Urban Wilderness Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 15, 2024
Broward County Parks Administration, South Building Conference Room
950 NW 38th St., Oakland Park, FL 33309

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

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

Board Members Present:
Corey Callaghan
Marcey Carabelli
Ken Evans
Diana Guidry
Roberto Fernández, III
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, Broward County Parks and Recreation

Public Input: NONE

Old Business:

Approval of Minutes from the February 21, 2024, Meeting: Diana Guidry made a motion to approve the minutes for the February 21, 2024, meeting and Brian Rosen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Logo Update: Linda Briggs Thompson reported that Dan West, the Director, expressed no significant concerns about establishing a logo for the urban wilderness sites. The plan is to collaborate with the marketing section after the World Cup cricket tournament to finalize the logo. The goal is to share the finalized logo during the next meeting.

Status of Sites to Add to Inventory:

Linda Briggs Thompson shared a new map has been created of the Broward County Wilderness Areas, highlighting different levels of designations and pending designations for various sites. The map includes sites visited by the Board over the past several years (numbered 44 through 69). Some of these sites are broken into pieces due to ownership and other issues. Ms. Briggs Thompson noted that, if we are successful, the Sites to Add to the Inventory category may eventually move up to the Designated Urban Wilderness category. Some of the sites in the inventory are challenging due to private ownership and development plans. Sites with city

permission are likely to transition to the Designated Urban Wilderness level after two public hearings and Commission approval. Additionally, the list of sites voted on in the last five years will also progress toward designation.

Update on Miramar Athletic Park: Ms. Briggs Thompson shared some pictures of the clearing and removal of garbage that was previously done at Miramar Athletic Park Addition and discussion was had about the next steps on how to connect it to the regional park and manage it as a natural area.

New Business:

2024 Sunset Review Process: Ms. Briggs Thompson explained the Sunset Review process for Broward County Boards. The advisory board's relevance and efficiency are reviewed every four years to determine if it should be retained, modified, or Sunsetted. The review process involves gathering feedback from board coordinators, members, and the county attorney, and presenting recommendations to the County Commission for approval.

Board Membership: Ms. Briggs Thompson informed the Board that there are currently three vacant seats and invited members to refer anyone who meets the requirements. The open positions are for District 5 (Commissioner Steve Geller); District 6 (Vice Mayor Beam Furr), and District 8 (Commissioner Robert McKenzie). Prospective members do not have to have a degree, it can be practical, working knowledge. They do not have to reside within the district of the appointing Commissioner, but they must be Broward County residents.

Mr. Fernandez noted that Commissioner Tim Ryan's term will be up. Dr. Callaghan mentioned that he was appointed by Commissioner Ryan. A discussion was had about the timing of Dr. Callaghan's re-appointment after the election.

Section Update:

Michel Therrien provided an update on West Lake mitigation regarding crib installation and planting activities. The plantings are located north of Sheridan Street and south of Dania Beach Boulevard. Additionally, there were several areas of Australian pine have been excavated to create seagrass habitat.

Mr. Therrien advised that the ECISMA (Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) annual conference will be hosted at Long Key next month. There are ongoing permitting efforts for the Long Key wetland, and a grant has been secured for a pollinator garden at Deerfield Island. Planting for the garden is scheduled to begin in June.

Ms. Briggs Thompson updated the Board on the Tree Tops Wetland Mitigation Agreement. She advised that discussions are underway regarding wetland mitigation proposed for the southwest corner of Tree Tops Park. The goal is to transform it into a healthier wetland with mitigation from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). An equestrian trail runs through this area, and FDOT is designing a trail that will retain nutrients and protect the wetland. Balancing the needs of the wetland and providing access is a key consideration in the design process.

Mr. Therrien reported that negotiations are ongoing on the transfer of the Cullum Dome to the Broward County Park system. As part of the transfer, the County is asking the developer to install a rehydration pump and construct a boardwalk. A discussion ensued regarding whether this is a site that should be revisited for UW designation and the fact that Cullum Dome is in the city of Coconut Creek.

Mr. Therrien updated the Board on various environmental projects. The Shorebird Nesting Platform is in its final stages and construction should start soon. Another project is a collaboration with 4H and Fairchild to cultivate native plants not commonly found in local nurseries with the aim to enhance natural areas.

Ms. Briggs Thompson explained development plans to implement infiltration trenches to hold and slow down the water, allowing nutrients to settle out before it enters the Shooster Preserve through a proposed drainage easement from an adjacent development. The location for the outflow of the pretreated water is an old ditch, which will be rehydrated, delaying the water's entry into the wetland. This solution is expected to be beneficial in the long run, as the preserve currently receives a lot of untreated drainage overflow.

Mr. Therrien updated the Board on various environmental restoration, monitoring, and surveying activities. A grant application is in progress to remove pothos at Long Key. A prescribed fire was conducted at the south prairie at Fern Forest, covering about 8 to 9 acres. This was done to lower fuel levels and improve habitat for the resident gopher tortoises. A gopher tortoise survey was conducted post-burn, revealing numerous burrows. Gopher tortoise surveys are also being done at Deerfield Island. Quarterly treatments are being carried out at Miramar, Pineland, and Fern Forest for syngonium control. A new chemical treatment has been found that can kill syngonium, a significant breakthrough given the difficulty of removing it manually due to its root system. The burned area at Fern Forest will be monitored and treated for any invasive species that emerge. The north side of Woodmont Natural Area was mechanically treated to reduce wildfire risk and aid restoration. Restoration work has been ongoing at Pine Island Ridge, Snake Warrior's Island, Willow Pond, the scrub sites, and Deerfield Island. At Deerfield Island, mechanical treatment and clearing have been done for a pollinator garden.

The Pine Island Ridge Natural Area was treated for invasive species. Some of the treatment was herbicide and some of it was manual removal, depending on the species. Ms. Guidry noted that this is a big birding and nesting site. Dr. Callaghan inquired if Pine Island I & II were already designated, and Ms. Briggs Thompson replied in the affirmative. She stated that they were purchased through the 2000 Bond, so they are county owned. The rest of Pine Island Ridge is state owned. Mr. Fernandez inquired about the interpretive signs and reported that many of them are fading and outdated. Ms. Briggs Thompson replied in the affirmative and advised that staff will revisit updating the signs.

Mr. Therrien continued with the grant project proposed to remove pothos from an area at Long Key. The removal process will be manual and will not involve any herbicides, which explains the high cost. Mr. Fernandez inquired if the manual removal would have any impact to the archaeological resources and Mr. Therrien replied that the manual process also safeguards archaeological resources, as no heavy equipment or digging will be used. The project is a 40-acre

area, with three highly infested spots. The rest of the area has 10% to 20% pothos. Despite the high cost and labor-intensive work, the change will be beneficial, particularly for the oak trees in the area.

Ms. Briggs Thompson and Mr. Therrien reported on multi-agency projects. Secret Woods Nature Center was severely damaged by flooding in 2023. The team is exploring the best approach to rebuild the infrastructure and protect the wetland at the same time, such as possibly elevating the infrastructure. Protecting historically freshwater system is also a priority being explored. A proposal for the study and design is being submitted to FEMA.

Ms. Briggs Thompson continued with Delevoe and Sunview drainage improvements and advised that those projects are in the conceptual stages. Mr. Therrien noted that Easterlin Weir replacement is underway with grant funding (as a Broward County Water Management project). Additionally, a study of the flooding within Easterlin is underway. The Turnpike Expansion was mentioned as another project that staff is involved in. This project will impact Quiet Waters Park, with a possible land swap with FDOT.

Dr. Callaghan and Mr. Fernandez inquired about the site visit to Deerfield Island. A discussion was had about possible dates in October for the site visit, as it is currently closed to the public. Ms. Guidry made a motion to schedule the site visit for October 10, 2024, with an alternate date of October 24, 2024, and Vice Chair Evans seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Therrien mentioned a tour of the USDA Invasive Plant Research Lab the Parks Environmental Management Group staff had, which focused on the research that they were doing with melaleuca, air potato, lygodium, and the processes they use. Mr. Fernandez inquired if the Board could tour that facility and discussion was had about the timing and scheduling of the tour in January 2025. Staff will provide potential dates during the next meeting in September 2024.

Mr. Therrien concluded with an update on Prescribed Fires for Fern Forest Nature Center (which is completed). They are also looking at Military Trail Natural Area, Long Key Nature Center, Tradewinds ESL. He also reviewed various naturalist outreach projects and collaborations, such as Earth Day at Fort Lauderdale Airport, Seminole Hard Rock Eco Action at Woodmont.

Additional New Business:

Mr. Fernandez announced his decision to step down as Chair and nominated Vice Chair Evans for the position. However, Vice Chair Evans declined the offer. Mr. Fernandez then recommended Dr. Callaghan and Dr. Callaghan agreed to take on the position. Mr. Fernandez made a motion to appoint Dr. Callaghan as Chair and Ms. Guidry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: September 11, 2024 at 6:00 PM.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:14 PM.