

**MANATEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELMAC)
REGULAR MEETING
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER, 5TH FLOOR, MANATEE ROOM
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida
August 3, 2026**

Present were:

Mason Gravley, Chairman
Mike Burton
Robert Brown
Eric DiSilvestro
Kyle Fisher
Alyssa Gay
Ruth Lawler
Charles Richards
Scott Tussing
Jennifer Hoffman

Absent were:

Kate Horne, Vice-Chairman
Jonathan Lynch
Merrie Lynn Parker
Scott Childress

There are three vacant seats.

Also present was:

Bryan Parnell, Deputy County Administrator
Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director
Kara Koenig, Environmental Lands Program Section Manager
Kendall Carson, Environmental Lands Program Coordinator
Mike Elswick, Resource Management Division Manager
Hannah Bishop, Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court



Chairman Gravley called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

AGENDA

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1. **WELCOME**

Chairman Gravley welcomed all to the meeting.

2. **MINUTES**

 A motion was made by Member Burton, seconded by Member Fisher, and carried 10-0, with Members Horne, Childress, Lynch, and Parker absent, to approve the minutes of July 13, 2026.

3. **STAFF REPORTS**

 Kara Koenig, Environmental Lands Program Section Manager, and Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director, utilized a slide presentation to review the ballot and resolution referendum that was presented at the July 28, 2026 Board of County Commissioners meeting.

 Discussion ensued regarding the language of the ballot referendum related to the use of funds, public preserves, project sustainability, providing accurate information to the public for campaign materials, prioritizing land acquisitions throughout the County, communicating that properties acquired through the County's Environmental Lands Program are not resold shortly after purchase, and addressing misinformation on social media regarding County-owned properties acquired through the Environmental Lands Program.

 Bryan Parnell, Deputy County Administrator, suggested Members direct citizens to the Environmental Lands Program webpage and stated the Trust for Public Land (TPL) would lead the campaign for the ballot referendum.

 Ms. Koenig continued the slide presentation reviewing the proposed changes to the Environmental Lands Ordinance, noting the public hearing is scheduled for the September 1, 2026, agenda and that the Environmental Lands Program audit is currently under review.

4. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

 Ray Vinson thanked Michael Eslwsick and Natural Resources staff for assistance during the controlled burn at the Tatum Sawgrass Scrub.

There being no further citizen comment, Chairman Gravley closed citizen comment.

5. **COMMITTEE MEMBER APPOINTMENT UPDATE**

 Ms. Koenig provided an update on committee membership, welcomed Jennifer Hoffman as the representative for Keep Manatee Beautiful, reported no applications had been received to date for the Florida Engineering Society seat, and stated advertising for Districts 1, 2, 4, and 6 seats is planned for December 2026.

6. **CONSERVATION ACQUISITION CANDIDATE PROPERTIES**

Nominated Lands

 Ms. Koenig utilized a slide presentation to review the following nominated lands:

- SRR Cattle Company (573 acres) – Conservation Easement with Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP)
- Cypress Hammock (227 acres) – Conservation Easement with RFLPP

 Discussion ensued regarding the SRR Cattle Company property's land use and land cover, improvements, the unique characteristics of the Cypress Hammock property, the land acquisition process and timeline, potential management and restoration plans for SRR Cattle Company and Cypress Hammock properties if acquired, providing detailed property information to members prior to meetings to facilitate more efficient discussions, increasing public awareness of the Environmental Lands Program and land acquisition process, communication strategies for the program, and potential next steps if the Environmental Lands Program acquires these properties.

 A motion was made by Member Gay, seconded by Member DiSilvestro, and carried 10-0, with Members Horne, Childress, Lynch, and Parker absent, to direct staff to proceed with due diligence in anticipation of a purchase contract review and approval by the Board

of County Commissioners for SRR Cattle Company and Cypress Hammock.

Existing Candidate Property Updates



Ms. Koenig continued the slide presentation to review:

- Pope Ranch (117 acres) – Staff cannot move forward based on counteroffer received from landowner
- QMF Parcel (71 acres) – Staff cannot move forward based on counteroffer received from landowner
- Anson Road Properties (557 acres) – Staff intends to make an offer this week (3.3 percent over the highest appraisal)
- LMR Connector (Parcel 1 - 153 acres and Parcel 2 - 41 acres) – In negotiations
- Taylor Grade (150 acres) – Staff intends to make offer by end of the week
- City of Bradenton Scrub Parcel (550 acres) – Conservation Easement on pause

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Candidate Property Work Plans



Mike Elswick, Resource Management Division Manager, reviewed Anson Road properties work plan, natural habitat and features, site importance, proposed site protection and public access, resource management, hydrologic rehabilitation and habitat restoration, anticipated costs, funding partnerships and revenue, and displayed the Geographic Information System (GIS) dashboard.



Discussion ensued regarding coordination with Florida Forever, restoration projects, partnerships to support restoration efforts, grant opportunities, public access, and consideration of potential cattle grazing or citrus production on the property.

(Depart Member Burton)



A motion was made by Member DiSilvestro, seconded by Member Richards, and carried 9-0, with Members Burton, Horne, Childress, Lynch, and Parker absent, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners execution of the work plan and contract for sale and purchase of Anson Road Properties.

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7. **PRIORITIZATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

A motion was made earlier in the meeting.

8. **NEW BUSINESS AND COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**



Member Gay suggested contacting agricultural partners related to acquiring and maintaining properties.



Member Brown noted the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDPE) will host a public open house on August 26, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The next meeting will take place at 6:00 p.m., on October 5, 2026, in the Fifth Floor, Manatee Room, Manatee County Administration Building, 1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton.

9. **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Gravley adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.
Minutes Approved: _____