

Summary Agenda

Basin Board Land Resources Committee (BBLRC) And Land Use Stakeholders Joint Meeting Agenda

1:00 p.m.

July 14, 2010

Lecanto Government Center
3600 West Sovereign Path
Lecanto, Florida 34461

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Presenter: Albert Joerger, BBLRC Chair

2. **December 1, 2009 BBLRC and March 16, 2010 Joint Meeting Minutes**

Presenter: Albert Joerger, BBLRC Chair

See Exhibits

3. **Fiscal Year 2011 Meeting Dates**

The District is required to follow Florida Statute Chapter 189 concerning meeting notices. The Statute requires that the District submit an annual meeting calendar to all Clerks of Court in the District by September 15 of each year. The Statute further requires that if a meeting date, time or location changes after the annual calendar has been sent to the Clerks of Court, the District or Basin is required to place a legal advertisement in area newspapers to notice the change from the originally published calendar. Therefore, it is important to review this meeting calendar closely before it is published.

The following are proposed meeting dates and locations for fiscal year 2011:

Date	Time	Location
Thursday, November 18, 2010	1:00 p.m.	SWFWMD, Tampa Service Office
Tuesday, March 15, 2011	1:00 p.m.	SWFWMD, Bartow Service Office
Tuesday, July 12, 2011	1:00 p.m.	SWFWMD, Brooksville Headquarters

Presenter: Albert Joerger, BBLRC Chair

4. **Land Use and Management Plans (BBLRC)**

Staff are currently in the process of drafting management plans for the Potts, Flying Eagle and Hálpata Tasthanaki Preserves. As part of the plan development process, two public meetings will be held on July 8 and 12 to gather input and share information with the public. Staff will present highlights of the plans and a summary of public input received.

Presenters: Will Miller, Land Use and Protection Manager
Kevin Love, Land Manager

5. Overview of Breakout Session Topics

- a. Hunting – At the March 16th meeting, there was discussion regarding the District’s process and procedure for evaluating hunting opportunities on its conservation lands. Attached as exhibits to this item are the initial 2006 report titled *An Assessment of Public Hunting Opportunities on Southwest Florida Water Management District Lands* (No Net Loss Report) as well as 2009 update to the annual report to assist in evaluating the current decision-making process.

In 1998 District staff developed the initial evaluation for hunting opportunities on District lands. This analysis was updated in 2006 in response to the passage of the “No net loss of hunting land” legislation. The initial No Net Loss Report provides a consistent methodology to evaluate the compatibility of hunting on District lands and describes the criteria utilized, and the weighting of each criterion. It also provides a brief summary of the determination as to whether hunting is appropriate for each non-hunted property based on those criteria. Subsequent reports have been submitted to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission annually.

Staff will present the methodology utilized, the criteria considered, and seek stakeholder input as to the sufficiency of this process and criteria. This topic will be discussed in the breakout session with the following question being considered: *Is the process and the evaluation criteria valid?*

The BBLRC/Stakeholders will be asked to provide input regarding the specific criteria being utilized, the validity of that criteria and whether the criteria should be modified.

- b. Recreation Monitoring – Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, provides that lands titled to the District Governing Board shall be managed and maintained, to the extent practicable, in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access, general public recreational purposes, and the restoration and protection of their natural state and condition. At the June 24, 2009 stakeholders meeting, the challenge of achieving the balance was discussed and ideas exchanged. Monitoring of recreation impacts was the most common suggestion recorded at the meeting. At the BBLRC in December of 2009, the BBLRC suggested staff research best practices, evaluate alternatives and recommend a framework for a recreation use monitoring program on District conservation lands.

At this meeting, the group will be asked to provide feedback on ideas to improve the conceptual recreation monitoring framework which is summarized as an exhibit to this.

- c. Multiple Use Analysis – In addition to balancing public use, the District also looks to balance other non-recreation uses on its lands. Where it is lawful and the use is compatible, the District has a reasonable responsibility to reduce management costs by generating revenue from land use activities that have a public demand and benefit. Through a multiple-use management strategy, money generated from compatible

revenue-generating activities is channeled back to support future management of District lands. In the winter of 2009, staff was asked to review and evaluate the current multiple-use management strategy to determine if the potential for revenue generation on District lands is being maximized, given current limitations and constraints. A summary of the methods and findings of this review are attached as an exhibit to this item.

Two of the potential uses examined in this review, woody biomass harvesting and carbon credits/sequestration, are unique in that they represent relatively novel approaches to revenue generation on conservation land; and therefore very little information is available regarding their ecological and management constraints. During the breakout session, the group will be asked to provide feedback on the variety of implications the application of these uses would have on the management of District conservation lands.

Presenters: Will Miller, Land Use and Protection Manager
Stephanie Green, Sr. Land Management Specialist
Kevin Love, Land Manager

See Exhibits

6. **Breakout Session**

7. **Open Discussion**

Presenter: Eric Sutton, Land Resources Director

8. **December, 2010 Meeting Topics**

Presenter: Albert Joerger, BBLRC Chair

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Basin Board Land Resources Committee Southwest Florida Water Management District

Green Swamp West Meeting Facility

December 1, 2009

The Basin Board Land Resources Committee of the Southwest Florida Water Management District met at the Green Swamp West Meeting Facility in Dade City. The following persons were present:

Board Members

Albert Joerger, Chair
Bo Rooks, Vice Chair
Frank Strelec, Committee Member
Devon Higginbotham, Alternate Committee Member
Hugh Gramling, Governing Board Member
Mitch Hammer, Committee Member

Other

Kurt Williams, Florida Farm Bureau

Staff Members

Bruce Wirth
Eric Sutton
Stephanie Green
Cheryl Hill
Lou Kavouras
Chuck Lane
Kevin Love
Will Miller
Carmen Sanders
Sharon Pope

1. **Call to Order** – Chair Joerger called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.
2. **July 13, 2009 Meeting Minutes** – Following consideration, Mr. Strelec moved, seconded by Mr. Rooks to approve the July 13, 2009 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.
3. **Florida Forever Project Boundary Review** – Mr. Love gave a presentation regarding the Florida Forever Project Boundary Review (PBR) initiative, stating the District began this initiative two years ago and the final product will be presented to the Governing Board in January and February within the Florida Forever Work Plan as part of the District's annual consolidated report. The last boundary review was completed in 1997. Mr. Love gave an overview of the project which consisted of a GIS model; a steering committee of ecological, hydrogeological, and engineering experts; stakeholders/external experts; and public workshops.

The PBR consisted of separating the District into four watershed study areas (WSA), hiring project consultants (Wildlands Conservation Inc. and University of Florida Geo Plan Center), reviewing resource evaluations and data analysis, and completing data sets of natural systems and water resources (known as PBR CLIP). The first phase of the project included the consultants making first filter recommendations regarding areas to modify, add or reduce. The next phase consisted of the steering committee reviewing their recommendations from an agency perspective, checking for accuracy and compliance with the project scope, analyzing each individual recommendation, and performing second filter recommendations. The third phase involved WSA stakeholder teams providing feedback on internal/external subjects, opinions from local, regional, state and private sectors, reviewing each recommendation and documenting feedback. Next WSA public workshops were conducted during which information was provided, questions were answered and feedback documented. Ultimately the PBR steering committee performed a final review that

considered all feedback from stakeholders and the public. Final modifications were made to the map and database. Staff reviewed maps of the 2010 proposed acquisition boundaries with the committee.

Mr. Joerger stated that it is important to be cognizant of local, state and federal funding for land protection regarding programs such as Florida Forever. Ms. Higginbotham inquired if there were push backs from counties being concerned with removing property from the tax base. Mr. Sutton replied that this problem is usually neutralized by making payments to counties and in lieu of taxes lost. Mr. Wirth stated that he has not heard those types of comments for quite some time, as growth and land use transitions helped to resolve these types of issues. Mr. Rooks inquired as to the total cost to the District PBR project. Mr. Love stated that it was about \$200,000. Mr. Wirth stated that this initial investment brings long term value as it provides a solid baseline for future years and it will be continually updated.

4. **Multiple Use Status Report** – Ms. Green gave a presentation regarding the status of the multiple use revenue generation report. She stated the report was initiated to help determine if the District maximizes its potential for revenue generation based upon protection of natural and water resources. A list was compiled for additional review which consisted of cattle grazing leases, apiary leases, pine straw harvest, special hunts, biomass harvesting, carbon credits, eco-tours/concessions and communication tower leases. Four recommended actions were created which consisted of reviewing current policies, procedures, and plans; completing Florida Natural Areas Inventory vegetation mapping (in order to build the model); continuing research of the four potential revenue generating uses/implementation of fee system; and developing a fine filter.

District staff temporarily discontinued evaluation of the fee system due to the goal of “no charge” for recreation on those lands. Between now and July, District staff will continue to gather information; survey other agencies and water management districts regarding their revenue generation; revise data layers; and establish criteria for land base analysis. Staff’s goal is to return to the Committee with a final draft at the July meeting.

5. **Future Role of Land Use Stakeholders** – Mr. Joerger informed the group that there is a desire to have future joint meetings of the Basin Board Land Resources Committee (BBLRC) and the Land Use Stakeholders group. The goal would be for the two groups to become strategic partners with the staff regarding District land initiatives, promoting awareness of the needs and importance of what District lands offer. In addition to developing initiatives promoting recreation, Mr. Joerger suggested that a recreation monitoring program would be important.

Mr. Sutton informed the committee that the purpose of the stakeholders group is to create a stronger public interface regarding recreation on District lands and to create broad-based feedback on a variety of initiatives. One of the challenges faced by the District staff is ensuring that the meetings are open and inviting to the public. Accordingly, subsequent to the joint BBLRC and stakeholders meeting, a public meeting will take place immediately following the joint meeting.

Ms. Kavouras inquired if the BBLRC would continue to meet regularly and become a larger single committee with the stakeholders included. Mr. Sutton replied that they would meet jointly for one year then the process will be reevaluated.

6. **Land Resources Fiscal Year 2009 Accomplishments/Fiscal Year 2010 Goals** – Mr. Rooks inquired as to the status of funding for 2009/2010. Mr. Sutton stated that the bare essentials are the priority and focus. Mr. Wirth stated that future courses of action will be decided as the District moves forward. Mr. Joerger informed the group that the District's debt service is not an issue and that the District has paid its way to date. Mr. Wirth stated that District lands and their preservation and management is a very high priority.

Mr. Rooks inquired as to what other funding sources might be available. Mr. Wirth stated that the District will probably wait to see what the legislative session will bring about. As water managers, there is a directive from the legislature to buy lands and maintain them without incurring debt. Ms. Higginbotham stated that as time goes on, the District will spend less on acquisition and more on maintenance. Mr. Joerger also replied that partnerships could help. Mr. Sutton stated that the District does not anticipate a management burden will occur in the near future. Mr. Wirth stated that obtaining less than fee, searching for contiguous properties and developing partnerships will allow flexibility. Mr. Rooks suggested an update on the legislative session related to funding land management at the March meeting. Mr. Joerger agreed and suggested that staff also provide the committee with talking points to use when discussing funding issues with elected officials.

7. **Adjournment** - There being no further business or announcements to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m. with a field tour immediately following lunch.

Draft

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Basin Board Land Resources Committee and Land Use Stakeholders Joint Meeting Agenda Southwest Florida Water Management District

Sarasota Service Office

March 16, 2010

The Basin Board Land Resources Committee of the Southwest Florida Water Management District met at the Sarasota Service Office, located in Sarasota. The following persons were present:

Board Members

Albert Joerger, Chair
Hugh Gramling, Governing Board Member
Mitch Hammer, Committee Member
Devon Higginbotham, Committee Member
Mike McCoy, Alternate Committee Member
Fred Trippensee, Alternate Committee Member

Stakeholders

Newton Cook, United Waterfowlers
Paul Daniel, Field Trail Hunters
Dennis Dutcher, United Waterfowlers
Victor Echaves, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Chuck Echenique, Florida Big Game Hunters
Al Grubman, TOO FAR, Inc.
Ralph Hancock, Florida Trail Association
Daphne Lambright, Florida Native Plant Society
Mike Lasche, Florida Bicycle Association
Steve Lawrence, National Wild Turkey Federation
Laurie MacDonald, Defenders of Wildlife
Amy Meese, Sarasota County
Belinda Perry, Sarasota County
Jack Phethean, South Creek Fox Hounds
Sam Stone, Peace River/Manatee Regional Water Supply Authority
Jim Strickland, Florida Cattleman
Richard Sullivan, Hillsborough County

Staff Members

Eric Sutton
Maya Burke
Stephanie Green
Cheryl Hill
Lou Kavouras
Chuck Lane
Kevin Love
Danny Kushmer
Will Miller
Beth Putnam
Dean Rusk
Carmen Sanders
Amy Poxson

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Chair Joerger gave a brief background of the Stakeholders committee by stating that it was designed to initiate idea exchange and address the challenges that the District is facing in managing District-owned lands. The idea is to create feedback between District staff and stakeholders with the intended outcome of improving management of District lands. The first meeting was on June 4, 2009 that provided an overview of the District's land management and use program and the challenges the District faces. Discussions included initiatives that the District is engaging in and are to continue to explore and implement. The second meeting was held on October 14, 2009 where recreation opportunities of the Green Swamp were discussed. On December 1, 2009, the Basin Board Land Resources Committee met and discussed meeting jointly with the Stakeholders.

2. **December 1, 2009 Meeting Minutes** – Ms. Higginbotham stated that she had not received the minutes and would like to table the motion made by Mr. Hammer to approve until she had time to review them.
3. **Convene Joint Meeting of BBLRC and Stakeholders** – Chair Joerger convened the meeting at 1:20 p.m.
 - a. **Signage Strategy** – Ms. Sanders stated that in November 2009, the District conducted a public opinion survey that found that 58 percent of the people polled know we have lands open for recreation. Of that 58 percent, only 14 percent used District lands and only 7 percent could name a District land. However, roughly 2.8 million people visited District lands in 2009, but did not realize it was land owned by the District.

The signage strategy is one part of the overall recreation strategy, which is to promote watershed stewardship and sustainability through recreation conservation lands. The goal of the signage strategy is to inform the public how to get on the lands, know when they are on District lands, and how to navigate through those lands. This is a research-based, strategic, inter-departmental project that includes branding and signage. Staff is also working towards ensuring all materials are consistent and looking for outreach opportunities to highlight the brand.

Interior signs on lands that are managed by the District are being assessed to assist users with directions and provide information on the property. Entrance signs are being reviewed to make sure that they are fully visible to assist people with finding the property and knowing where they are. Highway signs are being looked at to direct people from the highway to major recreational areas.

Ms. Burke stated that the windshield experience is a recreational experience based out of the automobile. It will be how people will encounter District lands from a peripheral approach. Through the windshield experience, staff hopes to create a recreational experience, and then build the highway portion to draw people in from the roadways. The properties that offer the widest array of recreation experiences will be the focus of this effort.

An interdisciplinary team from several different departments was established to help determine what criteria to use in choosing properties to highlight. The team identified a project scope and used the Green Swamp Wilderness Area as a pilot for the project. The project plan articulates a three-prong approach that includes existing recreation opportunities, partnerships with other agencies and existing public roadways. The goal is to raise awareness of not only recreational opportunities, but also the ecological importance of the Green Swamp.

Preliminary strategies that were discussed and are being looked into include basic signage, educational kiosk pull-off(s), listening tours and designating State Road 471 as a scenic highway. Partners include the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Division of Forestry, Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Department of Transportation.

A meeting with the partners will be scheduled in the next couple of months. It is anticipated that when this meeting occurs, staff will refine the goals and strategies to coincide with those of the other those partners. Project implementation and budgeting will occur with the idea that this will be taken District-wide while applying the lessons learned from the Green Swamp pilot project.

- b. **Multiple Use Report** – Ms. Green gave a brief overview by stating this project is staff's ongoing evaluation of ways to generate revenue on lands under its stewardship. Staff is reviewing maximizing the potential of revenue generating uses within current limitations and constraints. Each revenue generating use has a unique footprint such as operational cost, required area and ecological impact and each footprint can vary in scale. Physical, political, environmental, economical, practical and social constraints all play factors in limiting the application of a revenue generating use, but does not necessarily prevent a use from being utilized. As part of this project, staff has identified what is currently being done, new opportunities, available land base, current constraints, and feasibility of the revenue generating use when constraints are applied to the available land base. Recommendations will be made based on the analysis.

Currently the District generates money through its multiple-use management strategy. This money is channeled back to offset land management costs on District lands. The three main revenue generating activities being used are silvicultural activities (timber and pine straw harvesting), cattle grazing leases, and apiary leases.

New opportunities were identified and put through a coarse filter analysis. Uses suggested for additional review include timber management, cattle grazing leases, apiary leases, pine straw harvests, special hunts, biomass harvesting, carbon credits, eco-tours/concessions and communication tower leases. Non-compatible uses included biofuel crops, row crop leases, ATV parks, mitigation banks, sod farms, live plant harvesting, plant nurseries and hunt leases.

Environmental, practical, political, ethical, social, business, physical and economic are current constraints that need to be taken into consideration. Staff is currently in the process of determining these factors and in the conceptual phases of how to run the analysis to determine the feasibility of uses when constraints are applied to the available land base. Recommendations will be made in July, 2010.

- c. **Legislative Session Discussion** – Mr. Kushmer stated that the Governor's budget recommendation includes \$50 million for Florida Forever funding, but nothing for the Water Management Lands Trust Fund which is the current funding source the District uses to manage the land. The Legislature is currently in the budgetary process should finish within the next two weeks.
- d. **Recreation Strategy/Get Outside! Events** – Ms. Putnam stated that the *Get Outside!* campaign is a multi-year, collaborative effort to promote District lands that are available for recreation. It also serves to promote stewardship and sustainability and make the public aware that the lands are available for several different recreational uses.

A public opinion survey was done to assess attitudes, knowledge and opinions of District lands. The survey was a random telephone sample survey and overall, 98 percent of the people stated that they wanted to get out more. It was found that people wanted it easy, fun, close to home, something to enjoy with family and friends and low cost. The majority of people stated that they liked to hike and walk. This campaign was designed to focus on these motivators and the desire was to overcome the misconceptions of District lands and raise awareness.

This campaign was launched on September 26, 2009 in conjunction with National Public Lands Day. Since then, the District has distributed 18,000 recreation guides, 20,000 Recreation At-A-Glance brochures and has had 35,000 web page visitors. The campaign was launched with a media blitz where 100 media kits were released which garnered 37 newspaper articles, 13 radio shows and 11 television shows that, in all, reached 2.4 million people. Several of the lands have also been featured on the *Florida on a Tankful* segments on the Brighthouse Network. Social media has also been used via an electronic newsletter, Facebook and Twitter. The District's speaker's bureau has done 20 presentations reaching out to 1,176 people. Several events have also taken place where over 4,600 people have attended.

Three special events were scheduled on District lands and local organizations within a 15 mile radius were targeted. Invitations were mailed to schools, churches and homeowners associations, along with local elected officials.

The first event was held on November 7, 2009 at the Serenova Tract in Pasco County with more than 400 attendees. Surveys were also conducted that day with 112 being taken. Results showed that 74 percent were first time visitors and 82 percent were visiting the area with family. Those that lived within a 30 minute radius represented 79 percent and 100 percent of those surveyed stated that they would return to the property.

From the results of the first event, it was decided that emphasis needed to be placed on diversity and youth, Scouts, elementary schools and high school clubs and groups. It was also decided to enhance church outreach programs and place flyers at local retail outlets.

The second event was held on February 27, 2010 at the Hampton Tract in Polk County. Unfortunately cold and rainy weather was an issue. 130 attended.

The final event is scheduled to be held on April 10, 2010 at the Deep Creek Preserve in DeSoto County.

4. **Open Discussion** – The group provided input on a number of issues including:
 - Desire to keep District land as a wilderness experience
 - Success of recent National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)/District partnership youth hunt
 - Regional coordination of bike trails

- A point was made to be cautious not to compete with private sector when looking at revenue generation on public lands
 - Inventory hunting with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to see if opportunities are currently maximized
 - Misperception on conflict/safety between hunting and non-consumptive users
5. **July 14, 2010 Meeting Topics** - Items mentioned for discussion at the next meeting were hunting; ecosystem services; conclusion of multiple use analysis; monitoring recreation use; land use and management plans for Potts Preserve, Flying Eagle Preserve and Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve; and bike trails.
6. **Adjournment** - There being no further business or announcements to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

An Assessment of
Public Hunting Opportunities on
Southwest Florida Water Management District Lands

September 26, 2006



Introduction

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) provides a diverse array of public access and recreational opportunities on conservation lands. Because of the diversity of uses (and users) it is important to continuously evaluate newly proposed and existing uses within the context of potential user conflicts, adjacency of other uses, and the compatibility with the original purpose of acquisition. Ownership interests (acquisition partnerships) and management partnerships must also be considered. Access to, and availability of, lands for public hunting in the State of Florida is an apparent concern of the State's hunting public. This concern has resulted in the Florida Legislature passage of House Bill 265.

Summary of Current Statutory Requirements

The following are excerpts of newly created Section 372.0025, Florida Statutes, regarding responsibilities of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), state agencies and the water management districts relative to hunting.

(4) Commission land management decisions and actions, including decisions made by private owners to close hunting land managed by the commission, shall not result in any net loss of habitat land acreage available for hunting opportunities on commission-managed lands that exists on the effective date of this act. The commission shall expeditiously find replacement acreage for hunting to compensate for closures of any existing hunting land. Replacement lands shall, to the greatest extent possible, be located within the same administrative region of the commission and shall be consistent with the hunting discipline that the commission allowed on the closed land.

(5) Any state agency or water management district that owns or manages lands shall assist and coordinate and cooperate with the commission to allow hunting on such lands if such lands are determined by the commission to be suitable for hunting. To ensure no net loss of land acreage available for hunting, state agencies and water management districts shall cooperate with the commission to open new, additional hunting lands to replace lost hunting acreage. However, lands officially designated as units within the state park system may not be considered for replacement hunting lands and may only be opened for hunting when necessary as a wildlife control or management tool as determined by the Division of Recreation and Parks in the Department of Environmental Protection.

(6) By October 1 of each year, the executive director of the commission shall submit to the Legislature a written report describing:

(a) The acreage managed by the commission that was closed to hunting during the previous fiscal year and the reasons for the closures.

(b) The acreage managed by the commission that was opened to hunting to compensate for closures of existing land pursuant to subsection (4).

(7) By October 1 of each year, any state agency or water management district that owns or manages lands shall submit a written report to the commission and the Legislature that includes:

(a) A list of properties that were open for hunting during the previous fiscal year.

(b) A list of properties that were not open for hunting during the previous fiscal year.

- (c) The acreage for each property and the county where each property is located, except for right-of-way lands and parcels under 50 acres.

In summary, this legislation requires the water management districts and state agencies to assist the FWC in securing lands for public hunting to compensate for closure or loss of existing lands (public and private) that are currently open for public hunting. In response to these concerns and in an effort to assist the FWC in identifying potential replacement hunting lands within the District's region, the District has undertaken an assessment of hunting opportunities on District lands.

Background

The District has developed strong partnerships with other public land acquisition and management programs, including agencies that facilitate public hunting opportunities. These partnerships afford District staff the opportunity to engage in new initiatives and discussions as they relate to other agency concerns, trends, and demands. Over the past year, the District has participated in a number of meetings, discussions and summits to better understand issues related to hunting on public lands. These coordination events included:

- Meetings between District and FWC executive staff;
- Participation in the 2005 Summit on the Future of Hunting in Florida; and
- The recently formed statewide FWC initiative, "Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project," focusing on restoration of degraded pine grasslands, where SWFWMD serves to represent all of the water management districts.

Through its participation in these discussions, the District has assimilated information related to public hunting statistics and trends. These statistics and trends are interesting when compared to the apparent concern of loss of public land for hunting.

Over the last five years, approximately 450,000 acres, 90,000 per year, have been added to the public hunting system and opened to hunting (FWC Legislative Affairs, 2006). The District alone has increased hunting acreage 64 percent (47,032 acres) from 1998 to 2000. This has resulted in a total of approximately 5,500,000 acres of public hunting land within the state (FWC Legislative Affairs, 2006) and places Florida ninth in the nation in state-owned lands open to public hunting and fourth in the nation in the amount of leased state land open for public hunting. Although acreage available to the public has increased, actual number of hunters and hunting participation has declined as evidenced by declining hunting license sales in Florida, from approximately 195,270 in 1993 to approximately 157,299 in 2004 (FWC, response to inquiry, 2006). This reflects a reduction in hunting participation of 20% from 1993 to 2004.

The District currently owns 331,700 acres in fee simple, of which the District has lead management responsibility for 283,500 acres. Of the total 331,700 acres owned by the District, 155,384 acres, in 12 projects, are under public hunting programs: 133,795 acres under Type 1 Wildlife Management Area (WMA) agreements with the FWC and 21,589 acres under special hunt programs for the disabled through an agreement with the Wheelin' Sportsmen – National Wild Turkey Federation (WS– NWTF) program.

The District conducted an assessment in January of 2006 using methodologies slightly modified from the one used during an assessment conducted in 1998. The updated assessment identified three additional District conservation lands that are candidates for expanded or new hunting programs: the Gilley Creek North Tract within the Lake Manatee Reserve (Manatee County – 4,789 acres), the Deer Prairie Creek Preserve (Sarasota County – 10,128 acres) and the Micaloney Tract within the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve (Lake County – 903 acres).

This document presents the assessment results and staff recommendations. The document is also intended to:

1. Formalize the criteria used to evaluate which areas are suitable for public hunting;
2. Establish a baseline inventory of all District lands that are currently suitable for public hunting, and
3. Describe the rationale for those District lands that are not suitable for public hunting.

Current Status of Public Hunting Opportunities on District Lands

In 1998 the District Land Resources Department undertook its first formal assessment of District conservation lands to ascertain if lands not hunted at that time would be suitable for public hunting. Prior to the assessment, 73,828 acres of District lands, in five projects, were open for public hunting programs. As a result of the assessment, three additional projects, totaling 47,032 acres were opened to public hunting in 2000. Other properties managed by the District's partners in WMA status include 277 acres managed by the South Florida Water Management District as part of the 9,469-acre Lake Marion Creek WMA, and 4,614 acres managed by the Florida Division of Forestry as part of the 58,146-acre Richloam WMA, bring the total to approximately 133,795 acres on ten projects (Table 1).

Table 1. Type 1 Wildlife Management Areas

Project	County	Ownership/ Acq. Funding	Lead Manager	Acreage
Green Swamp	Lake, Polk, Sumter	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	49,768
Green Swamp West	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	34,335
Upper Hillsborough	Pasco & Polk	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	5,178
Gum Slough/Half Moon	Sumter	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	4,021
Flying Eagle	Citrus	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	10,247
Little Withlacoochee (part of 58,146-acre Richloam WMA)	Lake	SWFWMD	Fla. Division of Forestry	4,614
Potts Preserve	Citrus	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	9,384
Lake Panasoffkee	Sumter	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	8,676
Myakka State Forest	Sarasota	SWFWMD/ State	Fla. Division of Forestry	7,295
Upper Lake Marion Creek Watershed (part of 9,469-acre Lake Marion Creek WMA)	Polk	SWFWMD	SFWMD	277
Total				133,795

In addition to increasing hunting opportunities for the general public, the District has opened lands to hunting for people with special needs. In 2004 the District entered into an agreement with the WS-NWTF, an organization that provides hunting opportunities for the disabled. Under this agreement four hunts were held on District lands as a trial program. Due to the success of this trial, in 2005 the hunting events under this partnership were increased to six. These events

were held on lands not deemed appropriate for more intensive public hunting programs; however see the discussion of Gilley Creek North Tract within the Lake Manatee Reserve under “Assessment Results.” The program includes archery, modern gun, feral hog and spring turkey hunts. This special hunt program added 21,589 acres of hunting opportunities on previously un-hunted District land. The District has been recognized both locally and nationally for these efforts. Table 2 identifies those properties hunted in cooperation with the WS–NWTF.

Table 2. WS–NWTF Hunt Program Lands

Project	County	Ownership/ Acq. Funding	Lead Manager	Acreage
Starkey Wilderness Preserve/ Serenova Tract	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	6,533
Upper Hillsborough/ Alston Tract	Polk	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	2,747
Green Swamp/ Hampton Tract	Polk	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	7,520
Lake Manatee Reserve/ Gilley Creek North Tract	Manatee	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	4,789
Total				21,589

Between FWC WMA status hunts and special hunt programs for individuals with disabilities, the total of District lands under public hunting programs is approximately 155,384 acres on 12 projects.

Hunting Lands Assessment Update

All un-hunted District lands were reassessed utilizing the methodology established in 1998. The methodology is based on a numeric ranking system used to rank the lands’ potential to accommodate future hunting programs based on seven qualitative criteria. The criteria are:

1. Habitat composition/condition; ranks tract’s ability to support abundance of major game species.
2. Limitations or conflicts posed by other land uses.
3. Limitations posed by capital site improvements such as education centers or reservoirs.
4. Limitations posed by adjacent land uses/development/safety concerns.
5. Accessibility infrastructure; sufficient all weather roads and access. Would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage.
6. Ecological constraints; ranks tract against limitations posed by sensitive ecological features, listed species, etc.
7. Public hunt demand; ranks tract against the local abundance of other public hunting opportunities.

The criteria were ranked on a scale from 1 to 4:

- 1 = poor
- 2 = fair
- 3 = good
- 4 = very good

Assessment Results

The results of the hunting assessment are contained in the two categories of potentially suitable lands and recommended as unsuitable. For potentially suitable lands, a description of the land and recommendations for further field investigations are described below. The results for lands

recommended as unsuitable are contained in Table 3. Figure 1 shows the general location of all lands that were assessed, as well as other public lands.

Potentially Suitable Lands

Three additional land projects ranked as suitable candidates for new or expanded public hunting programs. They are Gilley Creek North Tract within the Lake Manatee Reserve, Deer Prairie Creek Preserve and Micaloney Tract within the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve.

- ***Gilley Creek North Tract within the Lake Manatee Reserve (Manatee County, Map Reference A)*** – This tract encompasses 4,789 acres and is located in Manatee County east of the town of Parrish, east of Duette Park. The tract is currently included in the District/WS–NWTF hunting program for a three-day quail hunt. The accessibility of the property, the mix of habitat types to support a diversity of sustainable game species populations, the rural character of the surrounding area, and good accessibility are factors that make the Gilley Creek North Tract a candidate for consideration of additional special hunt opportunities, or expansion of the current special hunt program. Factors limiting the tract's potential to special hunting programs, in contrast to more intensive WMA hunts include its relatively small size, an existing cattle lease over a portion of the tract and the use of the tract by burrowing owls as a breeding site.

Just south of the Gilley Creek North Tract is the 1,005-acre Gilley Creek South Tract, which includes a Florida Department of Transportation mitigation site and a cattle lease. Due to these features and its small size, it is not considered a viable candidate for either WMA hunt status or special hunt programs for individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation – Conduct further field investigations to determine what game populations are supported by the habitat that would sustain an expanded low-intensity, special hunting program. Focus should be placed on quail and turkey population densities and the occurrence of feral hogs and associated disturbance. The District should consider the Gilley Creek North Tract for the expansion of the WS–NWTF program and other outdoor sporting programs to further diversify the District's recreation opportunities. Resulting programs should be administered by the District.

- ***Deer Prairie Creek Preserve (Sarasota County, Map Reference B)*** – This 10,128-acre Preserve was jointly acquired and is jointly managed by the District and Sarasota County. The Preserve is bounded on the west by the Myakka River, on the north by I-75 and the District's Schewe tract, and on the west and south by the City of North Port and the community of Warm Mineral Springs, respectively. Although its adjacency to the interstate and dense rural development is an issue, the size of the Preserve allows for buffering of these restricted areas from hunting activities. The Preserve includes ample habitat to support sustainable populations of game species, and additional feral hog control is needed. Although access within the interior can be restricted during wet periods, existing roads and trails may sufficiently accommodate hunting access. The District's partnership with Sarasota County will require a mutual decision regarding implementation of a hunting program. Sarasota County has historically shown caution and reluctance towards allowing hunting on lands purchased through their Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program. The portion of the Schewe tract south of I-75 is owned and managed solely by the District but as a functional matter, is part of the contiguous Preserve landscape. Portions of this tract should be considered for inclusion into future hunting discussions.

Recommendation – The Preserve can accommodate either a form of a WMA status hunting program, or a special hunting program administered by the District and/or Sarasota

County. Field observations suggest that some form of regular feral hog control is needed on the tract and special hunts have been suggested as a viable alternative. If further field investigations confirm that deer, turkey and other game populations exist at sustainable levels, the District and Sarasota County should discuss viability of a general public hunting use. This issue will be considered during the drafting of the Land Use and Management Plan for the Preserve during fiscal year 2007.

Micaloney Tract within the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve – (Lake County, Map Reference C) – This 903-acre parcel is located in Lake County in the extreme northeastern corner of the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve near the town of Bay Lake. It is bounded on the south by the Green Swamp WMA and on the west and north by the Withlacoochee State Forest–Richloam WMA. Together these two WMAs constitute over 150,000-acres of contiguous, publicly hunted lands. Upon acquisition, the parcel, which consisted almost entirely of improved pasture, was leased for cattle grazing and deemed incompatible for inclusion into the Green Swamp WMA. Subsequently, the lease was terminated and the parcel was reforested for use as a timber management zone. Its immediate adjacency to public access infrastructure within the existing Green Swamp WMA and the low potential for conflicts with existing uses now makes it a potential candidate for inclusion into the WMA. Factors limiting the parcel's potential for high quality public hunting include relatively low habitat quality and correspondingly low game species populations, and insufficient access infrastructure to support public vehicle access. The District and FWC are currently in discussions regarding deficiencies which exist in the management of the Green Swamp WMA by the FWC, primarily involving noncompliance with campground management conditions contained within the WMA agreement between the agencies. Another issue being discussed is the potential for improving deer management on the WMA to increase the quality of the herd, which at present is relatively low. Discussions to include the Micaloney parcel into the Green Swamp WMA should be held within the context of finding mutually satisfactory solutions to these outstanding issues.

Recommendation – Conduct further field investigations to determine the status of sustainable game species populations supported on the parcel. This information will be the basis for initiating discussions with the FWC regarding inclusion of the parcel into the WMA once the outstanding compliance and game management issues are resolved satisfactorily.

Table 3. District Lands Recommended as Unsuitable for Hunting

Map Ref	Project	Fee Acres	County	Ownership/ Acq. Funding	Lead Manager(s)	Rationale for Recommendation
1	Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve	8,146	Marion	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with passive recreation, urbanizing, incompatible with xeric habitat/ listed species restoration priority for the project
2	Two-Mile Prairie State Forest	2,980	Citrus	SWFWMD/ State	Fla. Division of Forestry	Managed by the Florida Division of Forestry, deemed incompatible pursuant to the FDOF forest management plan
3	Potts Preserve/ non-WMA Tract	835	Citrus	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage), adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 9,432-acre Potts WMA)
4	Flying Eagle/ former Boy Scout Tract	4,964	Citrus	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with capital site improvements, youth center program (portion of tract leased to Boy Scouts of America to administer program) and passive recreation, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 11,382-acre Flying Eagle WMA)
5	Panasoffkee/ Outlet	820	Sumter	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (adjacent Sumter County park site), currently leased for cattle grazing, insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage), nearby residential development
6	Lake Panasoffkee/ non-WMA Tract	587	Sumter	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible as property is used as a spoil site for dredging Lake Panasoffkee
7	Chassahowitzka River	5,563	Citrus & Hernando	SWFWMD	SWFWMD/ Citrus Co.	Incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (Chassahowitzka campground), insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage), incompatible with listed species pressured by development and adjacent hunting, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 5,674-acre Homosassa WMA and nearby 33,919-acre Chassahowitzka WMA)
8	Annutteliga Hammock	2,475	Hernando	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species (many small disjunct parcels), urbanizing, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on nearby 5,674-acre Homosassa and 33,919-acre Chassahowitzka WMAs)
9	Weekiwachee Preserve	11,149	Hernando & Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (education center/ Weeki Wachee attraction), highly urbanized, incompatible with listed species pressured by development and adjacent hunting, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 33,919-acre Chassahowitzka WMA and nearby 5,674-acre Homosassa WMA)
10	Hidden Lake	589	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat, highly urbanized, no access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)

Map Ref	Project	Fee Acres	County	Ownership/ Acq. Funding	Lead Manager(s)	Rationale for Recommendation
11	Starkey Wilderness Preserve	19,103	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD/ Pasco Co.	Incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (education center/developed park improvements), highly urbanized, deed restriction prohibits hunting on 8,621 acres, special hunting program is conducted on the 6,567-acre Serenova tract pursuant to agreement with WS-NWTF
12	Conner Preserve	2,980	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with passive recreation and restoration priority for project (FDOT mitigation), highly urbanized, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on nearby 5,178-acre Upper Hillsborough, 34,335-acre Green Swamp West and 33,919-acre Chassahowitzka WMAs)
13	Cypress Creek	7,446	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (wellfield infrastructure), highly urbanized, designated as "Wildlife Refuge" by FWC
14	Green Swamp West/ non-WMA Tracts	2,835	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with youth education program, capital site improvements (leased to Lowry Park Zoo for captive breeding program and youth education), adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 33,919-acre Green Swamp West WMA and nearby 5,178-acre Upper Hillsborough WMA)
15	Upper Hillsborough/ non-WMA Tracts	1,251	Pasco	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 5,178-acre Upper Hillsborough WMA and nearby 33,919-acre Green Swamp West WMA)
16	Green Swamp/ Overstreet Tract (Colt Creek State Park)	5,067	Polk	SWFWMD/ State/ Polk Co.	Fla. State Parks	Managed by Florida State Parks, incompatible with passive recreation and prohibition of hunting on state parks, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 49,768-acre Green Swamp WMA, and nearby 33,919-acre Green Swamp West and 5,178-acre Upper Hillsborough WMAs)
17	Green Swamp/ Small Tracts East of State Trail	4,275	Lake	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Many small disjunct parcels, adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on adjacent 49,768-acre Green Swamp WMA, and nearby 33,919-acre Green Swamp West and 58,146-acre Richloam WMAs)
18	Hillsborough River Corridor	276	Hillsborough	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species (2 small parcels), insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
19	Lower Hillsborough Wilderness Park	15,030	Hillsborough	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co.	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co.	Incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (five developed park sites, wellfield infrastructure, education center), highly urbanized, in 1980s Governing Board designated project unsuitable for hunting based on the above factors

Map Ref	Project	Fee Acres	County	Ownership/ Acq. Funding	Lead Manager(s)	Rationale for Recommendation
20	Brooker Creek Headwaters	1,038	Hillsborough	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co.	Hillsborough Co.	Incompatible with passive recreation, highly urbanized
21	Brooker Creek Preserve	1,634	Pinellas	SWFWMD	Pinellas Co.	Incompatible with passive recreation/education, highly urbanized
22	Jerry Lake	81	Pinellas	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat, public use prohibited (pursuant to deed restriction), highly urbanized, no public access
23	Sawgrass Lake	398	Pinellas	SWFWMD	SWFWMD/ Pinellas Co. School Bd.	Insufficient habitat, incompatible with capital site improvements (education center/developed park improvements), highly urbanized
24	Lake Thonotosassa	144	Hillsborough	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species, incompatible with restoration priority for the project (SWIM priority water body), insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
25	Edward Medard Reservoir and Park	1,290	Hillsborough	SWFWMD	Hillsborough Co.	Insufficient habitat/game species, incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (county park infrastructure), Hillsborough Co. partners with FWC for fisheries management in the reservoir
26	Alafia Reserve	334	Polk	SWFWMD/ Polk Co.	SWFWMD/ Polk Co.	Insufficient habitat/game species, incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (developed park improvements on adjacent Polk Co. tract), urbanized, insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
27	Circle "B" Bar Reserve	1,267	Polk	SWFWMD/ Polk Co.	Polk Co.	Insufficient habitat/game species, incompatible with passive recreation, capital site improvements (county park/education center infrastructure), insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage), prior to commencement of restoration Polk Co. allowed duck hunting on site – it is anticipated after restoration duck hunting will again be allowed on site in a more controlled manner
28	Lake Hancock	4,027	Polk	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species, incompatible with future water resource development priorities for project
29	Alafia River	4,727	Hillsborough	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co.	Hillsborough Co.	Insufficient habitat/game species (many small/disjunct parcels), incompatible with passive recreation, insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
30	C.W. "Bill" Young Regional Reservoir	5,228	Hillsborough	SWFWMD/ Tampa Bay Water	SWFWMD/ Tampa Bay Water	Insufficient habitat/game species, capital site improvements (potable supply reservoir), incompatible with mitigation priorities.

Map Ref	Project	Fee Acres	County	Ownership/ Acq. Funding	Lead Manager(s)	Rationale for Recommendation
31	Little Manatee River	6,989	Hillsborough/ Manatee	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co.	Hillsborough Co./ SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species (many small/disjunct parcels), incompatible with passive recreation, insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
32	Tampa Bay Estuarine Ecosystem	4,728	Hillsborough, Pinellas & Manatee	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co./ State/ Manatee Co./ City of Bradenton	SWFWMD/ Hillsborough Co./ Fla. State Parks/ City of St. Pete/ Manatee Co.	Insufficient habitat/game species, (disjunct parcels, many small), incompatible with restoration priority for project (SWIM priority water body), insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
33	Lake Manatee Reserve/ Coker Prairie Tract	2,135	Manatee	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage); adequate hunting lands available within region (hunting conducted on nearby 17,877-acre Duette Park)
34	Upper Myakka River Watershed	2,357	Manatee	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species
35	Jack Creek	1,284	Highlands	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species, urbanized area, insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
36	Myakka Prairie	8,246	Sarasota	SWFWMD	Fla. State Parks	Managed by Florida State Parks as an annex to Myakka River State Park, incompatible with passive recreation and prohibition of hunting on state parks
37	RV Griffin Reserve	5,917	DeSoto	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Incompatible with capital site improvements (potable supply reservoir/future reservoir expansion, ASR wellfield), incompatible with future mitigation priorities, cattle lease, marginal access infrastructure (could require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
38	Deep Creek	1,988	DeSoto	SWFWMD	SWFWMD/ DeSoto Co.	Incompatible with passive recreation, future capital site improvements (DeSoto County park site), urbanized, insufficient access infrastructure (would require significant capital investment with likely environmental damage)
39	Prairie/ Shell Creek	609	Charlotte	SWFWMD	SWFWMD	Insufficient habitat/game species, urbanized
40	Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park	7,631	Charlotte	SWFWMD/ State	Fla. State Parks	Managed by Florida State Parks, incompatible with passive recreation and prohibition of hunting on state parks

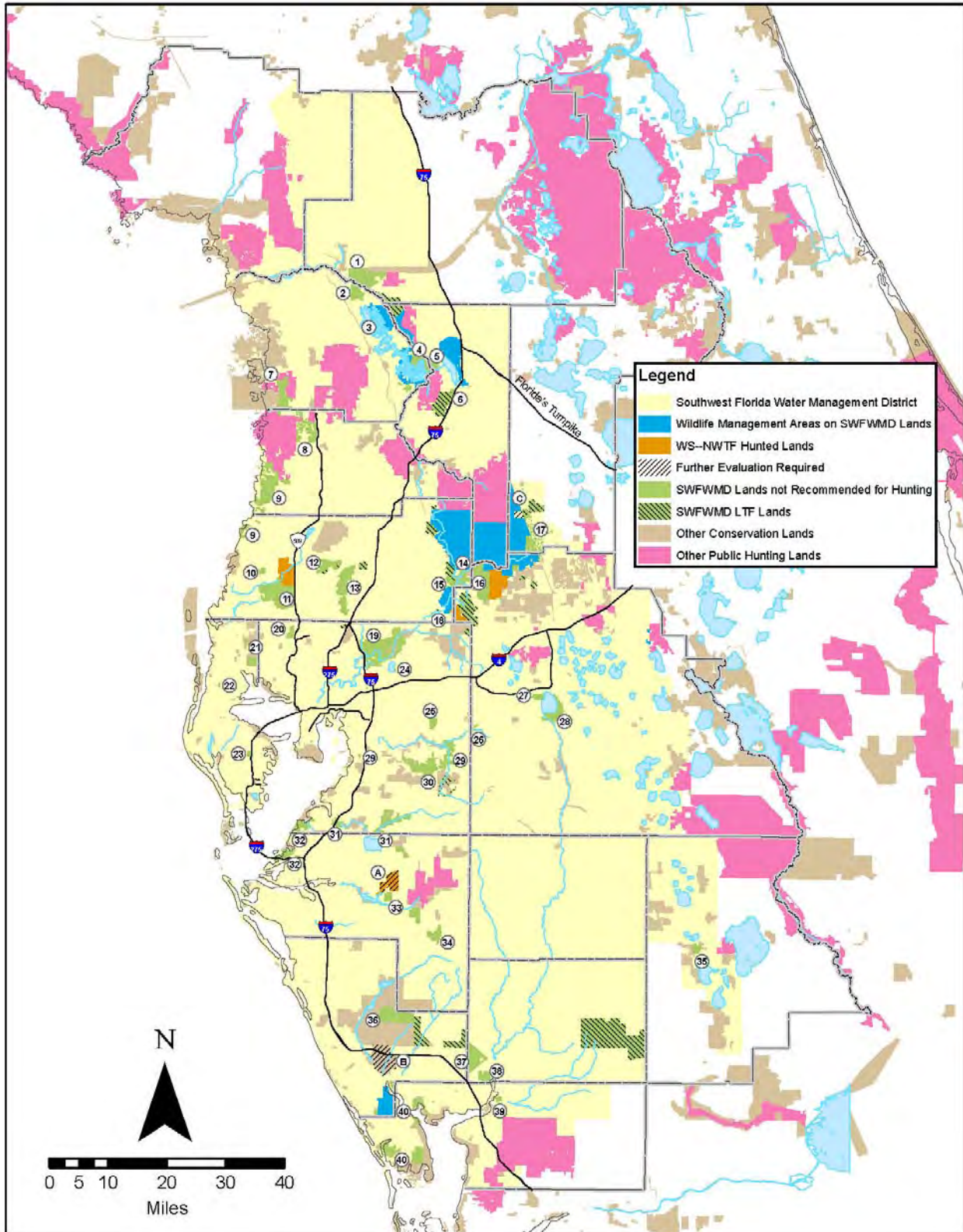
Conclusion

The District has identified conservation lands suitable for hunting, and through both public and private partnerships, has opened those lands to public hunting. The District will consider adding lands for public hunting as new acquisitions occur, and suitable projects are acquired.

Acceptance of this document by the Governing Board will result in meeting the three main objectives of this document: 1) The establishment of a baseline inventory of lands currently available for hunting in response to House Bill 265 enacted by the 2006 Florida Legislature; 2) the formalization of hunting lands assessment criteria, and: 3) the approval of staff's rationale concerning those tracts recommended as unsuitable for hunting.

Figure 1.

**Southwest Florida Water Management District
Assessment of Public Hunting Opportunities**



**Southwest Florida Water Management District
2008-2009 No-Net-Loss of Hunting Lands Report
August 21, 2009**

Section 372.0025, Florida Statutes, requires that state agencies and water management districts report to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the legislature annually regarding the status of public hunting on lands under its stewardship during the previous fiscal year.

The following tables summarize required information for Southwest Florida Water Management District lands for the 2008-2009 hunting season.

Table 1. Type 1 Wildlife Management Areas

Project	County	Acreage
Green Swamp	Lake, Polk, Sumter	50,692
Green Swamp West	Pasco	34,335
Upper Hillsborough	Pasco & Polk	5,178
Gum Slough/Half Moon	Sumter	4,030
Flying Eagle	Citrus	10,247
Little Withlacoochee (part of 58,146-acre Richloam WMA)	Lake	4,614
Potts Preserve	Citrus	7,408
Lake Panasoffkee	Sumter	8,676
Myakka State Forest	Sarasota	7,295
Upper Lake Marion Creek Watershed (part of 8,063-acre Lake Marion Creek WMA)	Polk	277
Total		132,752

Table 2. Outdoors Without Limits Disabled Hunt Program Lands

Project	County	Acreage
Green Swamp/ Hampton Tract	Polk	7,520
Lake Manatee Reserve/ Gilley Creek North Tract	Manatee	4,789
Starkey Wilderness Preserve/ Serenova Tract	Pasco	6,533
Upper Hillsborough/ Alston Tract	Polk	2,747
Total		21,589

Table 3. District Hog Hunt Lands

Project	County	Acreage
Conner Preserve	Pasco	3,487
Deep Creek	DeSoto	1,987
Green Swamp/ Hampton Tract	Polk	7,520
Myakka River/ Schewe Tract	Sarasota	3,991
Starkey Wilderness Preserve/ Serenova Tract	Pasco	6,533
Upper Hillsborough/ Alston Tract	Polk	2,747
Total		26,265

Table 4. District Lands Not Open for Hunting

Project	County	Fee Acres
Alafia River Corridor	Hillsborough	4,663
Alafia River Reserve	Polk	334
Annutteliga Hammock	Hernando	2,274
Bowlegs Creek/Crooked Lake	Polk	3,507
Brooker Creek Headwaters	Hillsborough	1,038
Brooker Creek Preserve	Pinellas	1,634
C.W. "Bill" Young Regional Reservoir (Chito Branch Reserve)	Hillsborough	5,515
Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park	Charlotte	7,418
Chassahowitzka River	Citrus & Hernando	5,677
Cypress Creek	Pasco	7,446
Deer Prairie Creek	Sarasota	6,135
Edward Medard Reservoir and Park	Hillsborough	1,290
Edward W. Chance Reserve/ Coker Prairie Tract	Manatee	2,135
Flying Eagle/ former Boy Scout Tract	Citrus	4,964
Green Swamp West/ non-WMA Tracts	Pasco	2,835
Green Swamp/ Colt Creek State Park	Polk	5,067
Green Swamp/ Small Tracts East of Van Fleet Trail	Lake	4,275
Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve	Marion	8,146
Hidden Lake	Pasco	589
Hillsborough River Corridor	Hillsborough	276
Jack Creek	Highlands	1,284
Jerry Lake	Pinellas	81
Lake Hancock	Polk	7,143
Lake Lowry	Polk	397
Lake Panasoffkee/ non-WMA Tract	Sumter	587
Lake Thonotosassa	Hillsborough	144
Little Manatee River	Hillsborough/ Manatee	7,151
Lower Hillsborough Wilderness Park	Hillsborough	16,098
Lower Peace River Corridor	DeSoto	118
Myakka Prairie	Sarasota	8,246
Panasoffkee/ Outlet	Sumter	807
Potts Preserve/ non-WMA Tract	Citrus	835
Prairie/ Shell Creek	Charlotte	609
RV Griffin Reserve	DeSoto	5,919
Sawgrass Lake	Pinellas	398
Starkey Wilderness Preserve	Pasco	19,541
Tampa Bay Estuarine Ecosystem	Hillsborough, Pinellas & Manatee	4,766
Two-Mile Prairie State Forest	Citrus	2,980
Upper Hillsborough/ non-WMA Tracts	Pasco	1,251
Upper Myakka River Watershed	Manatee	2,356
Weekiwachee Preserve	Hernando & Pasco	11,412
Total		167,341

"District Lands Not Open for Hunting" adjusted to GIS acres

Recreation Monitoring

Goal – Implement a scientifically sound, data-based, recreation monitoring program to ensure high-quality user experience and minimum resource impacts.

Assumptions – A program must be effective, efficient and achievable; and the data and protocol must be scientifically defensible and directly support recreation management decision-making.

Conceptual Framework

Baseline establishment – Baseline establishment entails preparatory actions to establish a sound, consistent programmatic foundation upon which monitoring will be guided and data compared. It is preventative– it identifies and corrects problems; seeks to minimize opportunities for impacts; sets desirable baseline conditions; and establishes mechanisms for corrective actions and mitigation. It is dependent on effective land use and management plans, and land use zoning; establishment of clear program standards; application of standard and consistent messaging in publications and in the field; uniform staff interaction with the public; and effective application and enforcement of rules, policies, procedures and guidelines.

Recreation monitoring – Maintaining accurate statistics on the recreational use of a property is vital in a number of ways. From an organizational standpoint, it reflects credibility and accountability. It demonstrates responsiveness when inquiries are made by policy makers, other agencies or the public. Most importantly, good use data provides a means of tracking and comparing use trends against facility and resource baselines and making informed management decisions about those relationships. Relevant quantitative and qualitative data will be recorded for two primary recreation facility categories: recreation zones and linear corridors.

- Recreation zones – Includes all sites on subject lands where recreational uses are congregated, including entrances, check stations, picnic sites, camping areas, boat launch/river access sites and special use areas.
- Linear corridors – Includes all linear transportation corridors such as designated recreational trails, primary and secondary roads, and firelines.

Resource impact monitoring – With the wide array of District resource management goals and diversity of resources being managed, the challenge is to select a resource parameter that is practicable and measurable; meaningful as an umbrella resource quality indicator; can be consistently applied across all District lands; includes indicator resources that can be consistently measured; and a means to correlate those measures to recreation data. Quantitative data is currently maintained for many recreational land uses that occur on District lands. These include sign-in registers located at key access points; day use reservations; camping reservations for individuals and groups; vehicle access authorizations issued to disabled users; Wildlife Management Area permits and District hunting authorizations; and special use authorizations issued for organized events. There are also special license agreements that cover one year or longer and often do not limit the number of participants. Likewise, focal species occurrence data as well as spatial data depicting the location and types of recreation zones and linear corridors are maintained for all District lands.

The parameter we found that may best meet these criteria is landscape integrity. Loss of landscape integrity due to fragmentation is a measurable threat to conservation resources. Fragmentation effects can result in alterations to hydrology and recharge patterns; increased runoff, erosion and sedimentation; habitat degradation and loss; expansion of exotic plant, animal and microbial infestations; and expansion of unauthorized uses resulting in additional fragmentation. Monitoring these parameters may be potential forms of data collection.

Additional data needs, formats, collection schedules, maintenance protocols, analysis designs and decision trees should be considered and documented to ensure a cohesive, effective program.

Multiple Use Analysis

Goal – To determine if the District is maximizing the potential for revenue generating uses on District owned lands under current limitations and constraints.

Tested Assumptions – If revenue generating potential is being maximized on District lands, we must assume that given the current limitations and restraints:

1. Those revenue generating uses currently being conducted on District lands are at capacity; and
2. No new revenue generating uses currently exist that could be feasibly implemented on District lands.

Methods

Expansion of Current Revenue Generating Uses – In order to test the first assumption, it was necessary to first evaluate our current limitations and constraints, and then to determine if any available space remains for the expansion of our current revenue generating uses. To do this we:

1. Determined the status of all revenue generating activities conducted on District lands.
2. Conducted a review of the most recent research and best available information regarding each use, in order to determine if our current policies and procedures align with present limitations and constraints.
3. Conducted a GIS-based analysis of land available to revenue generating uses as determined by our re-evaluated constraints and limitations.

New Revenue Generating Uses – In order to test the second assumption, it was necessary to not only determine if any new revenue uses exist, but to also determine if those new uses were compatible with the District's mission and management goals. This was accomplished in the following manner:

1. An exhaustive list of possible revenue generating uses and ideas was compiled.
2. A coarse filter process was developed and then utilized to determine which of these uses were clearly incompatible, and which merited further study and review.
3. Extensive literature reviews were conducted on each of the uses determined to merit further study in order to ascertain their inherent constraints and limitations.
4. A survey was developed and distributed to determine what revenue generating activities are being conducted by similar land management organizations throughout the state.

Results

Expansion of Current Revenue Generating Uses – Currently, the District has 8,797 acres of land in dedicated timber management zones, and over 10,770 acres of land designated as cattle leases. In addition there are 29 designated apiary lease locations throughout District lands. The bulk of revenue generated on District lands occurs primarily through its silvicultural program (\$213,723.00 in FY09) and cattle leases (\$51,576.00 in FY09), with a marginal amount of revenue generated from apiary leases (\$1,800.00 in FY09).

A review of the District's current policies and procedures pertaining to cattle grazing leases, timber management, and apiary leases was conducted. The primary criterion in these policies and procedures is that the ecological, economical, and infrastructural constraints are large enough that "acreage dependant" uses such as timber management and cattle grazing leases should be confined to areas of predominately altered habitat. A careful examination of current literature pertaining to these three uses, along with cursory comparisons of our programs to those of other similar land management agencies, led to the determination that our current operating policies and procedures are valid.

In order to determine the available land base for these acreage dependant revenue generating uses, a GIS-based analysis was conducted utilizing layers such as the completed FNAI habitat layer, the Land Use and Management Zone layer, the Restoration layer, and the Land Use Agreement layer. This analysis showed that there are currently only 448.3 acres of unoccupied land available for the expansion of the current revenue generating uses. It is important to note that these are not contiguous acres.

While apiary leases can be viewed as acreage dependant, their physical size makes them hard to fit into an analysis such as the one conducted. The more pertinent piece of information in regards to their expansion is whether or not they are in demand. Out of the 29 designated apiary lease sites, only 18 are currently occupied.

Based on these findings, we feel that the first assumption holds true. The revenue generating uses currently being conducted on District lands are at capacity.

New Revenue Generating Uses – A list of 15 possible revenue generating uses was compiled. The coarse filter system designed to analyze this list of revenue generating uses was structured as a dichotomous key, allowing for concise step-wise progression through the fundamental considerations and related concerns. The filter led to one of two results: "non-compatible" or "suggested for additional review." Out of the 15 possible revenue generating uses that were analyzed with the filter, 7 were classified as "suggested for additional review." These included the three uses currently being conducted on District lands (timber management, cattle grazing leases, and apiary leases) and four potential revenue generating uses (woody biomass harvesting, carbon credits/sequestration, ecotourism, and communication tower leases). An extensive literature review of the four potential revenue generating uses determined the constraints and limitations inherent to these uses being utilized on District lands.

While communication tower leases could potentially generate revenue, it was determined that their compatibility with the District's management mission would be severely limited due to their inherent ecological constraints (such as habitat loss/impact, and avian mortality concerns). Similarly, most ecotourism opportunities require a level of infrastructure not currently available on District lands; and therefore would not be feasible for implementation. In addition, both of these uses raise concerns related to competition with the private industry and public interest.

The remaining two potential revenue generating uses (woody biomass harvesting and carbon credits/sequestration) are unique in that they represent relatively novel approaches to revenue generation on conservation lands; and therefore very little information is available regarding their ecological, management, and market constraints. While not practiced by the majority of comparable

land management agencies in Florida, most believe the expansion of these revenue generating uses in the future is probable and several have initiated field research regarding their use. It is recommended that staff stay abreast of new developments in the Carbon Market, especially in regards to long term management implications and ecological impacts.

Based on the findings of these literature reviews, we believe that the second assumption holds true. Given the current constraints and limitations, no new revenue generating uses exist that could be feasibly implemented on District lands at this time.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this review, we believe that given the current limitations and constraints, the District is maximizing the potential for revenue generation on its conservation lands.