



Agenda Item Summary

File ID: 21-0286

R&P-1

Meeting Date: 1/12/2021

PLACEMENT: Requests and Presentations

TITLE:

PAL MAR INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this informational presentation is to provide a basic overview of the Pal Mar area. The presentation will discuss the environmental value, history and unique challenges that are facing Pal Mar. Over the next year County staff will be bringing forward a series of Board items focused on different aspects of the preservation and management of Pal Mar.

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

PREPARED BY: **Name:** Michael Yustin

Title: Ecosystems Restoration and Management Project Manager

REQUESTED BY: Commissioner Jenkins

PRESET:

PROCEDURES: None

BACKGROUND/RELATED STRATEGIC GOAL:

Pal Mar is a roughly 33,000-acre undeveloped area that straddles the border between Palm Beach and Martin County. The area is a mosaic of wetland dominated habitats including cypress sloughs, open marshes and hydric pine flatwoods. Due to a lack of development, Pal Mar has some of the highest quality wetland systems in Martin County and possibly even the greater Everglades system. Pal Mar is also part of a very large Greenway system that extends all the way from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Okeechobee. A portion of Pal Mar is also within the headwaters to Cypress Creek, which is one of the most important tributaries to the Wild and Scenic Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Due to its environmental significance, Martin County has spent the last 50+ years working to preserve and protect Pal Mar. Early efforts included successfully blocking a large planned development called the Rotunda. More recent efforts have focused on acquiring land within the area. By working with State partners and utilizing funds generated from previous voter approved tax referendums, over 23,000-acres of Pal Mar have been acquired. Most of the land acquired is now managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as the John C. and Mariana Jones Hungryland Wildlife and Environmental Area.

Despite these efforts there is still close to 9,000-acres of land that remain in private hands within the Pal Mar footprint. Most of this land is very small quarter to full acre sized lots that are commingled with properties acquired by Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The State/SFWMD has not contributed any funds to acquiring land within Pal Mar in over 10 years. Having these small plots of intermixed public and private lands creates unique challenges. The Publicly owned parcels are not readily manageable because they are so small and interspersed throughout the area. In addition, off-road vehicle use, trespassing, poaching, and invasive exotic vegetation are harming the conservation values of the entire area.

This presentation will be the first of several Board agenda items highlighting the unique nature and challenges facing Pal Mar. Each presentation will cover a different aspect of Pal Mar and will provide the Board with the opportunity to set policy and direction for each of these issues.

ISSUES:

None

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY REVIEW:

None

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECOMMENDATION

None

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

None

FISCAL IMPACT:

RECOMMENDATION

None

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

None

DOCUMENT(S) REQUIRING ACTION:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget Transfer / Amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Chair Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Contract / Agreement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant / Application | <input type="checkbox"/> Notice | <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution | |

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