Urban Wilderness Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Plantation Heritage Park, Heritage Hall
1100 S. Fig Tree Lane
Plantation, FL 33317

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:36 PM

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

Board Members Present:

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

Staff:
Dan West, Director, Parks and Recreation Division
Amanda Tolbert, Assistant County Attorney
Linda Briggs Thompson, Manager, Environmental Management Group
Michel Therrien, Environmental Project Coordinator, Environmental Management Group
Lisa Totten, Administrative Assistant, Broward County Parks and Recreation

Guests: Enrique Sanchez, City of Fort Lauderdale
Laura Tooley, City of Fort Lauderdale
Kim Pearson, City of Fort Lauderdale
Robert Dexter, City of Fort Lauderdale
Michelle Parks, City of Wilton Manors
Natalia Allen, Sunrise
Kim Heise, Parkland
Chris Calvano, Sunrise
Randy Guidry, Cooper City

I. Welcome, introductions and meeting overview.

Linda Briggs Thompson welcomed everyone to the Public Hearing and introduced the Urban Wilderness Advisory Board ("UWAB"). Ms. Briggs Thompson requested that the board members introduce themselves and their areas of expertise. The board members introduced themselves and described their professional background. Broward County personnel also introduced themselves and their roles.

II. Description of Urban Wilderness Park System.

Ms. Briggs Thompson outlined the meeting agenda, including meeting overview, site descriptions, public comments, and next steps. She described the Urban Wilderness Park System as a set of natural areas designated under Broward County ordinance to be protected and managed in perpetuity as reminders of the region's historic natural conditions, with sites recognized for biological, esthetic, and scientific value. She explained that the designation serves as an added layer of protection acknowledging a site's significance without transferring ownership or management from the existing entity, and that passive recreation such as picnicking, swimming, boating, organized camping, environmental education, meetings, gatherings, and the development or expansion of compatible amenities like trails or boardwalks remains appropriate under the designation without requiring additional approvals from the UWAB. She stated that the system's legal basis includes language dedicating designated areas "in perpetuity" and that removal from designation requires a public hearing, a recommendation from the UWAB, that withdrawal is in the public interest, and a majority vote of the County Commission determining that withdrawal is in the best interest. She outlined roles by noting that the UWAB proposes sites, conducts site visits, holds public hearings, prepares reports, and reviews plans; staff coordinate documentation and materials; the County Commission adds sites to an Inventory by resolution and later designates sites by ordinance. She described the designation process as two stages: first, an Inventory stage in which the UWAB visits sites, evaluates them, votes to recommend adding them to the inventory, holds a public hearing with noticed owners, prepares a report, and, upon Commission approval, sites are added to the inventory by resolution; second, after inventory placement, staff coordinates with the County Attorney's Office to draft an ordinance with legal descriptions and obtain any required owner approvals.

Amanda Tolbert explained the steps involved in drafting an ordinance, obtaining city approval, and the timeline for final approval. Ms. Tolbert stated that, for locally owned government properties, official approval from the city (such as a City Commission action or a delegated authorization) is required to be placed in the Urban Wilderness system, even though no ownership transfer or purchase is needed. Cities do not have to weigh in, but their approval is required later for designation. Ms. Tolbert explained that after the UWAB's recommendation, and County Commission resolution place sites on the inventory, staff and the County Attorney prepare an ordinance with detailed legal descriptions, obtain necessary owner approvals (including from cities or the state for state-owned lands), and take the ordinance to the County Commission for two readings, after which the ordinance is submitted to the state administratively so it appears in the code. Ms. Tolbert added that many inventory sites remain there when the County cannot afford to acquire privately owned parcels under the traditional approach, and clarified that the code requires management to preserve the land but is not expected to be used to enforce nonperformance; however, the designation can be used for enforcement if development is attempted on a designated site. She also summarized next steps after the UWAB's vote: staff draft a resolution for the County Commission to add the recommended sites to the inventory, the Commission holds a public hearing and, if

approved, sites are officially on the inventory; then staff begin collecting owner approvals and legal descriptions and prepare the designation ordinance for Commission adoption via two readings.

Michel Therrien also mentioned the UWAB's role in supporting management efforts and raising funds for site preservation.

III. Overview of each site.

Michel Therrien presented an overview of 17 proposed sites, noting each location, ownership/management, key habitats, notable species or features, and reasons for Urban Wilderness consideration.

Mr. Therrien described Bill Keith Preserve on the New River (Fort Lauderdale) with cypress, cabbage palm, and mangrove edges, boardwalk access, and passive recreation amenities; Cypress Creek Sand Pine Preserve (Fort Lauderdale) as globally imperiled scrub with sand pine, rosemary, and gopher tortoises; Sailboat Bend Preserve (Fort Lauderdale) as a small oak-dominated site supporting owls, bats, and butterflies with invasive-removal workdays; North Fork (Fort Lauderdale) as a mangrove-lined river parcel needing trash-focused workdays and having interpretive signage.

Dania Cove (Dania Beach) with a boardwalk, fishing pier, pavilion, mangroves, buttonwood, upland oaks, and archaeological significance.

Lakeside Pine Preserve (Oakland Park) as another imperiled scrub with gopher tortoises and prickly pear amid sand pines and saw palmetto.

Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve (Wilton Manors) with 2.3 acres of mangroves on the New River and recent invasive removals, alongside historic and public-use amenities.

Plantation Linear Park (Plantation) as a linear trail interwoven with a golf course featuring diverse native trees, birds, archaeological significance, overlooks, and interpretive signs.

Brian Archer Wilderness Preserve at Parkside Trailhead (Parkland; state-owned, city-managed) transitioning from pine forest north to cypress dome south, with invasive management, clearing work, and a boardwalk.

Dillard Green Space (unincorporated Broward) as a remnant pine flatwoods with oaks and cabbage palms functioning as urban wildlife habitat; Middle River (Broward) with cypress and mangroves and documented invasive removal in 2017.
Natural Areas of Everglades Holiday Park (unincorporated Broward) as Everglades-type habitat surrounding an artificial pond; Natural Areas of Markham Park (select parcels) including a conservation easement and restoration area with tropical hammock and archaeological significance, plus recent invasive clearing and plantings; Natural Areas of

Tradewinds Park and Stables (Coconut Creek, select areas within a larger park) encompassing cypress domes, wet areas, tropical oak hammock, equestrian/nature trails, and adjacency to already-designated units; Natural Areas of Tree Tops Park (Davie, select areas within a larger park) dominated by hardwood forest with nature trails, tower, benches, picnic areas, and boardwalk;

Snake Warrior's Island (Miramar, state-owned, county-managed) within the historic Snake Creek system, noted for archaeological significance, oak communities, and high public use; and West Lake Park as a predominantly mangrove system with complex ownership and extensive restoration history, where additional units (A–D) are proposed for inventory inclusion alongside areas already designated or on the inventory.

IV. Public comments.

Members of the public raised site and process specific comments and questions that were answered by staff and board members.

Guest speaker Natalia Allen stated she supports the inclusion of natural areas of Markham Park in the Urban Wilderness boundary.

Guest speaker Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Parks Director for the City of Fort Lauderdale, voiced support for the Urban Wilderness designation effort while raising practical questions about potential unintended consequences for several city waterfront parks, including Bill Keith Preserve, North Fork Riverfront Park, and Cypress Creek Sand Pine Preserve. He asked whether adding ADA kayak launches, extending boardwalks, or building grant-required trails would trigger new hurdles, reviews, or costs. Mr. Sanchez inquired about the City Commission's formal role and timing in approval and inquired if planned bond-funded passive recreation projects would remain permissible. In response, county staff and counsel clarified that passive recreation enhancements like boardwalk extensions and kayak access are consistent with the designation and do not require board approval. For city-owned lands, a formal city approval would be needed to join the Urban Wilderness system; and that management expectations focus on preserving the land without creating punitive enforcement for municipalities.

Mr. Sanchez also asked whether additional Fort Lauderdale sites not from the 2000 bond could be considered. Ms. Briggs Thompson and Chair Callahan invited him to share the names of those sites for future consideration.

Guest speakers Kim Heise and Chris Calvano express concerns about the potential development of mangroves at West Lake Park and the importance of preserving these areas. Ms. Heise asked why certain mangrove areas north of West Lake Park were not included and whether only parcels already in the county park system could be considered. Ms. Briggs Thompson explained those northern parcels are not part of the Broward County park system, which is why they were not included at this time, and clarified that the board can consider sites beyond the county park system. Ms. Heise further asked whether anything could be done regarding a developer proposal to clear mangroves in

that area; board members asked about ownership, and, after discussion, Chair Callaghan made a motion to have Broward County Park Staff bring background information on the privately owned mangrove parcel to the December meeting; the motion was seconded by Roberto Fernandez, III, and passed unanimously.

Guest speaker Kim Heise mentioned a park called Seven Acre Wood in Parkland, noting it is already a City of Parkland park and offering it as a candidate for consideration in a future round of Urban Wilderness reviews. Ms. Heise stated it is on the east side of the city, and Ms. Briggs Thompson responded that the suggestion would be noted.

Guest speaker Laura Tooley asked for more detail on the process and timeline after sites are placed on the Urban Wilderness inventory, including whether additional studies or resource evaluations are required and what role the state plays. Ms. Tolbert explained that many sites remain on the inventory because they are privately owned and the County cannot afford to purchase them and no additional studies are required beyond the UWAB's suitability determination.

V. Overview and next steps.

Amanda Tolbert outlined the procedural next steps after sites are placed on the Urban Wilderness inventory: for city or other publicly owned properties, staff prepares an ordinance with legal descriptions and brings it to the County Commission for two readings to place sites on the inventory; the owning entity (e.g., a city commission or designated authority) must then provide formal approval to join the system; once that approval is secured, staff brings a second ordinance to the County Commission for two additional readings to adopt the sites into the Urban Wilderness system. That final approval takes about four months once documents are ready, and that a realistic overall timeframe is six to twelve months after a site is added to the inventory, which anticipates the city approval step. She also noted that county ordinances are submitted to the state for administrative codification, and that for state-owned property the County must coordinate with the state on how approval will be provided.

VI. The Urban Wilderness Board votes on which sites to recommend for inclusion in the Urban Wilderness Inventory.

A motion to adopt the Urban Wilderness Advisory Board's report, identifying and prioritizing sites for recommendation for inclusion into the Urban Wilderness Inventory, as presented at the Public Hearing, was made by Roberto Fernandez, III, seconded by Diana Guidry. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to recommend that the County Commission adopt a resolution adding the identified and prioritized sites to the Urban Wilderness Inventory was made by Roberto Fernandez, III, seconded by Ken Evans. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to authorize the chair to transmit the Board's adopted Report and Recommendations to the Mayor by letter, consistent with the Urban Wilderness designation process, was made by Roberto Fernandez, III, seconded by Diana Guidry. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:41 PM.