

**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
November 3, 2025**

Present were:

Mason Gravley, Chairman
Kate Horne, Vice-Chairman
Mike Burton
Robert Brown
Eric DiSilvestro
Kyle Fisher, (Entered during meeting)
Alyssa Gay
Richard Larsen
Ruth Lawler
Jonathan Lynch
Merrie Lynn Parker
Scott Tussing


There are two vacant seats.

Absent were:

Scott Childress
Brian Searcy
Charles Richards

Also present were:

Commissioner Carol Ann Felts
Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director
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 6:04 p.m.


AGENDA

EL20251103DOC001

1. **WELCOME**


Chairman Gravley welcomed all in attendance and Members introduced themselves.

2. **MINUTES**

 A motion was made by Member Tussing, seconded by Member Gay, and carried 11-0, with Members Childress, Fisher, Searcy, and Richards absent, to approve the minutes of September 8, 2025.


(Enter Member Fisher)

4. **STAFF REPORTS**


 Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director, reported Deborah Woithe resigned from the County, and utilized a slide presentation to review general updates and staff reports, new webpage content, acquisitions to date, GO Bond fund availability, and the

Environmental Lands Management and Acquisition Advisory Committee (ELMAC) ordinance update.

4. **TRUST FOR PUBLIC LANDS**


 Will Abberger, Trust for Public Lands, utilized a slide presentation to review The Trust for Public Land's (TPL) Conservation Finance program, proof of concept, not red or blue, but green (map of the Country), land vote, all land conservation ballot measures, track record, over 25 years of conservation finance, TPL ballot measures in Florida, key steps for successful ballot measures, Manatee County 2020 feasibility study, initial ballot test, bond referendum on ballot, Manatee County results by precinct, and feasibility research.


 Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director, reviewed the process to bring the Trust for Public Lands to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

 Discussion ensued regarding the implications of removing property taxes, the impact of local climate and government taxes, clarification of the scope of the Trust for Public Land, and the potential effects of dissolving soil and water conservation districts.

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5. **CONSERVATION ACQUISITION CANDIDATE PROPERTIES**


 Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director, and Kendall Carson, Environmental Lands Program Coordinator, utilized a slide presentation to discuss Taylor Ranch, 184-acre property located in Myakka City, nominated by Florida Conservation Group, habitat types, within Florida Wildlife Corridor, Myakka River headwaters, near mining activity, and arial photos of the site.

 A motion was made by Member Burton and seconded by Member Parker, to direct staff to proceed with due diligence in anticipation of a purchase contract review and approval by the Board of County Commissioners for Taylor Ranch.


Discussion ensued regarding funding towards the purchase of Taylor Ranch, the ownership of mineral rights, and the distance of nearby mining operations from the property.

The motion carried 12-0, with Members Childress, Searcy, and Richards absent.


 Discussion ensued regarding limited-access properties being presented to the Board, protection measures for properties brought before this Board, the use of conservation easements, successful examples of family-owned conservation lands within the state, signage for these properties, and additional methods for protecting similar lands.

 Ms. Carson and Mr. Hunsicker continued the slides reviewing existing candidate property updates, Anson Road properties, Mossy Island Ranch, Thundercloud West, Sweet Bay Property, North Crooked River Preserve, Betts Property, B Squared Ranch, and Terra Ceia Port Manatee Buffer.


6. **ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MILLAGE CONSIDERATIONS**

 Member Parker reviewed her report regarding the environmental lands millage and the Environmental Lands 831 Fund, a breakdown of the funds allocated to environmental lands and suggested separating the ad valorem taxes, recommended directing staff to

draft a resolution for approval specifying how the millage funds are to be used and clarifying ELMAC’s responsibilities in fulfilling Resolution R-21-182, which outlines the committee’s purpose and duties, proposed establishing a subcommittee to meet with Sheila McLean, Chief Financial Officer for Manatee County, and recommending a reorganization of how the Environmental Lands Program is administered.

 Discussion ensued regarding reviewing a staff report on these recommendations before taking further action, Members agreed to review the information and continue the discussion at the next meeting, focusing on the millage breakdown, the scope of funding, and ensuring accountability and transparency. EL20251103DOC003


7. **MEETING DATES**


 Chairman Gravley and Kendall Carson, Environmental Lands Program Coordinator, reviewed the 2026 proposed meeting schedule, noting that meetings would be held on the first Monday every other month, unless the date falls on a holiday. EL20251103DOC004


8. **CITIZEN/GUEST COMMENTS**

There being no citizen comments, Chairman Gravley closed citizen comments.


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

 Discussion ensued regarding Will Abberger, Trust for Public Lands coming down for further discussion.

 A motion was made by Member Parker and seconded by Member Lawler, to have Chairman Gravley and Will Abberger, TPL present to the Board of County Commissioner’s regarding the Trust for Public Lands. The motion carried 12-0, with Members Childress, Searcy, and Richards absent.

 A motion was made by Member Parker and seconded by Member Burton, to send a letter of appreciation to Debra Woithe from the ELMAC Board. The motion carried 12-0, with Members Childress, Searcy, and Richards absent.

10. **NEW BUSINESS/COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

 Member Brown requested a map of mining boundaries in the County.

Commissioner Felts noted the BOCC meetings occurring this week.

11. **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Gravley adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Minutes Approved: _____