

Subject

Approve Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Polk County to facilitate the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on EL-137-25 G-3 Ranch (Property). (One-time expense \$500,000)

Description

In February 2023 the Board adopted Resolution No. 2023-009 which created the Polk County Conservation Land Acquisition Selection Advisory Committee ("CLASAC"). The creation of CLASAC was in response to a bond referendum approved by voters in November 2022 to finance capital projects related to the acquisition, preservation, protection, management, operation and restoration of environmental lands, water resources and important fish and wildlife habitat. CLASAC reviews and evaluates properties nominated by property owners and provides a recommendation to the Board as to whether staff should pursue the acquisition of the properties for the program.

One such nomination was made for EL-137-25, G-3 Ranch, approximately 938 acres of land located along Avon Park Cut off Road. The property borders exist in conservation land and would assist in creating a corridor connection. The property was evaluated by CLASAC which recommended approval and in April 2025 the Board approved staff to pursue the acquisition of the properties.

RFLPP has also determined the Property is eligible as a perpetual rural lands protection (conservation) easement due to its significant agricultural attributes. As directed by CLASAC and the Board of County Commissioners, look for partnership funding opportunities whenever possible. This MOA recognizes the mutual conservation efforts and responsibilities of each agency. The MOA facilitates the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on the Property. Through this MOA the County will contribute \$500,000 and RFLPP agrees to contribute remainder of acquisition cost.

The funds for this project are available in the Parks and Natural Resources CIP through the Environmental Lands CIP Ridge to River Corridor project.

Recommendation

Approve the Memorandum of Agreement between Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Polk County to facilitate the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on EL-137- 25, G-3 Ranch.

Fiscal Impact

Funds are budgeted and available Parks and Natural Resources CIP through the Environmental Lands CIP Ridge to River Corridor project. A one-time expense of \$500,000.

Contact Information

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