sites or properties of historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance; or maintaining existing land uses and which prohibits or limits certain uses.

- G. **Level of Service:** The standard stated for acquisition of land for conservation purposes in the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan is currently two acres per 1000 population.
- H. **Environmental Lands Oversight Committee Project Ranking Form:** A form to be used by the ELOC to establish priority ranking for lands that have been nominated for acquisition (see [Appendix D](#)).
- I. **Environmental Land Acquisition Parcel Nomination Form:** The form to be completed by the applicant or nominee which describes the proposed property in detail and provides the information requested in the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee Nomination Form (see [Appendix C](#)). There are no limitations on who can submit a Proposal Form.
- J. **Environmentally Sensitive Areas:** Landscapes, habitats, ecosystems or natural features that have special ecological, historical or cultural significance. This includes areas that are regionally endangered and provide critical habitat for protected species. It may also include areas that connect larger regionally significant environmentally sensitive areas, like the Florida Wildlife Corridor. It is important to note that agricultural lands may be acquired through this program if they fill a conservation need.

- K. **Resource-Based Recreational Land:** Lands purchased due to their natural features which will provide specific outdoor passive recreation opportunities (hiking, wildlife watching, paddling, etc.).
- L. **Florida Forever Program:** Florida’s premier conservation and recreation lands acquisition program; a blueprint for conserving Florida’s natural and cultural heritage.
- M. **Florida Wildlife Corridor:** A statewide network of nearly 18 million acres of connected lands and waters supporting wildlife and people. These corridors enable animals to travel from one natural area to another to find mates, food, and shelter. Such corridors are essential for the continued survival and well-being of many animals, especially large, wide-ranging species such as the Florida panther, bobcat, fox, deer, otter, and other species. Wildlife corridors are also important for maintaining biodiversity in preserve areas in the region.
- N. **Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP):** The single largest restoration program underway in the South Florida Ecosystem. The CERP, authorized by the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000, is implemented by a federal-state partnership to restore, protect, and preserve the region’s water resources by addressing the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution (QQTd) of water. CERP projects are categorized by “generation” reflecting their year of authorization. There are two Federally Authorized CERP Programs in Martin County, IRL South and the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project. Both projects are active within Martin County.