

# **ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS PROGRAM POLICY**

## **POLICY NO. 38-01**

**PURPOSE:** To provide for guidelines, criteria and procedures designed to govern the use of Environmentally Sensitive Lands funds.

**INTENT:** The intent of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program is the protection, preservation, improvement, maintenance, and enhancement of the County's environmentally sensitive lands and natural resources; and the accommodation of the public's resource based recreational needs.

### **Policy:**

#### **A. GUIDELINES FOR DESIGNATING ELIGIBLE LANDS AND PROJECTS AS QUALIFYING FOR FUNDING UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS PROGRAM**

1. The land or project supports prime examples of ecological communities and/or significant geological features (dry caves, sinkholes, springs, etc.) endemic to Hernando County.
2. The land or project is feasible to manage in a fashion that will protect and enhance the resource. Management plans will be prepared by Staff where necessary to implement this guideline. All projects will be consistent with the adopted management plan for the property.
3. The land or project supports enhanced upland access or recreational use of the gulf and other naturally occurring waterbodies.
4. The land or project has proximity to other environmental resources which would heighten its value under the program.
5. The land or project has significant historical, archaeological or cultural value.
6. The land or project is critical to preserving hydrologic integrity of significant natural systems and/or contributes substantially to recharge of the Floridan Aquifer.
7. The land or project furthers the enhancement of existing conservation lands or natural resources, and would not result in the environmental degradation of natural resources.
8. The land or project protects or enhances headwaters, viable wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams, or rivers that connect to other water bodies.
9. The land or project is designed to protect or improve water quality.

#### **B. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF FUNDS**

1. The funds will be used to further program guidelines for designation of eligible lands and projects.
2. The maximum value will be realized with minimum expenditures of funds.

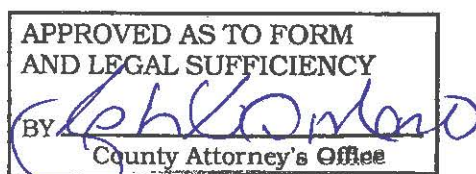
3. Existing commitments for the use of funds to manage, maintain, and improve properties designated under the program will be given priority.
4. The funds will be used to improve resource based recreational opportunities. Funds will not be allocated to further facilities designed solely for activity based recreation, nor to further facilities inconsistent with the conservation objective of the land or management plan.
5. When possible, the funds will be used as a local match to leverage funding from federal, state and nonprofit funding sources for eligible lands and projects.
6. The funds may be considered for use to further state and federal projects or programs designated under the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program that are designed to protect, conserve and enhance environmental resources.
7. The funds will not be used for basic infrastructure improvements, extensions or enhancements that are typically funded by other revenue sources designated for infrastructure funding.
8. The funds will not be used for mitigation projects that have been determined to be unsuccessful or require additional mitigation as part of the project and associated impacts.
9. Projects that require permits from other agencies shall go through preliminary design phase and assessment to determine cost implications and feasibility.

#### **C. REPLENISHMENT OF FUNDS**

It is the objective and policy of the Board of County Commissioners to provide funding for the long term commitment of the management, maintenance and improvement of lands designated under the program. In addition, it is the objective of the Board to provide funding for the designation of capital projects that qualify under the program.

#### **D. ROLE OF THE HERNANDO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

1. The annual operating and capital budget for the program will be approved by the Board of County Commissioners as part of the required budgetary process.
2. The Board will determine the selection of designated lands and designate projects that qualify under the guidelines established by this policy for the program specifying in the motion which guideline(s) the selection meets for designation of eligible lands and/or projects, and which guideline(s) the selection meets for use of the funds.
3. The Board will determine whether, and when, the program is used for acquisition.
4. All program related policies will be reviewed and approved by the Board of County Commissioners prior to implementation. The Board of County Commissioners will also approve any changes to the guidelines, criteria and procedures designed to govern the use of Environmentally Sensitive Lands funds.



**Adopted: June 13, 2017**