

**PALM BEACH COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**WORKSHOP SUMMARY**

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**Meeting Date:** February 26, 2008

**Department:** Environmental Resources Management  
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**I. EXECUTIVE BRIEF**

**Title: PRIORITIES AND FUNDING NEEDS OF THE NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM**

**Summary:** At this workshop staff will present 1) an overview of the Natural Areas Program with a focus on priority setting; 2) limitations that affect those priority setting efforts; 3) staff recommended priorities for the program and their fiscal impact; and 4) recommendations for obtaining the funds necessary to accomplish the priorities. This presentation is in response to a recommendation of an internal audit (Audit Report 08-06) of the activities and processes of land management staff (Natural Resources Management) in the Natural Areas Program. Staff will seek direction on any changes to the priorities or funding strategies that the Board may wish to pursue. Countywide (SF)

**Background and Policy Issues:** Since March of 1991, when the Environmentally Sensitive Lands bond referendum was passed, the County has been acquiring land in support of the Natural Areas Program. Land acquisition continued with passage of the Lands for Conservation Purposes referendum in March of 1999. The acquisition program has been very successful in stretching those bond referendum dollars with grant funds from State and Federal sources, allowing the County to accumulate over 30,513 acres on 33 different natural areas as part of the Natural Areas Program. Management of these lands to preserve, protect, and enhance the native ecosystems found on the natural areas is now the primary focus of the Department of Environmental Resources Management's (ERM) Natural Resources Stewardship Division (NRS).

The success of NRS to obtain grant funds or partners to share in acquisition costs also brings with it inherent obligations to those partners or grant funding agencies. Many of the priorities established for the Natural Areas Program are related to the direction given to staff to place major emphasis on securing funding offered through various state and federal grant programs. Restoration performed on the natural areas and offered as mitigation was another source of funding for land acquisition and management activities. Mitigation also has obligations associated with regulatory requirements of permits issued for the restoration activities. These obligations have fiscal impacts for the County.

**continued on page 3**

**Attachments:**

- 1. PowerPoint Presentation

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**Recommended by:** Richard E. Wainly 2/20/08  
Department Director Date

**Approved by:** [Signature] 2/24/08  
County Administrator Date

**II. FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS**

**A. Five Year Summary of Fiscal Impact:**

Fiscal Years	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Capital Expenditures	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Operating Costs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
External Revenues	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Program Income (County)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
In-Kind Match (County)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>NET FISCAL IMPACT</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b># ADDITIONAL FTE POSITIONS (Cumulative)</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Is Item Included in Current Budget? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X  
 Budget Account No.: Fund \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Object \_\_\_\_\_  
 Program \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Recommended Sources of Funds/Summary of Fiscal Impact:**

No fiscal impact associated with this agenda item.

**C. Department Fiscal Review:**

**III. REVIEW COMMENTS**

**A. OFMB Fiscal and /or Contract Dev. and Control Comments:**

*Item includes recommendations which would return to the Board for approval if changes made.*

*Stwillhite 2.21.08*  
 OFMB *EW 2/21/08*

*Jim J. [Signature]*  
 Contract Development and Control

**B. Legal Sufficiency:**

*[Signature]*  
 Assistant County Attorney

**C. Other Department Review:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Department Director

Recent land acquisitions (the 150 acre purchase from R.V. Holdings in the Cypress Creek Natural Area) used funds from the referendum bonds that had been earmarked for capital improvements on the natural areas and funds that were borrowed. The debt for the borrowed funds was repaid using grant dollars associated with the acquisition that would normally have been used for capital improvements on the natural areas. This action followed the philosophy of buying conservation land to preserve it when the opportunity presents itself. With the understanding that there may only be one chance to preserve the land before it is lost forever to development, it was the Board's decision that it was more important to purchase the environmentally sensitive lands when they could reach a mutually agreeable deal with a willing seller, than to reserve the funds for capital improvements and land management. Opportunities for funding the latter activities could be identified at a later date, while the land remained set aside within the public domain to be preserved.

The issue of obligations to our acquisition partners and the limited funding available to the Natural Areas Program was a finding in an internal audit report prepared in early FY 2008 (Audit Report 08-06). The report found "...other natural areas were not assured funding for capital improvements included in the management plans..." The audit recommendation was that "The ERM Director should present to the BCC the funding requirements identified, including options, such as obtaining a dedicated funding stream, for meeting the requirements over a period of time." This workshop is ERM's fulfillment of that recommendation and provides an opportunity to request direction from the Board relative to the priorities of the Natural Areas Program and methods on how to fund those priorities.

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**Priorities and  
Funding  
Needs  
of the  
Natural Areas  
Program**

**February 26, 2008**



## Current Program Status



- Lands Acquired  
30,648 acres/34 sites
  
- Public Use Facilities  
38% (13 of 34 sites)  
now constructed

## New Challenges

- Funding
  - Bond funds
  - Grant funds
  - Acquisition debt
  
- Large Properties
  - Limited existing access
  - Demands for multiple access points
  - Security, public safety, emergency response, large prescription burns
  
- Wetlands



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We cannot do everything that everyone wants us to do on our natural areas.

Even if we had unlimited resources, many use requests would benefit just a few people and negatively impact the mission of conservation.



### **Purpose of Today's Workshop**



- Share Driving Principles
- Provide Staff-Recommended Priorities
- Identify Costs, Revenues, Recommendations
- Seek Your Direction for the Future

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## Mission Statements

**Environmentally Sensitive  
Lands Bond  
Referendum 1991**

"Shall Palm Beach County, in order to acquire, preserve and maintain environmentally sensitive lands in Palm Beach County and protect wildlife and endangered species on such lands, issue general obligation bonds ...?"

**Land Acquisition Program  
for Conservation  
Purposes Bond  
Referendum 1999**

"Shall Palm Beach County ... implement a land acquisition program for conservation purposes ...?"

## Mission Statements (continued)

**From the  
Management  
Statement  
Included  
in All BCC-  
Approved  
Management  
Plans**

*"These natural areas ... were acquired to preserve the rare and diverse native ecosystems present on these sites and the endangered, threatened, and rare species of plants and animals that live there."*

*"Public use shall not take precedence over ecosystem protection. Proposed public uses shall take into account the specific environmental conditions of each natural area...."*

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### **Driving Principles**

- Remember the Mission
- Think low-impact, passive, nondestructive use
- Serve the most people at the lowest cost
- Not all public uses are appropriate on all sites
- Be conservative in authorizing public uses
- Chase the money
- Meet contractual obligations linked to individual sites

### **Staff-Recommended Priorities**

1. Manage/Restore Land for Conservation
2. Public Use Facility Obligations
3. Mitigation Obligations
4. Restoration Obligations
5. Multiuse Regional Greenways/Trails
6. New Public Use Facilities/Trails
7. Local/Backyard Access/Trails



## 1. Manage/Restore Land for Conservation

Includes: exotic animal and plant control, fire management, prescribed burns, firebreaks/management roads, site security, fencing, restoration of hydrology, restoration of vegetation, and maintenance of existing facilities



Annual Costs = \$7,200,000

### Benefits of Conservation

- Biodiversity of plants/animals
- Protection of threatened/endangered plants/animals
- Surface water storage/flood control
- Aquifer recharge
- Water quality
- Air quality
- Esthetics/open space
- Quality of life
- Passive recreation



## 2. Public Use Facility Obligations

Remaining obligations on 11 of 34 sites (32% of total)

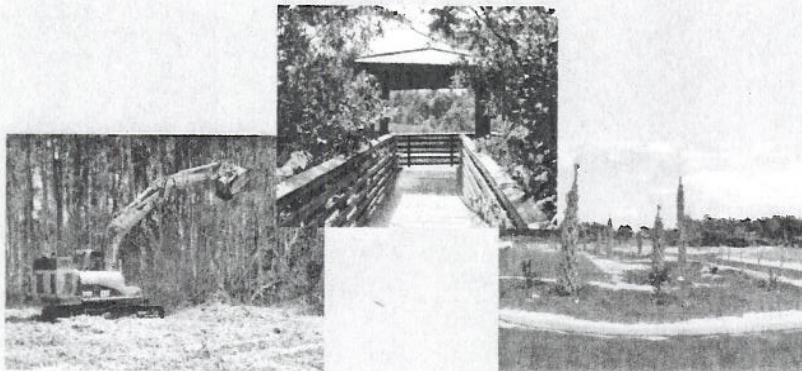
- 7 parking lots (includes signage, kiosks, & bike racks)
- 9,000 linear feet of accessible nature trails
- 3,250 linear feet of boardwalk
- 12 wildlife observation platforms
- 223 acres of wetland restoration
- 49 acres of upland restoration
- 2 hydrologic restoration projects

Acreage Pines	Lake Okeechobee Connector	Pine Glades
Cypress Creek	Lake Park Scrub	Pondhawk
Delaware Scrub	Limestone Creek	Snook Islands
Hungryland Slough	North Jupiter Flatwoods	

Additional Capital Costs = **\$9,300,000**

### Importance of Meeting Public Use Facility Obligations

- Part of the Mission
- Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Partnerships
  - Existing funding commitments/reverter clause
  - Creditability for future grants



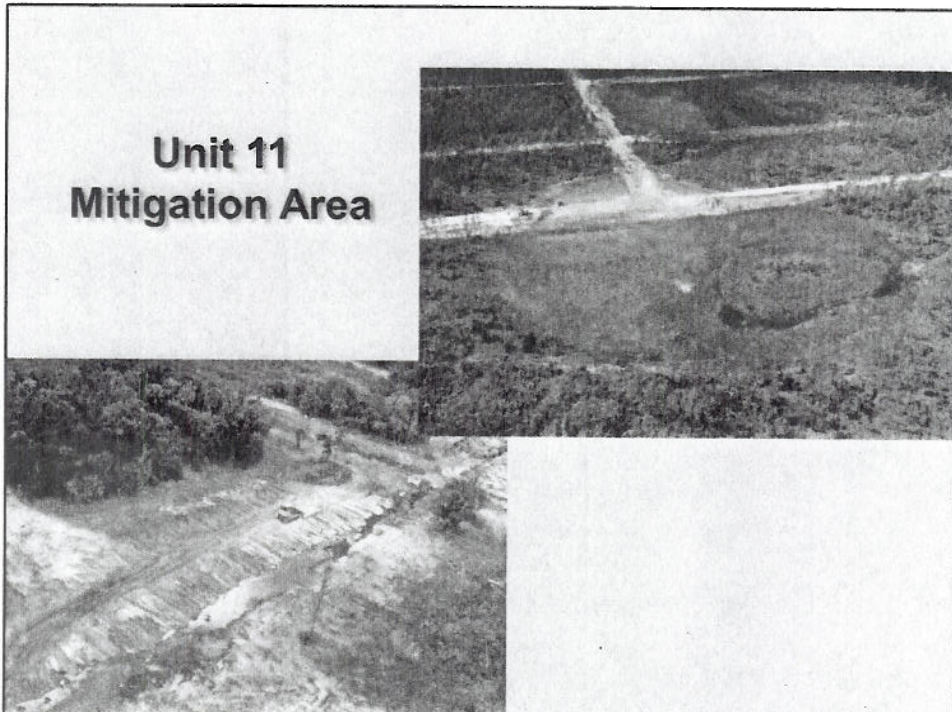
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### 3. Mitigation Obligations

- Unit 11 (Hungryland Slough) – 1,769 acres
- South Loxahatchee Slough – 780 acres
- Acreage Pines – 18 acres
- C-18 Triangle – 36 acres
- Pond Cypress – 544 acres
- Pine Glades - South/Minto – 655 acres
  - North – 615 acres
  - West – 1,872 acres

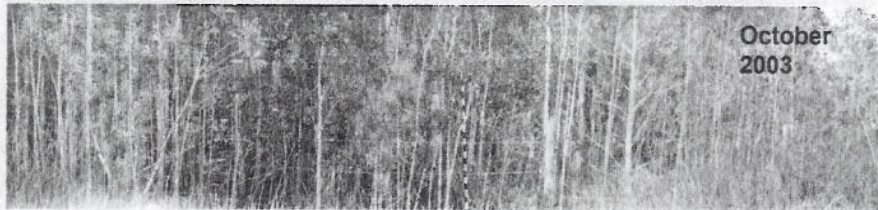
Additional Capital Costs = \$13,500,000

**Unit 11  
Mitigation Area**

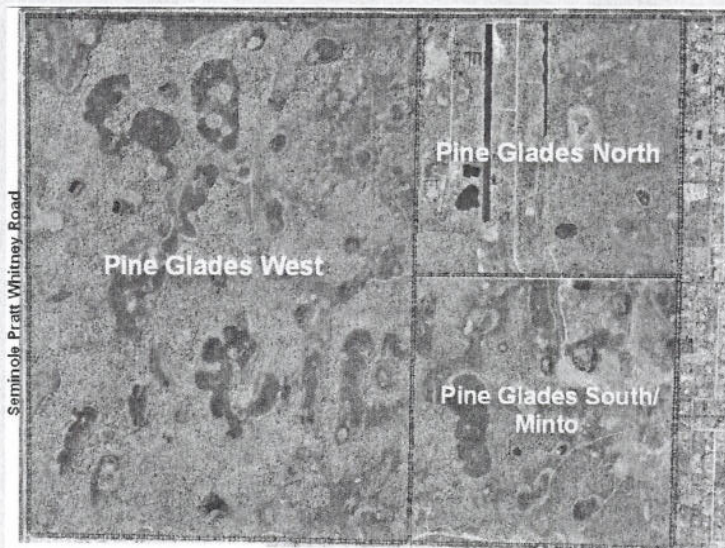


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### South Loxahatchee Slough Mitigation Area



### Pine Glades Mitigation Areas

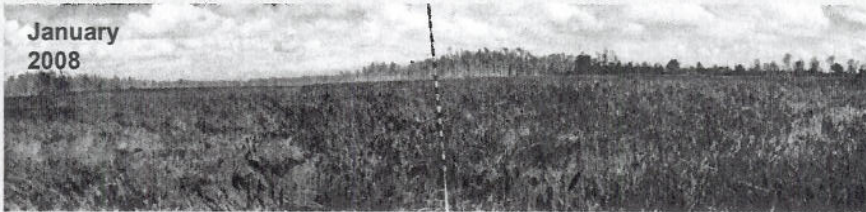


### Pine Glades Mitigation Area - West

May 2007



January  
2008



### Pine Glades Mitigation Area - South/Minto

May 2008



January  
2008



#### 4. Restoration Obligations

- Winding Waters (NRCS, \$1.5 million grant)
- Loxahatchee Slough (NRCS, \$1.5 million grant)
- Loxahatchee Slough (LRPI, \$250,000 grant)
- Limestone Creek (LRPI, \$680,000 grant)
- Cypress Creek (LRPI, \$150,000 grant)
- Various restoration grants scheduled for approval by BCC on 3/11/08 (\$1,178,000 total grants)
- Natural area restoration projects identified in approved managements plans, but without specific contractual obligations

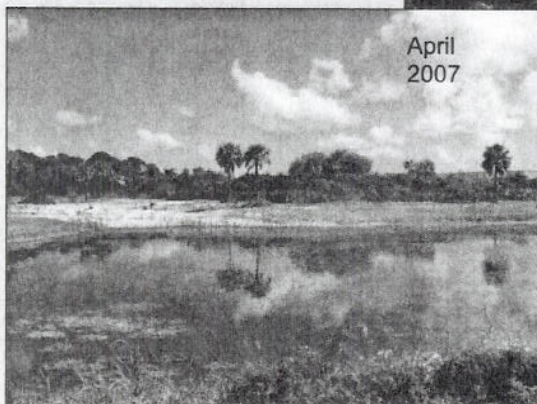
Additional Capital Costs (dollars not yet encumbered) =  
**\$1,500,000**

#### Yamato Scrub Restoration Area

December 2002



April  
2007

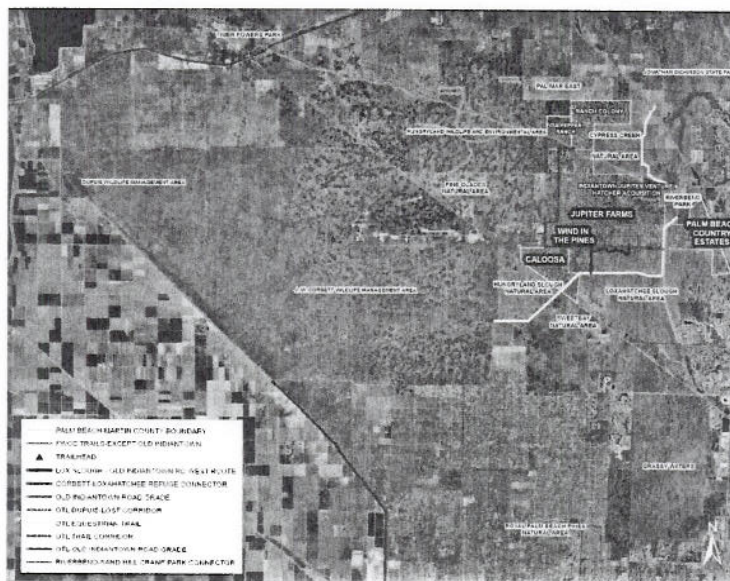


## 5. Multiuse Regional Greenways/Trails

- Riverbend to J. D. State Park & U.S. 1 (multiuse) – 11.5 miles
- Sandhill Crane to Riverbend (multiuse) – 5.5 miles
- Riverbend to Corbett (multiuse) – 10.5 miles
- L-8 Greenway (multiuse) – 10.9 miles
- Old Indiantown Road (multiuse) – 18 miles
- Ocean to Lake Trail (hiking) – 64.7 miles
- Lake Okeechobee Connector (equestrian) – 2.4 miles
- South County Connections - unknown

Additional Capital Costs = **\$8,000,000**

Existing and Proposed Multiuse Regional Greenways/Trails



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## 6. New Public Use Facilities/Trails

- Loxahatchee Slough
- Pond Cypress
- Winding Waters
- Indiantown-Jupiter Venture/Hatcher
- East Conservation Area
- C-18 Triangle
- Jupiter Inlet
- North Ocean Ridge Mangroves
- Pawpaw Preserve
- Jackson Riverfront Pines



Additional Capital Costs = \$7,000,000

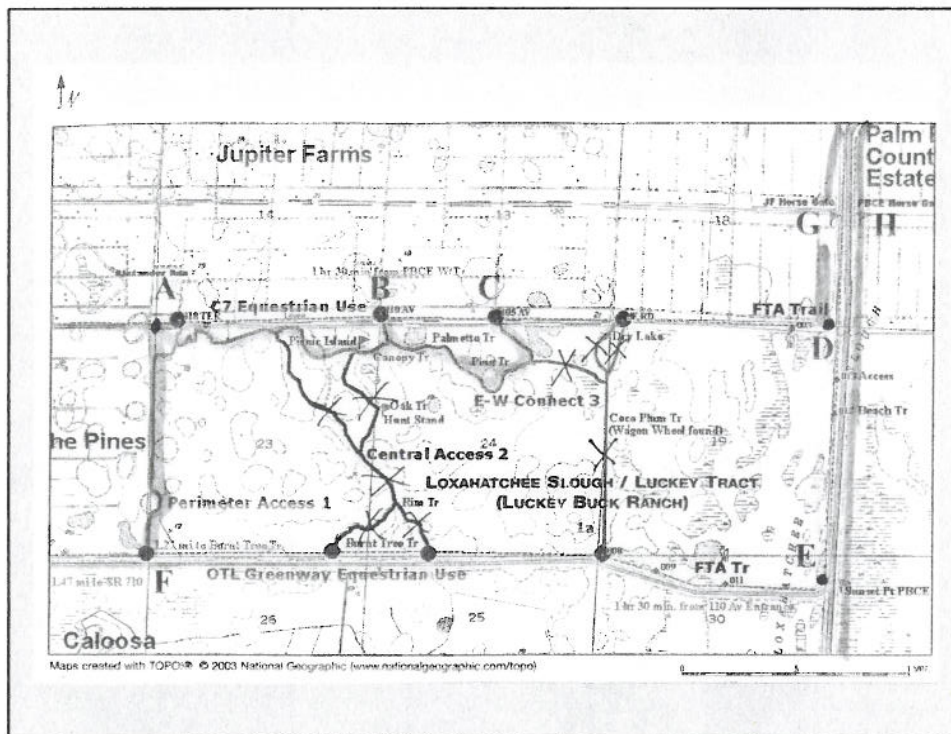
## 7. Local/Backyard Access/Trails

- Staff/security-intensive
- Multiple access points
- Each access point may be accessible by only a few people
- Additional support includes signage, maps, kiosks, gates, etc.



Additional Capital Costs = Unknown





Trail Distances

Segment Identification	Miles
F to Lake Okeechobee trailhead out & back	65.2
Riverbend Park north end to JD Park US 1 out & back	23.0
Sandhill Crane Park to Riverbend Park & back	11.0
H to A via Riverbend bridge out & back	11.0
F to eastern Corbett (near youth camp) out & back	9.8
G to D to E to F out & back	9.1
H to Sandhill Crane Park out & back	9.0
A to D to E to F to A canal loop	8.2
A to C to A out & back (inside)	4.2
A to C to A loop	3.7
D to Riverbend Park south entrance out & back	3.0
Riverbend Park south entrance to north end out & back	2.9
A to B to A out & back (inside)	2.8
A to B to A loop	2.5
A to F to A out & back (inside)	2.2
H to Riverbend Park south entrance out & back	2.1
G to Riverbend Park south entrance out & back	2.1
B to C to B out & back	2.0
B to C to B loop	1.6
G to D out & back	0.9

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### Costs of Staff-Recommended Priorities

	Estimated Cost (in Millions)	Cumulative Total (in Millions)
1. Manage/Restore Land for Conservation*	\$21.6	\$21.6
2. Public Use Facility Obligations	\$9.3	\$30.9
3. Mtigation Obligations	\$13.5	\$44.4
4. Contractual Restoration Obligations	\$1.5	\$45.9
5. Multiuse Regional Greenway/Trails	\$8.0	\$53.9
6. New Public Use Facilities/Trails	\$7.0	\$60.9
7. Local/Backyard Access/Trails	unknown	\$60.9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$60.9</b>

\* Recurring costs; estimated costs shown above are for a 3-year period.

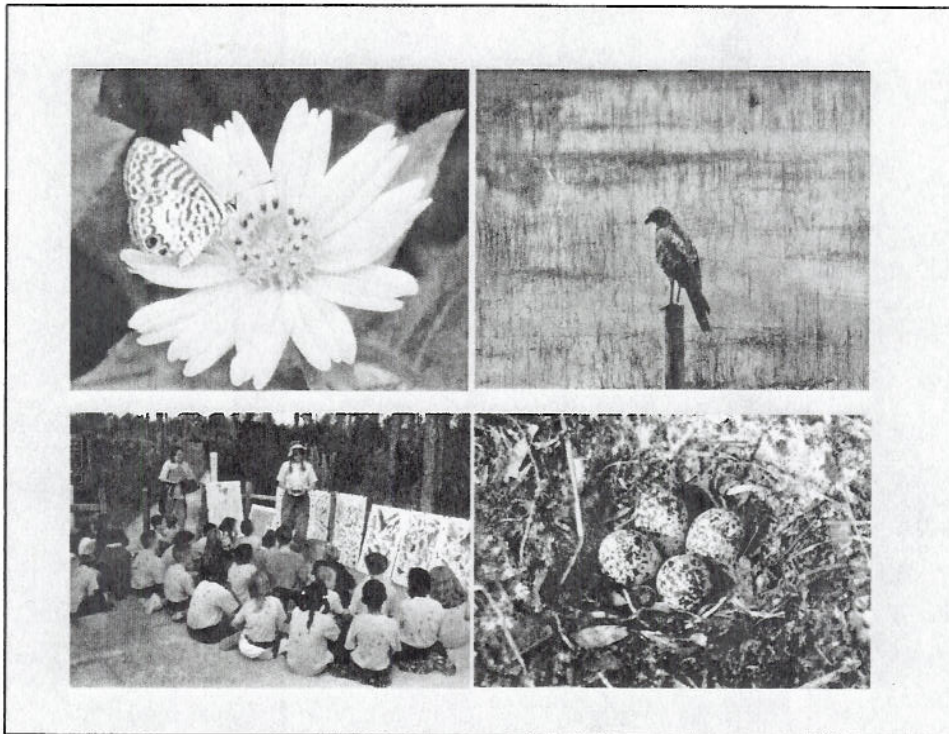
### Available Funding

Funding Source	Recurring Annual Revenues (in Millions)	Total Projected Revenues (in Millions)*	Cumulative Total (in Millions)*
Natural Areas Fund/Unit 11 Fund	n/a	\$3.9	\$3.9
Natural Areas Stewardship & Unit 11 Management Endowment Interest (Principal = \$8.5 million)	\$0.4	\$1.2	\$5.1
Conservation Lands (Lease Revenues, incl. 3% Inflation)	\$1.6	\$4.9	\$10.0
BCC Environmental Restoration	\$0.3	\$0.8	\$10.8
RV Holding (FCT Grant)	n/a	\$6.6	\$17.4
Pine Glades Mitigation (Credit Sales)	n/a	\$17.9	\$35.3
Bureau of Invasive Plant Management (Grants)	\$1.5	\$4.5	\$39.8
Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (Grants)	\$1.0	\$3.0	\$42.8
Future FCT Grants - Jupiter Ranch	n/a	\$6.6	\$49.4
Sale of TDRs	n/a	\$17.7	\$67.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$4.8</b>	<b>\$67.1</b>	<b>\$67.1</b>

n/a = not applicable, funding is static and not recurring

\* Total revenues shown for recurring items is for a 3-year period

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### **Summary of Staff-Recommended Priorities**

1. **Manage/Restore Land for Conservation**
2. **Public Use Facility Obligations**
3. **Mitigation Obligations**
4. **Restoration Obligations**
5. **Multiuse Regional Greenways/Trails**
6. **New Public Use Facilities/Trails**
7. **Local/Backyard Access/Trails**

### Recommendations

1. Recognize that resources are insufficient to meet all needs
2. Accept priorities recommended by staff
3. Based on priorities/revenues
  - Continue priorities #1 through #4
  - Selectively continue priorities #5 and #6 depending on outside funding
  - No additional starts on priority #7 at this time

### Recommendations (Continued)

4. Support continuation of Florida Forever Program
5. Seek dedicated long-term funding to cover shortfall in annual revenues (after 3 years)
  - Priority #1 – Manage/restore land for conservation = \$4.9M/year  
Total additional funding needed = \$4.9M/year  
(\$7.2 M/year total cost - \$2.3 M/year recurring revenues = \$4.9 M)
6. Seek additional revenue for public use facilities (one-time costs)
  - Priority #5 - Multiuse regional greenways = \$8.0 M
  - Priority #6 - New public use facilities = \$7.0 M
  - Debt on Hatcher/Indiantown Jupiter Venture = \$11.7 M
  - Contingency reserve for grant matches = \$5.0 M  
Total one-time costs = \$31.7 M
7. Reevaluate TDR program to increase certainty of revenue source

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