

Transcript of the September 7, 2011 Everglades Headwaters Press Conference  
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Dr. Shelly Lakly, PhD. State Director for The Nature Conservancy:  
ISN'T IT WONDERFUL PLACE TO BE? AS YOU DRIVE THEM ON THE TRAIL AND YOU LOOK AROUND AT THE BEAUTY, IT DOES NOT COME TO MIND UNLESS YOU'RE A BIOLOGIST, BUT THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WE FIX IT. THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN IT ALL COMES TO FRUITION. WE ARE ON A TO HAVE YOU HERE WITH US. ON BEHALF OF MOST OF THE PEOPLE HERE, -- AS I LOOK AT THESE PICTURES, IT IS TRULY INSPIRATIONAL. IT IS REALLY AN INSPIRING DAY TODAY FOR FLORIDIANS AND PEOPLE ALL ACROSS THE U.S. AS WE LOOK AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE EVERGLADES AND LOOK AT THE RATE WE HAVE GOTTEN OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, IT REALLY SHOWS HOW -- I REALLY WANT TO THINK YOU FOR SCHEDULING THIS TODAY. I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT WE ACKNOWLEDGE HOW WE CONTINUE AND WORK TOGETHER WITH PARTNERS. AS I SEE HOW WE HAVE WORKED TOGETHER, WE'RE REALLY INSPIRED. I, HAVING BEEN NEW TO THE EVERGLADES SYSTEM, KNOW THAT ITS GLOBAL IMPORTANCE REALLY STRUCK ME. THIS IS BY MARJORIE STONE DOUGLAS. THERE ARE NO OTHER EVERGLADES IN THE BROKER THEY ARE, THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF THE UNIQUE REGIONS OF THE EARTH. THEY'RE NEVER WHOLLY KNOWN. IT IS REALLY TRUE, AND IT IS AN HONOR THAT WE'RE HERE TO WORK TOGETHER TODAY. I AM GOING TO CALL UP REALLY QUICKLY CHARLIE PELIZZA, THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE PROJECT LEAD. THE MAPS THAT WE GOT, THE PLANNING. CHARLIE, PLEASE.

Charlie Pelizza -- THANK YOU, SHELLY, AND THANK YOU ALL FOR JOINING US TODAY FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PROPOSED HEADWATERS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. I WANT TO TELL YOU A SHORT STORY ABOUT HOW WE KIND OF DREAM UP THIS, AND THAT WILL GIVE YOU SOME OF THE DETAILS. FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS, I'VE GONE TO VISIT MY PARENTS IN SOUTH FLORIDA. TRAVELING EAST ALONG BACK THEN A VERY SCARY TWO-LANE ROAD. ALLIGATORS, BEARS, DEER ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. IT WAS NOT UNTIL ABOUT 2.5 YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS IN THE POSITION OF THE REFUGE MANAGER FOR -- THE THE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO WEST ALONG ROUTE 60. WHAT I FOUND ASTOUNDED ME. IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER A RAIN IN THE PAST WEEK OR SO HERE, AND THERE ARE WETLANDS, SAWGRASS MEADOWS, HERONS STORKS, AND WHAT TRULY IMPRESSES ME, WHAT OF ALL INSPIRING PLACE IT WAS. WHAT I ALSO FOUND TRAVELING A COUPLE MILES DOWN THE ROAD IS A SCENE THE EC -- I SAW RANCHERS HERDING CATTLE ON HORSEBACK. I WAS WONDERING WHEN I TOOK THAT RIGHT TURN AND HEADED WEST, TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, HEADING TO THE GREAT PLAINS.

THE RANCHING HERITAGE HERE BY AND LARGE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REASON I'M HERE TODAY, AND IT IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE'RE HOPING

TO -- A MONTH AFTER THE FIRST VISIT, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVITED BY A COUPLE CONSERVATION PARTNERS TO EXAMINE A 5,000 ACRE RANCH ALONG THE SHORES OF -- WE FOUND A LANDSCAPE THAT WAS COMPLETE WITH ALL THE ECOSYSTEM'S HERE, THE HEADWATERS OF THE EVERGLADES. WHERE THE WATER HITS THE GROUND, EXPRESSES ITSELF, AND ENDEMIC UNIQUE PART OF THIS PART OF SOUTH FLORIDA. IT FLOWS INTO LOW AND OAK RIDGE AGLOW LAND OAK, SAVANNAH, TO THE RIVER. IT BECAME APPARENT WHEN WE'RE LOOKING AT THIS LANDSCAPE THAT THE CONNECTION WITH THE EVERGLADES, WE KNEW THAT ANYTHING WE COULD DO AS FAR AS CONSERVING THE LANDSCAPE, RESTORING WETLANDS, WAS GOING TO HAVE BENEFITS TO ALL OF US. AS WELL AS PROVIDING BENEFITS TO THE 13 MILLION PEOPLE THAT CALL THIS PART OF FLORIDA HOME. WE GOT TO TALKING WITH ORGANIZATIONS AND WE FOUND THAT WE HAD A SIMILAR TRAJECTORY.

THE LANDSCAPE IS POPULATED WITH A TREMENDOUS NUMBER OF ENDANGERED SPECIES. 98 FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES ARE HERE. WE ALSO FOUND AN EXISTING CONSERVATION A LANDSCAPE THAT MULTIPLE PARTNERS HAD A PART IN PLAY.

WE KNOW THERE ARE SPECIES THEIR RANGE WIDELY ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE. WE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CONNECTIVITY -- WE KIND OF DEVELOPED A STRATEGY, ALL OF THIS, AND WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THIS INCLUDED MAKING SURE THAT THE BEIJING COMMUNITY -- THE RANCHING COMMUNITY -- THERE ARE THREE THINGS I WANT YOU TO TAKE AWAY. THE FIRST IS THIS IS A LAND ACQUISITION PROPOSAL THAT WE'RE ENGAGED IN, A PROPOSAL -- IF A LANDOWNER IS NOT INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING LAND ACQUISITION WAS, WE WILL NOT. THIS IS A NON-REGULATORY PROGRAM.

THE ONLY INTEREST WE WILL HAVE IN THE LANDSCAPE IS IN THOSE PROPERTIES THAT WE DO ACQUIRE OR ACQUIRE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS FROM LANDOWNERS THROUGHOUT THE LANDSCAPE. AS CONSERVATION EASEMENTS FOR THE OWNERS OF THOSE PROPERTIES. THE THIRD THING IS THAT WHEN WE LOOK AT THE MAP, WE DESCRIBE A VERY LARGE AREA. THE CONSERVATION FOOTPRINT WE'RE HOPING TO PROTECT, 160,000 ACRES. OF THAT TOTAL, 2/3 OF APPROXIMATELY 100,000 ACRES IS DEDICATED TO WORKING WITH THAT COMMUNITY. AS WELL AS PROTECTING THE HABITAT THAT EXISTS THERE TODAY. OF THE REMAINING 1/3, WE'RE ASKING FOR THE AUTHORITY TO COME WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF, -- OF THE TOTAL ACREAGE. THAT COULD POTENTIALLY BE ALL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. RIGHT NOW I WANT TO TAKE A BREAK AND LOOK AT THE MAP AND DESCRIBED A COUPLE OF UNIQUE FEATURES OF THAT, AND AFTERWARDS WE CAN TAKE QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY SPECIFICS YOU MIGHT HAVE. IF YOU LOOK AT THE MAP, YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THERE IS A DATA LINES RUNNING WHAT WE'RE CALLING THE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP AREA. WE WILL HEAR FROM CONSERVATION PARTNERS IN A FEW MOMENTS TO TALK ABOUT THEIR CONSERVATION PROGRAMS. THIS IS VERY MUCH A PART OF NOT WHAT AGENCY

OR ORGANIZATION CAN CONTRIBUTE. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE IS HOPING TO BE A CONTRIBUTOR TO THAT LANSKY. -- TO THAT LANDSCAPE.

YOU WILL NOTICE THREE OTHER COLORS ON THE MAP. THESE COLORS DENOTE THE CONSERVATION LAND THAT EXISTS ON THE LANDSCAPE. AROUND THESE OUR URBAN AREAS CURRENTLY BEING PROTECTED, AND THERE IS NO NEED FOR US -- THOSE THREE LARGE BLOCKS -- THE REMAINING COLOR, THE BLUE COLOR, IS WHAT WE'RE CALLING THE CONSERVATION AREA, THE AREA WE'RE CONSIDERING. IT IS THAT AREA THAT WE'RE ENGAGING WITH LANDOWNERS FOR REPURCHASING OF THAT AREA. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS TIME TO INTRODUCE MY FRIEND AND THIRD-GENERATION RANCHER, MIKE ADAMS.

Mike Adams -- THANK YOU, CHARLIE. IT IS A REALLY EXCITING DAY FOR US HERE. LOOKING AT THIS LANDSCAPE, IS NICE TO BE PART OF IT. AS A THIRD-GENERATION LANDOWNER, WE HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING PART OF THE COUNTY FOR QUITE A NUMBER OF YEARS NOW.

IN DOING SO, WE WILL -- WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AND WITH OUR CONSERVATION PARTNERS AS WELL. HOW WE HAVE INTEGRATED ARE OPERATION TO THE WILDLIFE -- OUR OPERATION TO THE WILDLIFE, HOW THE BIRDS INTERACT SO THAT WE DO NOT HAVE TO SPRAY OUR PASTORS TO CONTROL -- OUR PASTURES TO CONTROL. THE BIRDS PLAY A TREMENDOUS PART IN OUR OPERATION. ONE OF THOSE THINGS YOU CANNOT PUT A DOLLAR VALUE ON. MOST IMPORTANTLY, I AM AT A THIRD GENERATION. WE HAVE A FOURTH GENERATION COMING ON. THE TRANSITION TO THE NEXT GENERATION IS ONE OF OUR PRIMARY INTERESTS IN THIS PROGRAM, WHICH IT WILL ALLOW US TO DO. THE EASEMENT TYPE PROGRAM DOES DO A LOT FOR NOT ONLY THE AREA, IT KEEPS PEOPLE EMPLOYED, WHICH IS CRITICAL.

AT THIS PARTICULAR JUNCTURE, ONE OF THE AREAS IN FLORIDA, THAT IS THE CRITICAL ISSUE. WORKING THROUGH AN EASEMENT TYPE PROGRAM, IT KEEPS LAND ON THE TAX ROLLS, WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT. WE SEE THIS AS A WIN-WIN FOR FAMILIES, ALSO A WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY, ALSO A WIN FOR THE WILDLIFE AND THE NATIONAL FOOTPRINT THAT WE WILL HAVE. WE WILL HAVE AN UNUSUAL SITUATION HERE AND QUITE A PLACE LEFT IN FLORIDA. OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL APPRECIATE WHAT WE DO HERE TODAY. AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE DENNIS DAVID. HE IS THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE COMMISSION.

Dennis David -- THANKS, MIKE. YOU HEARD ABOUT CONSERVATION PARTNERS. FISH AND WILDLIFE IS EXCITED TO BE ONE OF THOSE PARTNERS AND HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON THIS PROJECT. THIS PROJECT CAME TO CONSERVE THE LAND AND WATER AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES, THE FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AGENCY, THAT IS SOMETHING WELL WITHIN WHAT WE WANT TO SEE HAPPEN. ALSO, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE. WE STRONGLY ADVOCATED FOR LAND TO BE OPEN TO RECREATIONAL

OPPORTUNITIES IN FISHING, AND WE ARE REALLY PLEASED. CHARLIE WENT TO MANY PUBLIC MEETINGS WITH THE SPORTSMEN'S COMMUNITY, AND THEY WANTED TO SEE WHAT LIFE CONSERVE TO, RESOURCES CONSERVE,D, AND IT WANTED PUBLIC ACCESS LAND FOR HUNTING. WE'RE PROPOSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.

TO ESTABLISH TITLE ACQUISITION TO PUBLIC LAND, MUCH LIKE TO DO WITH THE WATER DISTRICT LAND. ADDRESSING THE CITIZEN CONCERNS IS SOMETHING TO BE REALLY RECOGNIZED. WE HEARD FROM MIKE ADAMS, THE RANCHING COMMUNITY, WONDERFUL STEWARDS. THE REASON WE HAVE THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY -- IT IS GOING TO BE A WIN-WIN. WE THINK IT WILL REMAIN EXCELLENT STEWARDS. IT WILL CONSERVE THE WATER RESOURCES. THE HEADWATERS FLOW SOUTH, AND THAT IS WHAT FEEDS THE EVERGLADES. ONE OF OUR COMMISSIONERS, RON BERGER, HAS BEEN AN ADVOCATE, A LONGTIME ADVOCATE FOR THE EVERGLADES. HE WAS QUOTED, TALKING ABOUT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS, A SMART TOOL TO GIVE FRENCH AND FAMILIES AN OPTION.

YOU JUST HEARD THAT MIGHT SEIZE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY IN THE REGION. - - THAT MIGHT SEES THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY IN THE REGION. CONTINUING THE WRENCHING LIKE STYLE IN THIS LANDSCAPE WILL CONTINUE -- CONTINUING THIS WRENCHING LIFE STYLE IN THIS LANDSCAPE. THAT SUMS IT UP, AND ON BEHALF OF THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION, WE WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON AND RESPOND TO THE NEWLY REVISED PROPOSAL AND HELP MOVE THIS FORWARD FOR FLORIDA AS WELL AS WORK FOR CONSERVATION. OUR NEXT SPEAKER IS LIEUTENANT COLONEL BUCK MACLAUGHLIN, THE COMMANDER OF THE AVON PARK RANGE HERE.

Lt. Col. Charles ëBuckí McLaughlin -- THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TODAY. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO REMEMBER " SESAME STREET," YOU MAY BE THINKING ONE OF THESE NAMES IS NOT LIKE THE OTHER ONE. HENCE THE UNIFORM TODAY. IT GIVES ME A GREAT OPPORTUNITY, AND I AM EXCITED TO BE PART OF THIS. THE 106,000 ACRES THAT IS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS STUDY AREA, IS ONE OF THE LARGEST AERIAL AND GUNNERY RANGES IN THE NATION. THE LARGEST AIR FORCE ONE EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

WE'RE REALLY EXCITED ABOUT IT. IT HAS BEEN USED BEFORE, AND WE HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THAT IT IS A WIN-WIN. THE FACT THAT AS WE SEEK TO CONTINUE OUR TRAINING MISSION AND ALLOW OUR AIRCREW, SAILORS, SOLDIERS, ALL TO COME AND TRAIN AT AVON PARK, TO CONTINUE TO PRACTICE THEIR WARTIME ROLES, WE NEED TO DO THAT IN A MANNER THAT IS SAFE TO OUR NEIGHBORS AND THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE OPERATION IN THE AREA, CONSISTENT WITH A LOT OF OUR PROGRAMS. IF WE DO NOT DO THIS TO THE LAND THAT WE ARE TRAINING WITH, WE LOSE THAT. ADDITIONALLY, CONSERVATION AND COMPLIANCE PROGRAMS, WHILE NOT THE FORMAL CONSERVATION AREA, WE

EMPLOY MOST OF THE LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES THAT THE CONSERVATION AREAS DO. THE WILDLIFE LANDSCAPE IN THE ECOSYSTEM.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO US FOR THE REASONS OF PROTECTING AGAINST ENCROACHMENT AND CONTINUING TO BE ABLE TO DO OUR MISSION. NOT ONLY DOES THIS INITIATIVE PROTECT THE CULTURE AND THE LANDSCAPE OF FLORIDA, PARTICULARLY WITH THE LAND AND RANCHERS, THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, PROTECTING SPECIES, THE ECOSYSTEM THAT OCCURS LITERALLY NOWHERE ELSE ON THE PLANET -- BY THE WAY, WE EMPLOY AND PROTECT A VITAL NATIONAL ROLE AT AVON PARK. I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK. IT IS ALSO MY GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE CARLOS SUAREZ, THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST FOR FLORIDA. HE IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR \$175 MILLION BUDGET. THAT IS ALWAYS A GOOD PERSON TO HAVE. CARLOS, THANK YOU.

Carlos Suarez -- IT IS AN HONOR TO BE INTRODUCED BY A COLONEL, SO THANK YOU SO MUCH. GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE. I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE TODAY TO CARRY DISCREET ANNOUNCEMENT. -- TO CARRY THIS GREAT ANNOUNCEMENT. I'VE BEEN IN ON SEVERAL MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, SO I SEE THE SAME FACES. WE HAVE A GREAT PARTNERSHIP HERE IN FLORIDA, ONE OF THE GREATEST IN THE WHOLE UNITED STATES, AND I AM VERY PROUD TO BE PART OF THAT. WE SHARE A COMMON VISION WITH THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. AS YOU KNOW, ONE OF THE MAIN ISSUES IN THE EVERGLADES, RESOURCE CONCERNS THAT WE ADDRESS OUR WATER QUALITY AND WATER QUANTITY, WHICH ARE VITAL TO RESTORING THE EVERGLADES. THEREFORE, NRCS AND OTHER PARTNERS MANAGE SEVERAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, WORKING LANDSCAPE PROGRAMS. BUT ALSO EASEMENT PROGRAMS, THE RESERVE PROGRAM, AND OF COURSE THE WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM. WE HAVE DONE SEVERAL INVESTMENTS.

ONE OF THEM BEING LAST YEAR, AS YOU KNOW, WE HAD ONE OF SPECIAL PROJECTS WHICH HAS BEEN THE LARGEST AMPHIBIOUS PROGRAM IN THE WHOLE NATION, A \$89 MILLION, AN AREA THAT WAS A PERK -- THAT WAS ACQUIRED FOR RESTORATION. \$100 MILLION ANNOUNCED FOR RESTORATION, TO ACQUIRE LAND FOR RESTORATION OF WETLANDS IN THE NORTHERN EVERGLADES. 25,000 ACRES. NRCS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THIS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, AMONG OTHERS. AS WELL AS THE WATER MANAGEMENT. IN RELATIONS TO THAT, AS IT RELATES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA, WORKING IN THE CONSERVATION AREA THAT CHARLIE WAS TALKING ABOUT, THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE GOES HAND IN HAND IN RESTORING AND ENHANCING THE RESOURCES OF THE AREA. IT WILL PROTECT CATTLE RANCHING. MR. ADAMS WAS ONE OF OUR PARTNERS AND PRODUCERS. AS WELL AS PROTECTING THE OPEN SPACES. THIS RESOURCE PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES. THE BLACK BEAR, THE WHOOPING CRANE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO THIS PARTNERSHIP, AND WE LOOK

FORWARD TO CONTINUING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE IN THIS EFFORT. DR. LAKLY IS GOING TO COME IN AND SAY A FEW WORDS.

Dr. Shelly Lakly -- THANKS. IT REMINDED ME OF A QUICK STORY. I HAVE TWIN 8-YEAR-OLD BOYS AND WE JUST MOVED HERE. ONE OF THE BEST PIECES OF ADVICE WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN ON BOYS, TWO THINGS -- RUN THEM AND FEED THEM. AS I GO OUT INTO A CONSERVATION AREA IN FLORIDA ON THE WEEKEND, HOW CAN I ENGAGE THEM? HOW CAN I GET THEM WET, DIRTY, AND MOSQUITO-BITTED, WHICH IS WHAT IT WILL NEVER REMEMBER -- THE SKIMOSQUITO-BITTEN, WHICH IS WHAT THEY WILL REMEMBER WHEN THEY GROW UP. COMMITTED TO WORKING ON A DAILY BASIS TO MAKE THIS A REALITY. WE HEAR ABOUT THE SAME THINGS YOU HEARD. CARE ABOUT KEEPING RANGERS WORKING. WE CARE ABOUT CONSERVATION AREAS. WE CARE ABOUT WATER. WE CARE ABOUT ALL THE PIECES CONNECTED TOGETHER. WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, WHAT WE CARE ABOUT IS THE -- IS TOMORROW IN THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW AND WHAT SHOULD WE HAVE DONE YESTERDAY TO PREPARE FOR THAT?

WHEN I LOOK AT THIS, NOT ONLY DO I SEE A CONNECTION, IT IS A SYSTEM THAT IS ONLY GOING TO BE ALLOWED TO MAINTAIN ITSELF -- THIS PROPOSAL AND THE WORK WE'RE DOING HERE TODAY, WORKING AS PARTNERS, BECAUSE IT WILL ONLY BE SUCCESSFUL -- THAT IS WHAT IS GOING TO BUILD THIS. I JUST WANT TO THANK THE PARTNERS. IT HAS REALLY BEEN AN HONOR TO WORK WITH YOU GUYS. I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE DAVID HOUGHTON. DAVID IS THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION.

David Houghton -- THANK YOU, SHELLY. TODAY A LOT OF FOLKS WORRY ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT. I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE CHARLIE AND THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FOR DOING A REMARKABLE JOB ABOUT LISTENING, LISTENING TO PEOPLE'S CONCERNS. ONE, A GREAT PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS AND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES. IT SATISFIES ONE OF MY BIG WORRIES, WHICH IS THE HUNTING AND FISHING OPPORTUNITY. THOSE OF YOU KNOW I HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR AWHILE, AND I GOT HERE FROM SITTING IN A DUCK BLIND WITH MY DAD. THAT CREATED 30 YEARS OF CONSERVATION -- WITH MY DAD. THAT CREDIT 30 YEARS OF CONSERVATION ETHICS. I THINK THAT IS A REALLY GOOD THING. THEN WE TALK ABOUT A PARTNERSHIP THAT IS WORKING WITH RANCHERS, KEEPING RANCH LANDS IN WORKING STATE, EMPLOYING PEOPLE, GREAT, GREAT OPPORTUNITY. I GET TO WORK ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. FLORIDA RANCHERS HAVE BEEN DOING IT FOR A LONG TIME. THEN YOU TAKE A PARTNERSHIP THAT ALLOWS CARLOS TO BRING HIS \$100 MILLION TO FLORIDA. THAT IS A GOOD DEAL. AND THEN ALSO TALKING ABOUT PROTECTING OUR FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE ABOUT TO GO INTO HARM'S WAY IN IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN. BUT I THINK YOU'RE REALLY TALKING ABOUT AN INCREDIBLE

PROPOSAL. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO ALL OF US, CHARLIE. I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE CHARLES LEE FROM AUDUBON, THE DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY.

Charles Lee -- THANK YOU, DAVID. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE YOU BACK IN TINY LITTLE BIT, -- BACK IN TIME A LITTLE BIT, TO 1961. WHEN THE FLORIDA AUDUBON SOCIETY BEGAN WORKING WITH THE RANGERS IN THE KISSIMMEE VALLEY, ESTABLISHING THE KISSIMMEE VALLEY COOPERATIVE EAGLE SANCTUARIES. BY 1962, 59 OF THE MAJOR RANCH FAMILIES IN THIS VALLEY HAD SIGNED UP TO VOLUNTARILY POST THEIR PROPERTIES WITH THESE YELLOW SIGNS PROTECTING THE NATION PAUSED -- THE NATION'S GREATEST REMAINING CONCENTRATION OF THE BALD EAGLE. I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT AS YOU LOOK AT THIS SIGN THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT WORD ON THE SIGN IS THE WORD "COOPERATIVE," BECAUSE THIS EARLY AUDUBON EFFORT WAS A COOPERATIVE EFFORT.

TODAY WE HAVE COME DOWN THE ROAD A LONG WAYS, AND FOR AUDUBON, THE PROPOSAL OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, AND THE OTHER PARTNERS IN THIS EFFORT TO CREATE THE EASEMENT AREAS AND TO CREATE THESE FEE-ACQUISITION AREAS, TAKES THE EARLY WORK AND MOVES IT TOWARD A PERMANENT ACCOMPLISHMENT. TO US, THAT IS THE GREATEST FEATURE OF THIS ENDEAVOR. I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EFFORT TO THE EVERGLADES, THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EFFORT IS THAT WE ARE IN THE HEADWATERS OF THE EVERGLADES, AND THE LARGE RANCHES MAINTAINED BY THE HISTORIC RANCHING FAMILIES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED CLEAN WATER AND IMPORTANT WILDLIFE HABITAT, THE MAXI RANCH, LOCATED RIGHT HERE IN THE LARGE BLUE AREA, THE GOOD CONSERVATION WORK OF THESE HISTORIC RANCH FAMILIES MUST BE PRESERVED. DOING THAT DOES SEVERAL THINGS.

FIRST OF ALL, IT PRESERVES THE HABITAT FOR THE EGO. GRASSHOPPER SPARROW. THE TIGHTTIGHT. SPECIES DEPEND ON THIS AREA. THE SECOND THING IT DOES, THIS IS THE HEADWATERS, AND SO GOES THE HEALTH OF THE EVERGLADES AS WHAT HAPPENS HERE. IF THESE RANCHES ARE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE THE GOOD CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES THAT THEY HAVE DONE OVER TIME, IF THEY ARE BOOSTED IN THEIR ECONOMICS FOR THE PURCHASE OF EASEMENTS AND FEES WHERE THEY WANT TO SEE THE EASEMENTS OCCUR -- THE PURCHASES OCCURRED, WE WILL SEE A KEY ELEMENT OF THE RESTORATION OF THE EVERGLADES. EVERY ACRE OF WATER THAT CAN BE MAINTAINED IN A HEALTHY CIRCUMSTANCES, IS AN AWKWARD FOR OF WATER THAT WILL NOT RUSH SOUTH -- IS AN AQUIFER OF WATER THAT WILL NOT RUSH SOUTH. IT IS A REMARKABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND AUDUBON OF FLORIDA AT NATIONAL AUDUBON STRONGLY SUPPORTS THIS ENDEAVOR. THANK YOU VERY MUCH. MARK MUSAUS, DEPUTY REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE IN THE SOUTHEAST. MARK?

Mark Musaus -- GOOD MORNING. THIS IS AN EXCITING DAY. IT'S GREAT TO BE HERE, COMING DOWN FROM OUR REGIONAL OFFICES IN ATLANTA. WE HAVE GREAT SPEAKERS TALKING THIS MORNING. I WANT TO ADD THAT A COUPLE THINGS -- ONE, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, WHICH, WHEN IT IS ESTABLISHED, CONSISTS OF 500 REFUGES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IT WILL CREATE A NETWORK OF LANDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT ARE THERE TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PLANT HABITATS. NOT ONLY FOR WHAT LIFE BUT FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF AMERICA. TO PROTECT AND RESTORE, BUT WE ALSO WANT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TO ENJOY IT.

WE SEE A GREAT ECOSYSTEM THAT HAS BEEN -- SOMETIMES WHEN THEY DO THINK ABOUT FLORIDA, THEY THINK ABOUT DISNEY WORLD AND THEY DO NOT REALIZE WHAT A GREAT RESOURCE IS SOUTH OF ORLANDO RIGHT HERE. WE WANT TO COMPLIMENT THE GREAT WORK BEING DONE BY OTHER AGENCIES, WITH A FEDERAL, STATE, OR MEMBERS OF THE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY. THIS IS A LITTLE BIT OF DIFFERENCE ITEM THAT WE'RE TRYING TO ESTABLISH.

AS CHARLIE POINTED OUT, WE'RE LOOKING AT A POTENTIAL SERIES OF DIFFERENT LOCATIONS THAT WERE WE'RE TRYING TO BASE IT ON INPUT FROM OUR PARTNERS IN THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE, CREATING THAT CONNECTIVITY. ALSO ONE IN WHICH WE HAVE LOOKED AT NOT JUST TRYING TO ESTABLISH A REFUGE, BUT LOOKING AT TRYING TO ESTABLISH EASEMENTS AND ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT RANCHERS AND THOSE THAT ARE ALREADY DOING A CREDIBLE LAND STEWARDSHIP. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE A PARTNER ACROSS THIS LANDSCAPE. THIS IS KIND OF THE END POINT. THIS IS -- WE CAME UP WITH THIS IDEA A FEW MONTHS AGO, THIS IS SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN IN PROGRESS FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS.

TO SAY, HEY, WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS IN THIS PART OF THE STATE. WE WENT TO A PARTNERSHIP TO DEVELOP A PRELIMINARY PLAN. WE HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO WHAT THE PUBLIC HAS TO SAY. WE'VE ADDRESSED CONCERNS THAT ARE OUT THERE, AND THIS PLAN THAT WE ARE UNVEILING TODAY IS PART OF A TRANSPARENT PROCESS THAT WE WANT TO HAVE. IT IS OPEN NOW FOR OUR PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR 45 DAYS. OR EASEMENTS CAN BE ESTABLISHED, -- WHERE EASEMENTS CAN BE ESTABLISHED. THERE IS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST ESTIMATE THAT GOES WITH IT AS WELL. CHARLIE AND OTHER STAFF HAVE JUST WORKED EXTREMELY HARD OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS TO GO OUT AND BE AVAILABLE TO INSERT CONCERNS, TO MEET WITH COUNTY COMMISSIONS, TO MEET WITH COUNTY AND STATE REPRESENTATIVES SO THAT WE CAN EXPLAIN WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO.

I AM EXCITED ABOUT THAT. THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY, AND WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT. WE CAN HOPEFULLY ESTABLISH ANOTHER WILDLIFE REFUGE HERE IN FLORIDA. WITH THAT, I'M GOING TO CLOSE THIS PART OF OUR CONFERENCE AND NOW THROW

IT OPEN TO QUESTIONS FROM THE MEDIA. I WANT TO ALLOW A COUPLE OF MINUTES. WE HAVE THE OPERATOR ON THE PHONE WHO NEEDS TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MEDIA ON THE PHONE. ONCE THAT IS DONE, WE WILL TAKE QUESTIONS FOR ERNST -- FIRST FROM THE MEDIA, AND THEN TO THOSE ON LINE. WE WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS THE BEST WE CAN. WE HAVE SOME SPEAKERS HERE. WE WILL ASK THEM TO COME UP AND ANSWER.

Q & A -- IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK A QUESTION OVER THE PHONE LINES, PLEASE PRESS START-1 ON YOUR PHONES. AGAIN, PLEASE PRESS STAR-1.

FISH AND WILDLIFE FUNDING, WHAT IS OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FISH AND WILDLIFE FUND?

WE CAN TAKE DONATIONS. ONCE WE HAVE THE APPROVED BOUNDARY. WE CAN ACCEPT DONATIONS. THE OTHER PART IS THAT THE WAY WE DO IT IS WITH THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND. ALL REVENUES, LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND EACH YEAR. WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS REFUGE, AS WE GET THE PLAN APPROVED, WE CAN GO INTO THE PROCESS OF COMPETING FOR LAND WATER CONSERVATION FUNDS. THERE IS THE GUARANTEE THAT THERE IS MONEY RIGHT THERE. WE HAVE TO BEGIN THE PROCESS. WE HAVE A SET PROCESS WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH. WE WILL BE DEPENDENT UPON LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUNDING. THERE IS ALSO FUNDING THROUGH THE MIGRATORY BIRD COMMISSION.

HOW DOES IT WORK OUT WITH THE --

CORRECT ME ON THIS, BUT IF WE WERE TO GO OUT AND DO EVERYTHING WE SAID WITH FEELING PROTECTION PLAN, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A HUGE AMOUNT. IT WILL NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT. IT WILL TAKE YEARS TO HAPPEN. IN THE SAME WAY, THE EASEMENT CONSERVATION. IT IS GOING TO BE A PROCESS.

I HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF CALLERS SUGGEST THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT YOU'RE GETTING WITH THE ECONOMY THE WAY IT IS TODAY. CAN YOU PLEASE ADDRESS THAT?

WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT TAX DOLLARS THAT COME IN FROM TAXPAYERS. THIS IS COMING FROM THE LAND AND CONSERVATION FUND. SEPARATE ACCOUNTS THAT GENERATE THE REVENUE GOING FORWARD. WE ARE DEPENDENT UPON FUNDING FOR THE REFUGE TO BE ESTABLISHED.

I JUST WANT TO SAY THAT WHAT WE ARE PROPOSING HERE TODAY IS NOT SOMETHING WE ANTICIPATE WILL OCCUR IN THE NEXT ONE TO FIVE YEARS. THIS IS A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE FOLKS WHO LIVE HERE, WHETHER IT TAKES 10, 20, OR 30 YEARS, WE CERTAINLY HOPE THAT DURING THAT TIME THE ECONOMY WILL RECOVER AND WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY IN THE FUTURE TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING ALSO.

IS THIS DEPRESSING NEED -- IS THIS A PRESSING NEED AND WILL DEVELOPERS --  
[INAUDIBLE]

ARE THERE ANY CURRENT PRESSING THREATS TO THE ENVIRONMENT? THE ANSWER TO THAT IS, YES. IN TALKING WITH THE LOCAL BRANCH COMMUNITY -- THE LOCAL RANCHING COMMUNITY, AS WELL AS COUNTIES, THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCALS TO COME INTO THE AREA AND DEVELOPING THESE PLANS. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AS WELL AS INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES.

THE WAY OUR LAND ACQUISITION AND PLANNING PROCESS WORKS, WE ARE CURRENTLY IN OUR 45-DAY COMMENT PERIOD. WE WILL HOPEFULLY DRAFT A LEGAL DOCUMENT THAT WE WILL SEND TO OUR WASHINGTON OFFICE FOR APPROVAL. AND WHEN THAT IS APPROVED, THAT BECOMES -- IF AND WHEN THAT IS APPROVED, THAT BECOMES AN AUTHORIZATION. UP UNTIL THAT POINT, IT IS A CONVERSATION WE'RE HAVING. ONCE THE PROPOSAL IS AUTHORIZED, WE CAN ACTUALLY GO TO OUR WASHINGTON OFFICE AND TO CONGRESS TO SOLICIT FUNDING. WE'RE HOPING POSSIBLY BY THE END OF THE CALENDAR YEAR TO HAVE A FINAL THAT IS READY.

I AM CURIOUS ABOUT HOW YOU HAVE CHANGED, GUIDED YOUR MAP HERE? SOME OF THOSE BROWN AREAS OR AREAS OF CONCERN THAT YOU HAVE DESCRIBED A LITTLE BIT?

THE QUESTION WAS, CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW WE HAVE ADDRESSED THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE PUBLIC THERE? WE USED SOME INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN FLORIDA TO GO ON -- YOU DO NOT SEE IT ON THE MAP. BASICALLY, PLACED ON THE LANDSCAPE, THE HIGH-PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS. WHEN WE WENT PUBLIC BACK IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, THIS BROWN AREA RIGHT HERE -- THE RIVER RANCH COMMUNITY WAS VERY VOCAL IN THEIR THE VERY VOCAL IN THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT COMING IN. THEY WANTED TO MAKE SURE -- WE TOOK THAT INTO CONSIDERATION. THERE ARE TWO REASONS WHY WE WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THAT PARTICULAR PARCEL OF PROPERTY. IN THESE MID IN AND LAND -- THERE HAS TO BE A CONSERVATION DEMONSTRATED. THE RIVER RANCH COMMUNITY HAS A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF HIGH- QUALITY HABITAT. IF YOU LOOK AT OUR PRIORITY HABITATS, THERE ARE A LOT OF THOSE CHARACTERISTICS WE ARE LOOKING FOR. HOWEVER, LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS DO NOT ALLOW FOR THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT TO OCCUR THERE. THE RIVER RANCH COMMUNITY ALSO HAS A PROGRAM MAINTAINING THE HABITAT, SO THERE WAS NO NEED FOR THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO ENGAGE IN CONSERVATION PROGRAMS ON THIS PROPERTY. WE VERY MUCH LISTENED TO THEM.

COULD WE TAKE A QUESTION FROM THE PHONE, PLEASE?

THANK YOU.

GREG PEPIN, YOUR LINE IS OPEN.

HI. I AM FROM THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES." COULD YOU GIVE YOUR NAME? NOBODY HAS GIVEN THEIR NAMES DURING THIS PRESS CONFERENCE. ALSO, I WAS WONDERING, IN REGARDS TO THE FUNDING -- I AM ASSUMING IF YOU HAVE PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING TO SELL YOU CONSERVATION EASEMENTS, THOSE FOLKS WOULD BE GIVEN FIRST PRIORITY, REGARDLESS OF THE RANKING YOU MIGHT HAVE FOR THE LAND. BUT OTHER THAN THAT, IS THERE A PARTICULAR RANKING OF WHAT YOU WANT TO GO AFTER FIRST? WHAT PARTICULAR PARCELS YOU WOULD THINK WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT TO ACQUIRE?

MY NAME IS CHARLIE PELIZZA. THANK YOU FOR YOUR QUESTION. AS FAR AS THE RANKING FOR PROPERTIES, THE WAY WE HAVE DONE IT, WE HAVE A SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY WHERE WE CAN'T EVALUATE EVERY SINGLE PARCEL ACCORDING TO THE LAND -- WHERE WE CAN EVALUATE EVERY SINGLE PARCEL ACCORDING TO THE LANDOWNER. IF THEY'RE INTERESTED IN THE TITLE SALE OR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. AT THAT POINT, WE HAVE TO DO WAS WILLING SELLERS. WE ALSO HAVE TO -- HOW MUCH FUNDING IS AVAILABLE, WHAT APPRAISALS WOULD COME IN. AND WE HAVE TO COME TO AGREEMENT ON THE LAND ACQUISITION. SO WE MIGHT HAVE EVERYTHING IN PLACE BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY WE MAY NOT HAVE COME TO A CONCLUSION ON SIGNING A PIECE OF PAPER. IT IS ALL BASED ON SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY.

WE HAVE A QUESTION HERE IN THE ROOM?

I'M JUST WONDERING WHETHER YOU WOULD POSSIBLY WORK WITH SOME OTHER PARTNERS, IN FUNDING, IF YOU HAVE GOT LAND, THAT MAY BE SITTING FOR DEVELOPMENT WHEN YOU HAVE MONEY AVAILABLE. ANY CONSIDERATION OF THAT?

THE QUESTION WAS, WOULD WE BE WILLING TO WORK WITH ADDITIONAL PARTNERS? THE SIMPLE QUESTION IS YES, THE MORE, THE BETTER. THESE HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE KEY PLAYERS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS FROM THE BEGINNING, BUT WE CERTAINLY WELCOME AND ARE ENCOURAGING ALL OF THE AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN CONSERVATION OF THIS LANDSCAPE, TO COME TOGETHER AND TALK ABOUT HOW WE CAN PARTNER AND WORK TOGETHER.

DOWN THE ROAD, WHO PAYS FOR THE ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THESE PROPERTIES?

MY NAME IS MARK MUSAUS. I AM THE DEPUTY REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FOR THE SOUTHEAST REGION. WE ESTABLISHED

REFUGES AND WE HAVE TO PAY FOR THEM WITH OUR OPERATIONS ACCOUNT. WE HAVE SET ASIDE FUNDING TO PROVIDE OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT. CHARLIE HAS THE LINKAGE -- WE WOULD SET ASIDE DOLLARS OUT OF -- WE GET FUNDING FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. WE ALLOCATE IT OUT TO THE DISTRICT. THE ROOF RIDGE -- THE REFUGE SUPERVISOR FOR FLORIDA.

I WANT TO ASK A QUESTION. I NEED THIS SPELLED OUT FOR ME. HOW DOES THIS HELP IMPROVE THE WATER QUALITY OF THE EVERGLADES?

A VERY GOOD QUESTION. HOW DOES THIS PROPOSAL HELP THE WATER QUALITY DOWN SOUTH. IF YOU LOOK AT THE LANDSCAPE, CURRENTLY WE HAVE AN EXTENDED NETWORK OF THE EXISTING DRAINAGE AREAS. WHAT HAPPENS CURRENTLY IS THE RAIN FALLS AT A VERY FAST SPEED. SO ALL THE NUTRIENTS, IT GETS RIGHT INTO THE RIVER SYSTEM. THE PROGRAM THAT WE'RE HOPING TO EMPLOY AS FAR AS RESTORATION WOULD FILL IN SOME OF THOSE EXISTING DRAINAGE ISSUES THAT WOULD SLOW THE MOVEMENT OF WATER OFF THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM. IT ALLOWS FOR THE SLOWER MOVEMENT OF WATERS OFF THE LANDSCAPE AS WELL AS FOR THE NATURAL PROCESSES OF WETLANDS TO OCCUR, TAKING THOSE NUTRIENTS. THOSE OF THE TWO MAIN ITEMS.

HAVE A QUESTION FOR CRAIG ABOUT WHERE THE MONEY WILL COME FROM. WHETHER IT WILL COME FROM EASEMENTS OR --

PLEASE SAY THAT AGAIN. WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM, AND CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE EASEMENTS?

THAT IS CORRECT. AS FAR AS PURCHASE OR CONSERVATION EASEMENT, A LOT OF IT WILL DEPEND -- WE CAN PRIORITIZE, REGARDLESS OF INTEREST IN BEING PURCHASED OR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. WORKING WITH THE RANCHING COMMUNITY, THE LANDOWNERS ON THE LANDSCAPE, WORKING WITH THEM FIRST. AS FAR AS THE FUNDING, I BELIEVE MARK WAS PRETTY GOOD IN ANSWERING WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM, THE WATER CONSERVATION FUND.

I JUST WANT TO ADD -- AFTER THAT, WE'RE DEPENDING ON FUNDING WITHIN OUR AGENCY THE UP OPERATIONS, THE REGULAR DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES, WHATEVER IT MIGHT BECOME AWARE WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATE OF FLORIDA TO TRY TO CO-MANAGE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES. THE OPERATIONS OF THE DAY-TO- DAY WILL HAPPEN WITH FUNDING.

WE DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING YET, SO WE WILL LOOK AT WHAT WE NEED IN ORDER TO HAVE MANAGEMENT WORK ON THE AREAS TO BE MANAGED.

THE QUESTION WAS, WITH THE HUNTING PROGRAMS ONLY BE IN THIS AREAS -- WOULD BE IN AREAS WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENTS? CONSERVATION EASEMENTS THAT ARE CURRENTLY BEING ENTERTAINED IS UP TO THE DESERT PRIMARILY BEING A DEVELOPED BY -- WHERE THEY HAVE FAMILY INTERESTED, WE CANNOT ENVISION THAT WE WOULD BE ACQUIRING ANY HUNTING RIGHTS FROM LANDOWNERS. THAT IS CERTAINLY OPEN TO NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE IT IS A NEGOTIATION BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, BUT I DO NOT SEE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES. THE LAND THAT WE BUY OUT RIGHT, YES. THE QUESTION IS, HOW MANY OF THOSE ACRES OF LAND THAT WE BUY WOULD BE OPEN TO HUNTING? IN OUR DISCUSSION WITH THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION, THAT WOULD DEPEND ON THE LAND ITSELF. IF IT IS SUITABLE TO HAVE A HUNTING PROGRAM, WE WILL MAINTAIN THAT. -- WE WILL HAVE THAT AS AN OPPORTUNITY. SO POTENTIALLY ALL. IT DEPENDS ON THE LAND THAT WE ACQUIRE. IF IT IS 1000-ACRE PARCEL , THAT COULD BE A THRESHOLD.

THAT IS A GOOD QUESTION. WE WORK WITH THE WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT, THE NATIONAL FOREST. WE WORK WITH A LOT OF DIFFERENT AGENCIES. WE LOOK AT THE LAND, WE LOOK AT THE PROPERTIES. WE DO NOT USUALLY -- IT IS USUALLY DIFFICULT TO MANAGE PUBLIC HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES ON A SMALL PARCEL. WE KIND OF DEFER TO THE STATE ON THIS, JUST AS WE HAVE ON THE OTHER LANDS THAT WE MANAGE. WE WORK WITH THEM AND IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES. WE WOULD LOOK AT BALANCING THAT AS WELL.

MY NAME IS DENNIS DAVID, REGIONAL DIRECTOR WITH THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION.

WE ARE DOING IT IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. IN THE MONTANA, WYOMING AREA. HERE IN THE SOUTHEAST, AS WE REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A PARTNER ACROSS A WIDER LANDSCAPE, THERE ARE OTHER LANDOWNERS THAT OUR LAND STEWARDS. WE DO NOT NEED TO GO IN AND DO ANYTHING BETTER. WE CAN COMPLEMENT THEIR WORKED -- THEIR WORK. IT IS A RELATIVELY NEW CONCEPT FOR US. WE HAVE OTHER AREAS OF EXPANSION OF EXISTING REFUGES IN THE REGION, THE SAME KIND OF CONCEPT THAT WE WOULD INCLUDE. THIS IS REALLY OUR FIRST PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW REFUGE THAT WOULD BE ONE-THIRD TITLE, 2/3 EASEMENT.

DOES THAT KIND OF REFUGE HAVE A CHANGE OF DIRECTION A LITTLE BIT FOR THE AGENCY? OR DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH FUNDS NOT BEING RIGHT ARE AVAILABLE?

I THINK IT IS A RECOGNITION THAT WE CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE IN TERMS OF THE CONSERVATION STATE BY IMPLEMENTING AND USING EASEMENTS, WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS, EFFECTIVE LAND STEWARDS, AND IT IS PROBABLY THE REALITY THE FACT THAT WE CAN GET MORE FOR LAND

THROUGH EASEMENT THAT WE CAN THROUGH TITLE, IN TERMS OF PURCHASE. I THINK WE REALIZE THAT AS WE ARE FACING THE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES THAT ARE OUT THERE TODAY, WE CAN DO MORE IN A PARTNERSHIP EFFORT WORKING WITH THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY THERE, AND MORE OF A CONFERENCE THAT WAY.

MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EASEMENT -- [INAUDIBLE]

THE QUESTION WAS, THE BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. AGAIN, THE TAX ROLL MANAGEMENT INTO THE FUTURE, THE COSTS CONTAINED BY THE LANDOWNER. COST EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSERVATION DOLLARS GOING FURTHER. THE SAME HOLDS TRUE.

WHAT A PARTICULAR RANCHER IS DOING PRIOR TO FUNDING -- RANCHER IS DONE PRIOR TO FUNDING -- [INAUDIBLE]

YES, THAT WOULD BE THE RIGHTS RESERVED BY THE LANDOWNER.

I WOULD HOPE THAT SOME OF YOU IS NOT ALL OF YOU CAN STAY. IF YOU NEED THE SPEAKER BIOS, I'VE GOT THAT HERE. THANK YOU.