Land Acquisition in the Tampa Bay Region
Habitat Mosaics Comprise Ecosystem
Land Conversion Facts

- Florida has 34.5 million acres of non-sovereign land.
- 8.8 million acres have been converted to urban uses (25.7 million acres left).
- An estimated 250,000 acres are converted each year to urban uses (1 million every 4 years).
- Extrapolating: all Florida land could be converted to urban uses within 99 years (2108 AD).

- Accordingly, it is feasible that within the next century, that the only natural habitat left will be what has been purchased/protected from development.
Take Home Message:

BUY NOW!!!

Restore and Manage Later
Potential Funding Sources for Land Acquisition, Management, and Restoration

- Water Management Lands Trust Fund
- WMD Basin & Governing Boards
- Florida Forever Program – CARL, FCT
- Mitigation Funds (FDOT) and Mitigation Banks
- Private Sector/Environmental Organizations
  - Nature Conservancy
  - Trust for Public Land
  - Tampa Bay Conservancy
- Federal Agencies (USFWS)
- Local Land Acquisition Programs
Hillsborough County’s E.L.A.P.P. Program
What is E.L.A.P.P?

E - Environmental
L - Lands
A - Acquisition and
P - Protection
P - Program
History of E.L.A.P.P.

- Voter-approved program initiated in 1987; extended in 1990 and 2008
- To date, Hillsborough County has acquired 44,700 acres through the program
- 55 protected sites
- Currently have three field offices & 23 employees for management of ELAPP sites
History of E.L.A.P.P.

• Through 2008, $204 million spent to acquire 44,700 acres
• Of this, $128 million has come from the ELAP Program, while $86 million ($10 million pending) has come from partnering agencies
• Florida Communities Trust, Southwest Florida Water Management District
Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division

- Manage four large preserves totaling 13,196 acres. This includes the 8,000 acre Brooker Creek Preserve in northern Pinellas County.
- Also manage 15 smaller environmentally sensitive properties totaling 1,144 acres.
- Partner with Florida Communities Trust and Southwest Florida Water Management District
- WMD owns approximately 2,400 acres within the County
Manatee County Natural Resources Department

- Manage twelve large preserves totaling 29,000 acres. This includes the 22,000 acre Duette Preserve in eastern Manatee County.
- Partner with Florida Communities Trust and Southwest Florida Water Management District to acquire land
- WMD owns approximately 12,000 acres within the County
Tampa Bay Ecosystems

Pine Flatwoods
Pine Flatwoods (late 1800’s)

Pine Lily

Lopsided Indiangrass

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake
Tampa Bay Ecosystems

Depression Marsh
Depression Marshes in Lithia, FL (1938)

Pickerel Weed

Gopher Frog

Great Egret
Tampa Bay Ecosystems

Sandhill
Historic Sandhill (c 1900)

Wire Grass

Turkey Oak

Red-headed Woodpecker

Indigo Snake
Tampa Bay Ecosystems

Xeric Scrub
Florida Mouse

Florida Scrub-Jay

Gopher Tortoise

Florida Golden Aster
Tampa Bay Ecosystems

Floodplain Forest
Grasses (*Spartina*), Rush (*Juncus*), and Cabbage Palm

Saltwort

Osprey

Fiddler Crabs
Mangrove Communities

Black Mangrove

Red Mangrove
Seagrass Communities

- Grasses provide nursery areas for fish and other animals
- Stabilize the bottom
- Filter nutrients and suspended particles out of the water column

*Thalassia testudinum*
Land Management

- a) Habitat Restoration
- b) Prescribed Burning
- c) Exotic Plant Control
- d) Feral Animal Control
- e) Plant/Animal Monitoring
- f) Public Access & Recreation

Southern Blue Flag
Habitat Restoration

After site preparation, plants raised in the nursery are transplanted onto the preserve sites.

Large scale restorations are bid out to contract or managed by other agencies.

Native Plant Nursery at the Cockroach Bay Field Office.
Prescribed Burning

a) Is necessary for healthy native Florida ecosystems

b) Protects neighboring properties from wildfires

Was Smokey the Bear right??

“Only you can prevent forest fires”
Heavy fuel load causes tall flame lengths.

All fuels are consumed by the fire leaving behind bare mineral soil.
Post Burn

6 Months after prescribed burn
Exotic Plant Control

- Exotic invasive plants out compete native plants for space, thus altering native ecosystems.

- Exotic plants generally offer poor habitat and food sources for animals.

Identification is easy due to the off center mid vein.
Common Herbicides & Additives used in Natural Areas
Basal Spaying of Brazilian Pepper
Feral Animal Control

Why are these escaped/wild pigs such a problem?
Reasons why feral hogs are bad for native Florida lands:

- They compete with native wildlife for food.
- Hogs destroy sensitive lands with their feeding activities (rooting)
- They help introduce non-native plants through:
  a) Droppings
  b) Disturbing to soil

Tropical Soda Apple
Hog Hunting & Trapping
Threatened & Endangered Animals

Scrub Jay

Gopher Tortoise

Burrowing Owl
Threatened and Endangered Plants

Pine Lily

Florida Golden Aster
Recreational Activities at Cockroach Bay

- Fishing
- Canoeing
- Hiking
- Birding