

## EQUESTRIAN TRAILS & FACILITIES REFERENDUM COMMITTEE

Appointed by the North Brevard Commission on Parks and Recreation (NBCPR)  
Minutes of the Meeting held August 21, 2006, 7:00 p.m., at the Mims/Scottsmoor Library

### Committee Members Present

Donna McCone, Chairman  
Sabrina Jeffers  
Kay Miller  
Carol Thompson  
Winnie Woods

### Committee Members Absent--Excused

Susan Canada  
Connie Carswell  
Jennifer Hill  
Mary Page, Vice Chair

### NBCPR Liaison Present

Gigi Henkel

### Staff Present

Terry A. Lane, North Area Parks Operations Manager  
Judy Inman, Administrative Secretary

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### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McCone called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

### II. ROLL CALL—listed above.

### III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 19, 2006

**Motion by Sabrina Jeffers, seconded by Kay Miller, to approve the minutes of June 19, 2006.**

**AYE: Jeffers, McCone, Miller, Thompson, Woods**

**NAY: None** **Carried 5-0**

### IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Buck Lake—Nels Parson & JoAnna Baber—St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)—Terry Lane stated he was asked to call a meeting only if speakers were available and announced the SJRWMD staff present as Nels Parson, JoAnna Baber, and Karen Baker.

Chairman McCone thanked Terry Lane and expressed appreciation for the SJRWMD staff for taking the time to attend.

Nels Parson distributed copies of the newly revised SJRWMD Recreation Guide to District Lands and the Buck Lake brochure. He stated he was unaware there had already been public discussions on use of Buck Lake. SJRWMD is not a recreation agency, but is rather a resource agency that allows for compatible recreation; State Parks have more recreational activities. Natural areas are purchased for water resource protection and are usually very wet. Any work must be within the infrastructure of old existing trails at Buck Lake. There are some wet areas and also sugar sand issues in some areas. Buck Lake is also a wildlife management area where hunting occurs and 4-wheel vehicles are used. That is usually all that is allowed, along with equestrian, hiking, and non-motorized bicycles. SJRWMD doesn't

have onsite rangers. Three regional staff members, JoAnna Baber is one, cover about 100,000 acres in a handful of counties. Some things people want to put on site require a higher level of on site, day-to-day security than exists. There is a Sheriff's deputy who lives on site at Buck Lane. Some off-duty deputies and wildlife officers are also contracted to patrol the property. The program is basically modeled after the U.S. Forest Service which is called dispersed recreation, with a parking trailhead, information kiosk, which is low impact. Equestrians like SJRWMD's lack of infrastructure for riding.

Mr. Parson commented on prior minutes. In April, Peter Henn had requested an official request, proposal and design work before moving on from discussion such as tonight. Such requests start with the regional land manager, then Mr. Parson as recreation land manager, land management planners, environment folks within the District and other program managers.

Mr. Parson continued by saying then SJRWMD decides what can be there. He noted a vault toilet still needs septic truck access. Equestrians would have to walk in to the camping area after parking rigs at the trailhead. Initial discussion was about a trailhead. Mr. Parson stated that SJRWMD is probably open to expanding the trailhead. He reported he looked at the area today and thinks probably some palmettos could be removed and the fence moved to add about an acre. He noted parking is under the power lines, but there may be room to the side edge for a restroom building. Use would have to work within SJRWMD program. Camping would not be allowed in the trailhead parking, but vehicles could be parked overnight which would be near the security residence. Any facility would have to be used by all types of users, not just equestrians. Mr. Parson noted

there are three campsites on the property. Some have pitcher-pump wells, but the water is very salty. Chairman McCone noted Mr. Parson touched on a lot of the Committee's concerns, and that the Committee wants to get an overall picture and is really just looking at an overview of what would and wouldn't be allowed at various sites. Mr. Parson confirmed the only parking that will be allowed at Buck Lake is at the trailhead. There is a possibility of clearing another acre at the trailhead. In response to Chairman McCone's inquiry as to current size, Mr. Parson estimated it is about 1.5 acres and removing palmetto clumps would allow more maneuvering, but would still be tight for 40 rigs.

Chairman McCone asked if there would be potable water available at the trailhead. JoAnna Baber reported the security person has had problems with potability of the water and permitting would be a nightmare. She indicated she has no idea of the source of the water for the spigot near the burro.

Mr. Parson reported that normally SJRWMD doesn't put in vault toilets. The County would have to do the permitting. Mr. Lane noted the landowner needs to apply for permits, but County staff could assist.

Sabrina Jeffers inquired if there would be an easier way for putting in a well for potable water. Joanne Baber stated it would take a long time for SJRWMD to do that. Mr. Parson stated the District might be able to be a contributing partner if the County comes short of funds. Mr. Parson stated the District is willing to work with the Committee, but it needs to be within the realm of their abilities.

Carol Thompson asked about camping at the west trailhead. Mr. Parson indicated security there has been an ongoing problem and the west trailhead is just over the county line. Mrs. Henkel noted it is a small parking area and Mr. Parson noted it is close to wetland areas which SJRWMD doesn't impact.

Mr. Lane noted the Malabar Park trail is 2.97 acres. With expanding the trailhead at Buck Lake by an acre, it would be almost that size.

Mr. Parson and Ms. Baber suggested maybe there could be a well at the game check station. Mrs. Henkel stated possibly the water for the spigot mentioned earlier comes from there. Chairman McCone noted Malabar has low impact on the land.

Sabrina Jeffers inquired if paddocks would be allowed in the parking area. Mr. Parson responded that will probably have to be presented as a proposal. He reported the existing five year management plan is only about two years old. Mr. Parson suggested SJRWMD might be more open to riding into the campsite and having a corral area there, with the trailhead parking area as just transitional use. Overnight camping would be at one of the interior campsites. He has found that most of the time, people tie the horses to their own trailers. He reported the District has built mounting boxes in some areas.

Gigi Henkel inquired who built the paddocks at the property at Hatbill. Mr. Parson stated that is Seminole Ranch, and Joanne Baber indicated that was done before she came which would be more than seven years ago and they are in poor shape. She reported the parking area floods and there is lots of vandalism. Mrs. Henkel agreed paddocks would be better near the camping area.

#### Public Comment:

Rodney Hillsman stated he is representing Fawn Lake neighborhood which the trail borders on the east side. Mr. Hillsman stated he is concerned if more than just parking is there it will attract people to hang out if there are pavilions. He asked if the attendant there will be responsible for policing the area and who do neighbors call if someone is playing the radio too loud. Joanne Baber stated they should call the local Sheriff's Office, not 9-1-1. Mr. Parson stated there are regulations for the SJRWMD lands, but statutes applicable elsewhere are applicable on District lands. He commented that the caretaker is probably more interested in keeping it quiet than anyone.

Mr. Parson stated his concern that the District has not changed its focus as a parking trailhead which determines carrying capacity which impacts the quality of experience for people who want a serene site. He stated that is why SJRWMD is not really open to a campsite and long term facilities at the trailhead. However they would be open to having something on the property for ride in only. The County could provide and maintain restrooms at the trailhead parking area. Mr. Parson expressed it seems if there are enough of the right kind of users, it deters the wrong kind of users. Mr. Parson also noted most partying is at the west end.

Mr. Hillsman inquired how it works since this is the Rails-to-Trails, and there doesn't seem to be a direct connection to the trail, and could Rails-to-Trails money be used here. Chairman McCone stated this is not a

Rails-to-Trails committee, but rather is a Parks Referendum Committee. The Committee is to establish a trailhead. There is no mandate for Rails-to-Trails, but there is an advantage to work with that program because of additional funding that might be available and for the ability to ride to Lake Harney.

Chairman McCone stated Mr. Hillsman's time was up and she didn't want to keep the SJRWMD people any longer than necessary. Chairman McCone thanked SJRWMD staff for coming. Chairman McCone told Mr. Hillsman he could speak again later under Public Input.

B. Environmentally Endangered Lands(EEL) Update—Mike Knight—Mr. Knight reported he has spoken with Terry Lane a couple of times to keep him up to date on the acquisitions. He displayed a regional map showing properties as potential EEL purchases in the Mims/Scottsmoor area and pointed out various parcels. The property the Committee has heard about mostly is the Ag Ventures property with 129 acres to the north which is just south and east of Stuckey's. He pointed out a power line easement at the south border of that property and across the north border of the 550 acres (north end of Blounts Ridge) which is directly adjacent to the rail corridor.

In response to a question from Carol Thompson, Mr. Knight stated the property is about 550 acres and is less than a mile south of 5A. A scrub ridge runs north and south through the property down to Blounts Ridge. It appears the ownership extends all the way to the trail. It is in the appraisal process now. During the process of review by the EEL committee, both in meetings and the site visit, Mr. Knight brought to their attention the Equestrian Committee would like a trailhead. If the property were to be acquired, the next step is development of a land management program, which takes about a year. One of the primary factors considered in the process is if there is staff to support activities. The environmental goals of the program must not be overshadowed with recreation activities. Mr. Knight explained various steps in the process with the bottom line being, it will be a significant time until something could be implemented, but Mr. Knight might have an idea if it would be possible earlier on. It would have more support if it was known that the operation and maintenance of the program wouldn't fall on EEL staff. The EEL committee has heard it several times so it will not be a new concept when the time comes. Mr. Knight reported he has heard nothing negative.

Mr. Knight also reported there may be a conservation easement on hunting area west of the trail, north of

Bounts Ridge. EEL has talked with the Miami Corp, but their intentions are unclear. Miami Corp owns 57,000 acres, 10,000 of which are here.

Gigi Henkel inquired if the number of acres for an equestrian trailhead was discussed. Mr. Knight indicated what he and Terry Lane spoke of is about the size of the Malabar trailhead; however, he can't speak for the committee. Right now the ridge is an ATV highway. Appropriate use by such as equestrians would certainly help. If fenced off without active use, there would be constant problems with vandalism.

Chairman McCone stated most of the Committee has ridden that area at various times of the year and have been able to get through it. She asked Mr. Knight if there is a point where the Committee could discuss acreage with Miami Corp. Mr. Knight responded EEL has been asked by a representative of the Miami Corp to come up with a conceptual corridor for protection, but it hasn't been presented to Miami Corp. Consultants and lawyers are looking for the best way to present it to them. It is joint concept with Volusia County. Mr. Knight stated there is a 400 acre site a little further north that Miami Corp is willing to sell and EEL is going to move forward to try to purchase it. EEL is proposing a corridor which comes south to Buck Lake. The area between Blounts Ridge and Buck Lake has mitigation banks. EEL is also looking at another corridor that flows toward Volusia County.

Chairman McCone wanted Mr. Knight to understand that EEL has been, in the viewpoint of the members of this Committee, overly sensitive to equestrian impact on projects. She asked Mr. Knight that since he is mentioning this Committee's interest, if he has seen equestrian use in a conversation area that he personally believes is low enough impact to consider equestrian use. Mr. Knight responded equestrian use is supported on a number of EEL properties, however some properties are very small. He is not aware of how the decision was made on the Enchanted Forest as he wasn't involved early on in that process. Looking at the property now, there would be issues associated with trails such as boardwalks. Perhaps there was a limited amount of parking space to expand for trailers. Mr. Knight stated that with the piece north of Blounts Ridge, he would envision a designated trailhead area of two to five acres. EEL will be in a similar type of mind set as SJRWMD, but day use would be very manageable. Gigi Henkel noted that if equestrians were allowed to camp, they could keep drivers out at night. Mr. Knight reminded the Committee that some circumstances are

okay, but it is a management issue with staff resources. It is a difficult issue because there is starting to be more pressure for access.

Carol Thompson stated that if there is enough area for camping, it would attract people from other parts of the state.

Chairman McCone stated she hopes to hear primitive camping would be allowed farther in the property. Mr. Knight indicated it is conceivable, but the bottom line is if EEL will be able to manage it. Chairman McCone inquired if Parks and Recreation staff would be available to help. Mr. Lane asked Mr. Knight how many caretakers EEL has on site. Mr. Knight responded only one, and that a caretaker could be a possibility. Mr. Knight mentioned that EEL is in Parks and Recreation and therefore it is easy to form partnerships. Chairman McCone noted the Enchanted Forest has a huge volunteer group.

Mr. Knight noted other opportunities where 50 parcels have been conveyed for mitigation and there is still a fair amount of opportunity for acquisition.

Mr. Knight reported the next step with Miami Corp is to sell the concept of rural land stewardship and building environmental credits, which allows transfer of density and mixed use to other parts of one's property. If that comes about, the EEL program will sit on a committee as will commissioners and other folks to build a committee that works together with Volusia and Brevard County to come up with the details of how the property would be set aside. Chairman McCone asked if someone from the Equestrian Committee could be on that committee. Mr. Knight indicated possibly, but it will be a committee formed by their corporation.

Chairman McCone thanked Mr. Knight for his time. Mr. Knight stated he is happy to come back anytime and will keep the Committee updated.

C. Rails-to-Trails Update—Barbara Meyer—Barbara Meyer reported on the rail corridor being purchased in Titusville. Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) is going to keep the piece at Lemon, so the trail will now start at Canaveral Avenue. Differences have been worked out with Miami Corp. FEC asked for another appraisal because of incredible increased value of land. There were no arguments over how the appraisals are going. The intent is to have it wrapped up by the end of the year. Ms. Meyer reported she spoke with Mr. Knight and it looks like a wonderful opportunity. The County will be giving up a 40-foot easement with a logging

road. Commissioner Scarborough put into process the purchase of a 400 foot buffer. It is looking good and moving forward.

Ms. Meyer reported the Malabar trailhead was built by volunteers and noted it is a little more difficult to use volunteers to build things now.

Ms. Meyer reported the railroad in the Titusville area has been officially abandoned, rails are being removed, and things are looking good.

Sabrina Jeffers inquired if the trailhead were on the section at Blount's Ridge, with property running adjacent to the trail, would there be a problem with it not being right on the trail. Barbara Meyer stated it would be so compatible; it doesn't need to be right on the trail.

Ms. Meyer reported she is looking at getting another trailhead in Brevard and is continuing to work with Volusia. Sabrina Jeffers inquired if it would coincide with rules for funding for Rails-to-Trails. Ms. Meyer reported Rails-to-Trails has very limited funding. Most funding for building the trail would come from local and state sources. The Metropolitan Planning Organization is starting to put potential funding in the long range plan. Partnering would be wonderful.

Mr. Knight stated that if the trailhead could be sold to the EEL committee and incorporated into the management plan, there may be some EEL funding available for development. Mr. Knight stated he will keep Mr. Lane aware of meetings. In response to Mr. Lane's inquiry as to the time frame for acquisition, Mr. Knight stated he would hope negotiations would start in 30 days and then get it through the bureaucracy.

In response to an inquiry from Chairman McCone, Ms. Meyer indicated Miami Corp and Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would like to wrap it up with this administration. Sabrina Jeffers asked if Ms. Meyer foresees any possible problems if it is not done in this administration. Ms. Meyer responded she doesn't see that as it has been so widely accepted. She indicated maybe people would like to become more familiar with it. Barbara Meyer and Gigi Henkel noted some big hunting issues. Ms. Meyer stated there are ways to manage those types of uses. Ms. Meyer noted that a lot of money has already been spent, such as appraisals, and everyone wants it to move forward.

Chairman McCone thanked Barbara Meyer for the information.

D. Committee Attendance—Consensus was all absences were excused. Mr. Lane reported another letter was sent to Connie Carswell and an unsuccessful attempt was made to contact her by phone. Chairman McCone suggested wanting to delay action until the next meeting.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS—None

#### VI. PUBLIC INPUT

Rodney Hillsman stated he was chided last time for speaking for others. He reported he is a board member of Fawn Lake Community Association and was present to represent all of them. He reported the board voted to oppose development of the eastern trailhead at Buck Lake and presented copies of the Association's minutes.

Rodney Hillsman inquired how the community can get on the agenda. Mr. Lane indicated he can be on the agenda by calling his office and giving the topic.

Gigi Henkel questioned Mr. Hillsman that the Fawn Lake board took a vote to oppose something that is nonexistent. Mr. Hillsman stated, sure, and that they voted to have him represent the association to express their opposition. Mrs. Henkel asked what they voted to oppose. Mr. Hillsman read from the Association's minutes as follows: *Buck Lake—Rodney Hillsman attended a meeting of the Equestrian Club, not Fawn Lake's Equestrian Club, who are planning extensive events at the Buck Lake area. There are also plans for an arena and a self-contained campground. That this abuts to our property, the board has requested Rodney to be a spokesperson in opposing these plans and will continue to attend their meetings to keep the community abreast of the situation.*

Chairman McCone noted the minutes of the Fawn Lake Association that Mr. Hillsman presented were vague and asked for a record of the vote where he was requested to represent the association. Mr. Hillsman indicated the Association doesn't list who voted in the minutes.

Mrs. Henkel inquired of Mr. Hillsman if this was before or after the Equestrian Committee meeting he attended. Mr. Hillsman responded after.

Chairman McCone reminded Mr. Hillsman that he was told at the meeting extensive events were not planned for the Buck Lake area and asked him if there was a reason he represented that to be to the board when it was not the case at the meeting. Mr. Hillsman stated he read about extensive events in prior minutes and there was mention of a half acre. Chairman McCone stated again it was made sure at the last meeting that the Committee was not

planning extensive events at Buck Lake. Mr. Hillsman inquired what the arena was for. Gigi Henkel noted the arena was not intended for Buck Lake. Gigi Henkel and Chairman McCone told Mr. Hillsman they feel he has some misconceptions that he presented to the Association's board. Mr. Hillsman suggested the Committee attend the Association meeting to represent anything they want and ask questions. Chairman McCone stated the Committee cannot go as a group, but one could attend the next meeting and will make that arrangement

Chairman McCone asked to go on record that the statement in a copy of the minutes of June 20, 2006, board meeting of Fawn Lake Community Association states an inaccuracy in that extensive events are stated to be planned for the Buck Lake area, plans for an arena, and a self-contained campground. That is not what the Equestrian Committee minutes reflect from the June 19, 2006, meeting and that there is an issue with this.

Chairman McCone stated Mr. Hillsman's three minutes were up. Mr. Hillsman asked if the interpretation is that if he asks a question that has a three-minute answer, his three minutes are up. Chairman McCone restated his three minutes were up and he is more than welcome to attend the next meeting. Mr. Hillsman indicated he will attend as long as Buck Lake is on the agenda. Chairman McCone again stated he is welcome, as is his input. Mr. Hillsman stated he isn't. Chairman McCone told him he is welcome to the meetings to clarify inaccuracies that are being stated in the community. When he started to speak again, Chairman McCone restated that his three minutes were up and he may not address her again.

#### VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairman McCone stated there is a lot to discuss at the next meeting. Carol Thompson stated she would be interested in any updates from any of the speakers. The Committee decided to meet on September 18, at 6 p.m., and will limit their meeting to one hour if the Mims-Scottsmoor Community Center Committee meets at 7 p.m. the same night.

#### VIII. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m. at the motion by Winnie Woods, seconded by Sabrina Jeffers.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna McCone, Chairman