Urban Wilderness Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Parks and Recreation Division Administration Offices
Cypress Conference Room
950 NW 38th Street
Oakland Park, FL 33309

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM

Roll Call: Roll was called; a quorum was present.

Board Members Present:

Corey Callaghan
Marcey Carabelli
Elizabeth Dutra
Ken Evans (via Zoom)
Roberto Fernandez, III
Diana Guidry
Brian Rosen

Staff:
Linda Briggs Thompson, Manager, Environmental Management Group
Michel Therrien, Environmental Project Coordinator, Environmental Management Group
Elena Suarez, Environmental Specialist, Environmental Management Group
Lisa Totten, Administrative Assistant, Broward County Parks and Recreation

Guest(s): John Abbott

Public Input: None.

Old Business:

Approval of Minutes of October 15, 2025 Public Hearing.: Marcey Carabelli made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2025, Public Hearing and Brian Rosen seconded. The minutes are approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes of December 10, 2025 Meeting: Roberto Fernandez, III made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2025 Meeting and Marcey Carabelli seconded. The minutes are approved unanimously.

Status of Sites to Add to Inventory

Linda Briggs Thompson provides an update on the Broward County Board of County Commissioners' public hearing, which is scheduled for March 3, 2026. The public hearing will

be held after the agenda items are reviewed, likely between 11 AM and 2 PM. The public hearing pertains to adding 17 sites to the Inventory.

Ms. Briggs Thompson then described the next steps, a process involving preparing legal documents with detailed descriptions of each site and obtaining approvals from the cities and the state. Brian Rosen inquired about potential opposition, and Ms. Briggs Thompson replied that any opposition would come in the steps where the cities would be approving it. Ms. Briggs Thompson explained the process of preparing legal documents for the sites, including obtaining city and state approvals. Some sites may require more effort and time due to complex legal issues, but she hopes to have some legal documents ready by the end of summer or early fall. Corey Callaghan asks about the timeline for legal documents, and Ms. Briggs Thompson indicates that it will depend on the complexity of each site and plans to report on the progress by the next meeting.

William J. Kelley Rookery and Additional Site Visits

Ms. Briggs Thompson reported, in response to the Board's concerns with the site, some follow-up actions had occurred at W. J. Kelley. Staff met with the Summer Lake Estates representative, Laura, who manages the adjacent property, and she was described as very receptive and responsive. After some difficulty making contact, staff connected with her, and her team had already removed several bags of trash and debris from the area, with some remaining harder-to-reach trash still to be addressed. Ms. Briggs Thompson encouraged the Board members to visit the site again because conditions had recently improved.

Ms. Briggs Thompson addressed the Site Assessment form for W.J. Kelley, explaining that for every site the Board visits for potential listing as an Urban Wilderness site, the Board typically completes a standard form summarizing what was observed. The form includes a basic site description, surrounding land uses, vegetation, and wildlife (including any listed species), condition and restoration/management potential, possible public uses and access, water storage or recharge potential, and whether the site functions as refuge for plants and wildlife. The form also includes a section where the Board member(s) indicate(s) the recommended designation type or types (biological, aesthetic, and/or scientific) and whether the site should be added to the inventory and to the park system. Ms. Briggs Thompson noted that they did not yet have such a form on file for W. J. Kelley because they had not anticipated the Board adding it to the list at the previous site visit. She emphasized that, although not legally required, having the completed form is very important for staff as a historical and planning document, and that these forms have been used to prepare for public hearings.

Ms. Briggs Thompson proposed two options: either the Board could attempt to complete the W.J. Kelley form that evening from memory of the prior site visit, or one or more members could take blank copies, revisit the site, and complete the form later, returning it to staff for their files. Chair Callaghan asked if this was something he could simply complete himself. Ms. Briggs Thompson described how the Board historically filled out such forms together during site visits, but confirmed that any approach would be acceptable as long as a completed form was provided and later reviewed together at a meeting. Ms. Briggs Thompson stated they would email the form to members and review the finished document collectively at the next meeting to

formally document the Board's observations. Chair Callaghan requested that the form be sent to him by email, indicating he preferred to work from his notes before filling it out. Ms. Briggs Thompson then asked whether members felt they needed to return to the site before filling out the form or could rely on their earlier visit. Chair Callaghan indicated he would like to review his own records, and did not require a collective revisit. Ms. Briggs Thompson stated that if any member went out to W.J. Kelley, or other potential sites, they can bring the form, fill it out, and then share the completed forms so that the Board could review and discuss them in a future meeting. Ms. Briggs Thompson emphasized that the Board's completed forms were a key tool for tracking observations, supporting future public hearings, and justifying why sites were recommended for the inventory. Ms. Briggs Thompson confirmed that staff would email the form to the Board members, and they discussed that multiple members could choose to fill it out, but only one complete form per site is necessary. Completed forms would be either emailed back to staff or brought to the next meeting, at which time the Board would review and discuss them collectively so the W.J. Kelley site could be fully documented in the county's files and incorporated alongside other sites in upcoming inventory and public hearing processes.

Chair Callaghan made a motion for staff to email the Site Assessment form to the Board members, the members can then fill out the form if they choose to, and either email the form back to county staff or bring it to the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fernandez and passed unanimously.

New Business:

Ms. Briggs Thompson identified six Coral Springs sites: Cypress Hammock/Orchid Park, Oakwood Park, Sandy Ridge Sanctuary, Sherwood Forest, Three Mountains Natural Area, and Volunteer Park, and two Parkland sites: Six Acre Wood Park and Covered Bridge Park, as locations for upcoming site visits because they appeared to have the strongest natural-area characteristics and were close enough to be visited in a single outing. Diana Guidry proposed Saturday, May 2, 2026, and after checking availability, the Board agreed to hold the site visits on the morning of Saturday, May 2, 2026, in the Coral Springs and Parkland area, with staff to finalize the itinerary. Ms. Briggs Thompson clarified that participation in these visits is optional and not subject to quorum requirements but that they will be advertised to the public per the Sunshine Law. Chair Callaghan proposed that the Site Assessment forms can be reviewed and discussed at the May 20, 2026 meeting, when the Board will vote on which Coral Springs and Parkland sites to recommend for addition to the Urban Wilderness inventory, in addition to the W.J. Kelley site, with a potential public hearing scheduled in October 2026. Mr. Fernandez made a motion to hold the site visits on May 2, 2026. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dutra and passed unanimously.

Board Membership

Ms. Briggs Thompson reported that there were two open positions on the Board and that one application had been received from John Abbott. She stated that the vacancies corresponded to Commissioner Davis and Commissioner McKinzie, and indicated that those two Commissioners are the ones who could fill the open seats.

Section Update

During the Section Update, Michel Therrien reported extensively on recent and planned management, restoration, and monitoring activities across the county's natural areas. He began by describing work at Fern Forest, explaining that the central prairie areas will be treated primarily by the in-house restoration crew and through the prescribed burn program, while the remaining portions of the site, outside treatment-exclusion zones, will be addressed using state-funded IPMS work. Mr. Therrien then outlined the 2026 in-house treatment schedule, noting that staff time will focus on Military Trail, the prairies at Fern Forest, Pine Island Ridge, Tradewinds Park, the Pond Apple Slough mitigation area, Saw Palmetto, Helene Klein, parts of Deerfield Island, West Creek, Crystal Lake, West Lake, Shooster Preserve, and Willow Pond, with special attention on difficult sites such as Willow Pond. He complemented this with a summary of contractor work, including recent or upcoming full sweeps of invasive species at Hollywood North Beach, Fern Forest, Pine Island Ridge, Miramar Pineland, Highland Scrub, the ESL portion of Tradewinds Park, Markham Park, Long Key, and Snake Warrior's Island, emphasizing that many sites are now being treated almost annually, which is a major step forward for long-term management.

Mr. Therrien went on to discuss monitoring and surveying, noting that photo monitoring and gopher tortoise surveys are ongoing, with Deerfield Island requiring multiple field visits because of its size and challenging terrain. He highlighted the importance of mechanical restoration using Fecon equipment at Deerfield Island and West Creek, explaining that this has been critical for opening dense thickets of devil's claw and other invasives, improving habitat conditions and encouraging new gopher tortoise burrows in recently cleared areas. Mr. Therrien then described a major devil's claw and sword fern removal effort at Long Key, particularly in buffer areas above wetlands that are part of a South Florida Water Management District mitigation project, noting that the district will verify the invasive removal and that the area should, within a couple of years, support a diverse native plant and wildlife community.

As part of his overview, Mr. Therrien presented updated data on burrowing owl nesting, reporting 45 active burrows at Vista View, 42 at Brian Piccolo Park, and 26 at Central Broward, and describing how these locations are being mapped and monitored to track the health of the colonies. He also touched on targeted plantings and habitat enhancements, including supplemental plantings in an ephemeral prairie opening at Helene Klein where invasive turf had been removed, and additional tree-trust projects at Deerfield Island and Crescent Trail designed to complement recent canopy thinning while still leaving sufficient open space for gopher tortoise habitat. Mr. Therrien credited the GIS staff member who produces detailed treatment, management, and emergency maps to support this field work. He mentioned that the naturalists continue to run strong public-program numbers, including popular wet walks and other educational events. He closed his update by briefly highlighting the county's role in Operation Green Freeze, where staff and contractors collectively removed thousands of invasive iguanas that were then transferred mainly to FWC. Additionally, he noted noting ongoing collaboration with partners like Fairchild on propagation and out-planting of native species at key restoration sites

Additional New Business: Chair Callaghan asked staff for an update on plans for the least tern nesting platform, noting that the birds would be returning in a few weeks and specifically inquiring whether new gravel, audio playback, or decoys were being used. Elena Suarez provided details on the project, explaining that the state did not want to proceed with audio playback at this time, but that staff had both least tern and black skimmer decoys ready and planned to prepare the platform by placing the decoys and adding some additional gravel in March, followed by monitoring beginning in March as well. Chair Callaghan confirmed his understanding that the prior issue with the platform had involved the wrong type or size of gravel, and Ms. Suarez stated that the structure is now much more solid, with appropriate gravel in place. Michel Therrien confirmed that the platform is ready for the upcoming nesting season.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM.