

APPENDIX 1.
Stakeholder Participants, Public Hearing Minutes

Weedon Island Preserve Advisory Group
Public Hearing
Thursday, February 23, 2012

Weedon Island Preserve Advisory Group in attendance:

1. Commissioner Nancy Bostock, Pinellas County BCC
2. Sharon Collins, Soil and Water Conservation District
3. Dave Kandz, St. Petersburg Audubon
4. Dave Bruzek, Progress Energy Florida
5. Lindsay Cross, Friends of Weedon Island
6. Brent R. Weisman, Alliance for Weedon Island Archaeological Research and Education
7. Breanne Strepina, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network
8. Barbara Sheen Todd, Former Pinellas County Commissioner
9. Emma Mason, Weedon Island Preserve Volunteer
10. Robert M. Gerdes, Planning of Economic Development Department, City of St. Petersburg
11. Nanette Holland O'Hara, Tampa Bay Estuary Program

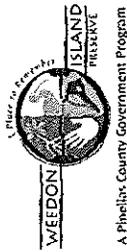
Weedon Island Preserve Advisory Group not in attendance:

1. Sergeant Bradley L. Millican, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
2. Willard Steele, Tribal Historic Preservation Office

Weedon Island Preserve

Management Plan Public Meeting

Thursday, February 23, 2012



A Pinellas County Government Program

| Name | How did you hear about the program? |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| BOB GERDES | CONTACTED BY COUNTY STAFF |
| JIM GOOSBURN | FAM LEASURE |
| Brent Wiseman | Contacted by staff |
| Barbara Green-John | FOWI - advisory group |
| Dave Kandr | SPAS |
| Judi Hopkins | EMAIL SPAS |
| MELISSA COUNTS | LIBBY |
| MARILYN RUGA | FOWI member |
| Nnette O'Hare | TBEP |
| Blaine Stepien | FAM LEASURE |
| Lana Mudd | advisory board - Weedon Island |
| Shirley Felani | |
| Sharon Collins | Hillsborough SWCD |
| Harold F. Alberg | SPAS |
| Mary Brazier | SPAS |
| | |
| | |

Weedon Island Preserve Advisory Group
Public Hearing
Thursday, February 23, 2012

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Purpose of Weedon Island Preserve Advisory Group
3. Plan Overview
 - Section 1. General Information
 - Section 2. Natural and Cultural Resources
 - Section 3. Natural and Cultural Resource Management
 - Section 4. Public Recreation
 - Section 5. Outreach and Education
 - Section 6. Budget

<http://www.pinellascounty.org/park/managedlands/wip-plan-2012.htm>

WEEDON ISLAND PRESERVE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE
2012 PUBLIC MEETING

DATE: February 23, 2012

TIME: 3:04 p.m. to 4:52 p.m.

PLACE: Weedon Island Preserve
Cultural and Natural History Center
1800 Weedon Drive Northeast
St. Petersburg, Pinellas County,
State of Florida

REPORTED BY: Karla S. Hyland, Court Reporter
Notary Public - State of Florida

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APPEARANCES

PAM LEASURE, Environmental Program Manager, Department
of Parks and Conservation Resources

DR. STEVEN J. HARPER, Operations Manager, Department
of Parks and Conservation Resources

ADVISORY GROUP:

NANCY BOSTOCK, Pinellas County Commissioner

BARBARA SHEEN-TODD, Friends of Weedon Island
Preserve

ROB GERDES, City of St. Petersburg Planning
Department

DAVE KANDZ, St. Petersburg Audubon Society

DAVE BRUZEK, Progress Energy

EMMA MASON, Weedon Island Preserve Volunteer

BREANNE STREPINA, Florida Fish and Wildlife
Commission

NANETTE O'HARA, Tampa Bay Estuary Program

BRENT WEISMAN, Alliance for Weedon Island
Archeological Research and
Education, USF

LINDSAY-CROSS, Friends of Weedon Island
Preserve

SHARON COLLINS, Hillsborough Soil and Water
Conservation District

ALSO PRESENT:

LIBBY CARNAHAN, Sea Grant Agent

LYLE FOWLER, Department of Parks and
Recreation

PHYLLIS KOLIANOS, Department of Parks and
Conservation Resources

Public Meeting for the 2012

Weedon Island Preserve Management Plan Update

DR. HARPER: Welcome, everyone. Welcome to the public meeting to discuss the Weedon Island Preserve Management Plan Update for 2012. We're going to go ahead and start by introducing the members of Weedon Island Preserve Advisory Group, and then, obviously, we have a number of members of the public here as well, which is great to see.

My name is Steve Harper. I'm the manager for the Parks and Conservation Resources Department Program of National and Historic Resource Management. So my group kind of spearheaded the plan, and with help from a number of other groups within the county and within the Parks Department.

I will point out that we have Karla here as our court reporter. She'll be transcribing the official record as part of the meeting, and these minutes will be available, or the recording will be available, as part of the official management plan. So especially for members of the Advisory Group, before you ask a question, if you could identify yourself to Karla, that would help her as she makes note of who said what.

With that, let's please go around the room,

and if the Advisory Group members could introduce themselves and just mention the group that they represent, that would be good, so we're all on the same page.

MS. COLLINS: Sharon Collins, Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District.

MS. CROSS: Lindsay Cross, Friends of Weedon Island Preserve.

MR. WEISMAN: I'm Brent Weisman of the Alliance for Weedon Island Archeological Research and Education.

MS. O'HARA: Nanette O'Hara, Tampa Bay Estuary Program.

MS. STREPINA: Breanne Strepina with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

MS. MASON: Emma Mason, Weedon Island Volunteer.

MR. KANDZ: Dave Kandz, St. Pete Audubon Society.

MR. GERDES: Rob Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Planning Department.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Barbara Sheen-Todd, Friends of Weedon Island.

MS. BOSTOCK: Nancy Bostock, Pinellas County Commission.

DR. HARPER: And I'll introduce Pam in just a second. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for coming out this afternoon and providing your time and energy to help us make a better management plan. We really do appreciate your efforts and look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Without further ado, I'd like to introduce Pam Leasure. She's the land manager for the south county properties within the Parks and Conservation Resources. It includes not only Weedon Island, but all the other parks and management areas and reserves that fall south of Ulmerton Road throughout the rest of the county.

MS. LEASURE: Can someone get the lights?
Thanks. Okay. Thanks, Steve.

I also would like to thank everyone for coming and taking time out of your day. I also especially want to thank our Advisory Group. I know that reading these plans, they're very dry, so I appreciate you taking the time to read them and come in and give comment.

The purpose of the Weedon Island Advisory Group, Weedon Island is owned by the state of Florida and managed by Pinellas County through two

lease agreements. We're required to update this plan every 10 years through these lease agreements.

We're also required to seek input from an advisory group, such as yourselves, and some of the required participants have to be a local property owner, conservation group, elected official, the Soil and Water Conservation District, but we also feel it's important to include our Friends groups and all of our other partners, like Tampa Estuary Program and the Audubon Society. Your feedback that you give us will help in finalizing the development of this plan.

And after the meeting, you're -- we'll consider your comments as we update the plan, and then I will have to take this plan to the Board of County Commissioners. I'll have to send all of the commissioners a plan, and we hope to be on the agenda for the March 13th meeting.

Once they approve that plan, then I have to send it off to the Department of Environmental Protection, and then it will go before their Acquisition and Restoration Council group. They'll have 90 days to review that, and we're hoping to be -- to bring this before their meeting on the 14th and 15th of June.

Once the -- it goes through that meeting, then it is officially final. As we go through all of these, these drafts of the plan, we'll continue to update that website, so it will always be online, and you'll have the latest and greatest. And then when it's final, we'll let everyone know that this is the final plan.

What we'd like to do today is just an overview of the plan. It's about a 45-minute step-through of each of these sections, and what we'd like to do is briefly go through the main titles in each of the sections so that -- we find it's most efficient to address your comments as we go through this.

We don't need to talk about the typos and spelling errors and that type of thing, just the significant comments on each section. You can give me your comments, and I will incorporate the spelling errors and typos later.

At the end of Sections 3 through 5 are the quantifiable goals that address specific topics that we're required to have in the plan according to our lease agreement.

DR. HARPER: Pam, do you want to say something about the public comment as well?

MS. LEASURE: Oh, when we go through this,

if there is -- we'll take comment as we're going through, and I'd like for the Advisory Group to have the first opportunity to have questions or comments. And then, members of the audience, we'll take your comments and questions at that time after that as well, so feel free to ask questions or give us comments.

Okay. This is the update to the Weedon Island Preserve Management Plan.

This is the boundary of the Weedon Island Preserve. It's about 3,200 acres of green space, as you can see, surrounded by very-densely populated Pinellas County, mostly St. Petersburg, in here.

When people think of Weedon Island Preserve, most people think of this area that's south of Gandy Boulevard. We also have a lot of property north of Gandy Boulevard, all the way to just south of the Clearwater/St. Petersburg Airport, that we manage as well. We have Tampa Bay to -- Tampa Bay is to the east of us, and all of the heavily-populated area -- to the east of us and the heavily-populated to the west.

Weedon Island has a varied history that includes Native American Indians interacting with

the environment, to a movie company or an airport, and now as we know it, as a Preserve.

As I said, the state owns most of the property. Lease number 3965 is the southern portion, and there's a difference between the two lease agreements. This southern portion includes state submerged lands buffer, and what that means is the Preserve extends about 400 feet water-ward of the main high waterline. We don't have that same buffer in the northern lease agreement in 3376. It stops at the mean waterline.

Progress Energy, we have about 350 acres that we manage through a lease agreement of Progress Energy's property, and Pinellas County has about 170 acres, a couple of parcels in the north, and several parcels here in the south.

There's one easement, and that is with Progress Energy for access to the property. They sent me this nice aerial of their new plant.

And this land use, adjacent land-use map, shows pretty much what that aerial was showing, green space, a lot of heavily-developed area, and there is some light industrial.

The policy compliance, the state leases are the guidance that we use that drive our management

of the Preserve, and we have to develop the plan and use that plan. For Pinellas County, we have our Pinellas County Ordinance, 10-44, are the rules and regulations of all of our parks and preserves. We also use the adopted management plan that is our guiding document in management of the Preserve. With Progress Energy, we have four leases for, again, access, management and also for security.

We have three structures in the Preserve that are not actually recreational structures; the main entrance station that you saw when you came through the Preserve, the three-bay workshop that's in the maintenance area; and also a residential structure that's just next -- adjacent to the shop.

Okay. Parks and Conservation Resources is structured into groups that provide specific services for all of the parks and environmental lands. For efficiency, we rely on our roving crews to manage the Preserve. With countywide horticultural operations, they're responsible for mowing and fire breaks and tree trimming. Parks and environmental lands, they're responsible for all of the environmental infrastructure or all of the recreational infrastructure, the trails and boardwalks, and also for safety and security.

The Extension Services, that's what all of that staff was here at the Education Center. They're the only ones -- the Extension Service and the Education Center, they're the only ones that have staff here that actually have offices here. None of these other services have staff here full time.

And the Natural and Historic Resource Management, that group is responsible for land-management activities, such as exotic removal and actual resource management, as well as the cultural resource management.

We also have a contract with Pinellas County Sheriff's Department that provides safety and security, not just on the land, but they're also out on the waters as well around the Preserve. And we also have the Real Estate Management Division is responsible for this building. They're the operation maintenance of this building.

We rely heavily on volunteers. Our volunteers provide services such as docents at the front desk, hike guides on our trails, cleanups and plantings. This is actually a partnership with Tampa Bay Watch to build oyster reefs in the Preserve and some of their volunteers helping us. We also have cultural

resources being counted and logged in by volunteers. Over the past five years, our volunteers have averaged each year about 5,000 hours, and we're always trying to recruit new volunteers.

Friends of Weedon Island are our oldest Friends group that have supported this Preserve for many years. AWIARE, the Alliance for Weedon Island Archeological Research and Education is our newest group, so both of these are our nonprofit friends groups that help support the Preserve.

We have a site-use agreement process that we use to partner with federal and state external agencies, universities and colleges, to provide supplemental research projects. This is USGS collecting some water samples for the Tampa Bay study that was done here, and this is USF students doing some cultural sampling.

Okay. Are there any questions at this time over just the general information?

Okay. This is the section on Natural and Cultural Resources. This is what's out there in the Preserve. The next section, we'll talk more about the management parts of that, of the resources.

Weedon Island is very low lying with exception of the shell mound. If you look, most of it is 2- to 5-foot elevation with the exception of these areas. It's very low lying. The geology of the Preserve is unconsolidated sediments, fine sands, and deeper sandy clays.

We have three hydrologic influences in the Preserve. Two of them are groundwater, surficial, and Florida aquifers, but the one that is most visible to us would be the tide cycles.

This is a photograph of one of the mosquito ditches that we have. This was done back in the '40s and '50s for mosquito control. These ditches dramatically changed the hydrology of the Preserve, not only changed the hydrology, but also the community structure of the Preserve.

We also have a small -- a freshwater spring and a freshwater lake. Both of those are on Progress Energy's property that we manage.

These hydric soils are the predominant soils in the Preserve and support the mangrove swamp areas, and then we have some of our upland soils in these areas. Most of it is in this area of the Preserve, but we also have two small uplands located on Ross and Googe Islands.

Again, the mangrove swamps are the predominant community, just like over the -- like the hydric soils, but we do have a number of upland communities that exist in this southern half of the Preserve and on Googe and Ross Islands.

We have diverse species of wildlife that have been documented in the Preserve through various surveys completed by staff and our partners.

Some of these are listed species. For example, we have Manatee, the Wood Stork, and the introduced Florida Golden Aster that are state and federally listed as endangered species, and you can't go very far without seeing one of our threatened species, the gopher tortoise. They're all around.

But we also have documented a number of exotic species through these various surveys that we've conducted. The Brazilian Pepper and Australian Pine are listed under the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council as category 1 species. What that means is that they're known to -- they will come in there and take over and disrupt native plant communities.

Weedon Island has a cluster of shell mounds and sand mounds that contain shell, bone and some pottery. We have one burial mound in the Preserve.

One of the things that has been a problem in the past are these looter holes that have been documented. That's where people come in and will dig up these artifacts and remove them from the Preserve. That's illegal. So we hope that we get a handle -- we've had a handle on that, and this doesn't occur much anymore.

Any questions on the Natural and Cultural Resources? Yes, ma'am?

MS. CROSS: What are the ways that you've tried to reduce the looting in the Preserve?

MS. LEASURE: Phyllis?

MS. KOLIANOS: Well, one of the ways is we've recently restored the shoreline midden out in the Gateway tract by filling in the looter holes with sandbags and raking the soil over it, and that has totally discouraged -- that happened two years ago that we did that. And we've got out there recently, and there's been no new looter holes at all, so that's been successful. The other way we can do it is completely by monitoring different sites on a regular basis.

MS. LEASURE: And I think a lot of it has to do with education and people being more aware. All of our volunteers and people that are out there now

know that this is just -- we have to completely discourage this, our sheriffs deputies, the rangers, so the more people that are watchful of this has helped reduce that activity in the Preserve.

MS. CROSS: Thank you.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Now, we'll go to the Natural and Cultural Resource Management. This is actually -- the management part will be -- I'll talk about what we've done since the last update of the plan, and I'll also mention what we plan to do in the future.

The lands that make up the Preserve have a long history of use and abuse, and restoration projects are used to improve and restore the natural features of these impacted areas, and these are the projects that were done since the last plan.

I showed the picture of the oyster bar construction, and it's along here, the red and in the north end of Riviera Bay along our shoreline. We initially wanted that there because of shoreline erosion, so that's helping protect our resources, plus it also gives an added benefit of providing additional habitat.

I mentioned the introduction of the Florida Golden Asters. We had three sites, two in this unit and then one little site over here. That's a Bok Tower Gardens research project, and with the number of volunteers, we installed over a thousand plants over a couple of months, and that -- I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

This project was a small mitigation project, 10 acres of restoring some of those areas that had been damaged by the mosquito ditch and mounding, and we used the hydro-blast method, and I'll talk about that as well.

The purple areas in this north area, the herbicide treatment to kill our exotic vegetation in those areas, that was through a grant that we received. Hired a contractor to go out and do a large restoration project in that area. And then on Google and Ross Islands, we hired a contractor to do the same type of treatment in there, and that was paid for by CIP funds, as well as supplemented with grants.

This is -- the green areas are mechanical restoration where we reduced the vegetation through what we call a hydro-axe.

And then our largest project, north -- just

north and south off of 275, it was 100 acres of mitigation money from DOT mitigation, DOT project that was done. They restored over 100 acres to restore hydrology, improve water quality, and improve the habitat as well. SWFWMD was overseeing that project. I think that was back in 2004 we completed that one.

I mentioned hydro-blasting. That was used in the DOT mitigation project, as well as that little 10-acre plot. This sometimes is a preferred method when you have to go deep into the mosquito ditch areas because you can't get heavy equipment back in there. What happens is this pressure washing of the mounds, the dirt from the mounds is pressure washed off, and it removes and kills the exotic vegetation. You can distribute the sediment more evenly, whatever way you want it to go, and it also gives us less collateral damage to the mangroves; where if you brought a bulldozer in there, you'd kill a lot of mangroves getting in and out of there.

This mechanical vegetation reduction, we do this by hiring a contractor to come in. We typically -- it's called a hydro-axe. It's a giant mulching machine. It comes in and reduces our

understory in our fire-repressed areas so it gives us a better burn before or we'll do it after a prescribed burn.

This is a draft design. We have two projects planned in the future, two large-scale projects. This is a draft design of our project that we've been working with Tampa Bay Estuary Program and SWFWMD at Feather Sound. We wanted to restore hydrology, improve the water quality, and restore some of the natural communities. We hope to have a contractor onboard this year.

And the orange areas are areas of exotic removal, as well as this area, and this white area, there will be some strategic ditch-blocking of the mosquito ditches, and this will return some of this area back into saltern environment. The yellow areas, the yellow things, indicate soil mounds with exotics on them, and we'll be working on those as well throughout the next few years to try to get all of this area somewhat restored.

And then the second area, we have money in the CIP. We would like to do some sort of similar design and restoration in the southern part of Weedon Island Preserve where it's all mosquito ditched. We want to restore the hydrology, improve

the water quality, and then get some of our native -- our natural habitats back. The CIP project will probably start in 2015, '16. We'll hire a contractor for design and then construction, you know, following that. Yes?

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Yeah, because I don't know when you're going to come back to the goals that you have, we'll be able to discuss them, but one of them was citing the filling of the mosquito ditches and hiring a contractor in 2012. Is that the same project you're referencing for 2015?

MS. LEASURE: No, there will be two separate projects. This one is hiring a contractor in 2012 in the Feather Sound area. And then -- and we've already -- we've already funded \$100,000 to this project, and it's supplemented with a number of grants. And then the southern part of the Preserve is where we plan to do some selective restoration.

I'll bring the goals up. Does that answer your question?

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Sort of, but you continue because I don't want to get you offtrack.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Prescribed burns, the uplands of the preserve consist of fire-dependent natural communities that require periodic fire to

remain healthy, and we've reintroduced fire to these systems using prescribed burns. Had two new fire breaks put in just recently, and that reduced the size of two units into three smaller, more manageable units.

We use our existing trails and roads primarily as our fire breaks unless we have to add new ones. Since 2002, we burned over 60 acres. Unit 7, 1F, 3, 2B, C, D and E, and 1E, those units were all burned. And then following the burn, we looked at the success of the burn, and if needed, we followed up with hydro-axing to further reduce that vegetation. And the reason you do that is so the next time you go in there, hopefully that next prescribed burn, if it's on cycle, it will just go right through it like you planned in the book.

This is our proposed plan for the next 10 years. We hope to do -- we're proposing to do at least two to three burns per year, and that's based on existing staff and the fire team. We have our -- Pinellas County has their own fire team responsible for fires throughout the county.

As I've already discussed, we rely on external agencies and partnering organizations and volunteers for species inventories to help us

understand the diversity of the plants and animals supported by the Preserve, for things such as butterfly counts and plant surveys. We have a lot of people that do a number of bird surveys throughout the Preserve. In the future, staff will continue to update lists, and we'll continue to work with our partners in keeping these lists up to date.

Invasive exotic species, exotic species are known to have negative impact in our natural areas, not just the plants, but the animals as well. So removal and control, we try to do this in a very methodical way. I like to do it by -- as I get an area done in restoration, whether it be burn or mechanical reduction or mosquito ditch rehabilitation, we'll go in and do maintenance on these areas on an annual basis. We'll do maintenance spraying.

So right now, the units that I discussed that have had the burns and all of the vegetation reduction, those are what we consider under maintenance control. They'll go in once or twice a year and just spot treat where it's needed.

So we'll continue to do what we call our first strikes in our fire suppressed areas, and we'll

also continue to our maintenance program, but as we get through new areas, those will be added to our maintenance program.

We have internal and external partners for our monitoring program. The Watershed Group at the Department and Environmental -- Environment and Infrastructure is responsible for water quality throughout the county. We have no water quality sites in Weedon Island Preserve, but this group monitors the reasonable contribution of the Preserve because its importance, it enters Tampa Bay.

This is just a graph of the mean annual chlorophyll-A values at four sites. Their sites are from Feather Sound then running south of Gandy, and then they actually have one in Riviera Bay.

This is post-burn monitoring done by PCR staff. We go out following a burn. We want to look at the success of the burn, and is there further vegetation reduction required at that time. We also have gone out with our volunteers, and Phyllis has gone out with volunteers, and we look through there to see if there are any cultural artifacts that have been exposed from the time -- during this burn, because it's important that we

not miss those as well.

We also, again, partner with outside agencies to -- and volunteers on our monitoring of our butterflies and bird counts, and we'll continue to do this in the future.

Okay. We do not conduct research but rather rely on partnerships with other agencies and institutions to study natural and cultural resources through our site-use process. This is a picture of USGS when they did their Tampa Bay study. They did some fish sampling in our mosquito ditches.

And this is the Florida Golden Aster, the Bok Tower Gardens project. This is monitoring that was done by volunteers a year after the plants were installed. We'll continue to permit and coordinate research projects because they promote archeological-implied -- implied ecological research for our projects.

Horticulture operations, our mowed areas are mowed every 21 days during the peak growing season, and then less often out of season. When we're not in the peak growing season, these roving crews will come in and disc our fire breaks for us. This is one of the new ones, and this is the piece of

equipment used to accomplish that task. In the future, we'll just continue with our mowing schedule and our fire-break maintenance.

Okay. The cultural resource management, the biggest, most notable that was accomplished was the prehistoric dug-out canoe. This 1100-year-old canoe was excavated in March of 2011. It was funded by the Friends of Weedon Island, AWIARE, and AWIARE was also instrumental in assisting with project oversight. We had a lot of staff and volunteers helping as well. Not only made the local news, but it also made international news, so that was important to the Preserve.

Something that has just happened recently, AWIARE has signed an agreement with the county to convert the residence that's located by the maintenance area into a research station, and that's to support the work of visiting scientists. AWIARE is funding the remodeling efforts and all associated costs with this station. So for the future, the monitoring and preservation of the canoe will be important, as well as displaying the canoe here at the Center, updating the listed Florida Master Site Files, and mapping archeological sites into a GIS database.

Security in the Preserve, our on-the-ground security are our PCR rangers. These roving crews, the ranger will come through at least twice a day and spend about two hours a day, and they're the only people that -- well, they're the face of the county. And people can ask questions, and they'll also pick up trash along the way, just do whatever needs to be done, but mainly they're for safety and security, safety of the visitors and security of the Preserve.

The biggest change in security is after hours. The Progress Energy security is no longer located at the entrance station. Once this gate is closed in the evenings, security is from the Progress Energy site, and visitors have to stop at this call station and ask to be admitted into the Preserve through this station located just on the other side of the entrance station. You probably saw that when you came in as well.

So in the future, we'll continue to have our rangers coming through at least twice a day for our safety and security. And one thing that we've added since we distributed the plan to you, if funds become available, we may seek opportunities to enhance the security of the Preserve by possibly

adding a facility to house a Pinellas County Sheriff's Deputy like we have at our other parks and preserves. So that's just -- that's just something that we've just added.

Okay. Here's the goals and objectives. The habitat restoration improvement, what we've put in there is to complete at least two units per year of prescribed burning, and then mechanically reduce by hydro-axing these units if it's necessary; treat exotic vegetation annually to keep everything on a maintenance cycle as we get these things under control.

And then for the Feather Sound Project that will begin in 2012, we want to remove at least 9.8 acres of exotic vegetation and restore 8.9 acres of that saltern area I showed. And then the separate project for the southern part of the Preserve will be to begin the design of the mosquito ditch restoration for the natural communities, to improve those natural communities.

MS. CROSS: It says in our plan that that will happen by 2018?

MS. LEASURE: Yeah, I had those reversed I think in the plan, and I just reversed those.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: How do you fill a mosquito

ditch? It's got to be a job.

MS. LEASURE: Well, they're going to assess which ones need it. We don't want to fill in -- there are good ditches and bad ditches. Some are sucking oxygen out of the system and some are just very active in providing habitat for fish. So the ones that we'll fill in, we'll use those -- that hydro-blasting technique is used, and what they'll do is they go around the mound, and those settlements are deposited in those ditch areas filling in the ditches, because it came from those areas anyway. When they made the ditches, it was just scooped up and put into a mound, so it will just be dispersed that way.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: It won't affect the canoe trails?

MS. LEASURE: No. In fact, that would be something we would want to discuss with our contractor, you know, can we provide more access by doing this, can we cut a shorter route. I know we've had -- our contract vendor was wanting to do perhaps a shorter route through the Preserve instead of going all the way south. So we will look for additional recreational opportunities while we're doing this restoration.

Okay. Hydrologic preservation and restoration, again, hire the contractor for Feather Sound, fill in .5 acres of mosquito ditches to restore hydrology and reduce nutrient loading to Tampa Bay. And then after the design of the southern area, we want to hire a contractor to fill in these mosquito ditches and restore hydrology and reduce nutrient loading to Tampa Bay, also restore the habitat.

MS. COLLINS: I'd like to ask a couple of questions, Sharon Collins. Going back to goals and objectives under A, for habitat restoration and improvement, or actually all of them, are you only addressing the actual goals and objectives for specifically what you're going to do during 2012 or over the entire Preserve?

If you're looking at the entire Preserve, would you want to include what areas are not going to be enhanced, restored or pre -- enhanced, restored during 2012, the upcoming years, and provide some sort of a timeline that you're going to address the rest of the Preserve in the future? Or there's a goal to address some of the other mosquito ditches or you're only going to look at X-mosquito ditches total and exotic vegetation and

how, and a little bit more specifics for timing and where and when and maps and such, or are you just looking at 2012?

MS. LEASURE: With our -- we know what funding is available. And when we put this in the plan, if we put something in the plan, we're tied to it. So we know we're going to do these areas in Feather Sound.

If we get opportunities to provide more restoration, that's good for us, but we can't put out there what we don't -- what we know we can't accomplish. So we know that we have funding right now in our CIP for that southern half of the Preserve. We don't know, because we don't have a design, how much of that we can do, so I can only say that we're -- we'll do a design and implementation.

For Feather Sound, we know there's a lot out there, and as funds become available, I know that working with Lindsay, we're going to continue to try to seek grants and funds to finish those projects.

MS. COLLINS: Maybe it should be a little clearer this is just for the funding for 2012, what's available. Because it looks like 3,000-some

acres in the Preserve that you're limited to only working on .5 acres or 2 acres or 10 acres, and you're not addressing the rest of the Preserve.

And it's not that you're not addressing the rest of the Preserve, it's that this is the funding for this year, for the next coming year, and that when funding comes, you'll address the rest of it.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. That's a good point.
Okay.

MS. COLLINS: It looks really limited and that you're not doing much, and I understand but --

MS. LEASURE: So you're saying just be specific that this is what we can do --

MS. COLLINS: You have X-amount of mosquito ditches, how many miles, et cetera, but at this time you can only address X-amount, but in the future you'll address X-amount. Currently you have X-amount of exotic vegetation, so many acres of Brazilian Pepper, melaleuca, or whatever else, and that you are going to eradicate -- the goal is to eradicate X-amount of acres per year. And so during 2012, you will address those acres located here.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: To even further elaborate, I noticed that on several of the goals, short-term

and long-term goals, and perhaps you could even include in your objectives the long-term goals but in a more generic sense. In other words, you can't -- this is for 10 years, this plan?

MS. LEASURE: Yes.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Not just for one or two or three years.

MS. COLLINS: Right.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: That's the point you're making.

MS. COLLINS: Right.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: So perhaps if there's some way that you could include that recommendation even more specifically, perhaps in generically under objectives as well as your long-term plans.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Nanette?

MS. O'HARA: I have -- Nanette O'Hara, Estuary Program. I had basically the same overall comment. And in looking, it looks as though this is a 10-year plan but -- and I understand the fiscal situation now, but I like to be optimistic and hope that perhaps 10 years from now or 7 years from now or 8 years from now, the county's fiscal position may be better and you may be able to do more.

And in that respect, I like what Barbara said

about incorporating in the long-term goals maybe some numeric targets. We do this in the estuary program. You know, we aim high. They're not locked in. Your short-term goal is what you're locked into with the available funding that you have now, but if you're looking at restoring, you know, 18 or 19 acres of these various habitats over the next 4 or 5 years, perhaps you might want to come up with a long-term goal that says if funding is available, we would like to do an additional, you know, 5 acres salterns or an additional -- just so you have that already in there. And if the economic situation improves, you have -- you know, you have your wish list already set out, and you don't have to go through this again.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Because, Pam, it will help you with your policymakers. It will help you with legislation. It will help you with the county commission as they begin to set their CIP and as legislation is established and grant funding and everything. If you have it in your plan, you can point to it and say we anticipate this.

MS. COLLINS: Including with maps that say here's your existing conditions, and here's your target -- targeted success conditions. Here's the

vegetative community we want to see. Here's the hydrologic conditions we want to see. And monitoring is included with, here's your baseline with what the hydrologic conditions are now, and here's where you're going, and it shows that you've accomplished something.

MR. WEISMAN: Just as a heads up, to keep the momentum rolling here, I would like to have the same discussion when we get to the outreach education discussion.

MS. O'HARA: For me it applies to everything.

MR. WEISMAN: I'm happy to see it come up now. I was saving it for -- saving my piece for then, but just to sort of put the group together here, I think we're all on the same page, and I would like to discuss it in the appropriate section but, again, just as a heads-up discussion.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Do you want to write that down? Okay. Thanks.

Do you want to go back to -- are we okay to go back to C? I'm not trying to rush.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: What is a nuisance animal, by the way?

MS. LEASURE: Cats, dogs.

DR. HARPER: It could be cats, coyotes,

raccoons, squirrels; if they become nuisances.

MS. MASON: Pythons.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: I can see a python.

MS. LEASURE: Lindsay?

MS. CROSS: Lindsay Cross with Friends of Weedon Island Preserve. My question, I think, is similar to some of the other comments made, but in terms of the fire management and the exotic and invasive management, are there other areas that would benefit from some type of active management that have not already been identified or not been included in this plan simply because of fiscal limitations? I'm wondering if there's areas in the northern part of the Gateway area that could have some management?

MS. LEASURE: Well, yeah, we can identify places like Ross and Googe Islands. We simply can't get there and do active management like we would like to. We feel it's important to do, you know, this part of the Preserve that's most visible, but yeah.

Dave?

MR. KANDZ: Dave Kandz, St. Pete Audubon. You mentioned the exotic control areas in the southern part of the Preserve, but you're not talking about

the Gateway tract areas?

DR. HARPER: The restoration is for which, for the prescribed burns?

MR. KANDZ: Well, for primarily the exotic vegetation management.

DR. HARPER: Yeah, those, the exotic control comes in as part of the restoration projects in those areas because that's mostly the mosquito-ditched --

MR. KANDZ: But you mentioned that that area was in 2004, so what's happening? What's the long-term plan?

MS. LEASURE: Yeah, we're working with the Water Management District to try to get some active maintenance on that. I'm not sure where that is right now. We've been going back and forth because I need them to come in and do that. If they can't do that, I'll do a first strike in that area, and then I'll send our guys in for under-maintenance control the first break.

DR. HARPER: The upcoming restoration project, the most current updating restoration project will be in the Gateway area, the collaborative effort with the Estuary Program.

MS. CROSS: Feather Sound?

MR. KANDZ: I was thinking about --

MS. LEASURE: He was talking about DOT mitigation.

MS. CROSS: Oh, the DOT.

MR. KANDZ: Yeah, when we go out and survey in a couple of weeks or so.

MS. CROSS: I see.

MS. LEASURE: Good? Okay. Exotic and invasive species control, again, we'll continue our annual maintenance treatment as we take in these new areas and continue with the areas that we've already been working in.

We'll introduce restoration projects as they're completed at Feather Sound, and then the southern portion, and we will continue removing nuisance and exotic animals from the Preserve as they're detected. It's not all about the plants. The animals are important as well.

Imperiled species, habitat maintenance, enhancement, restoration, or population restoration. This is the Bok Tower Gardens project that I spoke of earlier. They are -- this area is ready for prescribed fire so we want to get that done this year. And we will document -- or Bok Tower Gardens will continue to document the fate

and traits of this introduced Florida Golden Aster, and they'll document the recruitment of plants in this unit. The project will end at the end of 2013, and then they'll provide us with a research report following this project.

Yes?

MS. COLLINS: I have a question on the imperiled species, you don't talk about management for any of the other listed species that have the potential to occur on the property.

Wouldn't it be a good idea to state that part of the management goal is you have X -- you have X-species identified on the property, which you aren't really -- which aren't quite listed, and so your management plan will include habitat -- if nothing else, habitat, preservation or protection for the gopher tortoise, for wood stork; or if you can improve habitat, enhance it by removal of exotics or producing some sort -- you know, additional planting or such to -- for the other species, so identification of the other species.

The management plan covers all of those listed species that have the potential to occur on site instead of just Golden Asters.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: She's reading my mind.

MS. COLLINS: I just did a --

MS. SHEEN-TODD: I read Golden Asters. I was like, oh, that's nice, what about the turtles and the birds?

Have you done assessment for some of the needs of the other animals and critters that live here?

MS. LEASURE: Well, that's what all the restoration projects are, to enhance their habitat. This is what this is for.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: That's what it needs to say.

MS. COLLINS: It's not clear that it states --

DR. HARPER: Yeah, we really manage on a more holistic and realistic basis. We don't do single species. We try to improve the entire community, which benefits not only the listed species but also all of the other associated --

MS. SHEEN-TODD: To put critters up there.

MS. COLLINS: That's great to say the holistic approach, as used in the introduction.

DR. HARPER: We can certainly do that.

MS. O'HARA: In this section, this is very focused. A lot of the plan, I thought, was very focused on wetland or upland, but not sea grass or the actual estuary habitats, and I'm wondering if this is an opportunity where you could mention, you

know, at a minimum, you will continue to monitor and assess the pole-or-troll zones, the no-internal-combustion zones that you have.

You know, you're changing the signs, some of those are seasonal zones, so that's something you could put in, and that is done, you know, for Manatees. The seasonal changes are done for Manatees, so that is something that you are doing now and could be included as, you know, your long-term goal in talking about this holistic approach so that you're bringing both the water side of the Preserve into it, as well as the land.

MS. LEASURE: Did you have something, Lindsay?

MS. CROSS: It was similar to that holistic approach and maybe using this and having some information before this table that says how, you know, the preservation status will help to ensure the survival of the species, but with this table really is listing out some specific projects that are going to occur in addition to that, overall management.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Okay. The cultural and historic resources, in collaboration with AWIARE map locations of the mound sites and other significant features, we'll put this into existing

database.

As I already mentioned, update the listed Florida Master Site Files, and complete the preservation and display of the canoe by 2015, and that will be -- again, that will be displayed here at the Center. Right?

MS. KOLIANOS: Uh-huh.

MS. COLLINS: I had one minor comment.

MS. LEASURE: Yes.

MS. COLLINS: It looks like you had -- you've established a strong partnership with AWIARE in the past, but it reads that you're going to establish, so I think I would emphasize that you have done a fair amount of work in corroboration with other partnerships, and these will continue, as opposed to it's just being initiated. That was my only minor comment.

DR. HARPER: In this table or in the text?

MS. COLLINS: Both.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Both, because the Friends of Weedon Island should definitely be mentioned in this. And one thing I noticed when looking at your volunteers, and this may lead into what Brent wanted to say, because I think it's wonderful that AWIARE is part of this project. It's critical, and

it's critical that the Friends are, and it's critical that all of these other groups are working in it.

But I noticed in the volunteer thing. In 2008, you had 5,665 volunteers; in 2011, you had 3,109. That shouldn't be happening. And I would just -- just looking at it would say it's because of the fact that this park, for probably budgetary reasons, the hours have been reduced from having it open six days a week to three days a week, and I think one of the long-term goals, and it needs to be very clear, is that there will be priority to have more hours, because we're missing out.

We're missing out on the original vision of the schoolchildren here everyday so that they could experience the environment. We're missing out on teaching the kids about things he knows about and the things that Nanette knows about and everyone else, you know?

I really -- I don't know whether you put it here or somewhere else, but we need to emphasize, number one, our intent to increase our volunteer base because you keep mentioning we do these things without newer agencies and volunteers.

Well, three days doesn't give them very much

time, and I am more than -- understand your frustration with that because I know you're working your heart out to try and make it happen, but I really think maybe this is something we can do that would -- that would give us a little more leverage so that you would be able to get the time you need. And maybe you can put it in here, and some other places, about increasing the hours, and also about focusing on getting more volunteers for your education and your cultural outreach and your training.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. And I know that our volunteers -- even our volunteers recruit volunteers, so I know we keep trying. Emma's a big part of that. Jim and Barry are a big part of that, so thank you.

MS. CROSS: Lindsay Cross. I had a similar comment about the volunteer hours, but I think on page 14, I think that table is a little misleading because there's a figure listed for 2012 that's just over 3,000 volunteers, but we haven't finished that fiscal year, so it may be useful to know.

MS. LEASURE: Just take that off?

MS. CROSS: Either don't include it or just say that's January.

MS. LEASURE: We can just take that --

MS. CROSS: Because the way I look at this table, what I saw, despite having the Center open less hours, is we're getting more volunteer participation.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: See, I saw it the other way because I can only see the times.

DR. HARPER: And it's important to recognize volunteers contribute to all aspects of the Preserve, not just the education site.

MR. GERDES: Robert Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg. I just want to make a couple of comments. First of all, I just want to congratulate the county and volunteers on the excellent work they've done on the Preserve. And in reading the plan, I was really surprised with how much mitigation and restoration work has been done. It's very impressive, especially in these times.

I thought the plan was excellent. I felt that the goals -- to me, the goals, long-term goals, basically said it's your intent to take the land back to what it naturally was, and I got that from the long-term goals.

The only other comment I had is I agreed with

Nanette on the work that you've done on the submerged land. I think that you've done a lot of good work there, and I think you can get a lot more credit for that in the plan if you can tie the water monitoring to the work you've done on the submerged land and how you can improve the water quality. That was it.

MS. COLLINS: -- yourself a little more in the plan.

DR. HARPER: And the public is welcome to chime in as well if you have questions and comments.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: No, I was just -- while we're talking about Weedon Island, I've been here quite awhile, and the county, I'm sure they're aware that Weedon Island is substantial being known as an island is getting choked off. The only drainage between Snug Harbor and Weedon Island is a small drainage that goes underneath the road.

That's pretty much the only thing that classifies it as an island being surrounded by water. As the years go by, I've substantially noticed more and more silting and more and more filling in between the vegetation and the mangroves. Pretty soon it will not be an island

anymore, plus I have noticed that where you have put the oyster beds in and the growing on that, and that would seem to also substantiate the tidal flow to slow down in that area and have it fill in more.

Have you guys ever done any research or studies on the flow between Snug Harbor and Weedon Island and Riviera Bay?

MS. LEASURE: No, we have not.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: That's the only tidal flow between them, and I've seen it choke off over the years.

MS. LEASURE: I know it's been dredged a number of times just since I've been out here in 2002.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Just the small -- because right now it's just a small culvert ditch going underneath the road there. I guess going -- you go over it every time you come to the island, but nobody knows about it.

MS. LEASURE: No, I agree. Anyone else? Okay. Any further questions?

Okay. Public recreation, nearly a quarter-of-a-million visitors enjoy or Preserve every year for a number of activities. We're open 363 days a year, closed the day after Thanksgiving

and on December the 25th. Our hours of operation are 7 a.m. to the time posted at the entrance, which is typically 15 minutes before sunset.

Okay. These are our public recreation facilities. This is the "you are here." This is the Weedon Island Education Center. We have two miles of boardwalk, and over the past 10 years, a few years ago, the boardwalk was all replaced with the engineered lumbar. They replaced the boardwalk and handrail, and that was paid through our CIP funds.

We have a number of hiking trails, picnic tables, and this is where the canoe launch, fishing pier, and there's also a restroom facility there. The canoe launch takes you through this canoe trail, and this is where we'll consider in that restoration possibly having some shorter -- instead of going all the way down here, will there be a way to cut maybe a pathway through there so people don't have to take the long way.

Our trades crew is responsible for repairing of the boardwalk, fishing pier, the restroom and the picnic shelter. Real Estate Management is responsible for the maintenance and repairs of this Education Center, and we have a contract vendor,

Sweetwater Kayaks is on site on the weekends and available by just a phone call. They'll meet folks out here and bring out canoes or kayaks for rental during the week.

Our horticulture operations folks, again, will help, with volunteers, trim these trails, our hiking trails, as well as our canoe trails. In the future, we hope to keep these same levels of service that we provide by maintaining all of these existing recreational facilities with our staff and volunteers.

Our public access and recreational opportunities, again, we hope to stay open. We want to stay open 363 days in the same hours of operation into the Preserve. We want the rangers to continue to patrol the Preserve for safety and security at least twice a day, conduct routine inspections of our recreational facilities at least twice a month, and at least twice a year conduct these inspections of our paddling trails for overhanging vegetation and perhaps missing signs, and then we also want to continue to offer canoe and kayak rentals through a contracted vendor.

MS. COLLINS: Would you like to include how if you find a downed signed or trails that are in need

of repair, that they will be maintained and fixed to ensure that public access and recreation?

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Yeah, I know that --

MS. COLLINS: That you'll get right on it and fix it.

MS. LEASURE: Because Sweetwater does call us and let us know.

DR. HARPER: Like on an as-needed basis as opposed to annual inspection.

MS. COLLINS: Right.

MS. LEASURE: Yeah.

MS. COLLINS: That when routine inspections find problems, they will be addressed.

MS. BOSTOCK: Mr. Harper, are you tied into the SeeClickFix program?

DR. HARPER: We are.

MS. BOSTOCK: Because that would help some of that.

DR. HARPER: Would you want to take a minute to explain it?

MS. BOSTOCK: Well, I can try. I'm not as technically savvy as my kids, but for everybody with smart phones and all of that, the county has a web-based application where if you see something like that, shoot a picture of it into our website,

and it comes out onto his deck, somewhere, as something that needs taken care of. So it should facilitate that communication. You can add that.

DR. HARPER: Yeah, that's true, we can add that.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: By the way, your kayak and canoe trails are a world-class experience.

MS. LEASURE: Great.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: I mean, in reality, they're exceptional.

DR. HARPER: Thank you.

MS. LEASURE: Nanette?

MS. O'HARA: Is this section where you may want to include as your wish list longer out in this 10-year plan the potential of having a sheriff's deputy housed here? I think, did you mention that, Pam? I wrote that down.

MS. LEASURE: Yeah, we mentioned that and/or security.

MS. O'HARA: Yes. But this, to me, strikes to recreation and safety of people recreating here, and the goal says, outdoor recreation, which is compatible with the conservation and protection of public and natural resources, so it seems to fit in

here as well. Because that is someone who would monitor fisheries and other, you know, Manatee, potentially.

MS. LEASURE: Wildfires?

MS. O'HARA: Yes, exactly. So it may fit in here as well, and maybe additionally as another long-term goal, and I know this is tied back to money for habitat restoration and maintenance, but reopening the north trail. I mean, that's been closed for how long now? So we have only one canoe trail here now. We did have two. There's only one now.

As a longer-term goal out in that 10 years, again understanding there may not be money, but you know, if there is money, let us have more access. That would be -- it's already there. We just have to -- we just can't necessarily navigate it that well right now.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Did you -- excuse me, am I missing something? Did you miss the cultural or did I miss it?

MS. LEASURE: Yeah, that was way back.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: I missed that? Okay.

MS. LEASURE: We can go back.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: No, no, that's okay.

MS. LEASURE: Go ahead.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: I just want to know where you can stick in reference to longer or more hours as a goal for the access to this building.

DR. HARPER: That will probably be most appropriate in the education section that's coming up.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Okay. I wanted to make sure.

MR. KANDZ: I've got a quick question. I didn't see anything, and maybe we should put something in the plan about the fishing piers especially, because it looks like it's going to require resurfacing or replanking or something in the future. I don't know if that could be a --

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: The deck is getting a little worn.

MR. KANDZ: Yeah, and if we don't plan for it, then --

LYLE FOWLER: We'll have to check the CIP. I'd hate to put it in there. I think we can certainly identify it as a priority project. I can't say from memory there's actually a placeholder in the CIP currently.

And related to funding, the subject of a resident deputy has come up. That is not funding

dependent. We hope to get creative and partnership with the sheriff's office to possibly provide space that they could locate, at a deputy's expense, and perhaps we would forego the rent, maybe like a semipermanent or mobile home structure located in the maintenance area.

MS. LEASURE: Lindsay?

MS. CROSS: It seems like a lot of these things, you could have almost a wish list of if there's funding or with external grants, these are things that are high priorities, like opening the north canoe trail or creating a, you know, shortcut route, redecking the fishing pier. Just having it in there so if you are applying for funds, then it's that much stronger of a proposal.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Anyone else? Okay. Education and outreach, since the last plan was adopted, the Education Center opened in 2002, and the Exhibit Gallery opened in 2007. The Exhibit Center was 3.6 million dollars; the Exhibit Gallery, 2.1 million. Those were all funded through our CIP projects.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: It's not in there.

MS. COLLINS: It is.

MS. LEASURE: The Center offers classroom

experience, volunteer-guided hikes, and our Exhibit Gallery is there.

MS. BOSTOCK: But does section 5 have a corresponding --

MR. WEISMAN: Page 10 and 52.

MS. BOSTOCK: Yeah, the question is whether section 5 on page 52, going back to goals and objectives, table 1, does it have a corresponding section?

MS. SHEEN-TODD: That was the point.

MR. WEISMAN: To me, it looks like it's G.

MS. O'HARA: It's not listed as education and outreach. It's listed as capital facilities and infrastructure.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Maybe you need a section that's listed under goals and outreach education. Because the only place you see the wording is under G, capital facilities.

DR. HARPER: Right. The topic headings for the table 1 are the specific categories identified by the State for their approval of the management plan. We can certainly add additional items. If we want to pull out the education aspect as a separate set of goals and objectives, we're certainly free to do that.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Well, whatever way you feel is appropriate, but if you can provide some reference in here as a long-term goal, as funding becomes available, greater access to the facility, the Education Center, I just hate to see people not have access.

DR. HARPER: Sure.

MS. COLLINS: Goals and objectives go beyond the listing in table 1.

DR. HARPER: That's true.

MS. COLLINS: I would mention that.

MR. WEISMAN: All right. This is where I wanted to make the point that I brought up earlier, which does coincide with some points already made. But we all, I'm sure, understand the budgetary realities that have resulted in the Center not being staffed by extension service as the only full-time employees.

And when you read the text on page 52, there's a disjunction or a disconnect between the first paragraph and the second paragraph. The first paragraph really is -- provides the history, the context, a glimpse of the original vision of the Center.

Paragraph 2 then talks about it's managed by

IFAS extension service, Pinellas County, extension department, et cetera. And the -- I think that we can't forget what the original vision and the original mission of this structure was, and the original intent of the very careful design process that the building went through on paper before it was -- it was constructed.

And that in keeping with what Rob said about the landscape, restoration the goals there that he got out of that section, the intent of taking it back to the land that existed prior to all of these impacts, I would also like to have some language or some statement that -- that opens the possibility of taking the -- of restoring the original intent of this structure.

And I understand everything that's come up about the budget realities and how you don't want to overreach and commit. Nonetheless, this is a 10-year plan, and I think you're blessed here with a board of advisors who are optimists. We're all asking for the same thing, let's project beyond the dismal swamp that we're now in and work toward a brighter future.

And I think 10 years is a long time to get locked into a plan that doesn't have that vision

that we can all look for down the line. As Barbara said, that's what you need to go to the County Commission with, to all the local legislatures with to start to build toward that goal, the goal of implementing what you lay out here as a vision.

So I'm just calling our attention to the fact -- and there's only a few of us in the room that have that history of remembering everything it took to get to the stage where this building became reality in 2002, and how that took place and how carefully that was planned and designed, and what a dream it was when it opened, and the potential it had then, and how beautifully it was -- it was moving forward for those first couple of years until the reality that we now face.

And I know that over the last couple of years, the public of Pinellas County has spoken out many times in favor of what this facility brought to their quality of life here in Pinellas County. And out of, I think, respect to the funding source that provided the building in the first place, which was public tax, I think we need to have language that allows the possibility of that vision being restored.

I'm not able to craft the particular

statements right here, but I think that we could work on it. It doesn't have to be a revolutionary insertion into the document but, you know, I think that we do want to have that as something we're working toward.

MS. LEASURE: Nanette?

MS. O'HARA: I just want to say as someone who benefited from the Halcyon days of Weedon Island Preserve, in working with you and with Phyllis, I was able to do so many incredible educational programs out here, and from my perspective working -- this is really an "atta girl" from my perspective, working with three different counties, this was the county that I held up as the example.

No other county in our region had facilities like Brooker creek and Weedon Island. Manatee County now does. Hillsborough County still does, not but this is -- yeah, I'm looking at 6 million dollars, essentially, on the building and the exhibits, and you know, it's heartrending for me to come here now and to see that it is only open, you know, three days a week.

So I agree. I mean, we all are aware of the funding situation, but we're looking 10 years out. God, I hope it's going to get better, you know, in

10 years. And to me, the educational role of this Preserve and this facility is every bit as important as managing the land itself in a responsible way.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: So where can we put it?

MS. O'HARA: In the list of goals.

DR. HARPER: We're noting all of your comments as we go.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: We just want to make sure you hear us.

DR. HARPER: I think that's clear.

MS. COLLINS: I apologize, but I must leave.

DR. HARPER: Thank you. Do you have written comments you want to leave us with?

MS. COLLINS: No, I voiced them. I think I've said --

MS. LEASURE: Thanks. I appreciate your help.

MS. COLLINS: Sorry, I have to leave.

MS. LEASURE: Dean?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Yes, I want to go along with what Brenda's saying and what's been said. I've been a volunteer here for over 10 years, back when we were sitting out here, and this was all (inaudible) and whatnot, and I saw the hard work that was put in to build this, get the

facility going, see all the vibrant programs that were going on here in the past, the first three years.

But then it is disheartening to see, over the last few years, to see it. Almost like you saw it blossom. It was a great piece of artwork. People came. We had great programs, great staff, but then now over the last few years -- I mean, obviously with the budget cut, to see it slowly die on the vine.

And I hope, too, in the long term we get some more -- thing in here to bring it back to life, bring it back to more like what it was, too, because like as I said, over the years, I've seen -- seen drastic changes here. And it's just, it's such a vibrant place. There's so many things to offer.

And I agree that if we get back to five days a week or more days, the volunteer hours will come up, the programs will come back and whatnot. But I just wanted to add my comments to that. I think it's such a viable place, that we should have a long-term goal to hopefully bring it back to its previous glory. So I just wanted to add my two cents.

MS. BOSTOCK: At the risk of -- I don't want to play Devil's advocate, but just to try to put this in perspective. I'm going back to page 47. And we had 148,000 visitors in 2003; 246,000 visitors in 2011 with the reduced hours.

So it may not be as convenient and -- and putting on the programs may not be as easy, but the people are coming and benefiting from this facility.

What year were the hours cut? Was that 2008, 2009?

DR. HARPER: Yes.

MS. BOSTOCK: So you see, that is when the numbers jumped.

MS. KOLIANOS: That was Preserve numbers not Center numbers.

MS. LEASURE: Would it be more helpful if we put the Education Center numbers?

MS. BOSTOCK: Are they in here somewhere?

MS. LEASURE: They're not currently in here.

DR. HARPER: They're not in here.

MS. BOSTOCK: Can we get those, Phyllis?

MS. KOLIANOS: Sure.

MS. BOSTOCK: Let's just remember that without the -- in the bigger picture, people are

appreciating the Preserve, although the numbers may be different.

DR. HARPER: The follow up to that comment is that obviously there were a number of years of contraction with the Environmental Management Program running the Center, and that might be part of the decline phase. Now within the last year, we've transitioned over to extension services running it.

And we haven't made it to education program yet, but at the risk of stealing Pam's thunder, we do have a couple of new initiatives, including the extension service projects they brought with them, but also the Youth Conservation Network and also a new marine agent here located at the Center.

So, you know, we hope we've sort of -- we feel what you're saying, and we certainly know that because we've experienced it, but my request would be, you know, there are new programs on the horizon. Let's see -- the hours are certainly coming through loud and clear, and we'll take that under consideration as a long-term goal for the future.

Right now, the practical reality is that that's not an option with the resources.

MR. WEISMAN: I think we understand that, and we don't mean to diminish the good programs that have relocated here from these other agencies, but they could be anywhere. What had existed here in the couple of years after the opening of this Center was programming and staff that was unique to this location and this Preserve.

DR. HARPER: That's certainly noted.

MR. WEISMAN: And that's what I'm saying, that we should have an aspirational goal of getting back to that in a 10-year period.

MS. MASON: And I, Emma Mason, volunteer, Weedon Island, I would like to give kudos to the volunteers for keeping some of those numbers up because if we didn't have volunteers here, we wouldn't even have been open three days a week.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Well, I just wanted, like Brent said, I'm seeing rays of hope. It was a couple of years before this, but now I see, you know, things are improving. There's things coming back. I just wanted to add that comment, too. Like I said, I can see it, rays of hope, and I just hope it continues to build.

DR. HARPER: Good. Thank you.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Go on?

MS. BOSTOCK: But if I could just point out that as the economy rebounds, that will certainly have a positive effect on the monies that Pinellas County has to allocate, but with some of the legislative changes that happened, you can probably help me date that better, 2007, 2008 with Amendment Four, as the economy rebounds, as property appraisals go up, our revenues don't increase as much as they would have prior to some of those legislative changes.

So that increase is going to affect our budget less than you would expect. So, yes, I'm optimistic but let's be realistic, too.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: And also, not to prolong it, but just to throw in something a little additional, once the goal is written, you are free not only to seek county funds --

MS. BOSTOCK: Right, others.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: -- but to seek other funds.

DR. HARPER: Absolutely.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: So please make sure you write it down.

MS. CROSS: Lindsay Cross, Friends of Weedon Island. I just had a quick budget question in relation to the Sweetwater Kayaks, and it shows

that the money from the kayak rental goes into the general operating fund?

MS. LEASURE: Into the county, yes.

MS. CROSS: I'm wondering if there's any way for that to be -- the answer is probably no, but if that could be redirected to the Preserve, that would be a great way to fund some of the maintenance of your, you know, water-based recreation, kayak trails, fishing piers.

MS. LEASURE: And help with the restoration project. I know it goes to -- it's directed into the general fund.

MS. BOSTOCK: I can't answer that, but I can tell you I don't think there's a chance of getting that changed. As much sense as it makes, you've got the new fees going in at two other facilities in Pinellas County, and those monies don't stay at the facilities. They go to the general funds.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: They shouldn't.

MS. BOSTOCK: They shouldn't, I fully agree, but if they can't keep the flat-out dollars being handed at the entrance gate, I can't see that this will.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: How come the county is charging sales tax on going into these

places?

MS. BOSTOCK: I didn't know that we were but if we are --

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: I went yesterday, and it's 5 bucks.

MS. BOSTOCK: Plus sales tax?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: And sales tax.

MS. BOSTOCK: Well, if it's state law, we're abiding by it.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: But it's a county park.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Maybe as a P.S., just as an aside, not to put my friend Nancy on the spot because she's a great commissioner.

MS. BOSTOCK: No, go ahead.

MS. SHEEN-TODD: But I think approaching that concept that was mentioned as a proprietary fund, at least allocating a portion of it back.

MS. BOSTOCK: If it were up to me, it would be 100 percent of both, but it's not. One-seventh is up to me.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. Are we ready?

MS. SHEEN-TODD: Yeah.

MS. LEASURE: I'm going to probably start from the beginning of this slide. I don't remember

where I left off.

So the Center provides classroom experiences, volunteer-guided hikes, and our Exhibit Gallery is able -- we can educate visitors about the connections between the people and the land. I waited all that time to say that.

What Steve was speaking about in improving our -- increasing our programs, this year we've added a Sea Grant agent from the University of Florida, and that will provide us with programs on coastal issues, climate impacts, and sustainability.

We've also added a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network. And we are a partner site that coordinates regional activities that educate youth and parents to the positive experiences of the outdoors by creating compelling and fun outdoor programs and activities. It's so young, I had to read the whole thing. So that's our newest addition, Ms. Breanne.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: I might add St. Pete Audubon has taken advantage of her quite a bit. We've used her once and we're going to use her again for shortcuts. We've included this in

our education, and this is one of the Centers that we bring the children to.

MS. LEASURE: And our future is to maintain existing programs and continue partnering and collaborating with our Friends Groups and other partners. And we've already discussed some of the goals, provide access to the facilities at least three days a week; annually maintain and as-needed the Interactive Exhibit Gallery; provide monthly programs that are related to ecology, sustainability, history, art, archeology, Native American culture, and other relevant topics.

And we'll continue to collaborate with Friends of Weedon Island, AWIARE, the Florida Youth Centers Conservation Network, and our other partners such as Tampa Bay Estuary Program, St. Petersburg Audubon, just to name a few, Progress Energy. They're all our partners and have provided help for us in the past.

Any questions? Just a typical day at the ED Center.

DR. HARPER: Clive Butcher, right.

MS. LEASURE: Okay. This is the last section, the budget. Our funding sources are from the Pinellas County general fund, which fund our Parks

and Conservation Resources and Real Estate Management general operating budgets on a day-to-day management and staff of the Preserve and the facilities.

We also get funding from our CIP to fund our restoration projects that are supplemented with grants that we receive. We've had grants from outside organizations and partners, such as Friends of Weedon Island, AWIARE, Progress Energy, Tampa Bay Estuary Program. Those are just to name a few.

In the future, because the future budget allocations are uncertain at this time, and the State requires that we submit a 10-year budget, we project a static budget over the next decade, and it's detailed out in the plan if you'd like to look at it.

And with that, any further questions?

MS. CROSS: I'm just wondering how you handled the budget in the previous manage of plan? Did you allow for increases or did you also use a static?

MS. LEASURE: No. The other plan wasn't quite as detailed as we have been in this one. We followed a very strict State guidelines because they've become more strict on what they want to see. And with our past evaluations, they come in

and audit us every five years, so I've been audited twice on the past plan, and they're real sticklers. If it's in the plan, you better do it.

So if that budget was in there, they would have looked at that and said, you're not spending this. So they're -- I mean, I've been through them twice so they go word for -- some of these reviewers go word for word through the plan.

Okay. Any further discussion?

DR. HARPER: We're in the open discussion section now, so any questions that you might have had earlier or the public, if you have further questions and haven't had a chance to ask them yet, please feel free. Now is the time to do it. We are incorporating your comments, and as I said earlier, we are getting a transcript of the proceedings, and that will be part of the plan, so if you'd like to be on public record of making a recommendation or suggestion, please feel free to offer it up at this time.

MS. LEASURE: The other thing I'd like to mention, if there's any way I can get your plans back, especially if you have spelling errors or typos or something that you want included into the changes, but also the appendices in particular,

because then I won't have to copy those for the -- my submission to the Board of County Commissioners. I have to make 13 or 14 copies, and this will be a great help not to have to make all those and waste all that paper. The notebooks as well, but if you the plan back, I can get that back to you.

Yes?

MR. WEISMAN: Will we see a revised version that reflects these comments?

MS. LEASURE: What I'll do is I'll send --

MR. WEISMAN: It will be there?

MS. LEASURE: I can send an email to everyone. If you can make sure I get your email, I think I have everyone's, but once I have it prepared for the Board package, at that time I'll also take a disc up to our communications folks so they can immediately put it on the web.

DR. HARPER: It will be early next week. So we're going to work on your comments immediately. The process is ticking.

MS. BOSTOCK: And I don't know what your protocol is with the administration getting materials up to us, but I know I would be just fine, and I know several other commissioners would be just fine with an electronic copy.

DR. HARPER: Talk to --

MS. BOSTOCK: There's other rules between there and here, and I may be overstepping but at least two or three of us would prefer the electronic copies.

MS. LEASURE: I'll call Paula. That would be so much more appreciated. I don't have to get up at 5 in the morning to --

MS. BOSTOCK: And I don't have to carry it around so we're both good.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Is the Advisory Board going to meet with the County yearly? Is this an updated version or is this only every 10-years version?

MS. LEASURE: We're required 10 years. In fact, we have to revise our lease. We have to do an amendment to the lease agreement because since that lease agreement was written, a change has been made to the statute. The lease agreement says every 5 years, and they have changed that to every 10 years, so this plan has to be updated every 10 years.

DR. HARPER: But we will call the Advisory Group again if there's significant changes to the plan between here and 10 years.

MS. O'HARA: Could we still -- I have a couple of other comments, but I don't want to take up time today. Is there a deadline for written comments, Pam?

DR. HARPER: 17 minutes.

MS. LEASURE: Yeah, I have to have everything done. I've got to be -- have everything -- my Board package has to be downtown by --

DR. HARPER: Tuesday morning.

MS. LEASURE: -- Tuesday morning so in order to make all those copies and everything, I have to come in Sunday and get everything done.

MS. O'HARA: So if I just sent you my other little comments tomorrow morning, that would be fine?

MS. LEASURE: Yes, that would be great.

MS. BOSTOCK: Could I ask a question on the budget? On page 55, the two figures under Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center, the 110 and the 157, those added together are the total costs for this -- total costs for this building; is that correct?

MS. LEASURE: Yes. One is from Real Estate Management.

MS. BOSTOCK: But that covers this building?

MS. LEASURE: Yes.

MS. BOSTOCK: And then on page 52, is that the correct figure for the total number of visits?

MS. LEASURE: Yes, yes. Would you -- I can go ahead and I'll get the -- put a table in there, just the visitors in the Preserve. That way it's more clear.

MS. BOSTOCK: Sure, but it's \$267,000 a year to maintain this building and the facility for 16,000 visitors? Wow.

MS. CROSS: Lindsay Cross, Friend of Weedon Island. I just had a couple general comments. One, this is isn't staffing so much, but I think it would be appropriate if you or someone else related to the management did have more physical presence here.

Also I just wanted to commend you on the great job that everyone has been doing. There's a lot of outside research that occurs here that, you know, isn't at a cost to you but really helps to enhance our understanding and, you know, it's still my favorite place in the county, so thanks.

MS. LEASURE: Thank you. I want to thank you all for all your comments.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: I had a

question --

MS. LEASURE: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- about more publicity for the -- for the resorts here, for Weedon Island. It's far from town, from St. Petersburg, and I thought is there some way that there can be on something, channel 9, for instance that --

MS. CARNAHAN: I was just going to say, very recently the Communications Department has asked us if we know where people are coming to our programs are getting that information, and for some of my programs, I've been asking it for like six months. I'm going to go back and look at that, and hopefully I think Communications is trying to think about where people get their information, and how we can better get it to them.

MS. LEASURE: That's Libby Carnahan, and she's the Sea Grant coordinator, Sea Grant agent.

MS. MASON: Just so I can add to that, Emma Mason, volunteer, promoting it in Pinellas County is great, but in the surrounding counties, I do tours all the time in Manatee County, and when I mention Weedon Island, they want to know where it is. So I carry brochures in the

trunk of my car, and I start handing them out, come see us, so that's -- and that's on a daily basis so that tells me there's not enough broadcast going out about Weedon Island.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: There's not, because when we talk to people at the Shorecrest School to do this week that we're going to do with them, they had no clue what Weedon Island was. They thought it was a subdivision.

DR. HARPER: That's been a historical problem even when things were relatively flush when we had a program dedicated through, not only environmental management, but also the Communications Department doing extensive outreach and publicity, and you still get that. I live near Brooker Creek, and I'll get that from my neighbors. They don't -- you know, they live next to the Preserve and they don't realize that it's a Preserve.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: We plan on educating them.

DR. HARPER: But we certainly, as Emma said, if we can get the word out, a lot of good comes from word of mouth by talking to your friends and relatives and social groups that you may interact

with.

MS. BOSTOCK: That was a point I was going to add. I took a couple of pictures. One thing Pinellas County has changed also due to budget cuts is the way we do cultural arts. We're not funding cultural arts at all anymore. We've given some seed money to community, much like this group, to start as a financial foundation for them to then build the private support.

They're not relying on traditional media. You take any exposure you can get, but they're really focusing their limited resources on -- I can't remember -- a very hip name.

MS. CROSS: Social media?

MS. BOSTOCK: Yeah, something along social media lines, but hired three part-time, almost contract workers, to post things on Facebook, to Tweet things, to put on some of these citizen blogs that's going.

I have I think close to 3,000 people on my Facebook. I'll put these pictures up. Sometimes I get four or five people who then repost some of my things. Those are things everyone can do, because Bay News 9 may or may not come. And, you know, guest communications department can do more with

press releases. We can try to amp that up, but whatever you can do, you know, maybe some of the Friends Groups can start their Patch papers that are online everybody's reading now.

MS. CARNAHAN: I've been advertising on Northeast Patch sometimes.

MS. BOSTOCK: Yeah, those things are becoming more and more influential, especially if you've (inaudible.) If you get some of the students at the school, if one or two of them start posting, that can spread to the students so --

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Well, they're making a big project out of --

MS. STREPINA: This might be a good opportunity -- Breanne Strepina, FWC, might be a good opportunity for the counties to work together. I live two miles away from Hillsborough County, and a lot of people come here from Tampa. So this may be a good way for the commissioners to work together and, you know, get the word out.

MR. MOATES: I've got one comment. Can I make a comment? And this kind of goes back to a lot of the comments and suggestions that the Advisory Board -- my name is Jeff Moates. I'm a Regional Director for the Florida Public Archeology Network

for USF, and there was mention, there was some suggestions about some of these goals and objectives being almost wish list, and with the numbers that were presented from 2003 and 2007, and there's this major increase of people coming out here, I almost see those suggestions or those wish lists as kind of like a needs list, and that might translate better as far as a management plan to here's where we're at, but here's what we need to be at in 10 years because there's this major increase and uptick of people coming here.

They love it. The economy, not -- didn't just hit -- we all know that it hit facilities like this, but as the economy went down, people were looking for relatively inexpensive things to do, and that might have resulted in, you know, that real dramatic increase of folks coming out here.

So 10 years from now, that number may be a million, you know, and so -- well, it may increase exponentially, who knows, so I think those wishes are really needs, as far as the management and the upkeep and what really needs to happen to make Weedon Island kind of reach that point where -- where it was going. We all know it had -- it's got that trajectory, and it's kind of projected to be

there anyways. Thanks.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: I was just going to comment that years ago, Keith Thompson, who was the ranger here, did a book on the history of Weedon Island, and it would seem that it would be relevant to update that based on all the research and everything that's gone on in recent years and make that available on the web.

I know the Friends has a web page, and I don't know the status really of that now. But it would be -- I was thinking of what Nancy said about getting it on Facebook and the rest of it because I think people do, when they look for recreation now, they do go that avenue.

MS. BOSTOCK: You could tie something like that in to the -- there's a special part of the website that was Centennial Celebration, and it's not Centennial but it's certainly -- actually it puts our Centennial Celebration into a much bigger context, but you could probably tie that in with a historic value and maybe grab ahold of the little bit of publicity that's going on with that.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah. I just gave Phyllis a book that has a lot of the old records that go back from -- Barbara and I started

back in 1988 with some of the folks here.

MS. LEASURE: Again, I'd like to thank especially the Advisory Group for your reviewing this document and giving us your comments. They've been very helpful. I'd like to thank you-all for attending on your own time as well. Have a nice day.

(Public Meeting of the 2012 Weedon Island Preserve Management Plan Update was adjourned at 4:52 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)

COUNTY OF PINELLAS)

I, Karla S. Hyland, Certified Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings were taken before me at the time and place set forth in the caption thereof; that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the said proceedings; and that the foregoing pages, numbered 1 through 82, inclusive, constitute a true and correct transcript of said proceedings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed my official signature this 12th day of March, 2012, at St. Petersburg, Pinellas County, Florida.


 Karla S. Hyland
 Notary Public, State of Florida