



The Florida Senate

Interim Project Summary 98-53

October 1998

Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donald C. Sullivan, Chairman

STATE LANDS MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COST

SUMMARY

This project was recommended after the 1998 legislative session because of concerns raised that as Florida completes one of the most aggressive land acquisition programs in the nation (Preservation 2000) and will consider during the 1999 Legislative Session extending this effort, are sufficient funds available to develop, manage, and maintain these lands in a manner consistent with the public purpose for which they were acquired. The objective of this project was to identify the amount and type of acreage to be developed and managed by the state and the associated immediate and long term estimated cost. This project focused only on conservation and recreation lands managed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC), Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACs), and the Department of State (DOS).

Based on the information provided by the managing agencies, it appears there is no statewide coordination of land management activities, funding request are not consistent with stated needs, and the current allocation of CARL management funds will be insufficient to meet projected management and development cost. It is recommended the Legislature require five year management and development plans be prepared for all state owned lands and that these plans serve as the basis for agencies annual request for additional funding.

BACKGROUND

The primary statutory provisions authorizing the state acquisition of conservation and recreation lands is found in Chapter 259, Florida Statutes, and the program is formalized in administrative rule under Chapter 18-8, Florida Administrative Code (FAC). The above authorization puts in place legislative

policy intended to assure public ownership of natural areas for the purpose of maintaining the state's unique natural resources and provide lands for natural resource based recreation. Implementation of this policy resulted in the following major state land acquisition efforts that brought Florida into the nations forefront in preservation by acquisition of its unique natural resources.

- Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL) - \$200 mil. bonding program backed by the full faith and credit of the state (General Revenue Fund)
- Save Our Coast Program (SOC) - \$275 mil. bonding program backed by documentary stamp taxes
- Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund (CARL)-Funded from a portion of the documentary stamp taxes and the severance tax on phosphate as well as P-2000 bond proceeds
- Save Our Rivers Program (SOR) - Water Management District land acquisition program funded from a portion of the documentary stamp taxes and P-2000 bond proceeds. Management and development of these lands is a water management district responsibility and not addressed in this report
- Florida Preservation 2000 Program (P-2000) - 10 year \$3.0 billion. bonding program backed by documentary stamp taxes

Over the last decade, the Legislature has appropriated over \$3.2 billion. (with the exception of EEL funds which had been expended or committed) from the above programs for land acquisition. As a result of these programs the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold title to over 1,500,000 acres of conservation and recreation lands. These lands, as well as the those title to which is held by the managing agencies, are intended to provide conservation of the states unique natural resources and provide natural based recreation by serving as coastal

and urban parks, recreation areas, wildlife management areas, state forest, green ways, historic and archaeological sites, geological and botanical site, preserves, and reserves.

In addition to authorizing the public acquisition of these lands, Chapter 259, F.S. also provides they be managed in a manner that is most beneficial to the public and the resource, managed for public recreation compatible with conservation and protection, and managed for the purpose for which they were acquired. The Legislature recognized the need to provide a dedicated recurring funding source to meet these management and development cost by providing that 1.5 percent of the cumulative P-2000 bond issues shall be made available from the CARL Trust fund for management, maintenance, and capital improvement cost. These funds are allocated to the managing agencies according to an acreage based formula. The questions raised with the managing agencies and the subject of this project was to the sufficiency of these funds in meeting their management responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

The four primary managing agencies (DEP, GFC, DACS, and DOS) of state owned conservation and recreation lands were requested to provide the following information: the number of acres and primary purpose of lands for which they are responsible, the immediate land management funding needs of the agency as reflected in their 1999-00 Legislative Budget Request (LBR), the amount and basis of calculation of any long term unfunded land management needs that may be included in their LBR, and the agency position on the sufficiency of the current amount and formula of allocating CARL management funds.

FINDINGS

The financial needs of the managing agencies varied considerably depending on the amount and type of property to be managed. Table 1 represents the DEP's records as to the lead management agency and the primary public purpose of conservation and recreation lands owned by the Trustees:

<u>Agency and Primary Purpose</u>	<u>Acres</u>
DEP - Florida Park System, Green ways and Trails, State buffer preserves	706,284
GFC - State Wildlife Management Areas	307,410

DACS - State Forest	335,719
DOS - Historical Sites	76
Other - Variable	<u>194,584</u>
Total	1,544,073

In considering the above, the following should be noted: (1) Other category includes lands managed by non-state governmental entities, primarily local governments, (2) the above reflects only conservation and recreation lands owned by the Trustees, DEP indicates over 7.0 mil. acres of Florida land is held in public ownership through local, state, and federal programs, (3) the records of the GFC and DACS relative to management responsibilities of Trustees owned lands differs from DEP's (GFC - 874,145 acres and DACS - 406,416 acres) and, (4) in addition to managing Trustees owned conservation and recreation lands, the GFC and DACS report managing 128,705 and 339,119, respectively, of agency owned conservation and recreation lands.

Chapter 259 F.S., requires each state agency with land management responsibilities to annual request from the Legislature funds sufficient to fulfill such responsibilities. Table 2 represents a summary of the issues included in the managing agencies original 1999-00 LBR relating to conservation and recreation lands management needs which are above the current funding level. This is followed by a brief narrative of additional information provided by and related to the managing agencies.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Recurring</u>	<u>Non-recurring</u>
DEP	22.0	\$9.0	\$33.1
GFC	0	.5	0
DACS	16.0	7.8	4.0
DOS	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	38.0	17.3	37.1

DEP - The Division of Recreation and Parks within the DEP currently prepares a five-year development plan which includes estimated detailed funding requirements for each unit within the park system and which currently projects a \$225.0 mil need. This plan is used to develop the division's annual LBR which for 1999-00 includes \$33.6 mil. No unfunded management and development cost were presented by the Green ways and Trails Program other than their

1999-00 LBR, which included \$8.5 mil. The Division of Marine Resources, whose primary land management responsibilities involve buffer preserves, has estimated a natural resources system restoration cost of \$7.9 mil., none of which appears to be reflected in the 1999-00 LBR. The majority of DEP's 1999-00 LBR is funded from CARL management allocations and other departmental trust funds. The department feels the current allocation of CARL management funds is or will be insufficient to meet state -owned conservation and recreation land management needs.

GFC - The commission reports it is difficult to estimate adequate funding needs for land management, due in part to the different animal and plant life on the property to be managed, the size and shape of the property to be managed, and adjacent land uses. The commission believes the current CARL management allocation is adequate to properly manage assigned CARL lands (the commission's 1999-00 original LBR does not include all of the CARL management allocation available but will be addressed in a supplemental budget request to be submitted after January, 1999) . The commission indicates that to provide the same level of management services to non-CARL lands as is provided to CARL lands, an additional \$14.3 mil. would be required (based on an average per acre expenditure on CARL lands times non-CARL acreage) . The commission's 1999-00 LBR includes \$.5 mil. from the General Revenue Fund for meeting these non-CARL land management needs. It is unclear at this time why more of this land management need was not addressed in their LBR.

DACS - Of the funds included in the department's LBR, some are specifically related to land management and others are increments of other departmental budget issues where the department has allocated a percentage of the cost to land management. These percentages varied and the rationale is not known. The majority of all new funding included in the department's LBR for land management is from the General Revenue Fund. The department states that in addition to funds requested in their 1999-00 LBR, there is also a land management funding shortfall of \$2.5 mil. for non-CARL lands and \$.8 mil. for CARL lands (these funds were calculated based on an estimated need per acre times the number of acres to be managed). It is not clear why these funding needs were not included in the department's LBR. Based on the stated deficit in CARL land management funds, it is assumed the department feels the current CARL management allocation is insufficient. The

department also states there is a five year reforestation need of \$9.2 mil., some of which is assumed to be addressed in their 1999-00 LBR.

DOS - The department's original 1999-00 LBR does not include the total CARL land management allocation (they are in the process of developing issues for these funds and a supplemental budget request will be submitted after January, 1999). The department indicates they believe the current allocation of CARL management funds is adequate to meet their land management responsibilities.

Preliminary review of the above and other information submitted by the land managing agencies indicates the following:

- There is no state-wide coordination of management activities on state-owned conservation and recreation lands. Agency land records differ as to primary management responsibilities, funding levels of management activities vary considerably among agencies, and long term needs assessments with associated cost estimates have in most cases not been provided.
- It is questionable if all of the managing agencies original 1999-00 LBR's truly reflect the financial resources required to meet the management responsibilities required by Chapter 259, F.S. Agencies have indicated they intend to amend the original LBR's in January to reflect additional CARL management funds and many of the unfunded management needs asserted by the agencies are not addressed in their 1999-00 LBR.
- When considering all conservation and recreation lands owned by the state and the potential funding needs reflected in the LBR's, it is doubtful the current 1.5 % management allocation from CARL will be sufficient to meet the management requirements of all agencies.

Recommendations

It is recommended the Legislature statutorily require a five-year management and development plan be prepared for all conservation and recreation lands owned by the state (Trustees and agency owned). The plan should be prepared by the agency assigned lead management responsibility and provide at a minimum the estimated total cost of development and management of each property. These cost should be based on needs assessments of each individual parcel, facility, unit, etc. under the responsibility of the managing agencies and should serve as the basis for development of their annual LBR. Statewide coordination responsibilities should be assigned to the Division of State Lands, as staff to the Trustees. The five-year State Park Development Plan, currently prepared by the Division of Recreation and Parks, should be the model used by the other managing agencies.

COMMITTEE(S) INVOLVED IN REPORT (*Contact first committee for more information.*)

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MEMBER OVERSIGHT

Senator Latvala, Senator Bronson