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STATE LANDS ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, Florida has invested more than $6 billion to conserve approximately 3.6 million acres of land for environmental, recreational and preservation purposes. Florida Forever is the state's most recent blueprint for conserving natural. It replaced the highly successful Preservation 2000 program, the largest program of its kind in the United States. The Florida Forever Act, implemented in 2000, reinforced Florida's commitment to conserve its natural and cultural heritage, provide urban open space, and better manages the land acquired by the State. Florida Forever is more than an environmental land acquisition mechanism. It encompasses a wide range of goals including: environmental restoration; water resource development; increased public access; public lands management; and increased protection of land through conservation easements.

Section 259.1051, F.S. establishes Florida Forever Trust Fund and provides a cumulative $3 billion bonding limit. Section 215.15(1)(a), F.S. establishes an annual $300 million bonding limit and provides an intent statement that bonds issued for Florida Forever purposes be retired by December 31, 2030. As of the date of this report, the state has issued $1.8 billion in bonds for Florida Forever purposes. Under current statutes, a $1.2 billion in bonding capacity exists for Florida Forever purposes and it will take four years to fully utilize the authorized bonding capacity.

Prior to the 2007 Legislative Session, a consortium of environmental groups proposed doubling the bonding capacity of a successor program to Florida Forever. During the fall of 2007, the Department of Environmental Protection held workshops regarding a successor program, and recent Senate announcements have indicated that legislation regarding a successor program is likely to be proposed.

Despite the success of past programs, future acquisitions face increased land costs, budget constraints, and land management duties. As Florida plans for the successor to the Florida Forever Program, it must address these challenges. The long-term management of conservation lands and public access to such lands has been of particular concern to the House of Representatives.

Purpose of the Project:

The purpose of this interim report is to assist members in evaluating current state lands use policies and practices and to provide policy options to improve the management of state lands. The interim report also is intended to assist members who may develop legislation for a Florida Forever successor program by developing policies options for such a program with an emphasis on the role of land management in the acquisition decisions and long-term land management planning.

Methodology

The research methodology employed in gathering information presented in this interim report included:

- A review of the history of the state's land acquisition programs and their objectives, and a review of Chapters 253 and 259, F.S., and related department rules was conducted to identify current land management requirements and reporting mechanisms.
- In August 2007, a questionnaire was prepared that sought to elicit information regarding practices and expenditures with regard to land management activities, and public access to the state's lands. This questionnaire was sent to the state agencies and agencies of

the state that are responsible for management of state and public lands. The responses to these questions led to numerous requests for additional information.

- A review of the current Acquisition and Restoration Council's process and the Land Management Advisory Council activities and reports was conducted.
- Two opinion surveys of the state's land management agencies and staff were developed in conjunction with OPPAGA and several meetings with OPPAGA staff were held to discuss the resulting information.
- A review of current funding allocation methodologies was conducted.
- Periodic meetings were held with agency staffs to discuss and clarify issues relating to state land management.

Public Land Acquisition

The State of Florida has a history of land acquisition programs, each with differing goals, objectives and funding. Since 1963 there has been a series of land acquisition programs, including Outdoor Recreation and Conservation (1963), Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL, 1972), Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL, 1979), Save Our Rivers (SOR, 1981), Save Our Coast (SOC, 1981), Florida Communities Trust (FCT, 1989), Preservation 2000 (P2000, 1990), and Florida Forever (2000).

The land acquisition process for state lands, title to which will vest in the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (BOT), is provided in Chapters 253 and 259, F.S., and ch.18-24, F.A.C. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is charged to staff the BOT. This function is provided by the DEP, Division of State Lands (DSL). The DSL is, therefore, charged to acquire and oversee management of state lands as directed by the BOT.

State Goals, Policies and Legislative Intent

Section 7, Article II, of the State Constitution provides that:

> *It shall be the policy of the state to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty. Adequate provision shall be made by law...for the conservation and protection of natural resources.*

Section 187.201, F.S., adopts the State Comprehensive Plan and s. 187.201(9), F.S., provides specific goals and policies regarding natural systems and recreational lands.

Goal.—Florida shall protect and acquire unique natural habitats and ecological systems, ... and restore degraded natural systems to a functional condition.

Policies.—

- Conserve forests, wetlands, fish, marine life, and wildlife to maintain their environmental, economic, aesthetic, and recreational values.
- Acquire, retain, manage, and inventory public lands to provide recreation, conservation, and related public benefits.
- Prohibit the destruction of endangered species and protect their habitats.
- Establish an integrated regulatory program to assure the survival of endangered and threatened species within the state.
- Promote the use of agricultural practices which are compatible with the protection of wildlife and natural systems.

- Encourage multiple uses of forest resources, where appropriate, to provide for timber production, recreation, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, erosion control, and maintenance of water quality.
- Protect and restore the ecological functions of wetlands systems to ensure their long-term environmental, economic, and recreational value.
- Promote restoration of the Everglades system and of the hydrological and ecological functions of degraded or substantially disrupted surface waters.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive planning, management, and acquisition program to ensure the integrity of Florida's river systems.
- Emphasize the acquisition and maintenance of ecologically intact systems in all land and water planning, management, and regulation.
- Expand state and local efforts to provide recreational opportunities to urban areas, including the development of activity-based parks.
- Protect and expand park systems throughout the state.
- Encourage the use of public and private financial and other resources for the development of recreational opportunities at the state and local levels.

Section 259.032, F.S., establishes the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund and provides its purpose and the policy of the state regarding public lands:

> *...that the citizens of this state shall be assured public ownership of natural areas for purposes of maintaining this state's unique natural resources; protecting air, land, and water quality; promoting water resource development to meet the needs of natural systems and citizens of this state; promoting restoration activities on public lands; and providing lands for natural resource based recreation.*

Florida Statutes further state that a high priority be given to the acquisition of such lands in or near counties exhibiting the greatest concentration of population and that a high priority be given to acquiring lands or rights or interests in lands within any area designated as an area of critical state concern under s. 380.05, F.S., which, in the judgment of the Acquisition and Restoration Council, cannot be adequately protected by application of land development regulations adopted pursuant to s. 380.05, F.S. Finally, the section provides that lands acquired be managed in such a way as to protect or restore their natural resource values, and provide the greatest benefit, including public access, to the citizens of this state.

<u>Authorized Land Purchases for Public Purposes</u>
Section 259.032, F.S., authorized the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund to allocate moneys from the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund to acquire for fee simple or any lesser interest in lands for the following public purposes:

- To conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area;
- To conserve and protect lands within designated areas of critical state concern, if the proposed acquisition relates to the natural resource protection purposes of the designation;
- To conserve and protect native species habitat or endangered or threatened species, emphasizing long-term protection for endangered or threatened species designated G-1 or G-2 by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, and especially those areas that are

special locations for breeding and reproduction; *(G-1 and G-2= Sustainable Forest Management)*

- To conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, if the protection and conservation of such lands is necessary to enhance or protect significant surface water, groundwater, coastal, recreational, timber, or fish or wildlife resources which cannot otherwise be accomplished through local and state regulatory programs;
- To promote water resource development that benefits natural systems and citizens of the state;
- To facilitate the restoration and subsequent health and vitality of the Florida Everglades;
- To provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural resource based recreation and other outdoor recreation on any part of any site compatible with conservation purposes;
- To preserve significant archaeological or historic sites; or
- To conserve urban open spaces suitable for greenways or outdoor recreation which are compatible with conservation purposes.

Florida Forever

Section 259.105, F.S., establishes the Florida Forever Act and provides the declarations of the Legislature. It was the intent of the Legislature to change the focus and direction of the state's major land acquisition program. One distinct difference between Florida Forever and Florida's preceding land acquisition programs was the inclusion of performance based budgeting as a tool to evaluate the achievements of the program. The Legislature also recognized a competitive selection process can best select those projects that meet the goals of the Florida Forever program. The Legislature acknowledged a need for a long-term financial commitment to managing Florida's public lands in order to achieve protection of natural resources that provide the public the opportunity to enjoy lands to their fullest potential

Under the Florida Forever program, bonds may be issued for more or for less than $300 million per year. However, the entire program is limited to $3 billion. In each year that bonds are issued, the bond proceeds are distributed[1] as shown in Table 1.

[1] s. 259.105, F.S.

Table 1

Florida Forever Funding Recipients
(percent of each years bonds proceeds and dollars at $300 million per year)

Title vested in Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund — $129 million		
Department of Environmental Protection		
Division of State Lands	35%	$105,000,000
Division of Recreation and Parks	1½%	$4,500,000
Office of Greenways and Trails	1½%	$4,500,000
Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program	2%	$6,000,000
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	1½%	$4,500,000
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services		
Division of Forestry	1½%	$4,500,000
Title vested in local government or non-profit organization — $66 million		
Department of Community Affairs		
Florida Communities Trust	22%	$66,000,000
Title vested in Water Management District Governing Boards — $105 million:		
Northwest Florida Water Management District	7½%	$7,875,000
Suwannee River Water Management District	7½%	$7,875,000
Southwest Florida Water Management District	25%	$26,250,000
St. Johns River Water Management District	25%	$26,250,000
South Florida Water Management District	35%	$36,750,000

The Florida Forever program is a willing seller program where an applicant proposes an acquisition through a process established by statute and rules. Section 259.105(7), F.S., requires the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) to receive applications for project proposals. Section 259.105(9), F.S., requires the ARC to recommend rules to the BOT that competitively evaluate, select and rank projects eligible for Florida Forever Funding. Section 259.105(9), F.S., provides further guidance to the ARC's recommendations by requiring weight be given to projects that:

- Meet multiple Florida Forever goals.
- Are part of an ongoing governmental effort to restore, protect, or develop land areas or water resources.
- Enhance or facilitate management of properties already under public ownership.
- Has significant archaeological or historic value.
- Have funding sources that are identified and assured through at least the first two years of the project.
- Contribute to the solution of water resource problems on a regional basis.
- Have a significant portion of its land area in imminent danger of development, in imminent danger of losing its significant natural attributes or recreational open space, or in imminent danger of subdivision which would result in multiple ownership and make acquisition of the project costly or less likely to be accomplished.
- Implement an element from a plan developed by an ecosystem management team.
- Are a component of the Everglades restoration effort.
- May be purchased at 80 percent of appraised value.
- May be acquired, in whole or in part, using alternatives to fee simple, including but not limited to, purchase of development rights, hunting rights, agricultural or silvicultural rights, or mineral rights or obtaining conservation easements or flowage easements.
- Are a joint acquisitions, either among public agencies, nonprofit organizations, or private entities, or by a public-private partnership.

<u>Florida Forever Goals & Performance Measures</u>
As presented in the Florida Forever application, s. 259.105(4), F.S., the goals and measures are as follows (note; ** = 2001 baseline established and included in the Florida Forever Natural Resource Acquisition Progress Report):

- Goal A — Enhance the Coordination and Completion of Land Acquisition Projects
  - Measure A1: The number of acres acquired through the state's land acquisition programs that contribute to the completion of Florida Preservation 2000 projects or projects begun before Preservation 2000.
  - Measure A2: The number of acres protected through the use of alternatives to fee simple acquisition.
  - Measure A3: The number of shared acquisition projects among Florida Forever funding partners and partners with other funding sources, including local governments and the federal government.

- Goal B — Increase the Protection of Florida's Biodiversity at the Species, Natural Community, and Landscape Levels
  - Measure B1: The number of acres acquired of significant Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. **
  - Measure B2: The number of acres acquired of highest priority conservation areas for Florida's rarest species. **

- Measure B3: The number of acres acquired of significant landscapes, landscape linkages, and conservation corridors, giving priority to completing linkages. **
- Measure B4: The number of acres acquired of under-represented native ecosystems. **
- Measure B5: The number of landscape-sized protection areas of at least 50,000 acres that exhibit a mosaic of predominantly intact or restorable natural communities established through new acquisition projects, or augmentations to previous projects.
- Measure B6: The percentage increase in the number of occurrences of endangered species, threatened species, or species of special concern on publicly managed conservation areas.

- Goal C — Protect, Restore, and Maintain the Quality and Natural Functions of Land, Water, and Wetland Systems of the State.
  - Measure C1: The number of acres of publicly-owned land identified as needing restoration; acres undergoing restoration; and acres with restoration activities completed.
  - Measure C2: The percentage of water segments that fully meet, partially meet, or do not meet their designated uses as reported in the Department of Environmental Protection's State Water Quality Assessment 305(b) report.
  - Measure C3: The percentage completion of targeted capital improvements in surface water improvement and management plans created under s. 373.453 (2), regional or master stormwater management system plans, or other adopted restoration plans.
  - Measure C4: The number of acres acquired that protect natural floodplain functions. **
  - Measure C5: The number of acres acquired that protect surface waters of the State. **
  - Measure C6: The number of acres identified for acquisition to minimize damage from flooding and the percentage of those acres acquired.
  - Measure C7: The number of acres acquired that protect fragile coastal resources. **
  - Measure C8: The number of acres of functional wetland systems protected. **
  - Measure C9: The percentage of miles of critically eroding beaches contiguous with public lands that are restored or protected from further erosion.
  - Measure C10: The percentage of public lakes and rivers in which invasive, non-native aquatic plants are under maintenance control.
  - Measure C11: The number of acres of public conservation lands in which upland invasive, exotic plants are under maintenance control.

- Goal D — Ensure that Sufficient Quantities of Water are Available to Meet the Current and Future Needs of Natural Systems and the Citizens of the State
  - Measure D1: The number of acres acquired which provide retention and storage of surface water in naturally occurring storage areas, such as lakes and wetlands, consistent with the maintenance of water resources or water supplies and consistent with district water supply plans.
  - Measure D2: The quantity of water made available through the water resource development component of a district water supply plan for which a water management district is responsible.

- Measure D3: The number of acres acquired of groundwater recharge areas critical to springs, sinks, aquifers, other natural systems, or water supply. **

- Goal E — Increase Natural Resource-Based Public Recreational and Educational Opportunities
  - Measure E1: The number of acres acquired that are available for natural resource-based public recreation or education. **
  - Measure E2: The miles of trails that are available for public recreation, giving priority to those that provide significant connections including those that will assist in completing the Florida National Scenic Trail.
  - Measure E3: The number of new resource-based recreation facilities, by type, made available on public land.

- Goal F — Preserve Significant Archaeological or Historic Sites.
  - Measure F1: The increase in the number of and percentage of historic and archaeological properties listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places which are protected or preserved for public use.
  - Measure F2: The increase in the number and percentage of historic and archaeological properties that are in state ownership. **

- Goal G — Increase the Amount of Forestland Available for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources
  - Measure G1: The number of acres acquired that are available for sustainable forest management. **
  - Measure G2: The number of acres of state owned forestland managed for economic return in accordance with current best management practices.
  - Measure G3: The number of acres of forest land acquired that will serve to maintain natural groundwater recharge functions.
  - Measure G4: The percentage and number of acres identified for restoration actually restored by reforestation.

- Goal H — Increase the Amount of Open Space Available in Urban Areas.
  - Measure H1: The percentage of local governments that participate in land acquisition programs and acquire open space in urban cores.
  - Measure H2: The percentage and number of acres of purchases of open space within urban service areas.

The rules adopted by the BOT, Chapter 18-24.002, F.A.C., require projects to meet at least two of the Florida Forever goals and measures with some limited exceptions. Current Florida Forever goals and measures address land management activities to some degree, but only one is measured and reported formally: "Measure E2: The miles of trails that are available for public recreation, giving priority to those that provide significant connections including those that will assist in completing the Florida National Scenic Trail." Also, Florida Statues and Florida Administrative Code do not provide a weight to Florida Forever goals or measures which would facilitate a numeric scoring of Florida Forever applications or acquisitions.

<u>The Acquisition and Restoration Council</u>
Section 259.035, F.S., establishes the nine-member Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC). The Council is comprised of the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection, the

Director of the Division of Forestry of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Director of the Division of Historical Resources of the Department of State, the Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, or their respective designees, and four members appointed by the Governor who have backgrounds in scientific disciplines related to land, water, or environmental sciences. The council is charged with competitively evaluating, selecting, and ranking Florida Forever projects. An affirmative vote of five members of the council is required in order to change a project boundary or to place a proposed project on the acquisition list. The BOT reviews the recommendations and approves the results of this process.

The ARC also provides assistance to the BOT in reviewing the recommendations and plans for state-owned lands, including both the Land Management Prospectus (pre-acquisition) and the Land management Plan (post acquisition). In reviewing such recommendations and plans, the ARC is to consider the optimization of multiple-use and conservation strategies.

The Land Acquisition Process

When a sponsor proposes a state land acquisition project, applications are submitted to the DEP's Division of State Lands' (DSL) Office of Environmental Services and are initially reviewed for sufficiency of information. Each application requires the project sponsor to recommend a manager and management policy statement.

Applications deemed complete are evaluated by the DSL and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) staffs for value and suitability with regard to conservation, preservation and recreation attributes. These assessments form the basis for a set of recommendations by the DSL that identify the primary purpose for which the lands would be managed and establish a strategy to optimize the management of the project, including multi-use functions and public access. These recommendations are attached to the application and are submitted to the ARC. Affected landowners, local governments, regional planning councils and water management districts are notified of the application and staff recommendations.

The ARC is responsible for evaluating, selecting and ranking state land acquisition projects for submission to the BOT for approval. There are two evaluation cycles that each application goes through before a final vote by the ARC is taken to determine if it is to be included on the acquisition list. These evaluations are a preliminary review and a final assessment. A public hearing regarding the application is held after the preliminary review. The ARC then votes to accept or reject the application. If the application is rejected, it is returned to the sponsor for possible later consideration. If the application is accepted, the DSL prepares a final project evaluation report (PER).

The PER includes a management recommendation and a recommended manager. These recommendations are derived from consideration of the character of the resource and recreational attributes of the land, This in turn leads to a set of management objectives that can be pursued by the manager based on the geographic or physical characteristics of the land and how it may fit into a larger landscape objective of the manager, and negotiations among possible secondary, cooperating managers where two or more agencies want management of the same proposed acquisitions.

Once a manager has been identified, the managing agency prepares a management prospectus that addresses the purpose for the acquisition and associated uses. The management prospectus delineates the management goals for the property; the conditions that will affect the intensity of management; an estimate of any revenue-generating potential of the

property; a timetable for implementing the various stages of management and for providing access to the public; a description of potential multiple-use activities; provisions for protecting existing infrastructure and for ensuring the security of the project upon acquisition; the anticipated costs of management; recommendations as to how many employees will be needed to manage the property; and recommendations as to whether local governments, volunteer groups, the former landowner or other interested parties can be involved in the management. This management prospectus then becomes part of the PER. The ARC then votes whether to accept the report or to seek additional information.

When the PER is accepted by the ARC, affected landowners, local governments, regional planning councils and water management districts are notified, and a public hearing regarding the PER is held. ARC then takes a final vote for project approval. Upon approval, the ARC places the proposed acquisition into group-A or group-B lands and ranks the project with respect to other listed approved projects within the assigned group.

Group-A lands are those acquisition projects that the ARC believes make the greatest contribution to achieving the Florida Forever Act goals and measures. The number of projects within this group is limited by the total estimated funds available during the acquisition cycle for which the projects are scheduled for consideration by the BOT and the anticipated success of acquiring the targeted lands. Group-B lands are those acquisition projects deemed important but not of the highest priority.

At least twice each year, the projects listed by the ARC are presented to the BOT at a regularly scheduled Florida Cabinet Meeting for approval. Once approved, DSL begins efforts to acquire parcels within the approved project boundaries.

The state lands acquisition process is depicted graphically in Figure 1.

Florida Forever Five Year Work Plan

Section 259.04, F.S., requires the BOT to develop and execute a comprehensive, statewide 5-year plan to conserve, restore, and protect environmentally endangered lands, ecosystems, lands necessary for outdoor recreational needs, and other lands. The plan is prepared by the DSL and updated biennially following the development, reevaluation, and revision of the Florida Forever list.

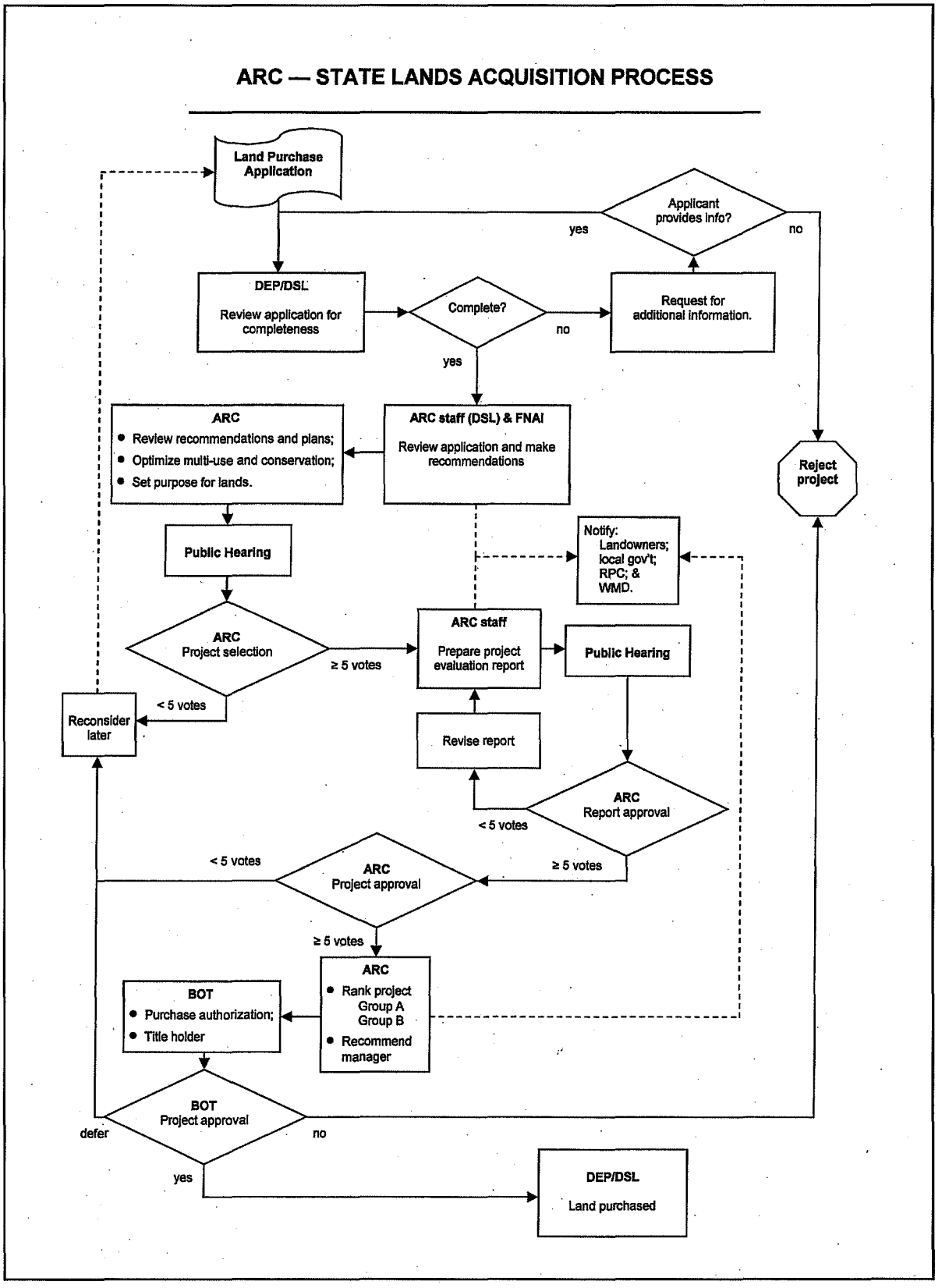

Figure 1: Acquisition process for state lands, title to which will vest in the BOT.

Land Management Objectives

The health of Florida's ecosystems depends on dynamic natural processes associated with fire, hydrology, and a delicate ecological balance among native species. The state's resource management policy[2] is to conserve, restore and preserve the natural landscapes of Florida by protecting and, where needed, reestablishing natural processes. Natural resource management involves four major activities: prescribed burning, invasive exotic species control, hydrological restoration and preservation, and habitat restoration and preservation. It is also the policy[3] of the state that all multiple use land management strategies address public access.

Fire

Although early wild lands management practices encouraged fire suppression, the critical role that fire plays in maintaining many ecosystems is now widely recognized. Largely because more lightning strikes occur per square mile in Florida than any other place in North America, fire is one of the primary natural forces under which Florida's natural upland ecosystems have evolved. However, fire suppression practices resulted in significant alterations to these ecosystems and accumulations of litter that resulted in an excess of fuel for wildfires. Restoration and maintenance of such fire-dependent habitats requires careful prescribed burning - the mimicking of naturally occurring fires by introducing fire according to detailed control plans called "prescriptions."[4]

With prolonged fire exclusion, fire-resistant species begin to invade and dominate many fire-dependent communities. Over time, the entire structure and species composition of such areas change, often with much less species diversity. Of Florida's forty-four land-based natural community types, seventeen depend on periodic fire for their continued existence and sixteen others benefit from an occasional fire. Without fire, applied at appropriate frequencies and intensities, many of Florida's rare and endangered species of animals and plants – such as the Florida scrub jay, Sherman's fox squirrel, red-cockaded woodpecker, and white-top pitcher-plant – would gradually disappear. The proper burning of natural lands is also known to increase the abundance and health of many non-endangered wildlife species, including native game species such as deer, turkey, and quail.[5]

Exotic Species

Florida's native species have long co-existed, gradually developing the state's various natural ecosystems. However, in recent history many exotic plant and animal species have been introduced to Florida, some of which are heavily invading our natural habitats. These exotic species are no longer only a major agricultural problem – such as the Mediterranean fruit fly and Argentine fire ant - but constitute a major factor in the degradation and alteration of Florida's natural environment. Invasion and disruption of native habitats by certain rapidly spreading non-native species is recognized as one of the greatest threats to maintaining the state's healthy and diverse ecosystems. In the worst cases, invasive exotic plants completely displace the native communities resulting in single-species stands. Also, exotic animals can severely impact vast areas of native groundcover, directly consume rare and endangered native species and destroy the food source for many native animal species. These exotic animals often have no

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[2] s. 253.034(1), F.S.
[3] Id.
[4] SFWMD and SWFWMD comments submitted in support of responses to August 2007, questionnaire.
[5] Id.

predator that can effectively prey upon them while they can be a significant predatory threat to native wildlife. In some instances, these animals can pose a direct danger to public safety.[6]

If left unchecked, invasive exotic plants and animals could eventually completely alter the character, productivity, and conservation values of Florida's natural areas. Successful land management practice continues to require the active removal of invasive exotic species with priority being given to those causing the most ecological damage. In the case of plants, most removal involves burning or selectively applying herbicides that are carefully chosen to have very low toxicity to wildlife and humans, and very short environmental persistence. Animals are removed according to established guidelines that insure humane treatment.[7]

Hydrological Restoration

Most of Florida's native ecosystems are precisely adapted to natural drainage patterns and seasonal water fluctuations. Depth to water table and the timing and duration of flooding determine the type of natural community that occurs on a site. Even minor changes to the natural hydrology can result in the loss of plant and animal species from a site or disruption to the natural progression of ecosystem evolution. The localized use of ditches, berms, roads and controlled lake levels, and excessive water use can have unintended detrimental consequences to natural lands by altering both the amount of water present and the timing of its availability. [8]

In its early history as a state, much of Florida was thought to have too much water and development pressures resulted in a large scale draining of the state's swamps and overflowed lands, the canalization of streams and rivers, and the holding back of floodwaters with major engineering projects. Over fifty percent of the state's original wetlands have been drained; the water quality of rivers, lakes and springs are often stressed and for many is in decline. Present state lands management objectives involve actively restoring the original hydrology to the lands. Accomplishing this restoration requires filling or plugging ditches, removing obstructions to overland sheet flow, installing culverts under roads, and installing water control structures to manage water levels at historical depths and durations. [9]

Habitat Restoration

Habitat restoration is a complex process often involving a combination of activities including the removal of invasive exotic species, reintroduction of missing natural species, beach and hydrological restoration, prescribed burning, and wildlife management. Monitoring programs are applied to survey imperiled wildlife and to gather information for development of innovative techniques to recover high-risk populations, and to enhance critical habitat.[10]

Public Access

All lands managed under chs. 253 and 259, F.S., are to be managed in a manner that will provide the greatest combination of benefits to the public and to the resources. The manager is to include provisions for public use and recreational opportunities on publicly owned conservation lands and provide adequate access to satisfy the public's needs without compromising the managing agencies mission or the natural resource values that led to the acquisition of those lands.

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[6] SFWMD and SWFWMD comments submitted in support of responses to August 2007, questionnaire.
[7] SFWMD and SWFWMD comments submitted in support of responses to August 2007, questionnaire.
[8] SFWMD and SWFWMD comments submitted in support of responses to August 2007, questionnaire.
[9] Id.
[10] FWC, 2007. Personal Communication, Mike Brooks. E-mail.

Managing Agencies
Lands purchased by the Department of Environmental Protection, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services are titled in the name of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (BOT). Lands purchased by a water management district (WMD) vest in the name of that WMD. Lands purchased under the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) program, in partnership with a county or city, vest in the name of the acquiring local government. Lands purchased by a nonprofit organization using grant funds provided by the FCT must remain permanently in public use through a reversion of title to local or state government, a conservation easement, or another appropriate mechanism should that non-profit organization cease to manage the lands for public use.

Section 259.034, F.S., requires the managers of state-owned land to protect the public interest by conserving the state's natural resources. Further, the land is to be managed to provide natural resource based recreation and to ensure the survival of plant and animal species and the conservation of finite and renewable natural resources. Each agency manages land based on its legislatively mandated responsibilities and the permitted activities on individual parcels. State-owned lands vary greatly in the purpose of the acquisition and mission of the managing agency.

Agencies Managing Lands Vested in the BOT

Division of State Lands (DSL), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)[11]

The DSL acquires and manages lands as directed by the BOT. The Division provides oversight of public lands, including islands and 700 freshwater springs. The Division also provides upland leases for state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, historic sites, educational facilities, vegetable farming, and mineral, oil and gas exploration

Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP), DEP [12]

The DPR provides resource based recreation while preserving, protecting and restoring the state's natural and cultural resources. The diverse nature of the parks include aquatic preserves, ornamental gardens, springs, beaches, forts, museums and lighthouses and offer a wide range of activities including hiking, biking, swimming, horseback riding, canoeing and kayaking, primitive and cabin camping, picnicking, viewing of threatened plant and animal species or quiet relaxation.

Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT), DEP [13]

The OGT is responsible for coordinating the development of a statewide system of greenways and trails for recreational and conservation purposes. The vision is for a statewide system that will help conserve wildlife and protect Florida's native biological diversity. The system will offer multi-use trails the length and breadth of the state, promote appreciation of the state's natural and working landscapes, provide routes for alternative transportation and protect cultural and historical sites.

[11] DSL website. http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/lands.htm
[12] DRP website. http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/parks.htm
[13] OGT website. http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/gwt.htm

The OGT works directly with local communities, developers, private landowners and state and federal agencies to facilitate the establishment of the statewide system of greenways and trails.

Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA), DEP [14]

The CAMA is responsible for the management of Florida's forty-one Aquatic Preserves, three National Estuarine Research Reserves, one National Marine Sanctuary, and the Coral Reef Conservation Program. These protected areas are comprised of submerged lands and select coastal uplands.

The Florida Coastal Management Program is based on a network of agencies implementing twenty-three statutes that protect and enhance the state's natural, cultural and economic coastal resources. The goal of the program is to coordinate local, state and federal agency activities to ensure that Florida's coast is as valuable to future generations as it is today.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) [15]

The Terrestrial Habitat Conservation & Restoration Section (THCR), Division of Habitat and Species Conservation (DHSC), provides wildlife and land management expertise for the state's managed wildlife lands referred to as the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) program. The WMA's are a blend of lands in public and private ownership over which THCR exerts the agency's lead management authority. The primary emphasis is to manage for the benefit of the entire spectrum of plant and wildlife populations and to support delivery of quality wildlife based public use. Additionally, THCR actively engages in the restoration of degraded plant and wildlife communities and the acquisition of new public lands that provide vital additions or linkages within the WMA's to provide sufficient habitat for the conservation of imperiled wildlife.

Habitat management programs involve use of prescribed burning on fire dependent plant communities, chemical and mechanical vegetation treatment to control exotic or invasive plant infestations, and hydrologic and ground cover restoration of lands impacted by past anthropological activities. Wildlife conservation is the primary focus of this activity and monitoring programs are established to survey imperiled wildlife. This data is used to develop innovative techniques to aid the recovery of high risk populations and to enhance critical wildlife habitat.

Division of Forestry (DOF), Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) [16]

The DOF manages the state's forests for multiple public uses — including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat — and oversees essential functions of acquisition and management of state lands managed by the DOF as well as providing support functions to other state agencies in their efforts to acquire and manage forested timberlands.

The DOF land management programs include prescribed burning, road maintenance and upkeep, reforestation and restoration (upland and wetland), water resource management, control of non-native invasive species, and wildlife management — both game and non-game species. The DOF further provides services for public use and recreation program management,

[14] CAMA website. http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/cama.htm
[15] Personal communication, Mike Brooks, 2007. E-mail. FWC.
[16] DOF website. http://www.fl-dof.com/index.html

law enforcement, fixed capital outlay projects, maintenance of existing capital improvements, and other multiple-use activities.

The Friends of Florida State Forests Program, authorized by s. 589.012, F.S., provides for cooperation between the DOF and private partners for the funding and conduct of programs and activities related to environmental education, fire prevention, recreation and forest management. These private partners may fund and install infrastructure such as trails and corrals, but all such activities are done with the oversight and prior approval of the DOF.

Florida Communities Trust (FCT), Department of Community Affairs (DCA) [17]

FCT is a state land acquisition grant program that provides funding to local governments and eligible non-profit environmental organizations. These grants provide for acquisition of community-based parks, open space and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs identified in local government comprehensive plans. Title of the land acquired rests with the awarded applicant with a reverter clause to the state.

A management plan is required for all project sites acquired under the Program. The management plan lays out the short and long range management objectives, site development plans, resource protection activities and long term monitoring of the project site. The management plan must set forth the following:

- How the site will be managed to further the purpose of the project;
- Description of planned improvements to the project site;
- Costs and funding sources; and,
- The management entity and its funding source.

Costs associated with managing the land are the responsibility of the awarded applicant.

Division of Historical Resources (DHR), Department of State (DOS) [18]

The Director of the DHR serves as Florida's State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), providing a liaison with the national historic preservation program conducted by the National Park Service. Also, the DHR is the primary agency for directing historic preservation in Florida, but the state park system administered by the DRP is the principle manager of public historic property sites in the state.

Agencies Managing Lands Vested in the WMD's [19]

The state's five water management districts are authorized to acquire lands for water management, water supply and the conservation and protection of water resources. Titles to these lands are vested in the governing board of the WMD that acquired the land.

Section 373.1401, F.S., provides that the governing board of each WMD may contract with a nongovernmental person or entity, any federal or state agency, a county, a municipality, or any other governmental entity, or environmental nonprofit organization to provide for the

[17] DCA website. http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/fct/index.cfm
[18] DOS/DHR website. http://www.flheritage.com/
[19] Personal communication, 2007. Water Management Districts, E-Mail.

improvement, management, or maintenance of any real property owned by or under the control of the district. The DOF manages one tract of land as a state forest that is owned by a WMD.

Land Management Review Process

Once the purchasing of land for an approved project commences, the designated land manager has twelve months to develop a detailed land management plan (LMP) for the project. When the proposed LMP is prepared, it is sent to the DSL where it is reviewed for completeness and, if necessary, is returned to the designated land manager for additional information.

Once the purchasing of land for an approved project commences, the DSL establishes a management review team[20] (MRT) that will be responsible for oversight and periodic review of the designated land manager's implementation of the LMP. The MRT is composed of eight members: one person from the local community (or county) within which the project is located – this person is selected by the county commission of the county most impacted by the acquisition; one person from the DRP; one person from the DOF; one person from the FWC; one person from the DEP district office in whose jurisdiction the project is located; one person who is a private land manager; one person who is a member of the local soil and water conservation district board of supervisors; and one person who is a member of a conservation organization.

When the LMP is accepted as complete, and the parcel of land being purchased is less than 160 acres in size, the DSL prepares a letter of delegation of authority to the land manager who then begins implementing the LMP. If the size of the parcel is 160 acres or greater, the LMP is sent to the ARC for review and a public hearing is held to receive comments on the LMP. If, after the public hearing, the ARC finds the LMP deficient, the land manager is required to correct the deficiencies. Upon final approval of the LMP by the ARC, the DSL is directed to prepare a letter of delegation of authority to the land manager who then begins implementing the LMP.

Each year, after the LMP is implemented, the land manager is required to submit a report of expenditures to the Land Management Uniform Accounting Council[21] (LMUAC). The LMUAC is located within the DEP and consists of the DEP's Director of the DSL, Director of the DRP, Director of the CAMA and Director of the OGT, the Director of the DOF, the Executive Director of the FWC, and the Director of DHR, or their respective designees. Each state agency represented on the council has one vote. The chair of the council rotates annually in the foregoing order of state agencies. The agency of the representative serving as chair of the council provides staff support for the council and the DSL serves as the recipient and repository for the council's documents. The LMUAC is charged with oversight of land management costs. The Auditor General and the Director of the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), or their designees, are directed to advise the LMUAC to ensure that appropriate accounting procedures and uniform methods are used in collecting and reporting cost data. The LMUAC assigns a set of cost accounting categories for each project – no cost is to be assigned more than one category – and prepares an annual report on land management costs for the President of the Senate (President) and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Speaker). A copy of the report is sent to the ARC for inclusion in their annual report to the President and the Speaker.

[20] s. 259.036, F.S.
[21] s. 259.037, F.S.

To determine whether a state land acquisition titled in the name of the BOT is being managed for the purposes for which it was acquired and in accordance with the LMP, the land manager submits to a management review by the MRT. This review takes place no less than every five years for a project of 1,000 acres or more and no less than every ten years for a project less than 1,000 acres. In conducting the review, the MRT evaluates the extent to which the existing management plan provides sufficient protection to threatened or endangered species, unique or important natural or physical features, geological or hydrological functions, or archaeological features. The review also evaluates the extent to which the land is being managed for the purposes for which it was acquired and the degree to which actual management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the adopted management plan. A copy of the review, including recommendations for changes to the LMP, is provided to the manager, the DSL and the ARC. The manager incorporates the findings and recommendations in finalizing a required update of the LMP. The ARC includes these reports in their annual report to the President and the Speaker.

The state lands management review process is depicted graphically in Figure 2.

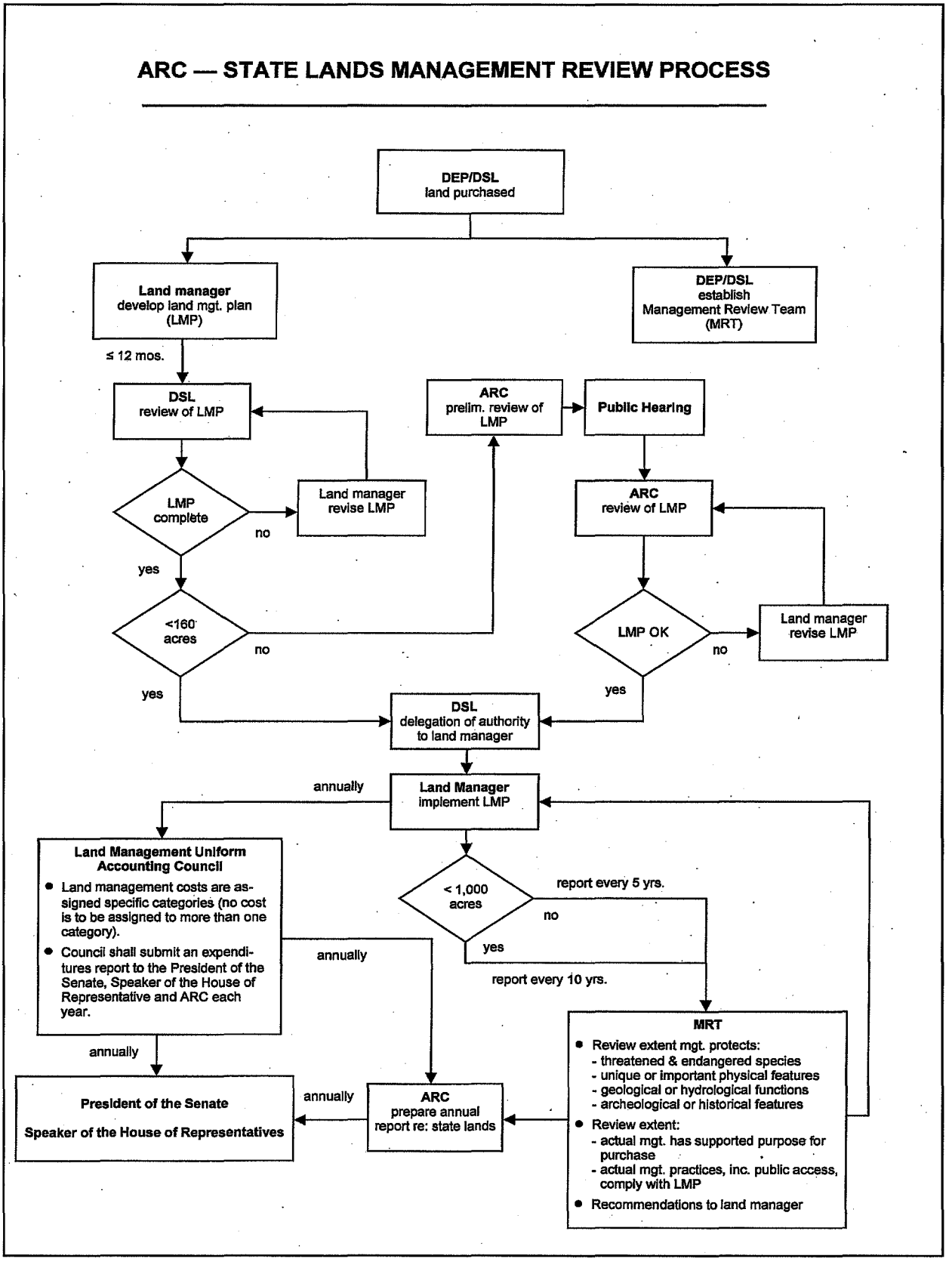


Figure 2: Land management review process for state lands, title to which will vest in the BOT.

Lands Vested in Water Management District Governing Boards [22]
The land acquisition and management review process for public lands, title to which will vest in the water management district governing boards, is handled through the WMD staff who are charged to evaluate lands considered for acquisition and oversee management of acquired lands as directed by the governing board.

When a sponsor proposes a state land acquisition, an acquisition application is filed with the WMD. The WMD staff will then determine a partnership relationship which establishes the lead for development of a land management plan (LMP). This determination is based on proximity to the management agent and adjacent state lands, size of the project, land resources to be managed, financial requirements, human resource needs, and degree of anticipated public use.

The goal of the land management planning process is to establish tangible performance measures and is outcome oriented. The LMP is developed with public comment and then governing board approval. During the LMP development process, public workshops are held and at least two governing board hearings are conducted at which public comment is also received.

The amount of time needed to develop a LMP varies based on the complexities of the resources being evaluated. The LMP is designed to include mechanisms for continuous public feedback and involving a network of volunteers to help maintain recreation amenities such as trails and camps. The LMP is evaluated and updated by a land management review team.

The water management district lands acquisition and management review process is depicted graphically in Figure 3.

[22] Personal communication. WMD's comments on land acquisition process, E-mails.

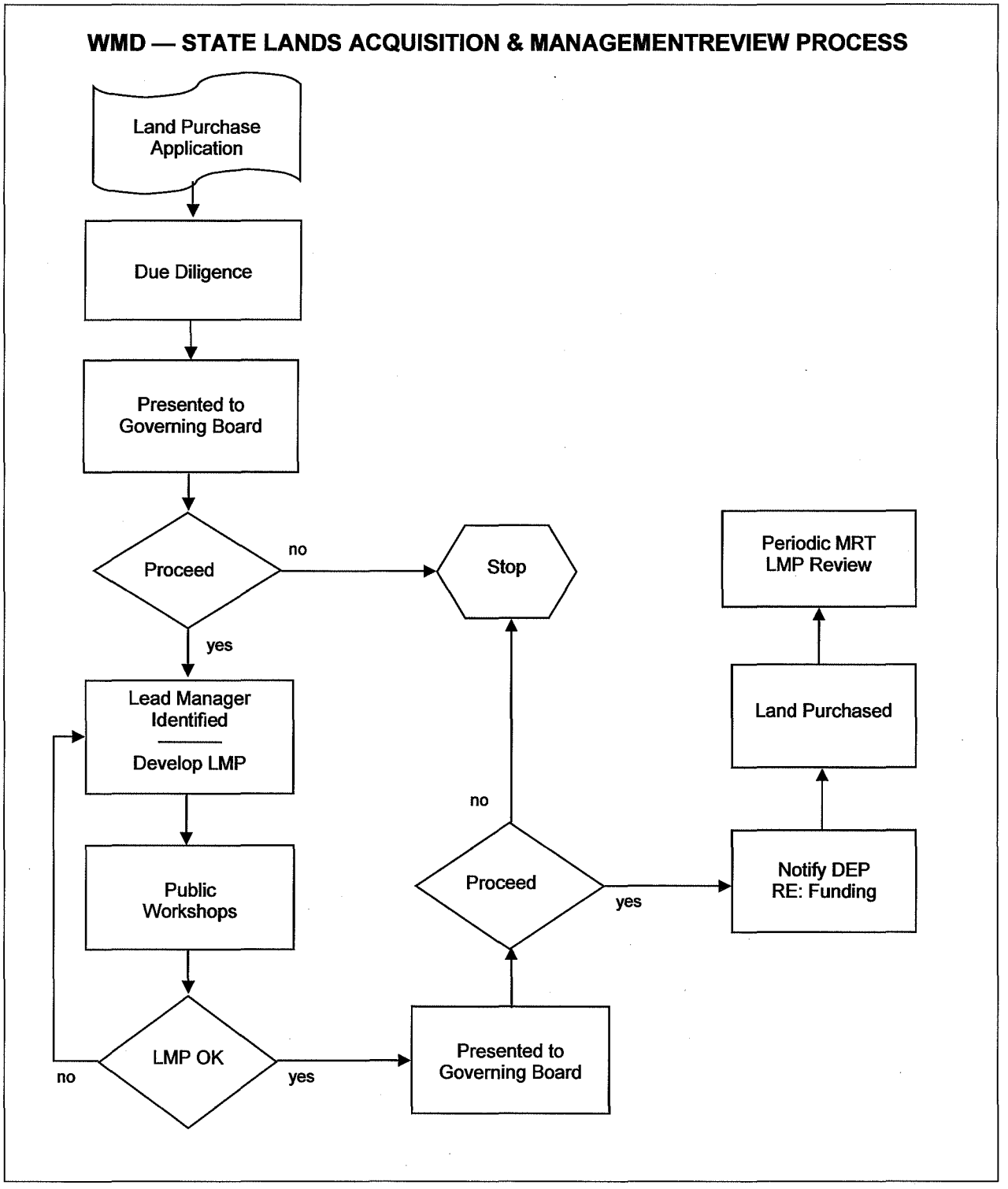


Figure 3: Land acquisition and management review process for public lands, title to which will vest in the WMD

Surplus of State Lands
All lands associated with tracts purchased as conservation lands prior to July 1, 1999, are designated by statute as conservation lands. For tracts purchased after July 1, 1999, the BOT determines, prior to the purchase, which parcels of the tract are conservation lands. The BOT may determine that a parcel of land acquired by the state for conservation is no longer needed for that purpose and may authorize the surplus of that land. The non-conservation lands associated with a latter conservation land purchase may be considered surplus. With the consent of the BOT, surplus lands may be sold or exchanged for conservation lands.[23]

State Lands Management Cost Accounting
Funding for management, maintenance, capital improvement activities, and debt service for BOT lands is provided by the CARL Trust Fund. Each year $10 million dollars from the phosphate rock severance taxes, 3.96 percent of document excise tax revenues (prior years were at 4.2 percent and beginning in 2008 will reduce to 3.52 percent), income from interest on investment of idle CARL Trust Fund monies, and proceeds from the sale of surplus lands are deposited into the CARL Trust Fund. Ten and five-hundredths percent of the annual CARL Trust Fund document excise tax deposit is then transferred to the State Game Trust Fund, under the FWC, (in prior years it was at 9.5 percent and beginning in 2008 will increase to 11.15 percent) to be used for land management activities. An additional transfer from the annual CARL Trust Fund deposit, as necessary but not to exceed $20 million, is deposited to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to be used to fund debt service and other obligations with respect to bonds issued to acquire lands through the P2000 or Florida Forever programs. An amount up to 1.5 percent of the cumulative total of funds ever deposited into the P2000 Trust Fund and the Florida Forever Trust Fund (FFTF) is to be made available for management, maintenance, and capital improvement activities not eligible for funding by bonds that obligate dedicated state tax revenue. Each year $250,000 of these funds are transferred to the Plant Industry Trust Fund, under the DACS, for the purpose of funding the Endangered or Threatened Native Flora Conservation Grants Program. CARL Trust Fund monies are also used to reimburse qualifying counties and local governments for tax revenue losses resulting from state land acquisition through the P2000 or Florida Forever programs. In addition, funds are available for state lands management and are distributed to a lead managing agency for interim and long term management in accordance with a memorandum of agreement (MOA) negotiated by the managing agencies. Any unencumbered monies in the CARL Trust Fund may be used for land acquisition, subject to appropriation.

Interim management is a short term effort needed to open a new land acquisition for immediate public use and to provide for necessary activities while the land management plan is being finalized. Up to one-fifth of the available CARL Trust Fund monies are to be set aside for interim management.[24] Each year $4.5 million of CARL Trust Fund monies are set aside for this purpose. This funding is separated into two categories — ninety percent to the acreage category for land management activities and ten percent to the special needs category for emergencies and historical sites. The special needs funds and are held separate for the first three quarters of the fiscal year. After the first three quarters, any unexpended special needs funds are moved to the acreage category.

Interim management acreage category funds are distributed to the designated managing agency at the time of closing on a new property according to an estimated needs formula. This

[23] s. 253.034(6), F.S.
[24] s. 259.032(11)

formula calculates a per acre dollar amount as directed by the MOA by averaging the acres acquired in the previous fiscal year and the acres anticipated to be acquired in the current fiscal year and then dividing that acreage average into the current fiscal year's total available interim management funds. Upon designation as lead manager of a newly acquired land parcel, an agency receives interim management funds in an amount equal to the acres of the acquired parcel times the formula's calculated dollars per acre value ($77.00 per acre for fiscal year 2007-08). If more funds were needed in the last quarter of the previous fiscal year than were available, that short fall is paid first from the new fiscal year's funds.

The annual long term management funds are provided to the managing agencies on the basis of a dollar per acre value calculated by a weighted acreage formula from the MOA. The use of weights as applied in the MOA formula is based on the directive of s. 259.032(11)(c), F.S.:

> *(c) In requesting funds provided for in paragraph (b) for long-term management of all acquisitions pursuant to this chapter and for associated contractual services, the managing agencies shall recognize the following categories of land management needs:*
>
> *1. Lands which are low-need tracts, requiring basic resource management and protection, such as state reserves, state preserves, state forests, and wildlife management areas. These lands generally are open to the public but have no more than minimum facilities development.*
>
> *2. Lands which are moderate-need tracts, requiring more than basic resource management and protection, such as state parks and state recreation areas. These lands generally have extra restoration or protection needs, higher concentrations of public use, or more highly developed facilities.*
>
> *3. Lands which are high-need tracts, with identified needs requiring unique site-specific resource management and protection. These lands generally are sites with historic significance, unique natural features, or very high intensity public use, or sites that require extra funds to stabilize or protect resources, such as lands with heavy infestations of nonnative, invasive plants.*

The allocation formula assigns a weight of one-half for conservation easement monitoring and private management assistance (low-need) tracts, one for moderate-need tracts and three for high-need tracts (high intensity public use). For the lands for which they have been identified as the lead manager, each agency identifies how many acres of each weight class they manage. The dollar per acre value ($31.37 per acre for fiscal year 2007-08) is equal to the current fiscal year's total available long-term management funds ($71.5 million for fiscal year 2007-08) divided by the sum over the weight classes of the appropriate weight times the total of all agency reported acres in that weight class. An agency's allocation of funds is then determined by multiplying this dollar per acre value times the weight times the reported acres in each weight class and summing over the weight classes. In the acreage reporting for this formula, when an agency evaluates a tract regarding the weight to be assigned, the total acres for that tract are assigned the highest weight that would apply to any portion of the tract. For example, if ten percent of a tract area rates a weight of three and ninety percent rates a weight of one, one-hundred percent of the tract area would be reported as having a weight of three. The fiscal year 2008-09 long-term management acres for the agencies managing BOT lands are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Weighted Acreages for Agency Long-term Management — Fiscal Year 2008-09.

	Acres* Average Total	Acres Weight 0.5	Acres Weight 1.0	Acres Weight 3.0	Acres Weighted Total
FWC	572,615.80	41,605.50	519,003.30	12,007.00	575,827.05
DOF	674,437.82	0.00	669,574.48	4,863.34	684,164.50
DRP	372,363.52	0.00	114,553.68	257,809.84	887,983.20
OGT	23,419.27	0.00	0.00	23,419.27	70,257.81
CAMA	32,634.07	0.00	29,986.91	2,647.16	37,928.39
Total	1,675,470.48	41,605.50	1,333,118.37	300,746.61	2,256,160.95

* Does not include acres in the "other" category in Table 3.

The variation of interim and long-term management funding over the life of the Florida Forever program are depicted in Figure 4.

In the August 2007 questionnaire, the various agencies operating as managers of state lands were questioned regarding their role as a manager. Question one asked each agency: for all state lands under their control or oversight, to identify the total acres acquired and list acres acquired under each statutory authorization (Florida Forever, P2000, etc.). A summary of the acres of state lands purchased through the various statutory authorizations is shown in Table 3. They were also asked to identify the total acres acquired and list acres acquired, purpose of acquisition (conservation, preservation, etc.) and cost of management.

Table 4 shows the dollars spent by each agency on land management for which that agency is the principle manager. The average cost per acre is $42.89 with a range from $13.17 per acre to $176.29 per acre. The variation in cost per acre is generally due the overall mission of the managing agency. The DPR has the highest per acre cost due to an agency mission that is primarily directed to a high public usage rate for its facilities, while the water management districts' mission is directed primarily at resource conservation with the consequence of lower per acre costs.

The distribution of expended management funds by agencies managing lands titled to the BOT is reported each fiscal year by the Land Management Uniform Accounting Council (LMUAC). These expenditures are classified by category. These categories are [25]:

- Resource Management (exotic species control, prescribed burning, cultural resource management, timber management, hydrological management, other);

[25] LMUAC, 2007. **2006 Annual Report to the Legislature**.

- Administration (central office headquarters, districts/regions, units/projects);
- Support (land management planning, land management reviews, training/staff development, vehicle purchase, vehicle operations and maintenance, other);
- Capital Improvements (new facility construction facility maintenance);
- Visitor Service/Recreation (information/education, operations); and
- Law Enforcement.

The resource management sub-category other includes all resource management activities not captured in the other sub-categories. This includes natural community and habitat restoration through other techniques, biological community surveys, monitoring and research, listed species management, technical assistance, and evaluating and commenting on impacts to state lands from resource utilization.

Expenditures reported by the LMUAC for each fiscal year are shown in Table 5. The total funds expended per fiscal year and total acres under management are depicted in Figure 5. The increase in DPR's numbers in FY 2004 and decrease in CAMA's numbers in FY 2005 are the result of a transfer of approximately 130,000 acres from CAMA to DPR in FY 2004 — the land transfer appears in the reporting for DPR in FY 2004 and for CAMA in FY 2005.

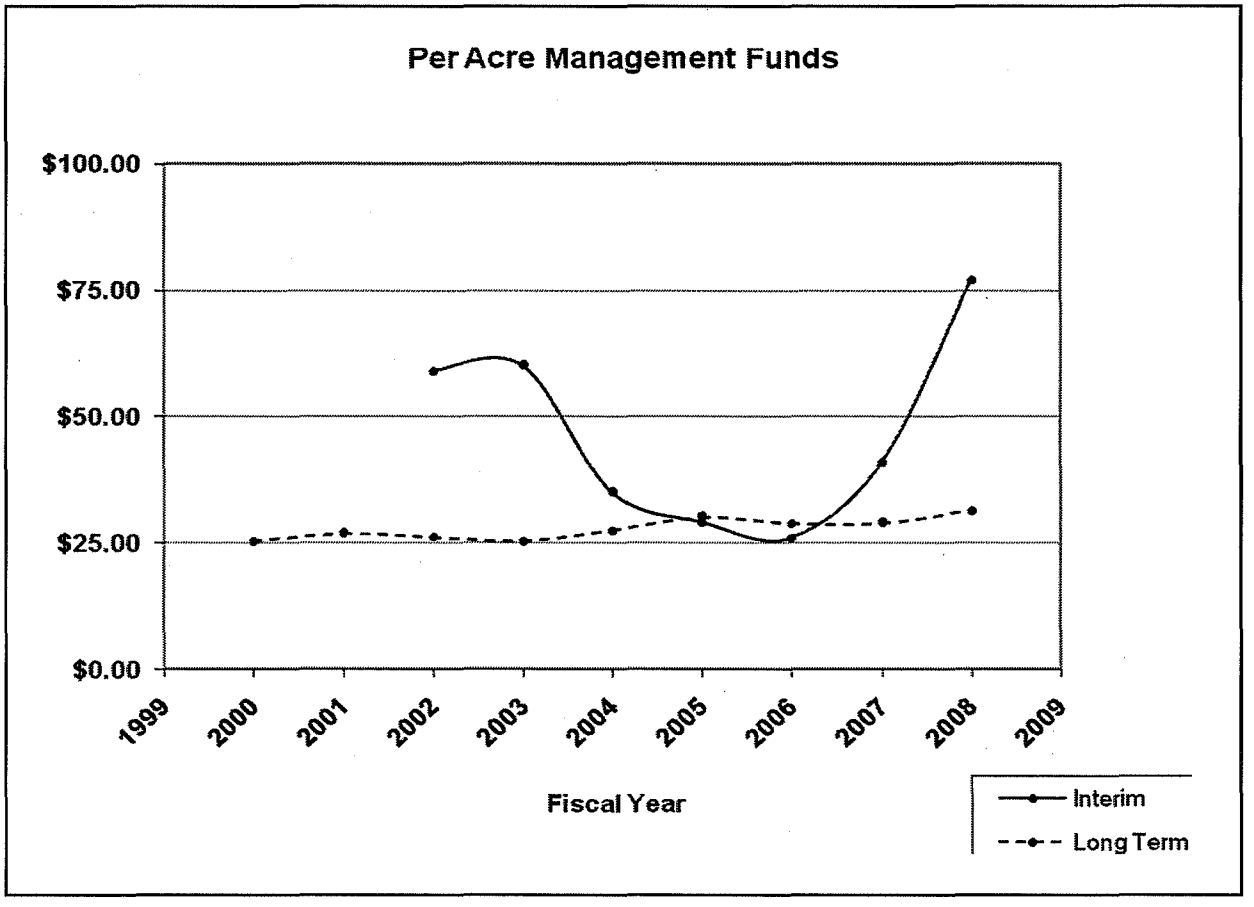


Figure 4. Interim and long-term dollars per acre during Florida Forever program.

Table 3

(a) Managing Agency Acquisition Acres by Statutory Authorization — Title Vested in BOT

	FWC	DOF	DRP	OGT	CAMA	Total
LATF	1,480.00	0	94,666.00	0	0	96,146.00
EEL	102,970.00	17,109.52	131,770.00	0	2,910.00	254,759.52
CARL	89,751.00	30,587.03	53,632.00	0	19,297.00	193,267.03
SOC	0	0	7,175.00	0	0	7,175.00
WMLTF (SOR)	0	0	0	0	0	0
SOETF	0	0	0	0	0	0
P2000	216,485.00	444,943.95	175,537.00	13,305.00	3,228.00	853,498.95
FLORIDA FOREVER	131,917.00	158,505.32	25,774.00	4,813.00	7,394.00	328,403.32
Other*	860,112.00	339,245.75	210,093.00	65,722.00	23,118.00	1,498,290.75
Total	1,402,715.00	990,391.57	698,647.00	83,840.00	55,947.00	3,231,540.57

(b) Managing Agency Acquisition Acres by Statutory Authorization — Title Vested in WMD

	SFWMD	SWFWMD	SJRWMD	SRWMD	NWFWMD	Total
LATF	94,061.76	0	0	0	0	94,061.76
EEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CARL	54,944.86	0	0	0	0	54,944.86
SOC	0	0	0	0	0	0
SOR	98,749.99	116,969.00	125,976.00	86,136.00	91,947.50	519,778.49
SOETF	46,331.44	0	0	0	0	46,331.44
P2000	98,364.15	156,916.00	234,791.00	140,329.00	95,309.74	725,709.89
FF	20,521.58	32,229.00	57,410.00	59,919.00	14,623.95	184,703.53
Other**	20,653.46	115,141.00	254,034.00	1,225.00	11,265.93	402,319.39
Total	433,627.24	421,255.00	672,211.00	287,609.00	213,147.12	2,027,849.36

* Donations, exchanges, Swamp and Overflow Act, Pittman Roberson Act, U.S. Department of the Interior, Cross-Florida Barge Canal lands, settlements, etc.

** Donations, exchanges, mitigation, ad valorem, special appropriations, federal programs, etc.

Table 4

(a) Agency Management Costs — Title Vested in BOT

	FWC	DOF	DRP	OGT	CAMA	Total
Interim	$1,154,151					
Staffing (FTE & OPS)	$8,325,726		$49,874,539	$1,961,971	$1,139,050	
Recurring	$15,550309		$28,640,492	$1,564,612	$1,355,586	
Non-recurring	$482,000		$44,650,000	$6,000,000	$1,159,086	
Total	$25,512,186	$29,860,306	$123,165,031	$9,526,583	$3,653,722	$191,717,828
Cost per acre	$18.19	$30.15	$176.29	$113.63	$65.31	$59.33

(b) Agency Management Costs — Title Vested in WMD

	SFWMD	SWFWMD	SJRWMD	SRWMD	NWFWMD	DOF*	Total
Interim							
Staffing (FTE & OPS)							
Recurring							
Non-recurring							
Total	$7,679,538	$5,549,119	$10,580,601	$5,900,000	$3,395,904	$772,954	$33,878,116
Cost per acre	$17.71	$13.17	$15.74	$20.51	$15.93	$30.15	$16.71

* DOF manages 25,636.95 acres of WMD lands as a state forest.

Table 5

Land Management Uniform Accounting Council Reported Data

FWC

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Acres	1,246,926	1,286,090	1,290,852	1,344,195	1,346,391	1,346,391
Resource Management	$4,905,670.00	$8,883,419.00	$13,209,385.00	$21,120,073.00	$12,420,738.25	$13,831,238.09
Administration	$10,283,353.00	$9,322,375.00	$8,784,845.00	$10,323,857.00	$9,604,826.07	$9,799,251.51
Support	$3,411,048.00	$7,258,399.00	$8,688,121.00	$8,651,026.00	$11,269,713.25	$10,093,833.75
Capital Improvements	$917,780.00	$4,282,223.00	$4,389,221.00	$4,630,238.00	$5,194,817.64	$4,424,256.30
Visitor Service/Recreation	$2,569,624.00	$2,462,321.00	$2,357,137.00	$2,416,033.00	$1,775,879.08	$1,375,648.19
Law Enforcement	$6,740,178.00	$5,922,549.00	$5,643,170.00	$5,441,503.00	$8,918,059.02	$9,717,941.43
Total	$28,827,653.00	$38,131,286.00	$43,071,879.00	$52,582,730.00	$49,184,033.31	$49,242,169.27

DOF

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Acres	897,950	910,497	958,136	991,393	993,924	1,001,668
Resource Management	$3,126,512.00	$2,791,214.00	$6,648,566.00	$7,723,640.00	$10,999,285.00	$9,054,596.00
Administration	$5,639,746.00	$5,637,957.00	$6,535,118.00	$7,450,019.00	$6,832,612.00	$6,039,883.00
Support	$6,257,907.00	$5,726,564.00	$6,532,388.00	$6,297,857.00	$7,609,144.00	$6,880,223.00
Capital Improvements	$7,791,696.00	$7,140,007.00	$6,149,416.00	$7,193,651.00	$6,461,337.00	$4,908,726.00
Visitor Service/Recreation	$2,407,013.00	$2,144,843.00	$2,245,339.00	$3,312,750.00	$3,126,530.00	$2,821,227.00
Law Enforcement	$154,321.00	$378,546.00	$527,064.00	$639,663.00	$591,753.00	$536,007.00
Total	$25,377,195.00	$23,819,131.00	$28,637,891.00	$32,617,580.00	$35,620,661.00	$30,240,662.00

DRP

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Acres	571,211	593,459	603,953	730,573	723,852	724,629
Resource Management	$4,467,365.00	$5,480,984.00	$5,248,693.00	$5,772,665.00	$5,754,934.00	$4,792,964.00
Administration	$15,425,392.00	$18,584,555.00	$18,354,917.00	$19,582,874.00	$21,515,041.00	$19,715,087.00
Support	$5,660,132.00	$3,929,614.00	$5,254,550.00	$4,459,167.00	$5,520,524.00	$5,423,659.00
Capital Improvements	$22,211,921.00	$30,501,429.00	$37,823,456.00	$42,653,351.00	$30,407,619.00	$22,575,314.00
Visitor Service/Recreation	$27,770,466.00	$25,603,938.00	$24,362,949.00	$25,355,505.00	$26,229,592.00	$25,655,466.00
Law Enforcement	$5,460,898.00	$5,409,550.00	$6,074,069.00	$6,763,052.00	$6,881,233.00	$7,074,043.00
Total	$80,996,174.00	$89,510,070.00	$97,118,634.00	$104,586,614.00	$96,308,943.00	$85,236,533.00

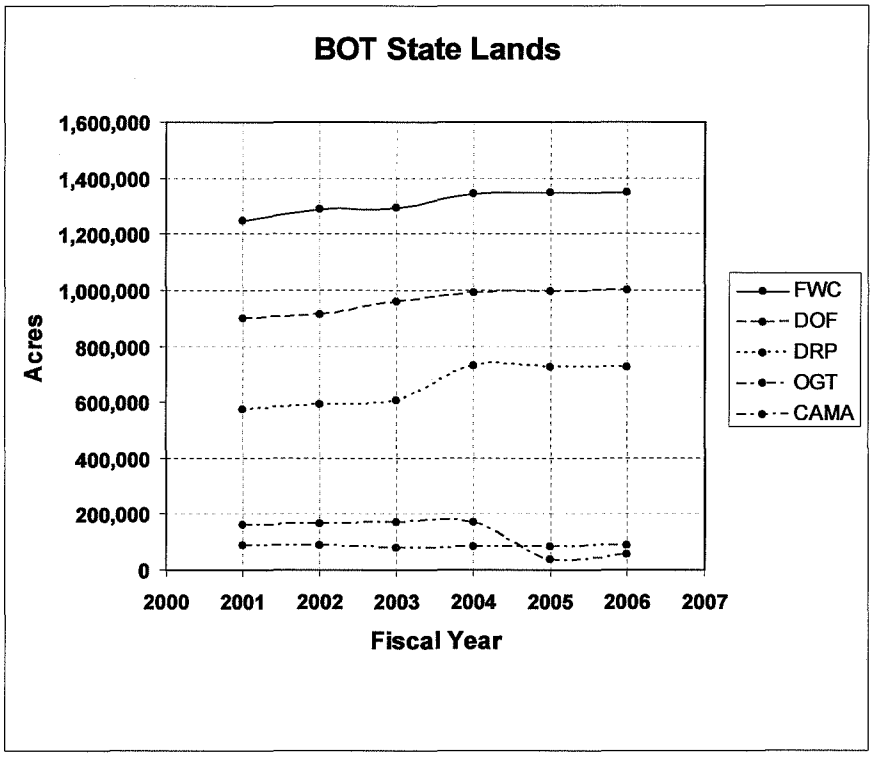
OGT

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Acres	86,282	86,295	77,213	81,909	80,904	86,964
Resource Management	$1,671,548.00	$2,769,637.00	$5,711,173.00	$3,635,287.00	$3,677,821.02	$3,689,262.40
Administration	$930,686.00	$572,820.00	$457,823.00	$707,715.00	$714,947.28	$719,537.43
Support	$0.00	$184,580.00	$283,106.00	$234,010.00	$276,134.73	$315,777.94
Capital Improvements	$647,679.00	$1,782,938.00	$3,413,089.00	$5,084,769.00	$4,611,928.13	$5,110,135.96
Visitor Service/Recreation	$287,052.00	$341,834.00	$509,559.00	$478,212.00	$492,486.99	$541,480.72
Law Enforcement	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Total	$3,536,965.00	$5,651,809.00	$10,374,750.00	$10,139,993.00	$9,773,318.15	$10,376,194.45

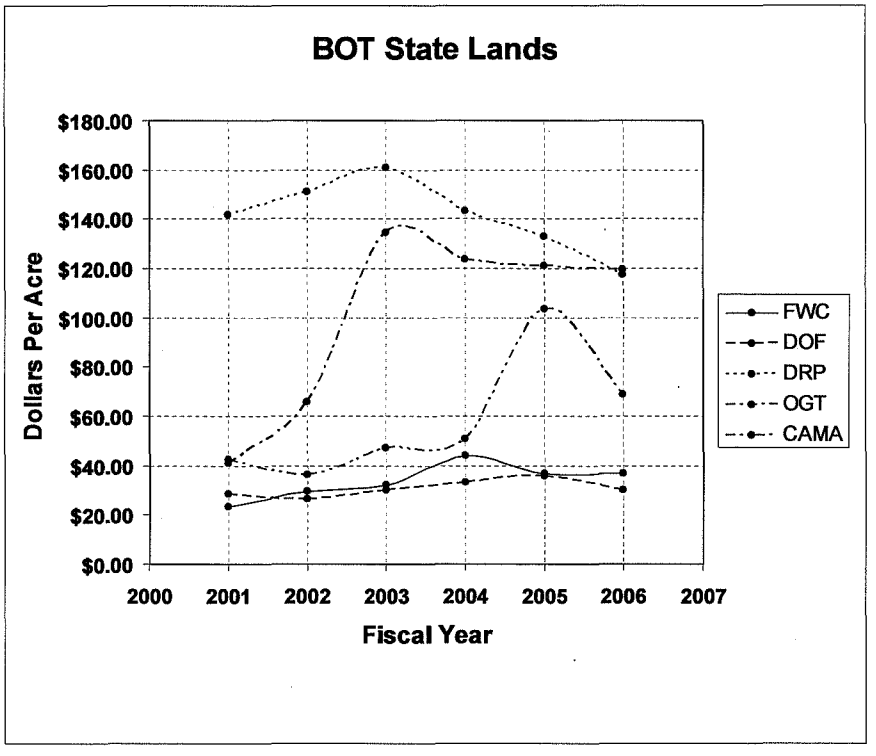
CAMA

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Acres	160,349	163,293	168,875	168,875	38,579	55,949
Resource Management	$1,961,775.00	$1,345,373.00	$2,193,985.00	$1,751,593.00	$1,620,714.00	$817,776.00
Administration	$1,387,016.00	$1,476,043.00	$1,746,982.00	$1,665,943.00	$1,093,392.00	$1,081,528.00
Support	$913,242.00	$888,530.00	$689,863.00	$545,198.00	$327,927.00	$282,518.00
Capital Improvements	$2,212,091.00	$1,779,077.00	$2,453,551.00	$3,185,871.00	$533,718.00	$844,301.00
Visitor Service/Recreation	$366,880.00	$426,084.00	$849,049.00	$1,398,144.00	$409,637.00	$809,843.00
Law Enforcement	$0.00	$9,783.00	$12,549.00	$12,549.00	$7,244.00	$3,549.00
Total	$6,841,004.00	$5,924,890.00	$7,945,979.00	$8,559,298.00	$3,992,632.00	$3,839,515.00

* Source: Land Management Uniform Cost-Accounting Council, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 Annual Reports.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5: Per fiscal year: (a) total acres under management; and (b) dollars per acre expended.

Public Access and Recreation

Public use is allowed on almost all conservation lands, with most of the exceptions being associated with structures supporting either flood control or water supply, lands leased for activities such as agriculture (see Table 6), or during times of infrastructure construction. Although most conservation lands are open to public use, there is often a perception that this is not the case. The perception of areas not being open for public use may be based on difficulty in finding access points or to areas closed to particular uses but not to others. Certain uses, such as hunting, are restricted by seasonality or they may be limited due to incompatibility with management goals or other ongoing public uses. The acres closed to public use are listed in Table 7.

Table 6

Acres of State Lands Leased by Lead Manager

	Total Acres Managed	Acres Leased to Public Entities	Acres Leased to Private Entities
FWC	1,402,716.00	--	119,748
DOF	1,016,028.52*	--	23,698**
DRP	698,516.83	--	--
OGT	81,663.33	--	--
CAMA	55,948.00	--	--
SFWMD	1,512,214.03	946,566	101,470***
SWFWMD	417,282.00	144,217	14,658
SJRWMD	672,211.00	357,446	65,823
SRWMD	136,048.00	22,700	--
NWFWMD	213,147.36	--	--
Total	6,205,775.07	1,470,949	325,397

* Includes 990,391.57 acres of BOT lands and 25,636.95 acres of WMD lands.
** Includes 22,925 acres that are open to public access as well as lessee use.
*** Includes 51,604 acres of interim leases until project construction in initiated.

Table 7

Acres of State Lands Closed to Public Use by Lead Manager

	Total Acres Managed	Acres Closed to Public	% Closed
FWC	1,402,716.00	1,305.00	0.09
DOF	1,016,028.52*	437.80	0.04
DRP	698,516.83	130.17	0.02
OGT	81,663.33	2,225.92	2.73
CAMA	55,948.00	0.00	0.00
SFWMD	1,512,214.03	220,765.03	14.60
SWFWMD	417,282.00	1,181.00	0.28
SJRWMD	672,211.00	110,527.00	16.44
SRWMD	136,048.00	3,562.00	2.62
NWFWMD	213,147.36	100.00	0.05
Total	6,205,775.07	340,233.92	5.48

* Includes 990,391.57 acres of BOT lands and 25,636.95 acres of WMD lands.

The challenge associated with providing public use and recreational opportunities on publicly owned conservation lands is to provide adequate access and suitable use opportunities to satisfy the public's needs without compromising the managing agency's mission or the natural resource values that led to the acquisition of those lands. For example, the Florida Communities Trust program is designed to acquire lands that are associated with urban open space and provides for an intensive use by the public. The State Parks provide for an intensive use on a limited footprint within a larger landscape. A wildlife management area has limited access and is usually managed to minimize impacts from human activities.

Furthermore, when a large parcel of land is acquired, it may have frontage on several different roads yet have limited access points due to the physical nature of the land. Also, an obscure access point may be the only legal access that the state was able to acquire. Travelers on roadways without an access point or trail head could be left with the impression that the area is closed because all they would see is fencing. In many cases, access points to natural lands are not easily identifiable since lands purchased by the state are often still in a natural condition because they had poor access even when they were in private hands.

The Florida Park Service and the Division of Forestry provide directional signs from major highways guiding visitors to their facilities. However, many of the other agencies do not make a

general practice of this. An effort to increase signage across the agencies could make a significant improvement in alleviating the perception that areas are closed.

The 2006 Legislature enacted legislation that committed the state to preserve hunting lands and hunting opportunities. Under the provisions of s. 372.0025(4), F.S., land management decisions and actions, including decisions made by private owners to close hunting land managed by the state and WMD's, are not to result in any net loss of acreage available for hunting. When lands are closed, other lands are to be opened which are, to the greatest extent possible, to be located within the same region of the state and are to be consistent with the hunting discipline that was allowed on the closed land.

Recreational opportunities provided by a managing agency depend on how many services can be provided given their cost. Expanding recreation facilities to levels similar to those found in State Parks, including campgrounds, boat ramps, bathrooms, running water, etc., dramatically increase land management costs. Facilities require increased maintenance as they age, security and law enforcement expenses increase, as well as utility, commodity, and staffing costs. Privatizing concessions can help, but they are only financially feasible in areas that have high visitation, like beach parks. User fees can be implemented, but, for water management districts, it would mean surrendering the liability protection provided through s. 373.1395, F.S.[26]

As reported in their responses to the August questionnaire, recreational services and education are provided by the managing agencies as follows:

- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

  Rules governing access vary depending on individual wildlife management areas. Access is normally afforded to a range of user groups at levels that are consistent with management objectives contained within the Conceptual Management Plan. In most cases, the public may access areas by motorized vehicle. The level of vehicle access varies with the season and the sensitivity of area resources. The FWC is also developing trail systems on most areas to provide access for a variety of recreational activities.

  FWC hosts public meetings, produces annual brochures and handbooks, issues news releases, installs information signs and kiosks, and maintains a website that contains all pertinent location and access information for all lands within the WMA system. FWC also produces articles in its Florida Wildlife magazine, and a feature in Florida Monthly magazine, and writes articles for publication in magazines of user groups. The agency also works with news media to promote new public access projects and makes presentations to recreational user groups around the State.

- Division of Forestry

  There are approximately 6,300 miles of state forest roads, access to those roads are available using County, State and Federal highways, and public waterway, and there are 1,165 miles of trails that they may use to access the state forests.

[26] This section limits a water management district's liability to persons going on the district's lands or for harm caused by another person on the district's lands if the district has made the lands available for public use without charging user fees.

The public is made aware of the thirty-three state forests by the Division of Forestry internet web page, signage along County, State and Federal highways, local tourist centers, local outfitters, presentations to civic organizations, liaison groups, management plan advisory group and public hearings, Division of Forestry state forest brochures, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation hunting regulation brochures and the FWC website, working with local schools, and many other media venues.

- Division of Recreation and Parks

  Public access to state parks is normally provided through an entrance facility where fees are collected, information is provided, campers are registered and visitor questions are answered. Parks are open each day from 8:00 am until sundown.

  Information on public access is provided by highway signage, a statewide brochure, brochures for individual parks, an Internet website and other public education.

- Office of Greenways and Trails

  OGT lands are accessed through trailheads or access points that include parking, signage, information kiosks, and other appropriate facilities. However, because of the narrow, linear nature of OGT's trail properties, there are other areas of open access along the corridors. With the exception of campground facilities on the Cross Florida Greenway, there are no fees to access OGT managed lands.

  There is signage that identifies properties and provides directional information to trailheads and access points. Kiosks are at trailheads and access points that provide details about recreational opportunities. DEP's website provides maps and descriptions of OGT managed properties. OGT's toll-free information line provides a way for the public to request information about recreational opportunities. Printed publications, such as the Visit Florida Biking, Paddling and Hiking guides, include information about the State Trails and the Cross Florida Greenway. Articles are submitted to periodicals, such as Florida Monthly, to promote recreational opportunities on OGT managed trails and greenways. Displays are taken to events that provide information about OGT managed trails and greenways.

- Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas

  CAMA allows open access on most areas which it manages. Designated improved access points are established at high use areas. Evaluation of access needs is part of the management planning process.

  Highway signs are at major entry points. Use information is posted at common access points and on the DEP website. Brochures are available at all sites. Staff frequently engages the public with one-on-one outreach efforts. Articles and calendar announcements are provided to local media.

- South Florida Water Management District

  The public primarily accesses district land at established parking/trailhead areas (vehicle, foot, bicycle, and equestrian) or by boat (including airboat, and canoe/kayak).

  The public is made aware of district lands available for public access by information made available through the district's Recreational Guide, recreation website, recreation hotline, public dedications, press releases, partnering agencies, and discussions/presentations conducted at stakeholder and outreach meetings.

- Southwest Florida Water Management District

  Access to district lands, whether it be lands managed by the district or managed by its partners, includes well-designated access points and walk-throughs, trailheads for hiking, biking and equestrians, watercraft landing areas, controlled motorized access in partnership with agencies such as FWC wildlife management areas, and campgrounds. Recreation opportunities on district lands include fishing, hiking, horseback riding, boating, biking, camping, hunting, picnicking, bird watching, inline skating, and where appropriate other activities such as radio-controlled airplanes. The district has established methods to monitor recreational use, such as on-line requests for camping that ensure a high customer satisfaction and avoid conflicts among users and land management operations.

  A Recreational Guide is available in print media, on CD and through the district's internet website. The district is currently instituting a signage improvement project and has recently conducted a constituent survey to increase public awareness of recreational opportunities on conservation lands. The district's partners employ various methods to make the public aware, such as those utilized by the State Parks and local environmental lands and parks programs.

- St. Johns River Water Management District

  Public access to SJRWMD-managed lands is by hiking, equestrian, bicycling, from the water (boating, canoeing, or kayaking), and at appropriate parcels and times by vehicle.

  SJRWMD publishes a *Recreation Guide* every few years that includes maps, general site information, and recreational activities found at various sites. On the SJRWMD internet website is an enhanced *Recreation Guide* that includes recreational trail maps and images. SJRWMD convenes seven Recreational Public Meetings each year throughout the eighteen county district.

- Suwannee River Water Management District

  Most access is by personal vehicles, on foot if hiking, and others by boat along our river corridors.

The District publishes a Recreational Guide that is available to the public. The guide is on the district's internet website.

- Northwest Florida Water Management District

  Access to district lands varies by area, but in general, district lands can be accessed at appropriate locations by one or more primary access roads suitable for travel by 2 x 4 vehicles. Foot travel is allowed district-wide. Many individuals, especially hunters, fisherman and nature lovers, access district lands at numerous locations, primarily at unimproved woods roads or old logging road locations where public vehicular access would adversely impact natural resources or the roads are unsafe for vehicular traffic and are not suitable for repair and improvement. District floodplain lands can be accessed by foot and by boat, canoe or kayak at numerous launch locations. The public can also access district lands via numerous hiking, equestrian and nature trails. Bicycling is also allowed and, in limited areas, all terrain vehicles (ATV's) or other appropriate off-highway vehicles (OHV's) are allowed on an established mobility-impaired hunting area during established hunting periods.

  The district produces brochures, maps, signage, website information, magazine articles, and kiosks. They also receive/answer numerous calls from the public inquiring about access. Also, the FWC prepares wildlife management area brochures and has information on their website about recreation activities on district lands via their wildlife management area program.

Land Management Needs

The costs associated with managing lands is minimized when a site is in a condition where large acre burns can be conducted on fire dependent communities, and invasive-exotics control measures are reduced to levels that involve identifying and treating sporadic re-occurrences once or twice a year after an initial infestation is cleared. For lack of a better term, this condition can be called a maintenance-level condition. The SFWMD estimates that managing land in this condition would average to about $17.00 per acre per year in today's dollars. With the presence of public recreation facilities this figure would climb to about $22.00 per acre per year or about $80,000,000 across all state lands if they were all in such a condition.[27]

The two largest resource management expenses are invasive-exotics control and prescription burning. With exotics the cost of treating the problem increases significantly as an infestation gets thicker. A mature forest of exotic trees (greater than 7 years growth) in a wet area can cost between $8,000 and $20,000 dollars per acre to clear in an initial treatment. Conversely, when exotics are young and sporadically occurring (1 year growth) they can be treated for between $10 and $50 per acre. Moderate infestations (2 – 3 years growth) cost about $150 to $400 dollars per acre. Waiting a decade between treatments could cost up to two-hundred times more than the cost of treating a site yearly in a maintenance-level condition.[28]

Prescribed fire, similar to exotics control, has an escalating cost factor associated with the condition of the land. An area with lighter fuel loads, adequate fire control lines, and a corridor free from smoke sensitive infrastructure can be burned much less expensively than an area without them. Approximately 683,000 acres need to be burned each year in order to burn all of

[27] SFWMD comments submitted in support of responses to August 2007, questionnaire.
[28] Id.

the fire-dependant communities that are being managed by the state agencies and WMD's with the needed frequency. Even if 15% of those acres end up burning in wildfires, it will still require the agencies to burn 580,000 acres per year. The costs associated with prescribed burns relate to the number of fires it takes to cover a particular area. If a 1,000 acre unit can be burned in a single burn day, it would costs about ten times less than it would cost if it were burned in a series of 10 fires of 100 acres each.[29]

In addition to the lands that are fire-dependent, Florida has 8.7 million acres of natural lands that are not fire dependent. These plant communities include swamps, hammocks, hardwood forests, and mangroves. Approximately 3.5 million acres are in managed lands or conservation lands, and nearly 5.3 million acres remain outside of such protections. Just over 1.7 million acres of these lands are managed by state agencies or WMD's.[30]

In the August questionnaire, each agency was asked to elaborate on their land management needs and to estimate what the costs associated with these land management needs would be. On November 14, 2007, the agencies were again asked to answer these questions. It was explained that the questions were intended to elicit comments regarding the level of funding that would be needed above and beyond what is currently available for land management. Additionally, agencies were asked: could the lands you oversee be managed for additional purposes (e.g. more public use infrastructure) without interfering with the primary management goals? How much do you estimate this would cost? Agency responses were as follows:

- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission[31]

  CARL management funding, which is given to agencies for the lands on which they are the lead manager, has traditionally varied between $26 and $32 per acre per year. Recently, FWC performed an in-house assessment that evaluated funding needs for three Wildlife Management Area (WMA) scenarios: a small acreage site (Guana River WMA ~9,000 acres); a large acreage site (Three Lakes WMA ~50,000 acres); and a high need/high cost site (Dinner Island WMA ~20,000 acres). According to the assessment, satisfying basic land management objectives for the three areas listed above would require recurring CARL funding levels of $58, $39, and $89 per acre per year, respectively. The amount required to satisfy initial start-up funding (Interim, non-recurring dollars) for these three areas was estimated at $235, $101, and $492 per acre, respectively - certain management activities were found to be significantly under funded such as exotic species control, restoration of disturbed lands, prescribed burning, resource monitoring, planning, and public use management.

  Insufficient staffing continues to be a primary obstacle towards delivering a desired level of resource protection and public use. FWC has established an optimum staffing standard of one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) per 5,000 acres. However, FWC's current staffing of 72 FTEs on 541,123 acres of CARL lead areas equates to one FTE per 7,500 acres, which is only two-thirds of the recommended standard.

[29] SFWMD comments submitted in support of responses to August 2007, questionnaire.
[30] Id.
[31] FWC response to November request for information.

Current CARL funding levels, which have remained relatively constant for about the last 12 years, have not matched pace with inflation and cannot support desired levels of resource management or the increasing demand for recreational infrastructure and use by the public. This leaves FWC inadequately prepared to handle other looming issues such as new exotic plant infestations, incompatible adjacent land uses from new growth and development, increased public demand for public recreation, and threats to plant and wildlife communities posed by climate change.

To meet desired or optimum levels of resource management and public use, FWC recommends that the annual CARL management level be raised to $75 per acre, and that the one-time Interim funding level be increased to $200 per acre.

Four major initiatives are outlined below that would significantly elevate FWC's capability to deliver quality public access and recreational opportunities and ensure the long-term stewardship of Florida's fish and wildlife heritage.

Outdoor Skill Development Centers
These would be multi-use centers designed to appeal to and engage a broad spectrum of outdoor recreational enthusiasts and forge a stronger connection between the public, Florida's rich wildlife resources, and stewardship of Florida's public lands. Five centers would be developed on Wildlife Management Areas that are near major metropolitan areas. Each center would provide classroom facilities for outdoor skills and hunter safety training, public shooting ranges for archery and firearms practice, and trails and field sites designed to develop and enhance outdoor skills such as hunting/shooting sports, outdoor survival and orienteering, nature study, birding and other forms of wildlife viewing. These centers also would serve as a focal point for developing strong volunteer programs and efforts aimed at strengthening awareness and support for fish and wildlife conservation and the importance of Florida's public conservation lands. Hours of operation would be tailored to meet peak demand periods such as weekends, afternoons, and summer months. Centers would accommodate both indoor and field instruction. Outdoor amenities associated with these centers might include archery and sporting clay courses, native plant landscapes and interpretive trails. Programs would focus heavily on skill development across a range of experience levels extending from novice through expert. There is strong recognition that appealing to today's society requires a high degree of action, interaction, and "hands-on" involvement; therefore all programs would have a strong field element. Total estimated startup funding required for this program is $32 million. Each Center would require $3.6 million for indoor infrastructure, $2.8 million for outdoor course development, eight FTE's, and $2.5 million in recurring budget.

Public Shooting Ranges
In addition to shooting ranges that would be developed in association with Outdoor Skill Development Centers, there is a need for additional facilities for safe and supervised public shooting on Wildlife Management Areas in more rural areas of the State. Such facilities could provide a diversity of shooting opportunities for the public that could include a place to learn how to safely use firearms, sight in firearms for hunting, sharpen shooting skills, develop and practice archery skills, and develop and practice wingshooting skills using clay targets. These ranges

would be open to the public with established hours of operation. Range safety officers would be present to provide supervision and support. FWC would evaluate the need for public shooting ranges in various parts of the state relative to the location of Wildlife Management Areas and suitability of sites that may be able to accommodate this type of public use. Each facility of this type would cost approximately $2.4 million in infrastructure, 2 FTEs, and $350,000 in recurring budget.

Enhanced Capability to Plan, Develop, and Manage Public Recreational Use Opportunities

FWC is currently developing the simple infrastructure (2-wheel drive accessible roads, trailheads, trail systems and wildlife viewing structures) necessary to support a quality recreational experience across the management area system. Additional personnel resources would allow the agency to: 1) monitor and maintain this infrastructure, 2) monitor and manage this use to ensure a satisfactory recreational experience while preventing wildlife disturbance and resource degradation, 3) provide an increased level of programming for the public by developing concessions, volunteers and other partnerships such as citizen support organizations. Enhancing this ability would require 8 FTEs, $1.2 million in start up funding and $800,000 in recurring budget.

Resource Monitoring and Recovery

This would be a technical assistance program administered by FWC to aid other CARL land managing agencies (Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Forestry; Dept. of Environmental Protection's Division of Parks and Recreation and the Office of Greenway and Trails; water management districts; local governments) apply evolving conservation technologies to lands they manage. Products of this program include the implementation of standardized monitoring protocols so that the effects of land management actions and various forms of public use could be measured and evaluated against predetermined objectives. A centralized statewide data base would be created to store, analyze, and distribute results and products. This program would provide decision support for targeted land management actions, assist with identifying land management needs and budget development, and provide policy and budget analysts with performance-based accountability tools. It would also house an imperiled species recovery unit so that conservation planning tools could be employed to identify which state lands and which management practices are best suited to improve habitat conditions and achieve recovery goals for listed wildlife. Program development would require 12 FTEs, $2.4 million in start up funding, and an annual recurring budget of $1.4 million.

- Division of Forestry[32]

Land management needs and programs include prescribed burning; road maintenance and upkeep; reforestation and restoration (upland and wetland); water resource management; implement silviculture related activities that result in better forest health; provide for public use and recreation program management; law enforcement, attempt to control non-native invasive species; wildlife management both game and non-game species, fixed capital outlay projects, maintenance of existing capital improvements, and other multiple-use activities.

In addition to the funding identified in the 2005-06 Land Management Uniform Cost Accounting Council's Report that had us [DOF] spending $30,240,662 to manage 1,001,668 acres, the additional funding increases are needed:

$ 2,802,750	*for prescribed burning per year;*
$ 2,445,800	*per year for maintaining the approximately 6,300 miles of roads;*
$ 1,000,000	*for the treatment of non-native invasive species;*
$ 720,000	*for new recreation facility construction;*
$ 300,000	*for law enforcement;*
$ 700,000	*for wetland restoration;*
$ 1,500,000	*in operating funds and implementation of other multiple use strategies; and*
$ 773,500	*per year to enhance recreation services for visitors.*
$ 10,242,050	*additional need*

NOTE: Of the $30.2 million spent on State Forest Lands, only $18.8 million was funded from CARL program funds.

The Division has not been successful in obtaining additional General Revenue funds for the management of state lands. Additional funding has been primarily received from the CARL Program through transfers from DEP, which is calculated by using the number of acres the Division manages with an amount per acre as the basis for the formula. The funding is for the total CARL program, not activity-based. The funding received is not sufficient to pay for all of our land management needs.

[32] DOF response to August questionnaire.

- Division of Recreation and Parks [33]

Division of Recreation and Parks needs are:

State Park Land Acquisition	*$173,000,000*
State Park Development	*$329,225,687*
State Park Repairs/Renovations	*$51,437,141*
State Park Historical/Cultural Repairs	*$19,829,679*
State Park Resource Management Needs	*$48,013,756*
State Park Operations Need	*

* *State Park operating needs would be several million dollars if all land identified is purchased and all items (cabins, camping, visitor centers, etc...) contained in the unit management plans of all parks are built. Staff needs and associated costs are not documented at this time, but would be significant.*

- Office of Greenways and Trails [34]

Resource management, restoration and monitoring	*$ 1,904,042*	*recurring*
Law Enforcement – 2.0 FTE	*$ 80,000*	*recurring,*
	$ 120,000	*non-recurring*
Trail Maintenance, Repair, and Construction	*$ 6,000,000*	*non-recurring*
Convert OPS to FTE (5)	*$ 42,000*	*recurring*
Prescribed Fire Management – 1.0 FTE	*$ 253,993*	*recurring*
Prescribed Burning and Wildlife Overtime	*$ 30,000*	*recurring*
Vehicle replacement	*$ 70,000*	*non-recurring*
Inglis Lock Closure	*$ 4,000,000*	*non-recurring*

OGT manages over 83,000 acres that must serve over 3 million visitors and also be managed for resource protection and restoration. Only 23,378 acres of our total managed acres receives land management funding due to the fact that over 60,000 acres are former Cross Florida Barge Canal lands that were transferred to the state from the federal government.

[33] DRP response to August and November questionnaire.
[34] OGT response to August and November questionnaire.

- Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas [35]

Complete land acquisition	*$ 28,000,000*	*non-recurring*
Support increased visitor use – 1.0 FTE	*$ 120,500*	*recurring*
Capital Outlay projects	*$ 610,000*	*non-recurring*
Law Enforcement – 2.0 FTE	*$ 150,000*	*recurring*
	$ 120,000	*non-recurring*
Invasive plant control	*$ 7,500,000*	*initial over 5 years*
	$ 500,000	*recurring*
Prescribed fire management – 2.0 FTE	*$ 120,000*	*recurring*
	$ 75,000	*non-recurring*
Resource management, restoration and monitoring 3.0 FTE	*$ 162,000*	*recurring*
	$ 35,000	*non-recurring*
Convert OPS to FTE (10)	*$ 84,000*	*recurring*
Vehicle replacement (3)	*$ 75,000*	*non-recurring*

- Water Management District's [36]

  Being agencies of the state rather than state agencies the WMD's do not make legislative budget requests. Rather their governing boards adopt resolutions requesting reimbursement of funds from the Water Management Lands Trust Fund (WMLTF) to fund their conservation land management programs.

  In addition to funds from the WMLTF, they receive funds from sustainable resource management leases such as cattle grazing and forestry and by entering into management agreements with partners including State and local governments. In the case where lands are leased to the State, the WMD's follow State funding protocols for land management. In the case of local governments, land management funds are derived through ad valorem taxes, user fees or other methods.

  The WMD's claim to have adequate funding for their management needs except where significant acres are involved with the need for prescribed burning or exotics control.

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability Review of State Lands Management

To support the Sunset Review Process, the Legislature directed the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to assess state lands management activities by the agencies responsible for managing BOT conservation lands. Two surveys regarding state lands, developed in cooperation with House staff, were conducted by OPPAGA. The results of these surveys were received by OPPAGA staff and findings have been discussed with House staff. These surveys addressed public access and management activities associated with state lands.

[35] CAMA response to August and November questionnaire.
[36] WMD's responses to August and November questionnaire.

OPPAGA Policy Option
The OPPAGA report provided numerous recommendations and four policy options that are listed below (Options 1-4): [37]

1. *Maintain the current system of land management by three separate agencies.* (See Appendix, Exhibit 7 for Advantages/Disadvantages)

2. *Create a council to coordinate and oversee land management activities.* (See Appendix, Exhibit 7 for Advantages/Disadvantages)

3. *Centralize land management under one state agency.* (See Appendix, Exhibit 7 for Advantages/Disadvantages)

4. *Centralize all land management activities under a new entity.* (See Appendix, Exhibit 7 for Advantages/Disadvantages)

Policy Options

1. *Revise current Florida Forever goals and assign numeric weights to goals to assist the ARC and DSL in prioritizing land acquisition projects.*

   Current statutes provide broad conservation and recreational goals for publically held lands. These goals are located in various chapters of statute and create broad goals with the intent of establishing program flexibility to meet almost any need. However, given limited resources that are far exceeded by the needs proposed under current acquisition plans, a revision of the Florida Forever goals could provide clearer legislative direction and allow for a more focused land acquisition strategy. A scoring system, as used in the ranking of Florida Community Trust projects, would provide a competitive foundation that prioritizes projects in an objective, transparent format that lends itself to participant input. As part of the numeric scoring, public access could be assigned a value that encourages land acquisition with a strong focus on public use. As acquisitions are completed, the Legislature could routinely evaluate progress and reprioritize needs as it deems necessary.

2. *Require a more complete land management prospectus during the evaluation cycle of Florida Forever applications.*

   Current DSL practices provide a cursory evaluation of land management needs during the evaluation of Florida Forever applications. A more complete picture of land management requirements could be developed early in the process allowing decision makers to better assess financial needs associated with an acquisition. The assessment could encompass a parcel by parcel evaluation to ensure the achievement of a final project that is both measurable and feasible. The evaluation could provide an assessment of invasive and exotic species and an estimate of the cost to remove them immediately following acquisition. Capital facilities requirements envisioned to provide public access should be addressed. An estimate, based on previous experience, that provides a practical time-line for implementation should be included in the evaluation.

[37] OPPAGA, 2007. **Conservation Land Management Options for Legislative Consideration**. Sunset Memorandum Report to the Florida Legislature.

These estimates could identify an existing funding source or establish a basis for requesting additional funding.

Anticipated management cost should have a greater weight in the evaluation, selection and ranking of Florida Forever projects. Consideration of projects protecting similar resources should favor those providing the most public access and those with lesser management cost.

3. *Expand the role of the Land Management Uniform Accounting Council Report to better capture and report land management activities.*

Currently, the LMUAC report is utilized to capture historic expenditures. The requirements of the report could be revised to identify and accumulate land management needs/costs. Such an accumulation of land management data could be accomplished through the current land management plans with some suggested modifications. An expanded report would provide the Legislature a more comprehensive view of land management needs and allow for the allocation of financial resources to targeted activities.

Additionally, the LMUAC report resource management sub-category *other* includes all resource management activities not captured in the existing listed sub-categories. This includes natural community and habitat restoration through other than existing sub-category techniques, biological community surveys, monitoring and research, listed species management, technical assistance, and evaluating and commenting on impacts to state lands from resource utilization. To better explain the expenditure of funds, the Legislature could amend the resource management category in s. 259.037(3), F.S., to include an expanded list of sub-categories based on those currently used in the LMUAC report. Another difficulty that occurs with reporting to the LMUAC is that field representatives often report all of their time to the resource category when in actuality some of that time should be reported in the administration or support categories[38]. This latter issue is one of education and training and should be an ongoing task of agency management administrators. Also, the LMUAC report could contain a category that includes acres managed and funds expended on sites for which an agency is a secondary or supporting manager. Such a sub-category list would allow for an enhanced measurement of accomplishments and accounting for expenditures.

Currently, the total acreage managed by an agency is reported in the LMUAC report but the actual acres associated with a particular management activity are not identified (e.g., how many acres were subject to prescribed burning). Including the actual acres involved would facilitate assessment of dollars per acre needed for land management.

The LMUAC oversees expenditures by agencies managing BOT lands and utilizing monies from the CARL Trust Fund. Expanding the authority of the LMUAC to track and report on all state and WMD lands management expenditures, whether title is vested in the BOT or in the WMD's and regardless of the funding sources for acquisition and management, would enhance the overall evaluation process.

[38] Personal communication, 2007. DOF.

The format of the LMUAC report and land management review reports could be revised to improve readability. This would allow anyone unfamiliar with the state lands process to be able to review the status and progress of land management initiatives.

4. *Revise the land management plans to include a cost estimate and time lines that identify anticipated results with measurable performance criteria, identify specific impediments to land management goals and incorporate cross-agency coordination and resource sharing.*

   Currently, post acquisition land management plans are prepared by the designated lead manager in cooperation with the DSL and then reviewed and approved by the ARC. The land management plan associated with a particular acquisition is often vague and lacking in specificity with regard to management objectives based on the land management review goals. The Legislature could develop or direct the land management agency to develop a uniform plan development format that includes cost estimates, time-lines, and specific management objectives with associated performance measures. The costs identified in the land management plans could be accumulated in a central depository for inclusion in the LMUAC.

   Each LMP could then contain an action plan describing anticipated results with specified performance criteria and an anticipated time-line for accomplishing those results. The LMP could also address cross-agency coordination with a clear assignment of management responsibilities. This would allow for application of differing management expertise and minimize duplication of efforts with an objective measurement of accomplishments.

   A LMP could also be utilized to identify the intensity of land management activities required for each acre of land within the LMP. This information could then be used in providing an allocation of resources based on a level of effort rather than the current per acre distribution.

5. *Revise the current methodology utilized to allocate long term management funds and codify the long-term land management funds allocation formula.*

   Section 259.032(11)(c), F.S, provides three categories of land management needs. These categories are loosely utilized by the land management agencies to allocate long-term land management funds. The present application of the formulas in the MOA is an attempt to follow the intent of the statutory requirement which is non-specific with regard to application. Rather than assessing the needs of individual parcels of public land, each managing agency is assigned a level of need based on the typical activities carried out by the managing agency. The statutes could be amended to specify which land management activities qualify for a specific level of effort funding allocation, as well as, the funding distribution formula for interim and long-term management funds.

   Also, some state lands produce revenues either through timber sales, leases, entry fees, fines, etc. These revenues are often directed to trust funds set aside for use by the lead manager but are not accounted for in the existing allocation formulas. In developing a revised formula, the allocation should account for other available funding sources.

   Currently, management funds are allocated to lands designated as CARL lands. This designation appears to have outlived its usefulness and ignores the needs on other

state-owned lands. Long-term land management dollars could be made available for all state-owned lands regardless of designation.

Furthermore, two of the four agencies that were signatories to the MOA no longer exist while two agencies that were created subsequent to the MOA are major state lands managers.

6. *Raise the priority of public access and create a measurement for public access.*

   Currently, most state owned lands are open for public access. However, the allowable public uses vary from tract to tract. A tract of land may or may not be open to off highway vehicles, open to hunting or fishing, available for camping, have trials for horseback riding, etc. A tract of land that is open to a large variety of activities likely serves a greater number of users, but a greater intensity of use results in greater management costs. While each member of the public may have competing interest, many of activities can coexist. A need exists to measure what public access is being granted on public land, and the benefit of this public use could be utilized in prioritizing acquisition, as well as, allocating resources.

   If, during the acquisition evaluation for a tract of land, it is determined that the lead manager should limit or deny public access to a certain parcel of that tract, an additional public hearing could be made available. To ensure adequate public input, this hearing could be requested by the local government or an affected citizen's group and held in the county most affected by the determination.

7. *Incorporate all state conservation lands into single management funding and reporting process.*

   Currently, funding for state lands management is provided through several trust funds. Often money for one trust fund originates in another trust fund and a given tract may receive funds from more than one trust fund. These expenditures are reported in several different reports but no single report contains all expenditures. This leads to confusion in reconciling the money spent on land management activities and the total acreage being managed. A unified long-term management funding process applied to all state lands and operating from a common trust fund would help expedite the review of management practices and the efficient distribution of funds for land management. All state lands managers should report annually in a common report such as the LMUAC report. This could apply to both BOT and WMD lands managers.

8. *Establish a single web-site identifying all state lands available for public recreational use.*

   Each lead manager maintains an Internet web page that identifies the lands that manager oversees. However, these sites are not always sufficiently instructive for the general public as to how one can not obtain access to the land nor for which activities the lands may be used. Although someone familiar with searching the Internet may have little trouble finding these sites, there is no uniform guidance for structuring or locating them. A single source web site that identifies all state lands, the lead manager, public access points, activities allowed, restricted uses, facilities available, etc. would greatly facilitate public use of the state's lands for recreation.

9. *Increase and enhance highway signage and access point identification.*

   Much of the difficulty associated with accessing state lands is due to a relative obscurity of the access points. Often these access points are along secondary (or less) roads and the access points themselves are not clearly marked. The DRP has a good signage plan that informs motorist on primary roads as well as secondary roads of the location of area state parks and clearly identifies the entrance to those parks. Several of the other managing agencies have begun to incorporate a similar approach and all agencies should be encouraged to implement such a program for all lands under their management.

APPENDIX I

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

Conservation Land Management Options for Legislative Consideration
Sunset Memorandum Report to the Florida Legislature

The Florida Legislature

OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

SUNSET MEMORANDUM

Conservation Land Management Options for Legislative Consideration

December 20, 2007

Summary

To support the Sunset Review process, the Legislature directed OPPAGA to assess land management activities conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Separate memos address land management activities conducted by the state's five water management districts and the state's land acquisition activities.

This memo provides information about public access to the state's conservation lands and assesses the agencies' effectiveness in managing these lands. It also presents four policy options for the Legislature to consider regarding state conservation land management. These options include maintaining the current system of land management by three separate state agencies (Option 1); creating a council to coordinate and oversee land management activities (Option 2); centralizing land management activities under one state agency (Option 3); and centralizing all land management activities under a new entity (Option 4). The memo discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

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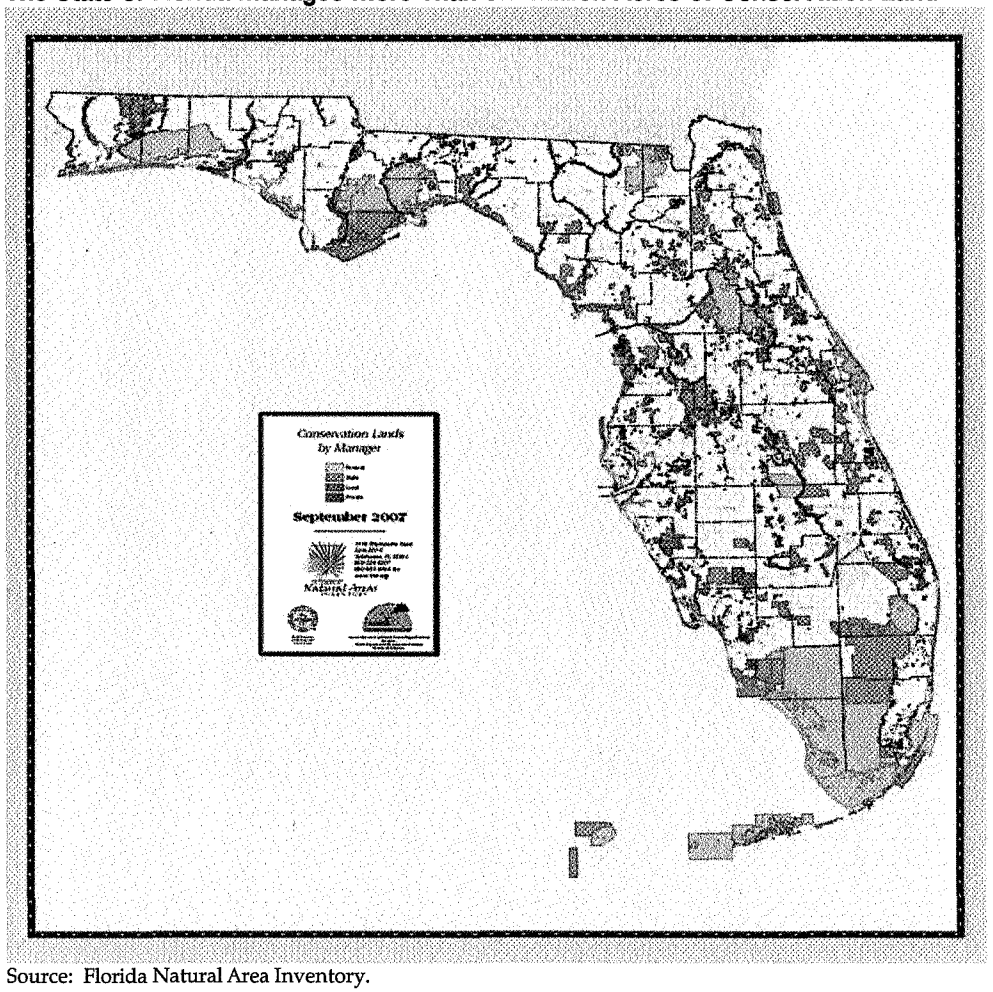
Agency Responsibilities

The state of Florida manages more than 3.7 million acres of conservation lands. These lands include state parks, preserves, forests, wildlife management areas, and other conservation and recreation lands that are managed to protect important natural and cultural resources and for public use and enjoyment. [1] In addition to these state conservation lands, the federal government manages 4.0 million acres, the water management districts manage 1.4 million acres, and county and municipal governments manage 386,161 acres (see Exhibit 1 for a map of all state, federal, and local conservation land in Florida).

Exhibit 1
The State of Florida Manages More Than 3.7 Million Acres of Conservation Land



Source: Florida Natural Area Inventory.

[1] Section. 253.034, (2)(c), *F.S.*, provides that conservation lands are lands that are currently managed for conservation, outdoor-based recreation, or archaeological or historic preservation.

Exhibit 2
Three State Agencies Manage the Majority of State Conservation Lands

Agency	Program	Management Purpose	Acres Managed
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	Forestry	Provide multiple use and sustainable forest management (including silviculture and fire management)	1,016,029
Department of Environmental Protection	Recreation and Parks	Protect natural and cultural resources and provide outdoor recreational opportunities	724,629
	Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas	Manage Aquatic Preserves, National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Marine Sanctuary, and Coral Reef Conservation Programs	55,948
	Greenways and Trails	Manage statewide system of greenways and trails for recreational and conservation purposes	83,840
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Wildlife Management Areas	Provide fish and wildlife protection and conservation, public recreation including and hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities	1,402,278
	Wildlife and Environmental Areas	Protection and enhancement of habitat important to upland listed wildlife	
TOTAL			**3,282,724**

Source: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

As shown in Exhibit 2, the state's system for managing conservation land is decentralized. Three state agencies primarily have management responsiblities: the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; the Department of Environmental Protection; and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Each of these agencies manages conservation lands differently based on its legislatively mandated responsibilities. For example, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission primarily manages lands to conserve and protect fish, wildlife, and their habitats and to provide hunting opportunities. However, it allows other recreational activities, such as camping and hiking, when compatible with these primary purposes.

The Acquisition and Restoration Council, administratively housed in Department of Environmental Protection, is responsible for recommending which state agency should become the primary manager of newly aquired state lands. [2] The council bases its recommendation primarily on the land acqusition goals the parcel is intended to meet, and how these goals match the agencies' missions and roles in conservation land management. The Governor and Cabinet make the final decision on which agency will be the manager when they approve the land purchase. Depending on which agency is designated as the lead manager, the amount and types of land management activities conducted and recreational opportunities that will be available to the public will vary. For example, hunting is not allowed in state parks, so this recreational activity may not be available if a parcel is assigned to the Department of Environmental Protection to become a new park; in contrast, hunting may be allowed if the parcel is assigned to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

[2] The Acquisition and Restoration Council is responsible for evaluating, selecting, and ranking state land acquisition projects for the Florida Forever program, subject to approval or modification by the Board of Trustees. The council annually reviews Florida Forever acquisition proposals, decides which proposals should receive further evaluation, and determines the final project boundaries. Exceptions to this are lands purchased by the in-holding and addition programs of, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The *Florida Statutes* require that agencies facilitate multiple uses for conservation lands, such as public access and enjoyment; resource conservation and protection; ecosystem maintenance and protection; and protection of threatened and endangered species. [3] Agencies conduct a variety of land management activities to achieve these multiple uses, including facility construction and maintenance, prescribed burning, wildlife management, control of exotic species and invasive plants, preserving historical and cultural resources, managing visitors, and restoration of natural habitats. Agencies often coordinate their activities to facilitate these multiple uses. For example, the Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services is the primary manager of timber lands, but it will often be assisted by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to manage hunting activities on these lands.

Each of the agencies also participate in land management planning and reviews. Land management plans provide guidelines for managing each state land parcel. Managing agencies are statutorily required to submit a land management plan to the Acquisition and Restoration Council within a year of acquisition and at least once every 10 years for each parcel they manage. [4] At a minimum, the land management plan must include a

- statement of the purpose for which the lands were acquired;
- list of key management activities necessary to preserve and protect natural resources and restore habitat;
- specific description of how the managing agency plans to identify, locate, protect, and preserve, or otherwise use fragile, nonrenewable natural and cultural resources;
- priority schedule for conducting management activities;
- cost estimates for conducting priority and other management activities; and
- determination of the public uses and public access.

The Department of Environmental Protection is required to coordinate land management reviews to determine whether conservation lands owned by the state are being managed in accordance with land management plans. [5, 6] The reviews are conducted by interagency teams that include one individual from the county or local community where the land is located, state agency representatives (i.e., Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Environmental Protection, and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission staff), a private land manager, a member of the local soil and water conservation, and a member of a conservation organization. Department staff reported that, in Fiscal Year 2006-07, there were approximately 379 parcels managed by state agencies that had management plans, of these 156 are statutorily required to be reviewed every 5 years, and the department completed 25 land management reviews.

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[3] Section 253.034(1), *F.S.*

[4] Section 253.034(5), *F.S.*

[5] Chapter 259.036, *F.S.*

[6] Specifically, the statute requires review teams to assess the extent to which existing management plan provides sufficient protection to threatened or endangered species, unique or important natural or physical features, geological or hydrological functions or archaeological features, the extent to which the land is being managed in accordance with the purposes for which is was acquired, and the extent to which actual management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the adopted management plan.

Exhibit 3
State Agencies Spent Nearly $220 Million on Land Management Activities in Fiscal Year 2006-07

Program	General Revenue	Trust Funds	Total	FTE
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	$9,001,890	$ 26,064,266	$ 35,066,156	506 [1]
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	0	23,641,461	23,641,461	89 [2]
Department of Environmental Protection	0	161,128,386	161,128,386	1,090.5
Total	**$9,001,890**	**$210,834,113**	**$219,836,003**	**1,685.5**

[1] The Division of Forestry also has 765 FTE positions for fire prevention and management.

[2] The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has an addition 90 positions that include biological, acquisition, planning, and administrative support.

Source: The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

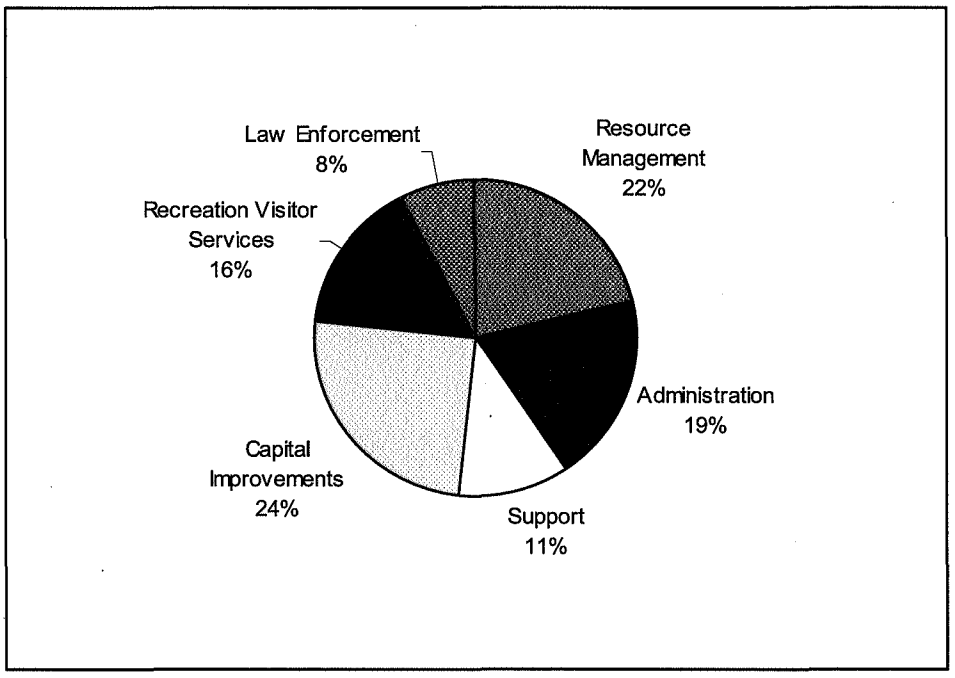
Resources

The three state agencies with land management responsibilities receive funding for these activities from a variety of sources, including General Revenue and trust funds.[7] Land management expenditures have generally increased over the last six years from $173 million in Fiscal Year 2001-02 to approximately $220 million in Fiscal Year 2006-07. The amount of funds expended by each agency is primarily determined by the number of acres managed and the level of management required, based on the statutory mission of the agency. The Department of Environmental Protection expended the highest amount of funds on land management activities, $161.1 million, in Fiscal Year 2006-07. See Exhibit 3.

Over the Fiscal Year 2003-04 to Fiscal Year 2005-06 period, the largest percentage of these expenditures was for capital improvements, which includes new facility construction and facility maintenance. As shown in Exhibit 4, over the three-year period, these expenditures accounted for an average of approximately a quarter of the state's total land management expenditures. The next highest expenditures were for resource management (22%); these activities include prescribed burning, invasive plant control, and hydrological management.

[7] Trust funds include the Conservation and Recreation Land Trust Funds, the State Park Trust Fund, Incidental Trust Fund, and the State Game Trust Fund.

Exhibit 4
On Average, From Fiscal Year 2003-04 to Fiscal Year 2005-06, Capital Improvements Were the Largest Land Management Expense



Source: Land Management Uniform Cost-Accounting Councils Annual Reports 2004, 2005, 2006.

Most conservation land is accessible to the public, but authorized uses vary

The *Florida Statutes* require conservation land managers to provide public access to natural resource-based recreation where feasible and consistent with the goals of protection and conservation of natural resources.[8] Most state conservation land is open to the public for a wide variety of recreational activities. Specifically, 3,279,551 acres or 99.9% of state lands managed by the three agencies are accessible to Florida citizens and visitors. However, the permitted activities on individual parcels vary greatly based on the land's characteristics and the missions of the managing agencies.

Each agency manages lands based on its legislatively mandated responsibilities. Therefore, available recreational activities on land managed by the three agencies vary (see Exhibit 5). For example, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission provides hunting access on most of the wildlife management areas it manages, which is consistent with its responsibility for hunting regulation and game management. Conversely, the Department of Environmental Protection does not allow hunting within most state parks, greenways, and state trails it manages due to safety concerns for visitors, but does allow hunting in some coastal and aquatic management areas and a portion of the Cross Florida Greenway. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services allows hunting in most state forests. Fishing is authorized in slightly over half of the state forests, about two-thirds of the parks and recreation lands, and over three-quarters of the wildlife management areas.

[8] Section 253.034, *F. S.*

Exhibit 5
A Variety of Recreational Opportunities Are Allowed on State Conservation Lands

	Number of Managed Areas that Are Open to the Public					
Recreational Oppurtunity[1]	33 State Forests (1,016,029 Acres)	160 Parks and Recreation Lands (724,629 Acres)	11 Greenways and Trails (83,840 Acres)	51 Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (55,948 Acres)	37 Wildlife Management Areas (1,402,278 Acres)	Total 292 Areas (3,282,724 Acres)
Biking	23	58	8	7	25	121
Camping	19	65	1	21	16	122
Canoeing/Kayaking	19	85	2	41	20	167
Equestrian Activities	17	31	7	3	18	76
Fishing	20	105	2	48	29	204
Hiking	25	121	8	16	34	204
Hunting	28	0	1	12	27[2]	68
Motorized Boating	8	61	1	46	21	137
Recreational Infrastructure	22	126	3	24	27	202
Swimming and Beach Activities	4	72	0	44	0	120
Tours	7	86	0	0	4	97
Watercraft Access Points	19	34	1	0	15	69
Wildlife Viewing	29	116	1	46	36	228

[1] The types of recreational opportunities provided by the state agencies vary. For example camping may include primitive camping, full facility camping, group camping, campfire circles, and RV camping.

[2] The 10 Wildlife Management Areas not open to hunting are closed because of local government agreements, small parcel size, or extreme environmental sensitivity.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of information from Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Environmental Protection, and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission websites and staff.

However, some state lands are not open to the public. The three agencies reported that 3,173 acres of lands they manage are not open to the public.[9] Most of this acreage (1,430) has been closed by the Department of Environmental Protection primarily because it is currently being repaired or developed for future public use, such as developing new greenways and trails. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission does not allow access to 1,305 acres in wildlife management areas due to acquisition contract provisions, to protect infrastructure or sensitive environments or to help ensure public safety. Finally, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services does not allow the public access to 438 acres of land it manages because these areas are not easily accessible by car or foot.

Agencies generally make information on the recreational opportunities available to the public on their websites and brochures. Agencies provide multiple ways for users to search for activities, such as by park, state region, or activity type. For example, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission allows users to search its website by both activity type (e.g., hunting and fishing) and wildlife management area. Similarly, the Department of Environmental Protection Division of Recreation and Parks' website allows users to search by detailed activity categories as well as geographical location.

However, there is no centralized source of information about recreational opportunities on state conservation land. Members of the public must seek information from each state agency to determine

[9] In addition, the state has purchased development rights to 515,627 acres through less-than-fee acquisitons. These lands remain in private ownership and are typically closed to the public.

what recreational opportunities are available on state recreation lands. The Legislature could address this issue and improve information provided to the public about recreational opportunities by directing the three agencies to standardize the information they provide to citizens and visitors. Alternatively, the Legislature could direct the agencies to work with VISIT FLORIDA to develop a centralized website that provides information on all state conservation lands and the recreational opportunities available on them. [10] The centralized website should be fully searchable by activity type, geographical location, and managing agency and should include property maps.

Agencies demonstrate mixed results in land management

Agencies showed mixed results on their performance measures that relate to land management for Fiscal Year 2006-07. As shown in Exhibit 6, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services exceeded its performance standard for the number of state forest visitors during the year, but it did not meet standards for providing forest-related technical assistance to other public land management agencies and for the number of acres authorized for prescribed burning. Similarly, the Department of Environmental Protection exceeded its standard for increasing the percentage of visitors to state parks, but did not meet its standard for the percentage of managed acres with invasive species controlled. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission exceeded its performance standard for the number of acres managed for wildlife.

Exhibit 6
In Fiscal Year 2006-07, State Agencies that Manage Conservation Lands Met Standards for 7 of 13 Performance Measures Related to Land Management

			Standard Fiscal Year 2006-07	Actual Performance Fiscal Year 2006-07
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services		Number of acres of state forests managed by the department	1,007,000	1,016,029
		Number of state forest visitors served	650,000	909,122
		Number of hours spent providing forest-related technical assists to public land management agencies	13,300	9,152
		Percentage of state forest timber-producing acres adequately stocked and growing	61%	63%
		Number of acres authorized to be burned through prescribed burning [1]	2.3 million	1.8 million
Department of Environmental Protection	*State Park System*	Percentage change in the number of state parks acres restored or maintained in native state from the prior fiscal year	2%	-17%
		Percentage increase in the number of visitors from the prior fiscal year	1.3%	7.3%
	Greenways and Trails	Percentage of managed acres with invasive or undesirable species controlled	35%	25%
	Coastal and Aquatic Areas	Total number of degraded acres in National Estuarine Research Reserves enhanced or restored	1,658	3,275
		Percentage change in the number of degraded areas in National Estuarine Research Reserves enhanced or restored from those enhanced or restored in the previous fiscal year	1%	250%
		Percentage change of managed lands infested by invasive plants	1%	17%
		Percentage increases in the number of visitors	3%	-.74%
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission		Number of acres managed for wildlife [2]	5,539,815	5,663,890

[1] This measure includes all authorized prescribed burning in Florida by county, state, federal, and private land managers.

[2] The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is lead manager on 1.4 million acres and is a cooperating manager on an additional 4.2 million acres.

Source: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Environmental Protection, and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Fiscal Year 2007-08 Long-range Program Plans.

[10] VISIT FLORIDA is the state's official tourism marketing corporation created in 1996. VISIT FLORIDA is not a government agency, but rather a not-for-profit corporation that carries out the work of the Florida Commission on Tourism, which was created as a public/private partnership by the Florida Legislature in 1996.

The agencies reported several reasons for not achieving performance standards. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services cited unfavorable weather conditions as one reason why it did not meet its target for prescribed burns, and indicated that it provided fewer than anticipated hours of forest-related technical assists to public land management agencies due to other priorities such as suppressing wildfires and responding to other emergencies. The Department of Environmental Protection similarly cited drought conditions for limiting prescribed burning and staff shortages for limiting its invasive plant control activities.

Performance measures need improvement. The agencies' current performance measures provide limited information about the condition and uses of the conservation lands they manage. This hinders the state's ability to identify the conservation status of these lands, track progress towards achieving conservation and recreation goals, and assess funding needs. For example, a state park identified the control and removal of invasive plants as a goal, however there are no performance measures that report progress on invasive plant control in state parks. In addition, performance measures do not quantify the availability of recreational opportunities, like miles of trails, days of hunting allowed statewide, and number of fisherman who reach bag limits.

To address this problem, the Legislature could direct agencies to establish and report performance measures on the condition and uses of conservation lands. A more complete set of performance measures would include those noted below.

- Percentage and number of acres of public lands that are open to various recreational uses
- Percentage and number of visitors satisfied with recreational experiences
- Percentage and number of acres identified for restoration activities that attain restoration goals
- Percentage and number of acres of managed lands in good/fair/poor condition
- Percentage and number of acres of public conservation lands on which upland invasive, exotic plant control operations have been conducted
- Percentage and number of acres of public lakes and rivers in which invasive, non-native aquatic plants are in maintenance condition
- Status of endangered/threatened/ special concern species on publicly managed conservation areas
- Percentage and number of acres burned according to the agency's prescribed burning schedule

To develop these measures, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission should jointly develop a system to assess, quantify, and rate the condition of state lands. At a minimum, the system should enable agencies to report annually the condition of state lands on a scale of poor, fair, good, and excellent. These ratings should be based on state and agency management objectives and performance measures.

Land management review process should be enhanced. Agencies' ability to manage conservation lands would also be strengthened if the land management review process were modified. Specifically, land management plans should be improved, more information should be provided to review participants, more time should be provided to conduct the reviews, and the results of the reviews should be better reported to stakeholders.

Our assessment of land management plans found that many do not detail specific needed activities or provide timelines for achieving stated goals. For example, the plans often lack basic information about

the type, amount, and cost of management activities to be conducted. Plans also often lack details on what work needs to be done to meet a goal such as restoring a property's hydrological features or how long it will take to restore it. Without this information, review teams lack benchmarks to assess progress toward achieving land management goals.

In addition, to assess the land management review process, we surveyed persons who had participated in these reviews and observed four review sessions. [11] Survey respondents were generally positive about the land management review process, with 79% indicating that the process is useful. However, these respondents also raised several concerns about the review process. For example, many respondents indicated that they did not receive enough information before a review to adequately prepare them to participate in the process. Overall, over one-fifth (22%) of participants reported that additional information on the process or property was needed to facilitate an effective review. Finally, some participants indicated that there was not sufficient time to conduct reviews and that some designated persons do not participate. To improve the land management review process, the Department of Environmental Protection convened a workgroup in September 2007. Conservation land managers and other stakeholders will assist the department in modifying the review process, with the workgroup's top priorities being to

- improve the synthesis of land management review data to a legislative report;
- modify land management plans to include measurable scientific and financial data and modifying the format to be more reader-friendly; and
- assess the appropriateness and improving the expertise of team composition.

Options for Legislative Consideration

The state currently manages over 3.7 million acres of conservation land at a management cost of approximately $220 million annually. As the state acquires more conservation land, these costs will increase, as will the need to effectively manage these lands and track, and report performance. However, the current management system is decentralized among three agencies, and the existing accountability system needs improvement.

Exhibit 7 presents four policy options for the Legislature to consider. These options include maintaining the current system of conservation land management by three separate state agencies (Option 1); creating a council to coordinate and oversee land management activities (Option 2); centralizing land management activities under one state agency (Option 3); and centralizing all land management activities under a new entity (Option 4). The exhibit summarizes the policy options and describes the advantages and disadvantages associated with each option.

[11] We attended land management reviews at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, Wakulla State Forest, J.R. Alford Greenway, and Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park in April 2007. We also surveyed 334 individuals who participated in a land management review between July 2004 and June 2007, with 143 (43%) responding.

Exhibit 7
The Legislature Could Consider Several Options to Modify Management of State-Owned Conservation Lands

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1 – Maintain Current System of Conservation Land Management by State Agencies		
Maintain the current organizational structure of land management by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department Environmental Protection, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.	▪ Agencies would retain the ability to focus on specialized land management activities related to mission and goals ▪ Would preserve the established funding mechanism	▪ Current structure may not provide adequate mechanisms for coordinating activities across agencies ▪ Agency mission may limit types of land management activities on state lands
Option 2 –Create a Council to Coordinate and Oversee Land Management Activities		
Create an interagency council to coordinate and oversee land management activities undertaken by state agencies. The council would be responsible for creating a system to track land management activities and the condition of state lands.	▪ Current model for an interagency council exists in the Acquisition and Restoration Council ▪ Agencies would retain the ability to focus on specialized land management activities related to their mission and goals ▪ Would maintain current organizational structure of state agencies managing land ▪ Establishing a separate council would increase focus on conservation land management ▪ Council could make recommendations on how to distribute land management funds based on legislative priorities ▪ Would increase accountability and oversight of land management activities	▪ Would increase administrative costs; based on current expenses of the Acquisition and Restoration Council, these costs could be at least $70,000 annually ▪ Land management agencies may disagree with council's priorities ▪ Would separate land management from acquisition process and require increased coordination, because the Acquisition and Restoration Council currently oversees both acquisition and management decisions
Option 3 - Centralize Land Management Activities Under One State Agency		
Centralize land management under one of the three current state land managing agencies. Under this model, the land management responsibilities, functions, activities, staff, funding, and equipment of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission would be transferred to one agency. This agency would oversee all state-owned conservation and recreational areas, including state parks, state forests, greenways and trails, water bodies, wildlife management areas, and coastal and aquatic areas. In addition, the agency would undertake all management activities currently conducted by the three agencies, including facility construction and maintenance, prescribed burning, imperiled species recovery, wildlife management, trail maintenance, control of exotic species and invasive plants, restoration of natural habitats, and visitor services. Placement of land management activities with any of the three agencies has advantages and disadvantages, as described below. Criteria for Legislative consideration in centralizing land management should include ▪ Cost efficiencies and reductions in administrative and operating costs ▪ Improved coordination of staff and equipment use ▪ Centralized policy-making ▪ Reduction in duplication		

Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	▪ Department is the second largest manager of state conservation land ▪ Department has the most expertise and resources for timber and fire management ▪ Would consolidate policy and decision-making ▪ Would centralize accountability and oversight of land management activities ▪ Would eliminate duplication of land management activities currently conducted by multiple agencies (e.g., prescribed burning and invasive plant control)	▪ May be objections from existing agencies ▪ Transition from decentralized to centralized system may be difficult ▪ Could be conflicts from integrating staff from agencies with various statutory missions and goals ▪ Department mission may not be consistent with full range of conservation land uses
Department of Environmental Protection	▪ Department has largest number of visitors to state-owned managed areas - state parks ▪ Staff has expertise in invasive plant management ▪ Department currently staffs the Acquisition and Restoration Council and land management reviews ▪ Would consolidate policy and decision-making ▪ Would centralize accountability and oversight of land management activities ▪ Would eliminate duplication of land management activities currently conducted by multiple agencies (e.g., prescribed burning and invasive plant control)	▪ May be objections from existing agencies ▪ Transition from decentralized to centralized system may be difficult ▪ Could be conflicts from integrating staff from agencies with various statutory missions and goals
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	▪ Department is the largest land manager of state land ▪ Department performs management activities on the majority of state land acres as primary or coordinating land manager ▪ Department's primary mission is conservation, including fish, wildlife, habitat, recreation, and land management, which is generally consistent with overall land management functions ▪ Currently implementing an objective-based vegetation management approach to resource management that takes into consideration land condition and focuses management activities to improve land ▪ Would consolidate policy and decision-making ▪ Would centralize accountability and oversight of land management activities ▪ Would eliminate duplication of land management activities currently conducted by multiple agencies (e.g., prescribed burning and invasive plant control)	▪ May be objections from existing agencies ▪ Transition from decentralized to centralized system may be difficult ▪ Could be conflicts from integrating staff from agencies with various statutory missions and goals

Agency Placement Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 4 - Centralize all land management activities under a new entity		
Under this model, the land management responsibilities, functions, activities, staff, funding, and equipment of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission would be transferred to a new entity. This entity would oversee all state-owned conservation and recreational areas, including state parks, state forests, greenways and trails, water bodies, wildlife management areas, and coastal and aquatic areas. In addition, the entity would undertake all management activities currently conducted by the three agencies, including facility construction and maintenance, prescribed burning, imperiled species recovery, wildlife management, trail maintenance, control of exotic species and invasive plants, restoration of natural habitats, and visitor services.	▪ Land management activities would be the sole focus of the new entity ▪ Would consolidate policy and decision-making ▪ Would centralize accountability and oversight of land management activities ▪ Would eliminate duplication of land management activities currently conducted by multiple agencies. (e.g., prescribed burning and invasive plant control)	▪ Would result in increased costs associated with establishing a new administrative structure ▪ Would increase the number of state agencies ▪ May be objections from existing agencies ▪ Transition from decentralized to centralized system may be difficult ▪ Could be conflicts from integrating staff from agencies with various statutory missions and goals

Source: OPPAGA analysis.