

APPENDIX “C”

SITE RANKING POLICY

SITE ACQUISITION POLICY

SITE RANKING POLICY

The process for site ranking involves three basic steps: site evaluation, classification, and review.

Once a site has been determined to meet program criteria, it will be evaluated by the Site Selection Team in five areas: environmental importance, degree of endangerment of the site to development, ease of acquisition, cost and size of site, and degree of public interest. Environmental Importance has eleven variables and is considered the most significant of the areas. Each area has a point scale and each site will be scored accordingly.

When a point score has been established, the site will be designated to a "Class". The classes have a hierarchy for consideration and all sites within a particular class will be considered in accordance with the established policy for that category. No single site within the class will have preference over others within the same classification, but certain classes will have primary consideration before others.

During the annual review of new sites, previously selected sites may be considered for re-evaluation based on team members' recommendations. A listing will be maintained and provided with the ranking and status of all sites. Changing conditions include, but are not limited to, increased public interest, additional funding, financial limitations, increased/decreased threat of development, or other aspects not existing when the site was originally nominated. Re-evaluation can change a site's classification or change the site's boundary. This policy will provide guidelines for sites to be removed from the list or changed to a different class. Any site that has been re-evaluated or is scheduled to be removed will be presented to the BOCC for approval in the ELAPP Annual Report.

SITE EVALUATION:

Each site will be ranked according to the five areas listed below. Environmental Importance has eleven factors, with each factor having a point scale and ranking guidelines. The higher the points, the more important the factor. Guidelines are provided to assist in determining a rank and should not be used to restrict the evaluation procedures. A range is given to allow for variations in perceived importance.

1. **Environmental Importance** - eleven factors with a point scale of 0 to 5. (Example: zero - site has no relation to the factor; five - site is a "text book" example of the factor)
 - Land containing native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna, including wetlands, uplands and transitional systems, representing a natural habitat unique to, or scarce within the State of Florida or Hillsborough County.
 - Land that provides or could provide a habitat important to the support or protection of state or federally listed species.
 - Land containing an unusual, outstanding, or unique geologic feature.
 - Land which plays a vital role in the enhancement and protection of water quality and quantity, including ground water resources, or which provides protection for fish and wildlife habitat but which cannot be adequately protected through local, state, and federal regulatory programs.
 - Land that provides valuable access, urban/rural land links, protection zones, or additions to existing environmentally sensitive lands or which forms part of a natural

greenway system which functions as a habitat corridor associated with such lands, and which is essential for protection and management of those environmentally sensitive lands.

- Land containing significant archaeological sites.
- Degree to which site's natural resources would suffer degradation due to development
- Degree to which adjacent natural areas would suffer degradation due to the development of site
- Site's value for long term protection and management of the resources
- Site's value for educational and scientific uses
- Site's value for resource-based or passive recreation

2. Endangerment due to Development - point scale 1 to 10.

- High potential for development within five years including but not limited to:
 - a) Regulatory approvals for development or preliminary subdivision plan
 - b) Within Urban services area7 to 10
- Moderate potential for development within five to eight years 4 to 6
- Low potential for development within ten years such as sites that are at least 80% preserved through existing regulations. 1 to 3

3. Ease of Acquisition - point scale of 1 to 10.

- 80% or more of the project is comprised of one or two ownerships who has/have either stated they are willing to work with the County or have not objected to being in the program 7 to 10
- 80% or more of the project is in under four ownerships who have either stated they are willing to work with the County or have not objected 4 to 6
- 80% of the project is in more than five ownerships 1 to 3

4. Cost and Size of Site - point scale 1 to 10.

- Low cost per acre compared to other properties in proximity to site 7 to 10

- Moderate cost per acre compared to other properties in proximity to site 4 to 6
- High cost per acre compared to other properties in proximity to site 1 to 3
- Bonus points for joint funding
 - Potential for joint funding 0
 - Very high potential for joint funding 2
 - Currently approved for funding under another program 3

5. Public Interest - point scale 1 to 10.

- Strong 7 to 10
- Moderate 4 to 6
- Minimal 1 to 3

SITE ACQUISITION POLICY

The following classification levels are established to group the sites into a hierarchy for acquisition. Properties within each category are to be considered equally important. No single property should be acquired prior to others, but sites in lower classifications can only be considered under certain conditions. Point guidelines will be adjusted based on committee/team recommendations, but will not be changed on an annual basis. A tentative site acquisition schedule will be developed on an annual basis as part of the overall work plan.

A site can be designated "acquired" if the ELAPP Program has acquired or protected a significant portion or manageable unit (see also "core parcel"), or if another preservation entity has purchased or protected the site.

CLASS "A"

Any site with a point total of sixty (60) or more will be placed in this classification. All sites in this category will be considered for purchase at any time; however, this category is limited to ten (10) sites. If more than ten (10) sites qualify, the most recent nomination(s) will be temporarily placed in "Class B" until a vacancy is available.

CLASS "B"

Any site with a point total from forty-five (45) to fifty-nine (59), or due to capacity in Class "A", will be placed in this classification. No more than twenty sites (including Class "A" sites) will occupy this level at any one time. If more than twenty (20) sites qualify, the most recent nomination(s) will be temporarily placed in "Class C". Sites in this classification may be considered for acquisition by satisfying at least one of the following conditions.

- 1 owner willing to sell at 90% of average appraised value or less
- 2 Joint funding established or a requirement of contract
- 3 An immediate threat of development (regulatory approvals in place or substantially complete or more than half of the adjoining private uplands have been fully developed
- 4 An Approved and funded restoration plan or resource based park exists.

CLASS "C"

Any site with a point total from thirty (30) to forty-four (44), or due to capacity in Class "B", will be placed in this classification. There is no limit on the number of sites in this category. Sites in this classification may be considered for acquisition by satisfying at least two of the following conditions.

- 1 Owner willing to sell at 90% of average appraised value or less
- 2 Joint funding established or a requirement of contract

- 3 An immediate threat of development (regulatory approvals in place or substantially complete or more than half of the adjoining private uplands have been fully developed
- 4 An approved and funded restoration plan or resource based park

CLASS "D"

Any site with a point total of twenty-nine (29) or less will be in this classification. There is no limit to the number of sites in this classification. Sites in this classification will be considered for acquisition by satisfying at least two of the following conditions.

- 1 Owner willing to sell at 80% of average appraised value or less
- 2 Joint funding established or a requirement of contract
- 3 An immediate threat of development (regulatory approvals in place or substantially complete or more than half of the adjoining private uplands have been fully developed
- 4 An approved and funded restoration plan or resource based park

ACQUIRED

Any site where a significant portion or a manageable unit of the site area has been acquired or protected will be placed in this category. There is no limit to the number of sites. Parcels not protected or acquired within the original site boundaries can be considered for purchase at any time. Adjoining parcels to the original site will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

INACTIVE

Any site that fails to qualify for nomination will fall into this category. Additionally, the Site Selection Team can recommend that a previously approved site should be considered inactive, or a "suspended acquisition" as described below. If a site is in this classification for four years or two nominations, whichever comes first, the site will not be reconsidered for the next four years unless the nominator can prove substantial change. Exceptions to this policy may be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

SUSPENDED ACQUISITION:

An approved site may be considered a "suspended acquisition" for the following reasons.

1. The owner is not willing to sell or cooperate with the program.
2. An offer has been presented and refused by the owner(s) of the core parcel(s).
3. A technical aspect of acquisition of the core parcel is revealed that makes it unfeasible to pursue the property, and the owner is unable or unwilling to correct the objection by the County. (Such issues may include an environmental audit indicating that the property is contaminated; an unacceptable title report or survey, or encroachments onto the property; a future public or quasi-public use which will render the site unmanageable.)

The purpose of this category is to remove sites from current consideration so other sites within certain categories may be considered for purchase, not to diminish a site's environmental significance. When information sufficient to reconsider the site is presented to the Site Selection Team, or when there are

sufficient vacancies within the site's original classification in conjunction with the annual ranking process, a suspended acquisition may be reclassified into an active acquisition category.

PROVISIONAL RANKING

Sites which qualified based on a restoration proposal are not to be considered active or eligible for acquisition unless there is a commitment from a government agency or non-profit organization to conduct the required restoration. This commitment will include a general or detailed site restoration plan, an approximate timetable for restoration, and a budgeted or forecasted funding source to accomplish the restoration.

REVIEW

During the annual selection of new sites, Site Selection Team members can make recommendations concerning previously selected sites. A site can be re-evaluated if the Selection Team believes that there have been significant changes that could affect the site. Factors including, but not limited to, development of site, threat of development, new information, or time on list may warrant reconsideration.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Linkage:

A site, regardless of its initial ranking, shall become a top priority for acquisition or protection if it would provide a critical link between two or more existing preservation areas.

Core Parcels:

A site with multiple parcels must have a single parcel or a group of parcels designated as the project core. The project core must be able to meet program selection criteria and be acquired in total. Once the core parcel of a multi-owner site is acquired, remaining parcels of the site which contribute to the site's overall integrity shall become a high priority for acquisition or protection.

Geographic Location:

Consideration shall be given to acquisition of approved sites which are located in areas of Hillsborough County where urbanization has eliminated most of the remaining natural habitat.

Management/Public Access:

A site, regardless of its initial rank, shall become a top priority for acquisition or protection if it would provide an important addition to an existing preservation area for access to or management and protection of that area.

Planned Restoration Effort:

An approved ELAPP site that has been ranked as Class "B", "C", or "D" may be considered for preservation or acquisition on the same basis, without displacing a Class "A", site contingent upon satisfying all of the following:

1. A commitment from government agency or non-profit organization to restore a disturbed site that has been approved for preservation through the ELAPP Program. This

commitment will include a general or detailed plan of site restoration, an approximate timetable for these activities associated with this plan, and a budgeted or forecasted funding source to accomplish the restoration.

2. The evaluation of the site in question was based on the site's current condition and did not take into account a restoration effort, but restoration of the site was recommended during the assessment process. If a site has been evaluated in the program on the basis that a commitment for restoration must occur to consider acquisition, that site may only be considered under its current ranking.
3. In the event that a particular government agency or non-profit organization does not fulfill the obligations for a prior commitment on a particular site or perform in reasonable compliance with the plans, subsequent commitments or requests will not be taken under consideration until the issues regarding a prior commitment have been resolved.

Anticipated resource based or passive recreation:

Resource based, passive recreation would include activities associated with natural resources such as camping, fishing, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, photography, and nature observation/study. These activities are considered passive in nature as opposed to active recreation which includes sports such as baseball, basketball, football, tennis, etc.

An approved ELAPP site that has been ranked as Class "B", "C", or "D" may be considered for preservation or acquisition on the same basis without displacing a Class "A" site contingent upon satisfying all of the following:

1. A commitment from government agency to improve a site for resource based recreation. This commitment will include a general or detailed plan of site indication types of improvements, an approximate timetable for these activities associated with this plan, and a budgeted or forecasted funding source to accomplish these improvements, and evidence that there is a deficiency or need for resource based recreation in the area of the site.
2. The plan will be evaluated by ELAPP staff to assure that the improvements will not degrade the environmental quality of the site.
3. In the event that the government agency does not fulfill the obligations for a prior commitment on a particular site or perform in reasonable compliance with the plans, subsequent commitments or requests will not be taken under consideration until the issues regarding a prior commitment have been resolved.

Coordinated Intergovernmental Project:

A site, regardless of its initial ranking may become a top priority if participation by the ELAP Program is an essential element to at least two other public projects not associated with land preservation or restoration.