

Jekyll Island Conservation Planning Committee
February 9, 2011 Meeting
9:00 PM – 4:30 PM
Facilitator: Jay Exum, AECOM

Agenda

1. review public comments
 - o from the e-mail "blast"
 - o individually prepared e-mail responses
 - o from the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island website
2. review detailed comments from the Conservation Planning Committee (CPC), Al Tate, and Steve Newell
3. discuss methods of responding to and publishing public comments
4. discuss the objectives for the public meeting

Meeting Minutes

- It was announced that Cliff Gawron has been promoted to Director of Landscape and Planning
- Jay reviewed comments from the public in three categories:
 - o Comments from approximately 250 e-mail "blasts". These comments included three items:
 - i. a request to specifically delineate the 65/35 boundaries of development and conservation on Jekyll Island
 - ii. a request that future construction follow adherence to some environmental guidelines such as LEED certification
 - iii. a request that specific mechanisms for funding the objectives from the Conservation Plan be identified
 - o Comments from approximately 40 individualized responses to a review of the Conservation Plan. These responses included some detailed and specific comments. In general, the comments related to six specific topics:
 - i. minimize development impacts
 - ii. sustain the natural beauty/aesthetics of Jekyll Island
 - iii. assure adequate staffing and funding to implement the Conservation Plan
 - iv. reference Jekyll Island as a State Park
 - v. include the Causeway in the Plan
 - vi. and variable references to the Jekyll Island Authority's conflicting role with respect to conservation and development.
 - o Comments from the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island website. An extensive array of comments occurs on this website, many of which relate to the specific comments of the individuals who sent e-mails regarding the Plan. In general these comments referenced several topics, including:
 - i. an independent review of the Conservation Plan
 - ii. a request for a sustained effort for citizen input
 - iii. more specificity on staff roles, particularly with reference to the Director of Natural Resources position

- iv. more specificity with respect to how the Environmental Assessment Procedure would be implemented, for example through a new Ordinance
 - v. a request for more details related to environmental education
 - vi. similar request for more detail on the recreation plan
- An extensive discussion occurred with CPC members related to each of the comments from the public. It was clarified that additional comments from the public would be considered on this draft of the Conservation Plan until February 11. It was agreed that AECOM would update the summary of these comments, and send this summary along with all of the comments to the JIA for posting on their website.
- We then continued with an extensive review of the Plan from the perspective of the CPC, Al Tate and Steve Newell. These comments included:
 - Move Appendix I to after Fig. 6 (**Brad** agreed to write a caveat for this graphic which would identify graphic's intended use and limitations)
 - It was agreed that the education section needs improvement, and **Terry** agreed to reconvene the education subcommittee to provide additional detail in the next draft of the Plan. It was also stated that a caveat needed to be provided in the Plan that would state that the education subcommittee had been recently informed (in response to the objectives for environmental education identified in the early draft of the Plan), and that the process of collaboration and creating a comprehensive approach to environmental education would come from this subcommittee
 - We need to reference management options for deer and raccoon
 - It was stated that there should be a section in which there is a summary of all the management priorities, and that there perhaps be a list of priority action items, perhaps to reference a budget for the priority items that would be included in the first five years after approval of the Plan. Included in this list of action items would be a reference to those accountable and a time line
 - There may need to be definitions for some of the technical references in the Plan
 - We need to be cognizant of the audience for the Plan - this would include staff and biologists who will implement the Plan, along with administrative personnel, volunteers, the interested public, and JIA board members
 - An additional review of the EAP needs to be conducted in order to assess how it can be more definitive
 - **Jay** will include a visual or flow chart to describe the process for reviewing impacts through the EAP, and relate how the EAP process relates to the Master Plan, and Design Guidelines – **Eric** will summarize this process in words and send the process to Jay for creating the visual
 - There are numerous comments from the public about the need for more “specificity” in the Plan. We need to add some point of clarification that describes the difference between the objectives for this Conservation Plan versus a Work Plan
 - There was a comment that there needed to be more detail on historical landscape changes such as the “yacht basin” and the plantation system – **Cliff** agreed to work with Jon Hunter to write the language for historical landscape changes on the Island that would relate to ecological conditions and long-term management actions

- Brad feels that the reference to Schoettle popular text is inappropriate in a document supposed to be science-based. There was disagreement on that within the CPC. The consensus was that the documents should be referenced in the education section of the Plan
- We need to identify where/when the 35/65 development/conservation requirement will be addressed. **Eric** agreed to provide guidance on this
- It was agreed that our Plan should reference a 50 year timeframe
- There was a comment that the organization of the Plan needed to clearly depict a strategy to start with broad goals and then reference greater detail including specific management actions. **Jay** agreed to write a summary of this approach in the Plan, and include how the EAP fits into this process
- Brad pointed out that “no management” is a management tool, and that there might be times in which the warranted action is to “do nothing”. **Randy** agreed to add a reference to that in the Plan
- There was concern about the clarity and accuracy of data in the Appendices, but everyone agreed that the intention from the beginning was to reference the previous work in an Appendix in order to document the substantial work that had been done in the past. **Jay** agreed to add language about the intentions of this work, and reference some things that will be done in the short term to improve the technical references, e.g. include information from Bryan England, a botanist at Tidelands
- Director of Natural Resources is more than salary – needs operating budget
- Environmental education director is needed to do all education tasks
- **Eric** agreed to work on a budget for the action items in the Plan that would be expected to be funded in the near term, and to report this budget to the JIA Board when the Conservation Plan is submitted. Others who agreed to provide input to Eric on funding recommendations in general included Al and Kimberly
- Several committee members reiterated that the Plan needed to be focused on macro (landscape scale) measures to protect habitat/wildlife - too many specifics can overwhelm that context
- At some point there does need to be a public survey to assess what the public wants for conservation issues on JI; what is the nature experience? But the committee agreed that the survey should not be a part of the scope for the Plan
- Jay described the evolution of the Recreation section in the Plan. AECOM had proposed a budget and scope for the preparation of a detailed recreation plan, but the scope was removed in order to focus on the natural resource aspects of the Plan. But, we did want to include a reference to the recreation trails’ importance to the management plan – the committee suggested that we keep the reference to the recreational aspects in the Plan, and requested that we provide an explanation of the circumstances for keeping it
- Communication with business should ultimately be a part of the ecotourism aspects of recreation on the Island, but not as a part of this Plan
- **Steve Newell and Eric** agreed that they would work on language regarding Jekyll Island as a State Park that should be included in the Plan
- There is a need for a reference to cultural resources on the Island – not a lengthy discussion, but it needs to be mentioned – **Cliff** agreed to write this section

- i. The committee agreed that specific funding is needed for this plan to be successful, and that internal funding was essential to recruiting external funding
- o The Plan needs to reference who is the “driver” of Plan before the Director of Natural Resources is hired
 - i. Accountable
- o The committee agreed that all of the public comments should be posted on the JIA website
- o The rate of implementation of the Plan relies on the Director of Natural Resources
- o A brief description of AECOM should be included on the back page of the document
- o The Plan should mention that there are limitations and controls on implementation that come from other sources such as the DOF, ACOE, the County, etc.
- o We need to check how we use the terms for green space/natural area
- o The Plan should provide specifics about updates or reviews of the Plan, on at least 5 year intervals
- o Jim Broadway stressed the need for the EAP to be consistent with the Design Guideline process - it already incorporates a development review process
- o Implementation of the EAP may require revisions to design guidelines language to assure consistency
- o Cliff reviewed his plan for management of natural resources along the Causeway. The committee agreed that it should be included in the Plan as a separate section; not as a separate Management Unit. **Cliff** will scan the graphic, write the text for the plan and send it to **Terry** for inclusion of the diamondback terrapin research elements. Ultimately what is included in the Plan needs to be about 1 page, reference priority species (plants and wildlife), and mention potential hydrologic enhancements
- o The committee agreed that the six-month time frame that is referenced in numerous places in the Plan should be changed to say "within the next year"
- o The Coastal Regional Commission should be referenced as a member of the EAP, along with one outside person appointed by the Executive Director of the JIA
- o The EAP should report to the Executive Director of the JIA
- o Stacia commented that the Conservation Plan should represent an historical document that captures the intentions proscribed for the long-term by the initial CPC
- o Even though the Director of Natural Resources is essential to the full implementation of the Plan, current staff can begin implementing many of the specific actions without a Director. So the plan should not infer that the hire of the Director must precede any actions on the Plan.
- o The potential examples used in the landscape scale implementation of the EAP are not realistic. The committee recommended examples that would include the giant parking lot in the mature maritime hammock, a parking garage constructed over wetlands. **Jay** will use these examples in the EAP section of the Plan.
- o With respect to the comments from the e-mail blast, Brad agreed that the mandate for green design is relevant to this plan, but stressed that the ecological value is more affected by the continued function of natural lands. He suggested that we

not dwell on the built environment if it distracted the mission of natural lands conservation.

- Similarly, Scott suggested that we not get too bogged down on comprehensive species lists, if it detracted from the mission of focusing on priority species
- The committee agreed to a schedule for the next few milestones. These included:
 - i. AECOM will continue to review comments from the public on the January draft of the Plan until February 11, 2011
 - ii. AECOM will complete compilation of the meeting minutes from the CPC, and send all the public comments along with a summary of comments from individuals responding to their review of the Plan by February 18, 2011
 - iii. JIA will post all three of these items on their website
 - iv. AECOM will revise the Conservation Plan by March 4, 2011
 - v. JIA will post the revised draft on their website on March 7, 2011
 - vi. a public meeting will be held to receive comments on the March 7, 2011 draft of the Conservation Plan on Friday, March 25, 2011 from 5:30 to 7:30 PM
 - vii. AECOM will continue to review public comments on the March 7, 2011 draft of the Conservation Plan until April 1, 2011