

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

### GOVERNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE SURPLUS LANDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

TAMPA, FLORIDA

NOVEMBER 3, 2011

The Southwest Florida Water Management District's (SWFWMD) Governing Board Surplus Lands Assessment (SLA) Project Subcommittee met at 9:00 a.m. on November 3, 2011 at the District's Tampa Service Office. The following persons were present:

#### **Board Members Present**

H. Paul Senft, Chair, Governing Board  
Albert G. Joerger, Chair, SLA Subcommittee  
Hugh Gramling, Vice Chair, SLA Subcommittee  
Jeffrey M. Adams, Member, SLA Subcommittee  
Jennifer E. Closshey, Member, SLA Subcommittee  
Judith C. Whitehead, Member, SLA Subcommittee  
Carlos Beruff, Member, Governing Board

#### **Staff members**

Blake Guillory, Executive Director  
David Rathke, Chief of Staff  
Mark Hammond, Division of Resource Management Director  
Michael Holtkamp, Division of Operations, Maintenance & Construction Director  
Roy Mazur, Planning Bureau Chief  
Joe Quinn, Planner  
Corey Denninger, GIS Analyst  
Cheryl Hill, Office Administrator

A list of others present who signed the attendance roster is filed in the permanent records of the District.

**Welcome and Introductions** – SLA Chair Joerger called the meeting to order and introduced each member of the Governing Board.

Governing Board Chair Senft thanked those in attendance and stated that the surplus lands assessment project has been discussed by the Governing Board and staff for almost a year, and is not being conducted at the request of the Governor's Office nor the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). He stated that the assessment will involve determining if properties are still needed for the original purpose for which they were acquired, that all properties needed for resource protection will be retained, and this will be an open and transparent process. The SWFWMD's process has been patterned after but is not identical to the Suwannee River Water Management District's surplus evaluation process.

Chair Joerger stated the Governing Board has directed staff to look at whether there is the potential to surplus any of our lands to improve the efficiency of our land resources program. This is one of several efforts currently underway to increase the operational efficiency at the water management district. The Governing Board feels this project is of such importance that it has appointed a five member subcommittee to oversee the project and make recommendations to the full Board for its consideration. The purpose of this meeting is threefold: for the Subcommittee to understand the process and methodology for evaluating parcels as proposed by staff; listen to public input on the process; and give staff guidance on the process. He stated that staff will not be recommending any parcels for

surplus consideration, but the purpose of this meeting is for the Subcommittee and the public to understand the proposed process, listen to public comment and provide any feedback to staff to enhance or improve the process

Chair Joerger requested that anyone wishing to comment on the process, please fill out a speaker's card. To assure that all speakers have an opportunity to speak, comments may be limited to three minutes per speaker. When appropriate, exceptions to the three-minute limit may be granted by the Chair. If several individuals wish to speak on the same issue or topic, the designation of one spokesperson is recommended.

**Subcommittee Procedures** – Chair Joerger explained that the Subcommittee is made up of Governing Board members appointed by and serving at the discretion of the Governing Board Chair. The role of the Subcommittee Chair is to serve as liaison between this Subcommittee and the Governing Board. A quorum of this Subcommittee consists of a minimum of three members and all of the Subcommittee's surplus recommendations require approval by the Governing Board. Participation by phone is an option for Subcommittee members, and arrangements should be made in advance with staff.

Mr. Adams moved to nominate Mr. Gramling as Vice Chair. Chair Joerger seconded the motion. Governing Board Chair Senft said it was appropriate for Mr. Gramling to serve as Vice Chair, as the Subcommittee serves under the Governing Board's Resource Management Committee, which Mr. Gramling chairs. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Joerger recommended the Subcommittee meet every other month unless otherwise warranted. He stated that at each meeting, staff will make a presentation on a grouping of parcels. The Subcommittee will review the parcels, accept public input and make a formal recommendation to the Governing Board relative to which parcels are recommended for surplus. In order to gain the most public input, the meetings will be held in the geographic area that the lands being evaluated are located. Chair Joerger indicated that the proposed evaluation areas were as follows:

**Evaluation Area 1**

- Manatee
- Sarasota
- Charlotte
- DeSoto
- Hardee
- Highlands

**Evaluation Area 2**

- Polk (excluding Green Swamp)
- Hillsborough
- Pinellas

**Evaluation Area 3**

- Pasco
- Lake
- Polk (Green Swamp)
- Sumter (Green Swamp)

**Evaluation Area 4**

- Levy
- Marion
- Citrus
- Hernando
- Sumter (excluding Green Swamp)

The Subcommittee concurred with the proposed evaluation areas.

**Characterize Program Mission Statement** – Chair Joerger opened the discussion by stating that a mission statement is a brief description of an organization's fundamental purpose and answers the question, "Why do we exist?". The mission statement articulates the organization's purpose to both the public and for those in the organization. He then introduced Mr. Roy Mazur, the District's Planning Bureau Chief, to lead the discussion. Mr. Mazur stated that a well-composed mission statement

resonates with the people working in the organization, as well as with the different constituencies that the organization affects. He stated a mission statement should include what are the needs that we intend to address (purpose); what are we doing to address those needs (process); and what principles or beliefs guide our work (values). Mr. Mazur then provided an example of a well-written mission statement and discussed the draft mission statements provided to the Subcommittee in their SLA notebook. After discussion Mr. Gramling moved, seconded by Ms. Closshey, to accept the following mission statement:

Review the SWFWMD's land holdings to ensure the diligent and efficient stewardship of both land and financial resources for the citizens of Florida by confirming the original acquisition purpose and current water management benefits, facilitating a transparent public decision-making process and, if appropriate, consider a full range of potential surplus options.

After discussion, Ms. Closshey requested that the language be amended to change the word "current" to "continuing." Mr. Joerger requested that the District's four areas of responsibility be included. Mr. Gramling amended his motion to change the word "current" to "continuing" and include the District's four areas of responsibility. Ms. Closshey seconded the amended motion and it carried unanimously. Mr. Mazur restated the mission statement:

Review the SWFWMD's land holdings to ensure their support of the water supply, flood protection, water quality and natural systems areas of responsibility thereby ensuring the diligent and efficient stewardship of both land and financial resources for the citizens of Florida. The review process will confirm the original acquisition purpose and current water management benefits within the four areas of responsibility, facilitate a transparent public decision-making process and, if appropriate, consider a full range of potential surplus options.

**Project Methodology – Parcel Evaluation Process** – Chair Joerger stated the SLA project evaluation is based on guidelines established by DEP and incorporates Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data analysis in combination with reviews by multi-disciplinary teams of subject matter experts to evaluate potential surplus opportunities of District-owned lands. He then introduced Mr. Corey Denninger, the project's lead GIS Analyst and Mr. Joe Quinn, the SLA project manager.

Mr. Denninger reviewed the process methodology, which incorporates GIS technology; includes individual review by staff subject matter experts; staff subject matter expert team review; SLA Subcommittee review of staff subject matter expert recommendations; and ultimately recommendations will be made to the full Governing Board for consideration. Mr. Denninger stated that the GIS application is based on a well-vetted statewide resource evaluation tool called "CLIP – Critical Lands & Waters Identification Project." Recognizing the value of the statewide CLIP, in 2008 as part of the District's Florida Forever boundary review project, staff partnered with its developer to develop "SWFWMD CLIP." The SWFWMD CLIP added increased focus on water resources data. Mr. Denninger then reviewed the evaluation areas and the GIS application, clarifying that the GIS application is only one component of the SLA process. He stated that the subject matter experts consist of interdisciplinary staff teams that will utilize more recent data, including environmental and management concerns. Mr. Denninger used an example land project to review the process and data to be incorporated in the evaluation.

Ms. Closshey moved, seconded by Mr. Gramling to approve the Surplus Lands Assessment Project methodology and parcel evaluation process. The Subcommittee concurred with the use of CLIP and methodology outlined by staff. Chair Joerger suggested, and Ms. Closshey agreed, staff look at an economic model to determine the public cost to own and benefit. This could be a parallel process that may require bringing in consultants. He also stated that disposition options should be looked at the end of the process. Mr. Mazur stated that the District's economists could address this at a future meeting. Mr. Gramling suggested overlaying impaired waterbodies, and Ms. Closshey requested staff use the best information available relative to nutrients/water quality standards. Chair Joerger then entertained questions from the audience. Former District Governing Board Chair Heidi McCree thanked the Board for inviting the public to participate in the process and asked about peer review. Ms. Closshey stated that this is something to be looked into at the end of the process. Ms. Becky Ayeche representing ECOSWF stated staff has done a commendable job and a similar evaluation was undertaken during the Jeb Bush Administration and that report should be reviewed to see what has changed. Ms. Whitehead agreed that we should look at what was done in the past, but stated that the evaluation done at that time was not nearly as comprehensive and there is new technology available that will be incorporated into the current review process. Mr. Joerger agreed with Ms. Whitehead and said this is an iterative process and will probably be undertaken again in five to ten years. Another member of the audience stated that when lands were purchased in the past, the real estate market was elevated and that should be looked at compared to what the property is worth now. He also suggested looking at the impact to adjacent residential property.

After further discussion Ms. Closshey amended her motion, seconded by Mr. Gramling, to approve the Surplus Lands Assessment Project methodology and parcel evaluation process, including adding impaired waterbodies, and looking at disposition alternatives and an economic model. Motion carried unanimously.

**Public Information and Outreach** – Mr. Quinn reviewed the SLA webpage stating that it has receive approximately 1,000 hits, 70 comments have been submitted, and 64 individuals submitted their email addresses to stay informed of the process. He then reviewed the proposed meeting dates, times and locations. Mr. Gramling requested that all meetings be held at District offices unless additional space is required. Ms. Closshey moved, seconded by Ms. Whitehead, to the following meeting schedule:

<b>Public Information Meetings</b>	
Lecanto Government Center	December 13, 2011, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Bartow Service Office	December 14, 2011, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Tampa Service Office	January 10, 2012, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Sarasota Service Office	January 11, 2012, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
<b>Governing Board Subcommittee Meetings</b>	
Sarasota Service Office	February 15, 2012, 10:00 AM
TBD, based on parcel evaluation region	April 10, 2012, 10:00 AM
TBD, based on parcel evaluation region	June 13, 2012, 10:00 AM

Motion carried unanimously.

**Public Comments** – Thirteen members of the audience participated in the public comments portion of the agenda. Issues raised included:

- The Florida Native Plant Society offered to assist in the review of properties to be evaluated and in the land use and management plans
- Accredited land consultant, Mr. Charles Gayre, offered services to dispose of surplus lands
- Land prices are low now and selling in the current market might not be advisable
- As population increases, will need land for water quality and water resources
- Lease land for hog and armadillo hunting
- Public was supportive of purchasing land, all money received through surplus lands should be used to purchase additional land
- There is no Florida Forever funding and there are economic issues with water management districts; not advisable to sell land when there is no money to purchase more land
- Concerned with past and future cuts in staffing
- Public values conservation lands
- Concerned we won't be able to purchase more land
- Concept of surplus small, outlying parcels is understandable, but use money received to purchase land adjacent to other conservation land – no net loss
- Once the land is covered with asphalt, we can't get it back
- Previously a great deal of land was set aside
- Some land may be considered surplus, but there is restoration potential and the ability to provide buffers should be considered; land management becomes more difficult when land uses are converted
- Development rights on public lands are not needed; most of value is in development rights; consider selling development rights; don't acquire development rights when acquiring land in the future – transfer the development rights
- Supportive of including economics
- Consider bringing in other subject matter experts from counties to work with District staff; would add to credibility
- The District is looking at the right data and analysis and hope outcomes continue based on what's been presented so far
- The Governor and Cabinet recently approved an exchange of an isolated outparcel for lands adjacent to state forest; suggest considering this type of decision
- More District lands are being used for compatible outdoor recreation
- Some pasture or non-natural systems valued property could be used for access, parking, visitor centers, or for other similar uses
- Look carefully at the State Constitution and Chapter 373 regarding surplus lands
- Offer land to state and local government first
- Once land is gone, it's gone forever
- Look at other uses such as leasing before surplus
- Current form of communication isn't good enough, consider advertising meetings in the newspaper
- There's a great desire for coastal lands
- Set land aside: expected growth will be horrendous
- The original intent of acquisition is of utmost importance
- Is there an opportunity for public input for those that oppose surplus of land? Chair Joerger responded that there will be public input received at the public information meetings, Subcommittee meetings and Governing Board meetings.

**Subcommittee Discussion and Set Next Meeting** – The next meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2011 at the Sarasota Service office at 10:00 a.m.

Chair Joerger adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

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