

SFWMD

Land Assessment

East Coast Region

Additional Public Comments



*The mission of the Florida Native Plant Society is to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.*

April 22, 2013

Ray Palmer, Real Estate Section Leader  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, Florida 33416

Subject: Comments on Comprehensive Assessment of East Coast Region Lands

Dear Mr. Palmer:

Please accept the following comments as the Florida Native Plant Society's recommendations on the East Coast Assessment Region.

**Indian River Lagoon Parcels (SOR)** – Both parcels are important for protecting water quality in Indian River Lagoon, and they also have substantial value as wildlife habitat and for public recreational use. The beach frontage is precious to preserve for public access, and adjacency with other protected lands enhances the long-term conservation value of both parcels.

**10 Mile Creek** - Although the Reservoir/STA lands have been substantially altered, the alterations are associated with structural improvements designed to store water and enhance water quality within the overall system. The staff assessment also acknowledges the projected habitat value of the Reservoir/STA for waterfowl and wading birds once the structural alterations have been completed. The other parcels are currently valuable for wildlife, support rare scrub and scrubby flatwoods vegetation, and/or have established facilities and importance for public recreational use. We recommend retention of the entire ownership.

**Indian River Lagoon South (CERP)** – Even the highly altered parcels within this assessment unit, which appear largely to lack significant habitat value (e.g. those comprising the C-23/C-24 and C-44 components) should be retained in their entirety to support the planned development of important water management infrastructure. The future development of C-44 is one of the most critical projects for restoring water quality and natural salinity gradients in the southern reaches of Indian River Lagoon. Even portions of these project areas that are not projected to be needed for restoration or infrastructure development could conceivably play important ancillary roles (e.g., staging areas, storage areas, or access sites) in accommodating the development of the reservoirs, STAs, and other structural elements. Any decisions about designating surplus lands from among the land in these individual assessment units should be deferred until after the completion of all projected restoration and infrastructure development.

**South Fork of the St. Lucie and Atlantic Ridge** – We recommend retention of all the lands within this assessment unit. They are extremely significant natural areas that support a diversity of plant and animal species. These natural land areas are also important headwater areas within the watersheds of both the St. Lucie and Loxahatchee Rivers. Although access to the Medalist parcel is problematic and appears to preclude public access at this time, the habitat and watershed values argue for its retention. There is also a potential to link the Medalist parcel with

Florida Native Plant Society  
Post Office Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902  
Telephone: 407.862.8172

the Atlantic Ridge State Park. The intervening lands remain in a natural condition, and such a linkage would benefit the long term conservation values and management of both the State Park and Medalist lands.

**Pal-Mar** – Northern PalMar and Chimneys, like other mega-parcel acquisition projects, represents a major challenge. The large number of individual ownerships makes acquisition a long, complex and laborious process. It is also difficult to manage the large number of small, non-contiguous land areas such acquisition projects generate. It is possible, or likely, that a substantial portion of this project area will never be acquired. However, the rationale for targeting these lands for acquisition remains valid and we believe it is appropriate to continue seeking to acquire them. It may eventually make sense to offer land swaps and explore other strategies to consolidate the district's ownership into contiguous tracts that border the Hungryland WEA. Any decision to surplus lands in the Northern PalMar and Chimneys should be deferred. Hungryland WEA should be retained in its entirety.

**DuPuis** – The District' DuPuis property, in combination with the adjacent Corbett Wildlife Management Area, is simply one of the most important natural areas in Florida. The District's long history of ownership, habitat restoration, and responsible stewardship are to be commended. It is a magnet for outdoor recreation and valuable for environmental education. Ownership should obviously be retained. It could be argued that the 25-Acre Strip is a potential candidate for surplus. Its retention would help maintain unencumbered right-of-way and access along the C-44 canal.

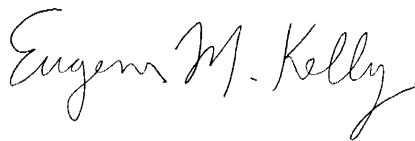
**Loxahatchee River/Cypress Creek** - Like the Indian River Lagoon South assessment area, the altered lands included in this assessment area were purchased to support CERP-related projects and must be retained for that purpose. This area also plays an essential role in maintaining landscape connectivity among Jonathan Dickinson State Park, Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge, Hungryland-PalMar, and other although public conservation lands. We recommend retention of the entire ownership.

**Loxahatchee Slough** – Retain ownership of this parcel so maintain hydrologic connectivity between the Loxahatchee Slough property and the Grassy Waters Preserve.

**L-8 Reservoir** – Ownership of this entire parcel must be retained so it can continue to store water, serve as a supplemental water supply source, and continue serving as a wildlife corridor between adjoining public conservation lands.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We look forward to continuing participation in the District's review of its lands.

Respectfully,



Eugene M. Kelly, Policy Chair  
Florida Native Plant Society  
[Policy@fnps.org](mailto:Policy@fnps.org)



**MARTIN COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
 2401 S.E. MONTEREY ROAD • STUART, FL 34996

*M. Meeker (Fy1 + File)*  
*R. Bassell*  
*R. Palmer for record*

Telephone: 772-320-3037  
 Fax: 772-288-5955  
 Email: cortagus@martin.fl.us

**DOUG SMITH**  
 Commissioner, District 1

**ED FIELDING**  
 Commissioner, District 2

**ANNE SCOTT**  
 Commissioner, District 3

**SARAH HEARD**  
 Commissioner, District 4

**JOHN HADDOX**  
 Commissioner, District 5

**TARYN KRYZDA, CPM**  
 County Administrator

April 18, 2013

Ms. Melissa L. Meeker, Executive Director  
 South Florida Water Management District  
 3301 Gun Club Road  
 West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

**EXECUTIVE**  
  
**APR 22 2013**  
  
**OFFICE**

**Subject: East Coast Region Lands Assessment**

Dear Ms. Meeker: *Melissa,*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the South Florida Water Management District's (District) lands assessment for the East Coast Region. Many of the lands which you are assessing are critical to the District's core mission "to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply." The lands are also critical to our collective interest in regional ecosystem restoration to protect the St. Lucie Estuary, Indian River Lagoon, and Loxahatchee River. Please consider our comments on the following parcels:

- **10-Mile Creek:** although located in St. Lucie County, this parcel is essential to our efforts to restore water quality to the St. Lucie Estuary. We have been advocating in numerous forums the need for the Army Corps of Engineers to do everything in their power to resolve all outstanding issues to make this project operable.
- **Indian River Lagoon South (CERP):** Martin County helped generate \$75 million to "jump-start" Everglades restoration for this project, and continues to advocate at state and federal levels for continued funding. Martin County would not support any proposal to use these lands for any other purpose than what is anticipated in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), including the Allapattah, C-44, C-23, and C-24 components.
- **South Fork of the St. Lucie River & Atlantic Ridge:** These properties are collectively of great importance to Martin County's interest in regional restoration efforts for the South Fork of the St. Lucie River, and clearly meet the original intent for which they were acquired under the Save Our Rivers program, and subsequent inclusion in CERP. We

TELEPHONE  
 772-288-5400

WEB ADDRESS  
<http://www.martin.fl.us>

propose that the District and Martin County pursue options to create a geographic connection between the Medalist property and the rest of Atlantic Ridge and include these potential parcels in a long-range regional planning process for these important areas.

- **Pal Mar:** Martin County shares the District's perspective on the assessment challenges associated with Pal Mar, including but not limited to non-contiguous ownership and complex legal issues which inhibit some use options. However, these parcels are essential to regional restoration efforts and overarching goals to protect water quality, water supply, natural resources, and flood control. Martin County proposes that our agencies work collaboratively to develop a long term vision for this complex and aggressively pursue the additional purchase of lands. Through our collective work, we can overcome land management challenges and proceed with hydrologic restoration and appropriate public access.
- **DuPuis:** This is an outstanding natural area that is a lynchpin in our region for biodiversity, wetland restoration and water resource protection, public use and education. Martin County would not support any proposal to use these lands for anything other than their current use, and recommends against considering the 25-acre strip as surplus in order to consider future options for connectivity with the C-44 canal.
- **Loxahatchee River / Cypress Creek:** These lands are critical to Martin County's effort to restore and protect the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. We have recently completed hydrologic restoration activities in Cypress Creek, and have on-going construction projects west of this area which will significantly further regional restoration goals for the Loxahatchee. Martin County is committed to continuing these efforts, and has recently coordinated with the District to determine opportunistic restoration opportunities for this area.
- **Unassociated Parcels**
  - **Mapp Road:** Although this parcel is not actively managed, Martin County is interested in the future potential of this site for a stormwater retrofit project that would improve water quality for the St. Lucie Estuary and assist in meeting our Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). This parcel is consistent with our proposed project identified as the "All-American Ditch Retrofit" in our Martin County Stormwater / Water Quality Needs Assessment.
  - **Orchid Island:** This parcel has conservation value to Martin County and is adjacent to our Oxbow parcel.



- **Pendarvis Cove:** This site is actively managed by Martin County Parks & Recreation Department as a non-motorized boat ramp site. Additionally, it contains over 30 acres of high quality mangrove habitat that is connected to the St. Lucie River. Martin County would not support any proposal to utilize these lands for purposes other than the current use.

Martin County understands the necessity of assessing acquired properties to ensure that they are being utilized to meet agency missions. We urge the District to work closely with Martin County, as you have done so often, and to give careful consideration to a longer-range perspective on restoration opportunities in keeping with our shared desire for prudent management and planning for future water resources. The majority of lands listed above were identified in the past for their outstanding natural resources and contribution to a regional complex that protects water quality and quantity goals. Whereas funds in the recent past may have limited our agencies in proceeding with the management or development of public access that we would have preferred, we are hopeful that the District will not surplus lands which would preclude future progress toward regional restoration.

If you or your staff have any questions or require clarification on Martin County's input on the land assessment process, please contact Deborah Drum, manager of our Ecosystem Restoration & Management Division at 772-463-3263, or [ddrum@martin.fl.us](mailto:ddrum@martin.fl.us). We look forward to continued cooperation on regional restoration efforts.

Sincerely,



Taryn Kryzda, County Administrator

Cc: Martin County Board of County Commissioners  
Don G. Donaldson, County Engineer  
Deborah L. Drum, Ecosystem Restoration & Management Division



RECEIVED

MAY 13 2013

LAND MANAGEMENT SECTION

Department of Environmental Resources Management
2300 North Jog Road, 4th Floor
West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743
(561) 233-2400
FAX: (561) 233-2414
www.pbcgov.org/erm

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

Steven L. Abrams, Mayor

Priscilla A. Taylor, Vice Mayor

Hal R. Valeche

Paulette Burdick

Shelley Vana

Mary Lou Berger

Jess R. Santamaria

County Administrator

Robert Weisman

An Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Employer

May 2, 2013

Mr. Ray Palmer
Land Assessment Team
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

SUBJECT: LAND ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT-OWNED LANDS IN THE EAST COAST REGION

Dear Mr. Palmer:

The Palm Beach County Departments of Environmental Resources Management and Parks and Recreation provide the following comments on the South Florida Water Management District's (District) land assessment efforts in the East Coast Region:

- 1) Lands in the East Coast Region should be retained for their intended purposes related to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and for sustainability of habitat and for water resources needed to prepare for climate change resiliency.
2) The District-owned land along PGA Boulevard in the Loxahatchee Slough is subject to a long-term (50-year) lease to the County for land management as part of the County's Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area. The County is amenable to taking title to that land and granting a conservation easement over the land to the District.
3) The County reminds the District of the obligation to convey an approximate 200-ft wide corridor along the eastern edge of the L-8 Reservoir property. This corridor is a requirement of the Development Order issued for the construction of the reservoir pits. The corridor will be a greenway connecting Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge to the south with the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area to the north.
4) The District-owned land south of Indiantown Road along the Loxahatchee River is subject to a long-term lease to the County for land management as part of Riverbend Park. The County is amenable to taking title to that land in exchange for granting a conservation easement over the land to the District.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the District's Land Assessment efforts in the East Coast Region. If you need anything further from us, please feel free to contact us at 561-233-2400.

Respectfully,

[Signature of Robert Robbins]

Robert Robbins, Director
Environmental Resources Management

[Signature of Eric Call]

Eric Call, Director
Parks and Recreation

# Comments Regarding Loxahatchee River/Cypress Creek



**PRESENTED BY  
STEPHEN WALKER  
LEWIS, LONGMAN & WALKER, P.A.**



# Comments: History and Current Conditions



- The District and Martin County jointly purchased lands to further the restoration goals of increasing water storage and freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.
- Restoration plans have been stalled for a number of years, during which time the land has been used for agriculture.
- Lack of water control affects surrounding properties and wetlands, and does not further the goal of restoration.

# Comments: Agricultural Lease Will Cause Harm



- **During the period of agricultural use, land has continued to deteriorate.**
  - Land is heavily over-drained.
  - Wetlands are being impacted.
- **Agricultural use does not further restoration goals**
  - The goal of increasing water storage is not met.
  - The goal of increasing freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is not met.

# Comments: A Water Control Mechanism Will Further Restoration Goals



- Presently, the development surrounding the Northwest Fork causes water to run off too quickly and at the wrong time.
- Installing a mechanism by which to hold the water on the land and allow for controlled releases will benefit Cypress Creek/Loxahatchee and the wetlands in the area.
- Available water that currently flows through canals could be diverted onto surrounding lands and gradually released back into the Cypress Creek/Loxahatchee Drainage Basin over a longer period of time.

# Comments: A Water Control Mechanism Will Further Restoration Goals



- **Better water control will help:**
  - Rehydrate the land while still allowing for releases to prevent flooding
  - Store water on the land that can be discharged when it is needed
  - Allow for controlled releases to help prevent saltwater intrusion
  - Meet the goal of increasing freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee
  - Meet the goal of increasing water storage



# Summary



- **The land was bought for restoration purposes.**
- **Agriculture only increases land degradation and does not support restoration goals.**
- **A water control device will further the goal of restoration by supporting the plans to increase water storage and increase freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.**

# Comments Regarding PalMar



**PRESENTED BY  
STEPHEN WALKER  
LEWIS, LONGMAN & WALKER, P.A.**

# PalMar Comments: Inaccurate Description



- The chimney area contains more than unused cattle pasture and unmanaged flatwoods
  - The area has been used for cattle grazing for decades
  - Only unused since January 2013 when owner relocated

# Pal Mar Comments: Current Conditions



- **Only 36% of lands are publically owned**
- **Ownership is fractionalized into small parcels**
- **The lack of continuity prevents effective implementation of the Districts core missions.**



# PalMar Comments: Proposed Solution



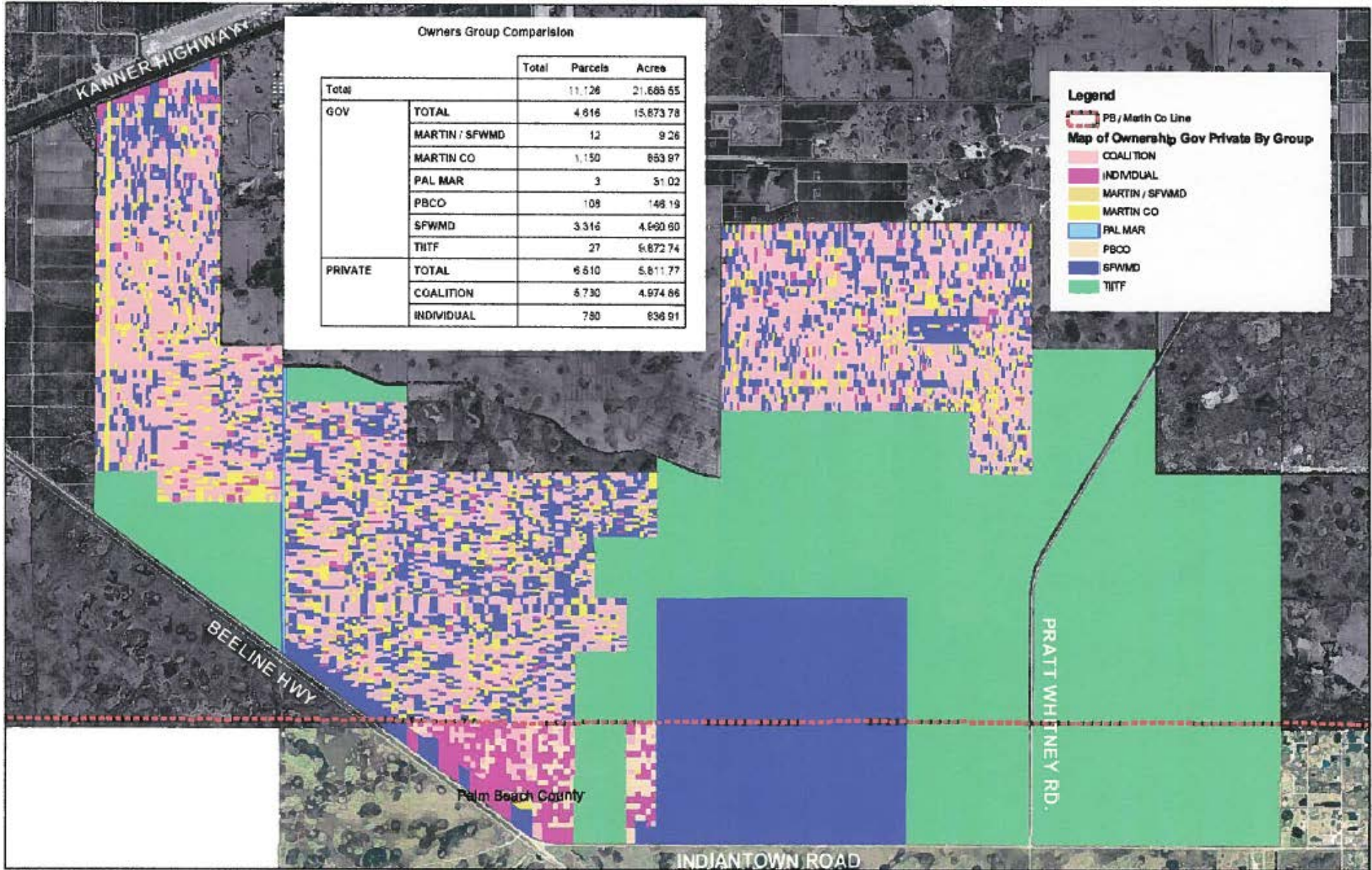
- Consolidate public land by acquiring fractionalized parcels
- Acquisition of these lands by the District would create contiguity and further the District's core mission of Hydrologic Restoration.
- Acquisition could be accomplished through purchase or land exchange

# Pal Mar Comments: Land Exchange Proposal



- Entity that can speak and negotiate for 88% of the remaining privately owned lands is willing to sell or exchange the land
- Exchange would:
  - consolidate public ownership of the central and southern sections of Pal-Mar; and
  - connect two existing publically owned areas

# PAL-MAR OWNERSHIP



**Owners Group Comparison**

		Total	Parcels	Acres
<b>Total</b>		11,126	21,685.65	
<b>GOV</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	4,616	15,673.78	
	MARTIN / SFWMD	12	9.26	
	MARTIN CO	1,150	653.97	
	PAL MAR	3	51.02	
	PBCO	108	146.19	
	SFWMD	3,316	4,690.90	
	TITF	27	6,672.74	
<b>PRIVATE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	6,510	5,811.77	
	COALITION	6,730	4,974.66	
	INDIVIDUAL	780	636.91	

**Legend**

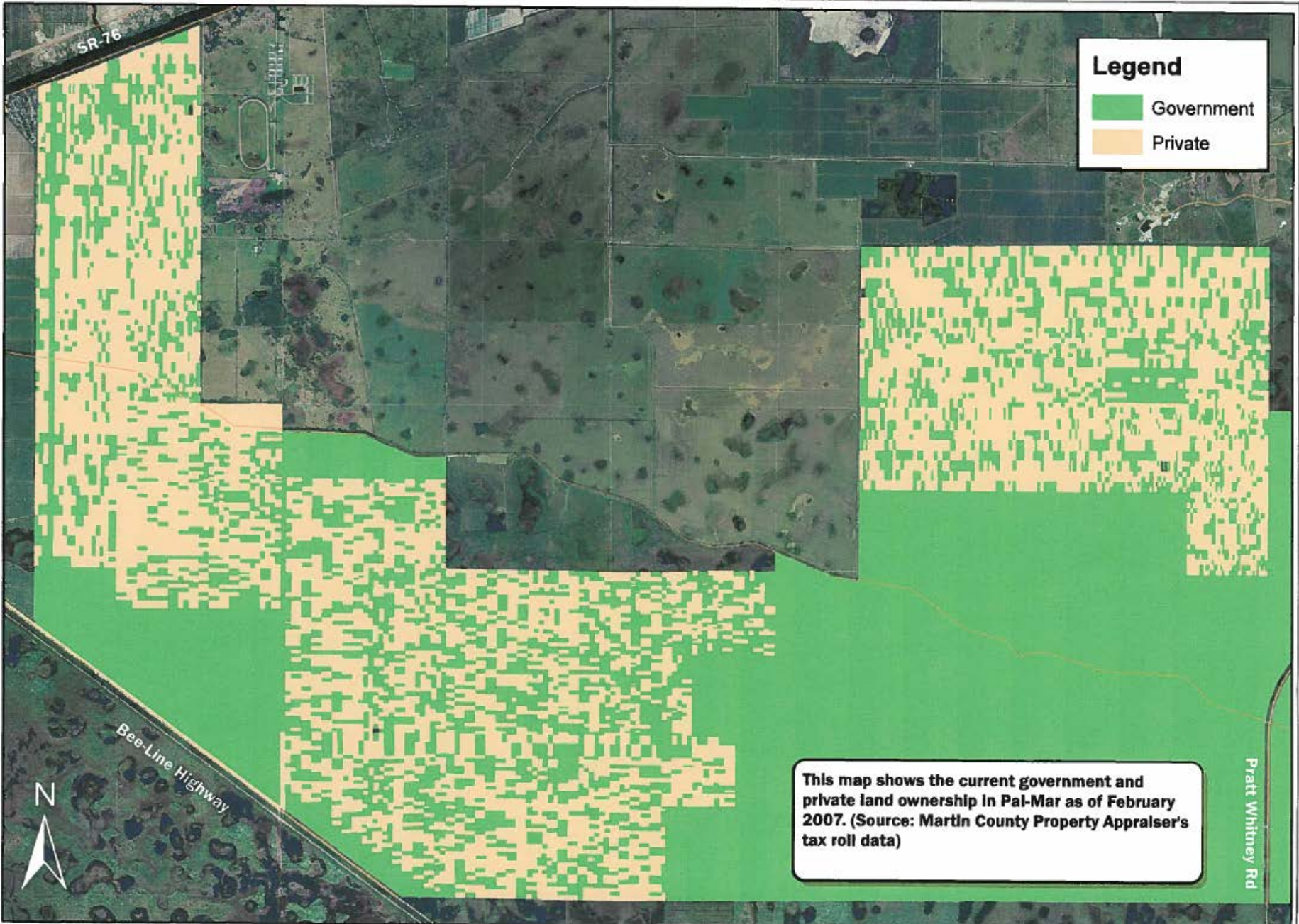
- PB / Martin Co Line
- Map of Ownership Gov Private By Group**
- COALITION
- INDIVIDUAL
- MARTIN / SFWMD
- MARTIN CO
- PAL MAR
- PBCO
- SFWMD
- TITF

**PAL MAR /  
PALM BEACH HEIGHTS**

1 inch equals 1 miles  
 Prepared: Dec. 12, 2006  
 Source: Martin Co. and PB Property Appraisers  
 2008 Certified Tax Rolls with Dec. updates



# Pal-Mar Ownership - Current (February 2007)



**Legend**

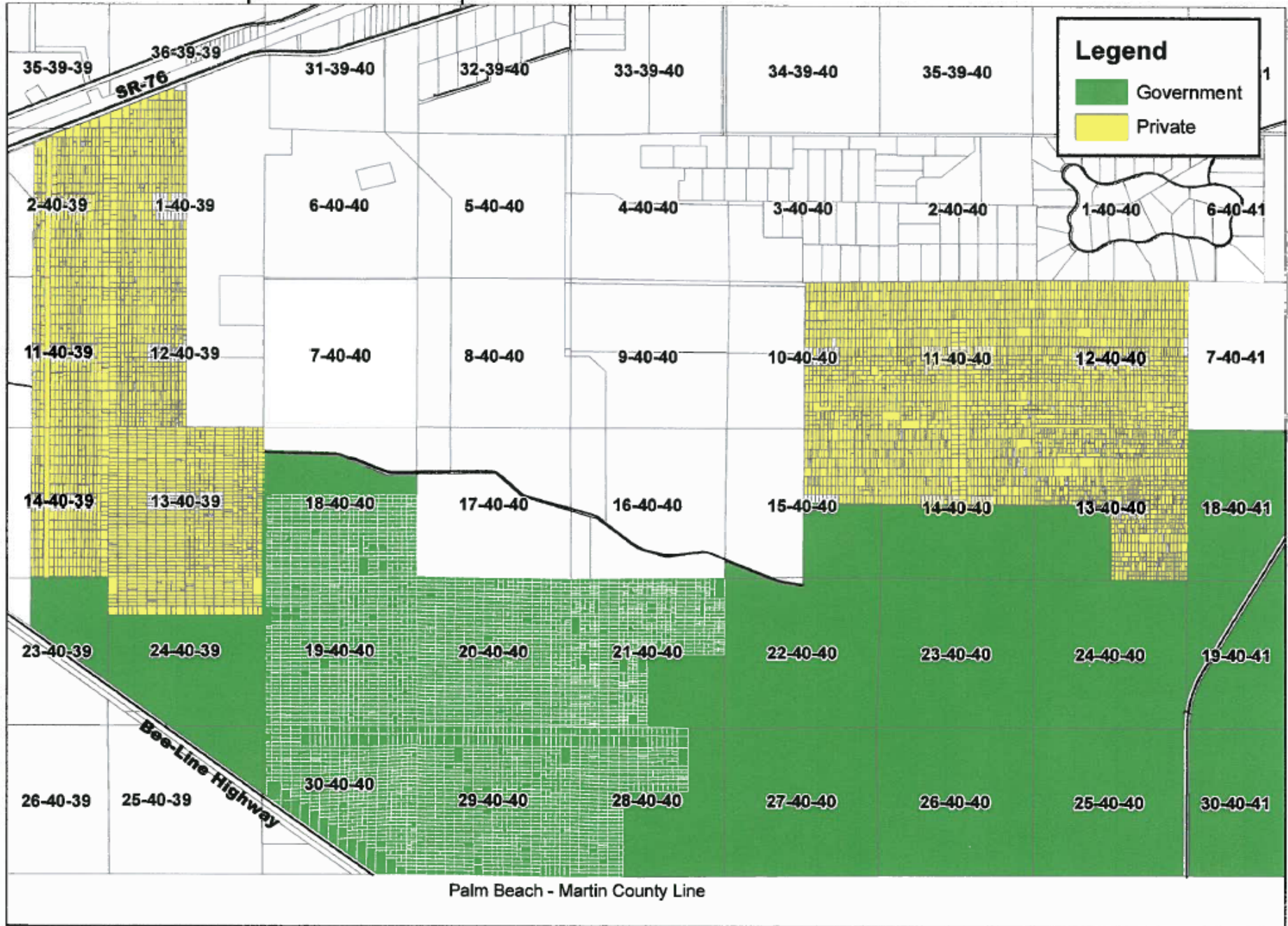
- Government
- Private

This map shows the current government and private land ownership in Pal-Mar as of February 2007. (Source: Martin County Property Appraiser's tax roll data)

Pratt Whitney Rd



# Pal-Mar - Ownership After Land Swap



# Summary



- PalMar land is highly fractionalized, preventing the District from achieving its core missions.
- The proposed land exchange would consolidate ownership and further the goal of hydrologic restoration.
- The land exchange is possible because an entity with control of 88% of the remaining private parcels is ready, able, and willing to make the exchange.

**From:** Jim David [davidj@stlucieco.org]

**Sent:** Monday, March 25, 2013 4:29 PM

**To:** Palmer, Ray

**Subject:** RE: East Coast Region Land Assessment - Request for Public comments

I'd like to note that the Queen's Island and Blind Creek projects had federal funding applied to the SOR-purchased Indian River Lagoon sites. In addition, the sites must continue to be publicly-managed for natural resource protection and restoration in perpetuity, or the federal funds would have to be reimbursed by the state to the USFWS NCWRA program.

---

**From:** DGREGBRAUN@aol.com [mailto:DGREGBRAUN@aol.com]

**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2013 1:55 AM

**To:** Palmer, Ray

**Cc:** DGREGBRAUN@aol.com

**Subject:** Re: Reminder - East Coast Region Land Assessment - Request for Public comments

Thanks for seeking public input on these. I have filled out separate response sheets for many of the parcels, but please add this email into the record for all the parcels in the East Coast Region.

For decades, the District has been a key entity in joint land acquisition projects in Martin County. As a former Chairman of Martin County's Public land Acquisition Selection Committee, I have been in a strategic position to see how valuable the District's participation is in acquiring tracts that serve multiple purposes. Although most acquisitions have had primary goals (e.g., SOR purchases such as White Belt Ranch (now known as Dupuis) for water recharge, 10-mile Creek for surface water management, Loxahatchee Slough for protection of the Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River, Atlantic Ridge for growth mgmt, ...), in reality most of these parcels are providing an excellent public service by simultaneously serving multiple purposes. In some instances, the full value of the District's ownership and management of these properties may not be fully recognized for years. As the population of the Treasure Coast region continues to grow and public recreation opportunities on District lands expand, residents will gain a better appreciation for the forethought that went into acquiring these properties for multiple purposes.

Having the District as one of several matching fund partners has helped in the passage of several voter-approved public land acquisition referenda in Martin County. The resulting acquisitions have helped achieve multiple goals. Although I am disappointed that projects such as 10-mile Creek have not thus far met their desired outcomes, I am encouraged by the District's continued collaboration on prospective public land acquisition projects such as CERP.

The current economic depression has resulted in numerous opportunities for new property acquisitions at prices that a few years ago would have been unheard of. While I agree that it may be useful to consider disposal of some properties that don't fit into the District's overall property management portfolio, it is my opinion that all the parcels that have been offered for public review in the East Coast Region are providing multiple functions and should not be surplus. Please consider buying more land while it is a buyer's market.

Greg Braun  
10370 Trailwood Circle  
Jupiter, FL 33478