



Protecting Our Environmentally Sensitive Lands

What is ELAPP?

ELAPP stands for the Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program. This program was established for the purpose of acquiring, preserving and protecting endangered and environmentally significant lands in Hillsborough County.

How did the County decide to establish ELAPP?

On January 7, 1987, the Board of County Commissioners approved an Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance that took effect upon passage of a referendum on March 3, 1987. County voters approved this referendum by a 3 to 2 margin. It provided for a ¼ mill property tax over a four-year period to supply funding for the program, and it raised about \$22 million to purchase and preserve these lands.

Because of the vast number of nominations to the program, it quickly became evident that there was not enough funding to purchase all of the lands that would qualify for preservation. On October 2, 1990, County voters, by a 3 to 1 margin, approved an extension of the property tax to fund up to \$100 million in bonds to continue this program.

With the passage of the second referendum, Hillsborough County's program became the largest local preservation effort in Florida.

What types of property does the County want to protect through ELAPP?

The program was established to conserve and protect those lands which have environmentally unique, irreplaceable and valued ecological resources. These lands must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

* Land containing native and scarce flora and fauna.



Florida Scrub Jay

* Lands that supply a significant habitat for endangered or threatened plants or animals.

* Land which plays a vital role in the protection and enhancement of water quality (but cannot be protected through other government agencies or regulations).

* Land that provides buffer zones, links, or additions to existing environmentally sensitive lands, or which forms part of a natural greenway.



Blackwater Creek Preserve

* Land containing unusual, outstanding, or unique geological features.

* Land containing significant archeological sites.

How does the County select lands for the program?

First, the land has to be nominated to be considered for approval into the program. Any property owner, concerned citizen, community or environmental organization can nominate property in Hillsborough County. There is no fee associated with the nomination. Applications and instructions to nominate

property, known as a "site," are available through the Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department. Nominations are taken annually until December 31 and are considered during the following year.

Once a site has been nominated, it goes through a review and an assessment process to determine its environmental significance and if it meets program objectives. After the assessment, it is reviewed by a committee of citizens, environmental experts, and County staff to confirm that the site should be in the program. Selected sites are presented to the Hillsborough County Parks Board and the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

ELAPP has purchased over 44,800 acres of land at a total cost of approximately \$205.9 million with approximately \$76 million being funded from state and local grants. There are an estimated 44,000 additional acres currently approved for acquisition through the ELAP program.



Golden Aster

Public meetings are held by the Site Selection Committee, the Parks Board and Board of County Commissioners to allow property owners of nominated sites to state positions and citizens to express their opinions, as well as to allow the County staff to present information and answer questions.

What happens after a site is selected and approved?

After the sites have been approved for preservation through ELAPP, the County’s Real Estate Department will contact the property owner to establish (or confirm) their interest in participating in the program and start negotiations for acquiring the site. Some owners will be contacted before others, based on anticipated costs, environmental significance of the site, and the owner’s previously expressed interest in the program. Some owners will donate property to the program, while most property will need to be purchased. There is no guarantee that an approved site will be preserved.

What if I own nominated property, but I don’t want to sell?

ELAPP is a voluntary program. The current program does not plan to use eminent domain to acquire property. If a property owner does not wish to sell, ELAPP does not force the sale. If a property owner wants more than the property is worth or more than the program is willing to pay, ELAPP does not have to buy the land. With the annual approval of new sites, the program has far more land to acquire than available funding.

I live on property that is nominated and want to help the program, but I don’t want to move. Is there something I can do?

If a property owner of a selected site wants to help to preserve the property, but does not want to sell, there are other options. A property owner can provide the County with a conservation easement for which the owner is compensated. This is not unlike a water or electric easement. It prevents development, construction, or other activities that would disturb the environment, but the property owners maintain their ownership



Sherman Fox Squirrel

rights. They do not have to let the public on the property, but the County will enforce the easement to assure the area is protected and left in its natural state. The easement can be customized to each property and property owner.

What happens to the land after it has been acquired by the county?

A management plan is developed for each site that is acquired. After the site is acquired, a detailed management plan is developed by County staff with citizen input. Priority is given to protecting a site's natural resources. All sites acquired by the County are accessible to the public for compatible, resource-based recreation to the greatest extent possible. No sites acquired for preservation will be used for active recreation such as organized sports or athletics or undergo any other form of public or private development.

Are other agencies working with the County?

ELAPP pursues funding to acquire property that may qualify under other programs, and these include the Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) Program through the State Department of Environmental Protection; the Save Our Rivers Program through the Southwest Florida Water Management District; the Florida Communities Trust Program through the State Department of Community Affairs; as well as other agencies. Many of these programs depend on funding from the Florida Forever Program that is approved by the Florida Legislature.

How can I find out more about ELAPP?

This pamphlet provides general information on the program. For detailed information and the site nomination process, or to participate in the program, please contact:

Forest Turbiville, Section Manager
Parks, Recreation, and
Conservation Department
1101 E. River Cove Ave.
Tampa, FL 33604-3257
Phone: (813) 903-2258

www.hillsboroughcounty.org/parks/conservationservices

For more information regarding the acquisition of approved sites contact:

Kurt Gremley, Manager
Real Estate Department
P.O. Box 1110
Tampa, FL 33601-1110
Phone: (813) 272-5810



Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners is an equal opportunity employer which offers all persons the benefits of participating in each of its programs and competing in all areas of employment regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or other nonmerit factors.



Protecting Our Environmentally Sensitive Lands



Pine Flatwoods

Questions And Answers About
The County’s Environmental
Lands Acquisition And
Protection Program.