



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Tibet-Butler Preserve - ALL

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Although it is one of the District's smaller properties, Tibet-Butler received the most comments of any site in the Upper Lakes region. The comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining the property in its current status.

Other comments/justification included:

- Counteract development/ remain in natural conditions
- Counteract climate change
- Preserve natural systems and wildlife habitat
- Supports SFWMD's core missions
- Personal reasons
- Protects water resources
- treats road and urban runoff prior to entering Butler Chain of Lakes
- Aquifer recharge
- Recreation/ value to surrounding communities
- Use for education
- Value of Tourism
- Flood control for surrounding communities
- Rare plants on site
- Important upland habitat
- SFWMD should not dispose of any property
- Preserving area for future generations
- Property is part of the "Headwaters of the Everglades"
- Natural land that is publicly accessible in Florida is limited
- Purchased under Save Our Rivers as an important wetland resource
- The site is home to one of the last remaining populations of *Lupinus aridorum*, a state and federally listed species.
- 68% of the property is wetlands
- Site contains significant acreages of wetlands which are important features of the Butler Chain of Lakes floodplain
- Property is managed reasonably well, but is affected by fragmentation (edge-effect) and human-controlled water regimes
- Area is within the 100-year floodplain
- Long-term needs for the property may exist in terms of flood control, wildlife, etc.



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Summary of *SME* comments:

1. This property supports the District's flood control, Water Quality and natural systems missions. Acquisition was important as it is one the largest undeveloped tracts adjacent to the Tibet-Butler Chain of Lakes - an Outstanding Florida Water.
2. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, the current use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
3. This property has been critical in buffering the water quality impacts of urbanization to Lake Tibet and protects a regionally significant tract of wetlands.
4. This property provides outstanding environmental education opportunities through the County's management of the center located on the property.
5. This property protects a natural system located in an area with extreme development pressure and also supports restoration and protection efforts for wetland priority listed species.
6. This property provides aquifer recharge, and water quality benefits to Lake Tibet.
7. The property provides protected habitat for many protected species, the best use for the property is for it to remain a preserve for the numerous species within this area.
8. The property is being well-used for the District's core mission of Natural Systems protection.
9. The Property is important from a Lake Okeechobee water quantity and quality perspective. It is part of the natural system water storage and treatment system within the Basin and should be retained for that purpose.
10. One of the District's groundwater hydraulic head wells are located within the property.
11. The property is in an urban area and captures, stores and cleans storm water runoff, allows groundwater recharge.
12. This property is managed by Orange county under a lease with the District, hence maintenance costs are covered by another entity.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of *Public* comments:

Comments overwhelmingly supported retaining property in its current status or in conservation lands.

Other comments/justification included:

- Preserve natural systems and wildlife habitat
- Counteract development/ retain in conservation
- Counteract climate change
- Education and recreation
- Personal/ nostalgia
- Value to surrounding communities
- Maintain passive recreation/ consider limiting/ restricting recreation on some portions of the property to provide refuge for vulnerable plants/animals
- Enhance degraded portions/ continue managing as a natural ecosystem
- SFWMD should not dispose of any property
- Property provides water quality treatment for surrounding communities
- Property protects water resources
- Floodplain protection
- Property was acquired under Save Our Rivers as a locally significant wetland resource
- Publicly accessible conservation land in Florida is already limited
- Preserve for use by future generations
- Property is part of the "Headwaters of the Everglades"
- Property supports SFWMD core missions

Additional suggestions included:

- Only additional use would be improvement of recreational facilities (trails/camping)
- May consider a fee title exchange to Orange County with appropriate restrictions, such as a conservation easement
- May be opportunity to expand educational facilities/ displays and allow for donations
- Explore ways to expand current use within the District's core missions
- Treat invasive and exotic species
- Hydroponic green houses, rain water collection, and expanding the reservation
- Concern about too much water being extracted from the aquifer
- Additional programs for younger children
- Bike trails and picnic areas

Summary of *SME* comments:



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1. It is such an isolated property that it could be a candidate for donating or exchanging ownership with Orange County with appropriate land restrictions. The County is already actively engaged in public use, education, and management of the property.
2. This property is functioning to its full potential in its current managed state.
3. Not at this time, the District's core mission is being met.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is, either through a continuation of the existing long-term lease with Orange County, or, if the County would find it beneficial, by negotiating a transfer of the underlying fee-title to the County subject to an acceptable conservation and flowage easement in favor of the District.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the many contributions of the Tibet-Butler Preserve to the District's core missions, and further recognizes that those contributions would continue and would not be diminished if the property were owned and managed by the County subject to a conservation and flowage easement in favor of the District, rather than the current long-term lease under which the property is currently managed.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Shingle Creek - Munger Tract

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments supported retaining the acquired property in its current condition to protect water resources and water quality, provide urban areas with recreational opportunities, and preserve wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors in the region. Respondents believed the acquired property contributes to flood control and floodplain protection.

Other comments:

- Lands were conserved through mitigation to offset impacts to wetlands

Summary of SME comments:

1. The District-owned properties support the District mission, having been acquired for preservation purposes as mitigation to offset the loss of functional wetlands elsewhere.
2. The pattern of ownership makes land management challenging.
3. The District-owned properties contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration core mission as they are located in the Shingle Creek and Lake Toho watersheds as well as the larger, regional Lake Okeechobee watershed.
4. The District-owned property are part of the flood plain for Shingle Creek and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades boundary of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
5. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, the current use of the District-owned properties reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
6. These properties best fits into the District's mission of Water Quality protection and Natural Systems protection.
7. The community of pond pines located on one of the islands is unique to this area of central Florida and should be protected.
8. The District-owned properties provide protected habitat for many protected species, the best use for the property is for it to remain a preserve for the numerous species within this area. A great portion of this tract falls within the core-foraging area for a wood stork nesting colony.
9. The area is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective.
10. This tract contains several large wetlands. These wetlands provide critical flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin. The water from the wetlands generally flows east into the Shingle Creek Management Area and eventually into Shingle Creek.
11. Overall, the District-owned and private parcels in Munger are ecologically in good condition despite the lack of active on the ground land management.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments supported retaining the area in SFWMD ownership and/or conservation.

Other comments:

- Consider prioritizing additional lands for purchase rather than currently owned lands for surplus. Additional options may be a partnership with a mitigation bank.

Summary of SME comments:

1. Given these lands were acquired for mitigation purposes, the functional value of the preserved lands must be maintained.
2. An option to consider in order to improve land management capabilities would be an effort to consolidate District ownership to the east through land swaps or other acquisitions and surplus upland properties outside the floodplain to the west.
3. No. The site is a significant feature of the Everglades Headwaters.
4. The District-owned properties within this tract contribute to the District's core missions of Water Quality and Natural Systems protection and should be retained by the District. Specifically, the unique stand of pond pines should be protected from development.
5. The non-contiguous nature of the properties on this parcel limits its use.
6. Additional land and/or interest acquisition should be considered as part of the Dispersed Water Storage program from both a Lake Okeechobee and Central Florida Water Initiative perspective.
7. Not at this time, the District's core mission is being met.
8. The District should enter discussions with private landowners in Munger to either acquire or swap isolated parcels to consolidate its ownership with the large parcel to the east.
9. The tract is in a prime location to provide numerous recreational opportunities for area residents and visitors; with sufficient acquisition, the area could serve as a regional park.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends deferring a recommendation on this property to a future date to give the District an opportunity to seek additional partnership and land consolidation opportunities to better meet wetland mitigation requirements and management needs.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions that the individual parcels provide towards the District's core missions, and the additional benefits that would be possible with a consolidated block of ownership. There are a number of parcels within the Tract that are currently listed as being for sale. The District manages a fund from the Central Florida Beltway that may be spent on land acquisition within the Shingle Creek area to offset wetland impacts elsewhere in the basin. The fund and the District's current ownership present an opportunity to aggregate a consolidated area that could benefit from restoration and sound land management activities. If these District resources can be leveraged with local, state, or federal resources, then there is potential to acquire much of the remaining area within the entire tract, if willing sellers can be identified and agreeable terms reached.

However, the central and south Florida region has a number of locations that are like the Munger tract. They were subdivided and sold off decades ago, especially in the real estate boom of the 1920s. Speculation at that time was so rampant that properties were bought and sold site unseen. Most did not have practical vehicular access or available utilities, but the sales were driven by market speculation. Decades later, many of these properties have had their property interests divided several times over. Owners may be found all over the world. Therefore, assembling willing sellers within the area who will agree to reasonable terms, even with the leveraged resources, is a challenge. Opportunities and constraints for the Munger Tract, and similar properties characterized by noncontiguous public and private ownership, must be studied in greater detail before an informed recommendation can be advanced.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Shingle Creek - Shingle Creek Management Area

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments supported retaining the property in its current condition to prevent additional development, protect water resources and water quality, contributes to flood control and floodplain protection, provide urban areas with recreational opportunities, and preserve wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors in the region.

Other comments:

- Shingle Creek Management Area meets SFWMD core missions
- Restoration on site has been successful
- Area contains valuable wildlife habitat
- Shingle Creek Regional trail is part of an important trail network for public use/ recreation

Summary of SME comments:

1. The forested wetlands provide flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin. The uplands serve as a buffer by minimizing secondary impacts to the wetlands and provide some water recharge benefits.
2. The current use of this property is an excellent example of how to manage and protect District lands for the purpose of Flood Control, Water Quality improvements and Natural Systems protection and restoration.
3. This property and the associated wetlands provide significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region.
4. The property is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective
5. This property has been critical in buffering the water quality impacts of urbanization to the Lake Toho. Shingle Creek is a significant inflow to the lake and water quality data collected within this parcel indicate improvements in the levels of nutrients entering the lake over time from this source. Impacts to Lake Toho continue to be addressed and the preservation of this management area is critical to enhance the efforts to reduce nutrient loads to Lake Toho.
6. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration core missions. It is located in the Shingle Creek and Lake Toho watersheds as well as the larger, regional Lake Okeechobee watershed.
7. The District-owned property are part of the flood plain for Shingle Creek and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades boundary of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
8. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, the current use of the District-owned properties reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
9. The property provides protected habitat for many protected species, the best use for the property is for it to remain a preserve for the numerous species within this area. A great portion of this tract falls within the core-foraging area for a wood stork nesting colony.
10. The site is a significant feature of the Everglades Headwaters. It is part of a larger wildlife corridor with connections to the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes to the south.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments supported retaining the area in SFWMD ownership and/or conservation.

Other comments:

- Preservation of wildlife corridor/habitat is critical
- Property is vital for flood control
- In conservation, this property protects environmentally sensitive lands
- Property is ideal for ongoing habitat restoration
- Property is an important recreational area - Shingle Creek Regional Trail

Summary of SME comments:

1. Continue the public use program.
2. The property should be assessed for dispersed water management opportunities to meet these core mission goals.
3. This property provides numerous opportunities for public use and environmental education and outreach, such as the establishment of a greenway or blueway.
4. No, this property is functioning to its full potential in its current managed state.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions of the property towards the District's core missions, and the dramatic improvement to the ecological health of the swamp and pinelands since the District took over management, and the improvement achieved in in water quality by routing urban runoff through the swamp before it enters the Creek. Staff also recognizes the public use value of the site to local residents, to the many visitors of the greater Orlando area whose only impression of a natural Florida landscape may be Shingle Creek (the site is very close to SeaWorld), and to the students of Hunters Creek Middle School who enjoy access to the site from their back door.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Shingle Creek - Osceola County 70 acre parcel

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments supported retaining the property in its current condition to prevent additional development, protect water resources and water quality, contributes to flood control and floodplain protection, provide urban areas with recreational opportunities, and preserve wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors in the region.

Other comments:

- Property is part of a complex of protected land and supports SFWMD's missions as part of that complex.
- Parcel itself has high rankings for Habitat Richness and Strategic Habitat Conservation areas.

Summary of SME comments:

1. This property should be assessed for Dispersed Water Management opportunities to meet these core mission goals.
2. Shingle Creek and the associated wetlands provide significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region.
3. The property is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective
4. this property is not critical for furthering any of the District's core missions. Although the property is in its natural state and is a wildlife corridor, there are no rare or endangered communities or species on this property.
5. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration core missions. It is located in the Shingle Creek and Lake Toho watersheds as well as the larger, regional Lake Okeechobee watershed.
6. The District-owned property are part of the flood plain for Shingle Creek and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades boundary of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
7. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, the current use of the District-owned properties reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
8. The property provides protected habitat for protected species. This tract's greatest value appears to be the fact that it potentially serves as a north-south corridor for regional and migratory fauna.
9. The property provides many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. The forested wetlands onsite provide flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments supported retaining the area in SFWMD ownership and/or conservation.

Other comments:

- Transactional costs of transferring ownership to the county likely outweigh any benefits

Summary of SME comments:

1. No. The site is a significant feature of the Everglades Headwaters.
2. The best use for the property is for it to remain intact as a wildlife corridor.
3. This parcel is isolated from any access it does not seem reasonable to open it up for public use and it does not appear to be an important natural resource.
4. This is a small parcel of land that does not further any of the District's core missions. It is not open for public access and does not support any rare or endangered species. There also does not appear to be any District monitoring equipment on the property. This property is a candidate for donation, exchange or surplus.
5. The District's core mission is being met.
6. Initiate wetland habitat restoration to maximize the surface water storage on site and coordinate the restoration with adjacent property owners and mitigation area.
7. Seek opportunities for public use. Provide access along the Brown's Canal for walking paths and bike trails. In addition, a non-motorized boat launch would be a nice amenity.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the site continue to be used and managed as a natural area pursuant to its wetland mitigation function, either through an amendment to the management agreement between the District and Osceola County, or, if the County is willing and would find it beneficial, by negotiating a transfer of the underlying fee-title to the County subject to an acceptable conservation easement in favor of the District.

If the County is not interested in taking over management, staff would then recommend seeking another suitable management partner.

If no management partner is willing to take over the management of the site, staff would recommend retaining the property under District management and seeking an opportunity to develop public use on the site consistent with a regional greenway/blueway concept.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions of the property by virtue of being acquired for mitigation to offset wetland impacts, and by virtue of falling within the Shingle Creek floodplain. Staff further recognizes the potential value as a wildlife corridor link between the Reedy Creek floodplain and Shingle Creek. At the same time, the site is small and isolated in relation to other lands managed by the District, and effective land management activities could be better handled by an entity whose base of operations are closer to the site.

The District has partnered with the City of Kissimmee, the Florida Communities Trust, and Osceola County on several other Shingle Creek properties that fall within Osceola County. The District's interest in these properties has been a conservation easement written in favor of the District. The District is also a party to a management agreement with Osceola County who manages those properties, while the District contributes up to \$100,000 annually as a match for resource management activities. Finally, during the course of this assessment it was determined that the District had been made the beneficiary of an access easement from Poinciana Boulevard.

Therefore staff believes it would be in the best interest of the site to amend the current management agreement to add this parcel as one that they manage. In addition, if the County would find it beneficial, staff recommends negotiating a transfer of the underlying fee-title to the County subject to an acceptable conservation easement in favor of the District. This would be consistent with the other parcels in the Osceola County portion of Shingle Creek.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Lk Marion Crk/Reedy Crk - Intercession City - 6 acre parcel south of US 17

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated respondents believe the area should be retained in its current use because the area is an important feature of the Everglades headwaters. Additionally, respondents believed the area has high diversity and habitat value, provides value as a wildlife corridor, provides habitat for imperiled species, opportunity for public recreation, and contributes to protection of water resources.

Other comments:

- Though this parcel could potentially be considered surplus due to its configuration between roads, it helps serve as a buffer.
- The parcel is regularly inundated, which suggests it has flood protection value and limited development potential.

Summary of SME comments:

1. In its current condition, this parcel is cleared and highly disturbed, and likely does not contribute to the core missions of the District.
2. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, District use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
3. This open area is probably important to multiple species of wildlife as an ecotonal habitat (edge habitat) for foraging and hunting. Beyond that fact, due to its small size, this property is unlikely critical to wildlife. The pond on this property falls within the core foraging area of multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
4. Site provides significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region.
5. Area is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective.
6. The District's core mission is being met.
7. The property provides many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. Despite its disturbed character, it is adjacent to relatively natural habitat and serves as a buffer to further protect the larger natural area from adverse impacts in the surrounding area.
8. The pond on this property serves as a deep-water refuge for fish and wildlife during the dry season. This is an important feature for many listed species such as wading birds.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Comment indicated property should remain in public ownership and/or conservation.

Other comments:

- Area is a borrow excavation site which has created a wetland heavily used by wading birds
- The tracts are all within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network

Summary of SME comments:

1. This parcel has a potential for restoration.
2. If restored this site would support the core mission of water quality protection/improvements and natural systems restoration.
3. If this site were restored to a more natural wetland, it would provide water quality treatment and stormwater attenuation, and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is.



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Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions that the property has provided towards the District's core missions, as evident from the SME comments, and the value to wildlife from a grassy short-hydroperiod prairie with a deep pond lying on the edge of a large cypress swamp. Staff further recognizes that the site is lower than the adjacent land and inundates both seasonally and following heavy rain events, and is therefore unsuitable for most other purposes.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Lk Marion Crk/Reedy Crk - Intercession City - 16 acre strip between Old Tampa Hwy and US 17

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated respondents believe the area should be retained in its current use because the area is an important feature of the Everglades headwaters. Additionally, respondents believed the area has high diversity and habitat value, provides value as a wildlife corridor, provides habitat for imperiled species, opportunity for public recreation, and contributes to protection of water resources.

Other comments:

- Though this parcel could potentially be considered surplus due to its configuration between roads, it helps maintain connectivity between natural areas

Summary of SME comments:

1. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, District use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
2. The potential for this small tract of land to be a wildlife corridor is important even though the proximity of this property is between two roads.
3. The property contributes little, if any, to the District's core missions.
4. Restoration of the property may provide some flood control and water quality benefits while providing improved wildlife habitat.
5. The site contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration core missions, and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
6. Considerable effort would be necessary to provide further public access.
7. Site provides significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region.
8. Area is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective.
9. The property provides an important buffer between the adjacent highways and Reedy Creek's pristine bottomland swamp
10. The District's core mission is being met.
11. The property provides many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. Most of the site is comprised of forested wetlands. These wetlands collect runoff from the adjacent roads and provide some level of filtration and flood attenuation. Water from this site flows south under a bridge into the larger District-owned parcel.
12. The property provides a wooded corridor for wildlife between undeveloped lands to the north and south.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Comment supports retaining the 16-acre strip in its current use.

Other comments:

- The tracts are all within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network

Summary of SME comments:

1. The pond tract and 16 acre strip currently are of little importance to the District's core missions and may be considered for donation, exchange or surplus.
2. The property contributes to the District's core mission

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is, for now.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value that this site could have as a wildlife corridor between the Reedy Creek and Shingle Creek floodplain. The continued utility for this purpose depends upon whether or how the property to the north is ultimately developed. If the link between the floodplains is protected, either through a thoughtful development plan, restrictive covenants, or some other method, then this parcel will continue to be a critical link in that corridor. This property should be re-evaluated if the property to the north is developed in a manner that effectively cuts off that link.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Lk Marion Crk/Reedy Crk - Lk Russell and Poinciana Blvd tracts

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated respondents believe the area should be retained in its current use because the area is an important feature of the Everglades headwaters. Additionally, respondents believed the area has high diversity and habitat value, provides value as a wildlife corridor, provides habitat for imperiled species, such as the Florida Scrub Jay, opportunity for public recreation, and contributes to protection of water resources.

Other comments:

- The Poinciana Blvd tract is primarily cypress swamp, subject to year-round inundation
- The Lake Russell tract includes scrub and other important upland habitats
- The Lake Russell tract is a crucial component of the ecosystem preserved as part of the Disney Wilderness Preserve
- Properties protect Reedy Creek floodplain from stormwater discharge, etc.
- Osceola School Board facility on site provides important educational opportunities
- The tracts are all within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network

Summary of SME comments:

1. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements core mission as it is located in the Lake Cypress and Lake Hatchineha watersheds. In addition, the area is in the larger, regional Lake Okeechobee watershed.
2. Since this site is mainly floodplain it provides water quality treatment and stormwater attenuation and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
3. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, District use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
4. This parcel has been critical in buffering the water quality impacts of urbanization to the downstream receiving waters. Water quality data collected within this parcel indicate stable water quality over the past 28 years and protection of a natural system under extreme development pressure to the east and west. These parcels are strategic areas for conservation and also support restoration efforts for wetland priority listed species.
5. The property provides protected habitat for many protected species, the best use for the property is for it to remain a preserve for the numerous species within this area. There are eagle nests on this property and the eagles likely use it as a foraging area. The property falls within the core-foraging areas of multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
6. The properties are being well used for furthering the core missions of Water Quality and Natural System protection. In particular, the Poinciana tract filters runoff into Reddy Creek.
7. Site provides significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region. Area is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective.
8. The property provides many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. The forested wetlands provide flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin. The uplands serve as a buffer by minimizing secondary impacts to the wetlands and provide some water recharge benefits.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Other comments:

- Management coordination with Disney Wilderness Preserve may benefit both the Nature Conservancy and SFWMD

Summary of SME comments:

1. One of the best uses for this property is for it to remain as a preserve for the numerous species within this area.
2. Both properties are in their natural state and the rare and endangered species that occur on these tracts should continue to be protected. Both properties appear to be high-priority candidates for habitat conservation.
3. These properties are valuable for Water Quality and Natural Systems protection and should be retained by the District.
4. Additional land and/or interest acquisition should be considered as part of the Dispersed Storage program from both a Lake Okeechobee and Central Florida Water Initiative perspective.
5. Continue the public use program.
6. This property is functioning to its full potential in its current managed state.

Recommendation:

1. Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is.
2. Staff further recommends that the boundary between the Lake Russell Unit and the Nature Conservancy's wilderness preserve be evaluated for realignment potential for the benefit of the natural resources and management continuity.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the property's contribution towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments, and the value as an earth-science educational facility through the partnership with the Osceola County School Board.

Staff also recognizes the comments received from the Nature Conservancy that there may be restoration and management advantages to a realignment of the boundary between the Lake Russell tract and their wilderness preserve that lies immediately to the west.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Lk Marion Crk/Reedy Crk - Huckleberry Island / Snell Creek

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated respondents believe the area should be retained in its current use because the area is an important feature of the Everglades headwaters. Additionally, respondents believed the area has high diversity and habitat value, provides value as a wildlife corridor, provides habitat for imperiled species, such as the Florida Scrub Jay, opportunity for public recreation, and contributes to protection of water resources.

Other comments:

- This area has high wildlife and water resource value, particularly in reducing downstream nutrients
- Property is an important component in protecting Upper Kissimmee River headwaters
- Polk County has deemed the region environmentally significant and has acquired additional lands in the area
- Creeks in the area are relatively pristine

Summary of SME comments:

1. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements core mission as it is located in the Marion Creek and Lake Marion watersheds as well as the more regional Lake Cypress and Lake Hatchineha watersheds.
2. Since this site is mainly floodplain it provides water quality treatment and stormwater attenuation and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
3. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, District use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
4. The property provides protected habitat for many protected species, the best use for the property is for it to remain a preserve for the numerous species within this area. Both of these pieces of land fall within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
5. The properties are being well used for furthering the core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality and Natural System protection.
6. Site provides significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region. Area is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective.
7. The property provides many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. The forested wetlands provide flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin. The uplands serve as a buffer by minimizing secondary impacts to the wetlands and provide some water recharge benefits.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Comments all indicated property should remain in public ownership and/or conservation.

Other comments:

- Maintaining this property is important to protect the floodplain of Reedy Creek
- USFWS, SFWMD, and Polk County all acquired land in this area
- The tracts are all within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network

Summary of SME comments:

1. The properties are being well used for natural resource protection. Both properties are in their natural state and the rare and endangered species that occur on these tracts should continue to be protected. There is good public access.
2. These properties are valuable for Flood Control, Water Quality and Natural Systems protection and should be retained by the District.
3. Additional land and/or interest acquisition should be considered as part of the Dispersed Storage program from both a Lake Okeechobee and Central Florida Water Initiative perspective.
4. Continue the public use program.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions that the property has provided towards the District's core missions, as evident from the SME comments, and the dramatic improvement to the ecological health of the pinelands since the District took over management and the value to the greater Kissimmee/Orlando/Poinciana/Celebration area as a popular public use area.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Lk Marion Crk/Reedy Crk - Lake Marion

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated respondents believe the area should be retained in its current use because the area is an important feature of the Everglades headwaters. Additionally, respondents believed the area has high diversity and habitat value, provides value as a wildlife corridor, provides habitat for imperiled species, such as the Florida Scrub Jay, opportunity for public recreation, and contributes to protection of water resources.

Other comments:

- The Lake Marion tract is one of SFWMD's most ecologically diverse tracts, containing ecologically sensitive communities, such as scrub and cutthroat seepage slope
- The large acreage of the Lake Marion Creek unit makes it a significant player in protecting the area's floodplain
- The property provides a buffer from development for wildlife and contributes to water quality
- Polk County deemed this area environmentally significant and has acquired additional land in the area

Summary of SME comments:

1. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements core mission as it is located in the Marion Creek and Lake Marion watersheds as well as the more regional Lake Cypress and Lake Hatchineha watersheds.
2. Since this site is mainly floodplain it provides water quality treatment and stormwater attenuation and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
3. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, District use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
4. The property provides protected habitat for many protected species, the best use for the property is for it to remain a preserve for the numerous species within this area. There are multiple eagle nests on this property and the eagles likely use it as a foraging area. This property falls within the core-foraging areas of multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
5. The properties are being well used for furthering the core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality and Natural System protection.
6. The site provides significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region. Area is important from a continuity and habitat richness perspective.
7. The property provides many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. The forested wetlands provide flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin. The uplands serve as a buffer by minimizing secondary impacts to the wetlands and provide some water recharge benefits.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Comments all indicate there is no better use of the property, citing other public entities that have acquired land in the area, as well.

Other comments:

- The tracts are all within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network

Summary of SME comments:

1. One of the best uses for this property is for it to remain as a preserve for the numerous species within this area.
2. The rare and endangered species that occur on these tracts should continue to be protected. There is good public access. There are also significant cultural resources that should be protected.
3. These properties are valuable for Flood Control, Water Quality and Natural Systems protection and should be retained by the District.
4. Additional land and/or interest acquisition should be considered as part of the Dispersed Storage program from both a Lake Okeechobee and Central Florida Water Initiative perspective.
5. Continue the public use program.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions that the property has provided towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments, and the value as a popular public use area.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: Lk Marion Crk/Reedy Crk - Avatar Scrub

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated respondents believe the area should be retained in its current use because the area is an important feature of the Everglades headwaters. Additionally, respondents believed the area has high diversity and habitat value, provides value as a wildlife corridor, provides habitat for imperiled species, such as the Florida Scrub Jay, opportunity for public recreation, and contributes to protection of water resources.

Other comments:

- Tract contains significant habitats - upland scrub areas and seepage slope, which contribute to aquifer recharge
- Polk County deemed the area environmentally significant and has acquired additional lands in the area
- Sand skinks occur on site

Summary of SME comments:

1. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements core mission as it is located in the Marion Creek and Lake Marion watersheds. In addition, the area is in the larger, regional Lake Okeechobee watershed. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has listed Lake Marion, Marion Creek, and Lake Hatchineha as impaired for nutrients.
2. The portions of this site that are wetlands/floodplain provide water quality treatment and stormwater attenuation and contribute towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
3. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, District use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
4. This tract's greatest value appears to be the fact that it serves as habitat for species dependent on scrub environments in central Florida. This property contains a diverse group of fauna indicative of Florida scrub habitats including many protected species. Many species that exist within scrub habitats have great difficulty existing in other surrounding habitats and much of the scrub habitat within Florida has been disappearing for decades due to development.
5. This property does further the District's core mission of Natural Systems protection.
6. Site contains Priority 2 rare species imperiled habitat for the Florida Scrub Jay. It is adjacent to extensive tracts of underdeveloped natural lands improving its natural systems value. Scrub sites with deep sand, such as occur on this site, offer high recharge potential to the surficial aquifer because rainfall rapidly infiltrates the soil.
7. The permeable sandy soils and its proximity to the ridge gives the tract significant recharge value. It also has the potential to minimize secondary impacts to the forested wetlands along Lake Marion Creek from the proposed uses, thus protecting the Lake Marion Creek system from further degradation associated with residential development. Many listed scrub plant and animal species occur onsite.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Comments all indicated property should remain in public ownership and/or conservation.

Other comments:

- Area is excellent Florida scrub jay habitat
- Seepage slopes on ridges provide water retention during wet periods and base flow during dry periods
- Property plays an important role as a wildlife corridor along the Kissimmee River watershed

Summary of SME comments:

1. One of the best uses for the property is for it to remain intact and be maintained for wildlife dependent on scrub habitat.
2. The remaining scrub should be protected due to the numerous rare plants and endangered animal species. Public access is likely acceptable.
3. The property contributes to the core mission of Natural Systems protection; however, this parcel may be a candidate for donation or exchange as long as it remains in its natural state to protect endemic plant and animal communities.
4. Area should be improved for recreational activities compatible with scrub jay nesting and foraging.
5. Incorporate the tract into the Lake Marion Creek Wildlife Management Area.
6. The tracts are all within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue, and to enhance such use and management by seeking to have the area incorporated as part of the Lake Marion Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the property's contribution towards the District's core missions following acceptance of the land by the District as mitigation for impacts to other water resources, and as evident from the comments received. Staff further recognizes its value as a rare plant community upon which many rare or endemic animal species are dependent, and the potential benefit to those species from the added protection of FWC wildlife Management Area rules.



Upper Lakes Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Upper Lakes Region

Select Area Name: SUMICA

In your opinion, how well does the *current use* of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

The comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining the property in its current status. Supporting information included:

- Property contributes significant wildlife value:
 - Important function as part of Central Florida wildlife corridor
 - High ecological & biological diversity
- Property is part of the "Headwaters of the Everglades"
- Property supports SFWMD core missions
 - Purchased with Save Our Rivers funding due to significant and extensive wetlands
- Property plays an important role in protecting water resources
 - Uplands contribute to aquifer recharge
 - Current water quality is good
 - Contributes to downstream water quality, water supply, and flood control
 - Approximately 2,000 acres of water quality treatment occurs on site
- SFWMD should not dispose of any property
- Property is important for recreation, including use by the Wounded Warrior program
- Property should be preserved for future generations
- Marsh system on site is part of SFWMD alternative water supply project
- SUMICA is part of a network of important conservation lands
- Natural lands promote tourism
- Property protects Lake Walk-in-Water shoreline and creek
- Property contains Woyhyakapka Creek - one of the most pristine creeks in the State

Other comments:

- Suggest using more details site-specific scientific analyses to evaluate properties

Summary of SME comments:

1. This site likely contributes to the District's Water Quality protection/improvements core mission as it is located in the Lake Weohyakapka watershed as well as the larger, regional Lake Okeechobee watershed.
2. The portions of this site that are wetlands provide water quality treatment and stormwater attenuation and contributes towards the overall goals of the Northern Everglades boundary of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (373.4595 F.S.) which has the goals of improving water quality, water storage and habitat restoration in the northern Everglades watersheds.
3. This property furthers the District's core mission of Natural Systems protection.
4. The property provides significant water storage and retention as well as groundwater recharge benefits to the region. Area is important from a continuity and habitat and species richness perspective. Important from a Lake Okeechobee dispersed storage and Central Florida Water Initiative perspective.
5. From a consumptive use permitting standpoint, the current use of the property reduces the potential for competition between existing and future water users by preventing additional or more intensive water use.
6. The property provides protected habitat for many protected species. All of this tract falls within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies. Snail kites likely forage and nest along the lake edge on this property.
7. The Dispersed water project on the site provides an estimated 281 acre-ft of additional storage.
8. The property is managed by Polk county, hence maintenance costs are covered through an agreement with the District.

In your opinion, is there a *better use* of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Summary of Public comments:

Comments overwhelmingly indicated there was not a better use of the property and it should be retained in its current status.

Supporting information included:

- Public use as part of Wounded Warrior program
- The property should remain in conservation/ prevent development (13), because:
 - It allows for continued public use & enjoyment
 - It supports wildlife habitat
 - It is important for Everglades ecosystem function
 - It plays a role in protecting regional water resources

Other suggestions:

- Wildlife corridor should be expanded – additional parcels should be acquired
- Consider a form a long-term lease or deeding the property to the Polk County while retaining a conservation easement and reverter provisions
- Management should consider aesthetics, particularly when planning Rx fire along trails and roadways
- Aggressively apply management, including Rx fire and exotic vegetation removal
- Construct an educational center

Summary of SME comments:

1. Regardless of whether the property remains under the ownership of the SFWMD, the best use for the property is for it to remain as a preserve for the numerous species within this area as well as serving as a wildlife corridor between surrounding lakes and creeks in the region.
2. Because this property is managed by Polk County, it should be considered for donation to Polk County.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is, either through a continuation of the existing long-term lease with Polk County, or, if the County would find it beneficial, by negotiating a transfer of the underlying fee-title to the County subject to an acceptable conservation and flowage easement in favor of the District.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the many contributions of the SUMICA to the District's core missions, and further recognizes that those contributions would continue and would not be diminished if the property were owned and managed by the County subject to a conservation and flowage easement in favor of the District, rather than the current long-term lease under which the property is currently managed.

Additionally, staff recognizes that the District is managing land within Lake Marion Creek for the County under a long-term agreement. It may be beneficial to both the District and the County to exchange the underlying fee-simple interest in the Lake Marion Creek property and SUMICA so that each entity owns the land that they manage.