



Board of County Commissioners

2401 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, Florida 34996

Agenda Item Summary

File ID: 21-1004

DEPT-5

Meeting Date: 9/14/2021

PLACEMENT: Departmental

TITLE:

MARTIN COUNTY LAND ACQUISITION FUNDING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff will provide an update on Martin County Land Acquisition efforts and give the Board of County Commissioners the opportunity to set the future direction of the program.

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

PREPARED BY: **Name:** John Maehl and Mike Yustin
Title: ERM Division Manager and Project Manager

REQUESTED BY: Martin County Board of County Commissioners

PRESET:

PROCEDURES: None

BACKGROUND/RELATED STRATEGIC GOAL:

During the March 9, 2021 Board of County Commissioners Meeting, a motion was made for staff to return with an agenda item discussing options to fund a land acquisition program. Based on that direction staff completed an evaluation of conservation lands within Martin County.

Over the last 30+ years Martin County has been a leader in terms of protecting environmentally sensitive lands. The County, working in partnership with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the State of Florida, have been able to acquire over 100,000-acres of land. By acquiring these properties, the County has done its part to help clean up and restore our river systems, save and protect wetlands, act as a safe haven for wildlife, attract tourism from all over the world and provide countless recreational opportunities. Furthermore, these conservation lands are a top priority for the citizens of Martin County. On several occasions Martin County citizens have voted to tax themselves to generate funds for conservation land acquisition. In 2016 the Parks and Recreation Department completed a Master Plan that asked the public about their top recreational priorities. More trails and access to conservation areas came back as being one of their top priorities. These conservation areas play a big role in making Martin County unique and special.

Despite the success of these past acquisition programs, the job of protecting our environmentally sensitive areas is not complete. For instance, there remain large amounts of unacquired land that is needed to complete the Indian River Lagoon South Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

(CERP) Project. By acquiring and restoring these lands for shallow storage, the County can help to alleviate damaging run-off that negatively impacts water quality and contributes to the destruction of aquatic habitats for seminal species such as oysters and sea grasses within the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon and in high quality wetlands. For example, in the Pal-Mar area in southern Martin County, staff has observed multitudes of people operating off road vehicles within the wetlands, mechanical ditching and ponding that can have the effect of draining surrounding wetlands, and unpermitted structures being erected in these areas. These activities cause degradation of what was previously pristine wetland habitat in the Pal-Mar area. Even though the County has acquired hundreds of acres in Pal-Mar, without large tracts of land held in conservation, the destruction can continue. Another County acquisition focus has been in the area known as the Loxa-Lucie, which extends between Atlantic Ridge and Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The County has not seen the destruction of this area as in Pal-Mar. Nevertheless, increased acquisitions in Pal-mar, Loxa-Lucie, and other strategic areas have the potential to create a unique urban greenway corridor extending throughout the County and would create shallow water shortage areas free from large scale human impacts.

ISSUES:

None

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY REVIEW:

None

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECOMMENDATION

Move that the Board designate the land acquisition program as a priority strategic objective and direct staff to bring back a detailed action plan with funding options.

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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